



# ● GREEN BULLET

28<sup>th</sup> June 2019

North West Environment Link (NWEL) is a partnership of environmental voluntary sector organisations, representing hundreds of thousands of members in the North West. We are members of VSNW, the regional voluntary sector network for the North West, whose purpose is to support a connected and influential voluntary and community sector (VCS).

This bulletin is intended to keep NWEL members and wider networks up to date on events and issues that will be of interest to environmental voluntary and community sector organisations in the North West. Please send any items for inclusion in the next bulletin to [andyuille@gmail.com](mailto:andyuille@gmail.com) - and feel free to forward all or parts of these bulletins throughout your own networks to help spread the word!

The Green Bullet is also available to download from the [VSNW](#) website.

## CONTENTS

- Campaigns – Climate change, biodiversity, seas, air quality, intrinsic value, communities
- Information update – Brexit & beyond, energy, planning, transport
- Publications – farmers & conservation, farmland & tax, GM Industrial Strategy, Natural Capital Committee advice papers, UK2070
- Events – Cheshire & Cumbria young people's environmental Question Times, Great Landscapes, wellbeing & urban nature
- Resources – nature-climate connections, green space index, nature & urban planning, urban and rural nature renewal, This Is Not a Drill, conserving bogs
- Consultations – Heathrow Expansion, Green Infrastructure Partnership
- Funding – High Street Heritage Action Zones
- Vacancies – Cumbria Action for Sustainability CEO

## Campaigns

### Climate change

- The UK Government has signed into law a commitment to achieve [net-zero carbon emissions by 2050](#) – a big step up from the previous target of an 80% reduction by then, and in line with the [Committee on Climate Change's recommendations](#). [18 European countries](#) now officially support a carbon-neutral 2050 target. However, the Committee has also warned that the UK is [not even on track to meet its previous targets](#), and the

[Government appears to have defied its advice](#) not to 'roll forward' already-achieved emissions reductions to future budgets; while the European Commission says that the UK's current plan is "[unclear" and lacks key details](#) about how the UK will reduce greenhouse gas emissions over the next 12 years.

- This change in law followed the day after the [The Time Is Now](#) mass lobby, when thousands of people descended on Westminster to [lobby their MPs for stronger action](#) on climate change, and the ongoing national and international [Extinction Rebellion](#) protests.
- Six Select Committees have jointly announced plans to hold a [Citizens' Assembly on combatting climate change](#) and achieving the pathway to net zero carbon emissions.
- The CEO of the Environment Agency has said that "[a lot of people will die](#)" unless action is taken to combat the "climate emergency", and that "in a few decades many areas of the UK could be uninhabitable"
- Last year's rise in global CO2 emissions – the largest since 2011 - was driven in part by a surge in demand for petrochemicals [used largely to manufacture plastic materials](#), according to statistics in BP's latest world energy review.
- [Liverpool City Region](#) have joined 108 other 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tier authorities in declaring a climate emergency – if yours isn't [already on the list](#), you know what to do!

### **Biodiversity**

Scientists are concerned about a "[frightening](#)" number of plant extinctions. Researchers who completed the first global survey on this issue found that 571 species have been wiped out since 1750, with the possibility that far more species could be extinct. As Dr Eimear Nic Lughadha points out: "plants underpin all life on Earth... so plant extinction is bad news for all species".

### **Seas & marine life**

In May, UK Governments announced they were [failing to deliver on their collective promises](#) of achieving healthy seas. With the Governments' own reports stating only 4 out of 15 indicators had been met, Environment Links UK have developed the [Seas Our Future](#) campaign, [calling for a stronger, more ambitious UK Marine Strategy](#) to turn the tide for our seas. Meanwhile, ClientEarth and the Marine Conservation Society have launched a [High Court challenge over Defra's changes to Brexit negotiations](#), which potentially limit the types of areas set aside for marine protection. Michael Gove has announced a [review into the measures](#) to protect UK seas and marine life and the designation of [41 new Marine Conservation Zones](#).

### **Air quality**

- Despite over ten years of air quality policy, [inequality in exposure to traffic-related air pollution has widened](#), a new study has revealed, with the poor most exposed to air pollution caused by rich.
- June saw over 500 events taking place to celebrate [Clean Air Day](#) to highlight measures that can be taken to improve air quality...
- ...while Highways England have [spent just £7 million of a £75 million budget](#) given to them by Government to tackle illegal levels of traffic air pollution. The whole amount must be spent within 5 years, and there's less than a year left.

### **Intrinsic value**

A new survey suggests that the common conservationist strategy of [commodifying nature](#) – putting a price on it, describing it as 'natural capital' or 'ecosystem services', or subjecting it to decision-making processes like cost-benefit analysis – may be counter-productive, and that

focusing instead on the intrinsic value of nature may be more effective at achieving conservation.

### **Communities in charge**

The newly launched [Communities in Charge](#) campaign is a coalition of local people, community groups, businesses & national organisations calling for communities to be put directly in charge of the government's post-Brexit fund for economic regeneration. They want the Shared Prosperity Fund to be put in the hands of communities. To make that happen, at least a quarter of the fund money must go directly to local people, local businesses and communities to spend on their own priorities.

### **Information update**

#### **Brexit and beyond**

- More than 30 commercial, professional and campaigning/advocacy organisations have come together under the Broadway Initiative to [seek specific assurances from Government about the content of the final Environment Bill](#), in order to create a coherent, long-term framework for the environment. Noteworthy due to the range of organisations and presence of many 'unusual suspects'.
- Greener UK has produced a [briefing on the environmental implications of the different potential UK-EU relationships](#) post-Brexit, and provides a series of recommendations for minimizing environmental harm.
- The NAO has published an [early review of Defra's future farming programme](#), which is responsible for developing a new domestic agriculture policy. The report focuses on the development of an environmental land management (ELM) scheme, which will replace the current system of area-based subsidies, by rewarding farmers and land managers for the delivery of environmental public goods. The report has brought out into the open many of the challenges the programme is grappling with, whilst there is still time to get it back on track.
- A new survey by Greener UK and the Climate Coalition has found that the [vast majority of the British public](#) would like to see politicians take more "urgent action" to tackle climate challenges and mass biodiversity loss. However, the [Greener UK Brexit Risk Tracker](#) indicates that, despite all the recent publicity and proclamations, UK environmental protections are still set to be weaker post-Brexit, with Select Committee scrutiny of the draft Environment Bill finding it to be seriously deficient, marking in some areas "[a significant regression on current standards](#)". The 'transposition' of EU law into British law, rather than simply 'cutting and pasting' existing provisions, has in some cases severely weakened them and made substantial changes to the law.
- [How do the prospective Prime Ministers shape up on environmental issues?](#) Edie has examined their (and their erstwhile rivals) environmental credentials.

#### **Energy**

- The UK Government had confirmed that 10 companies have secured £26m in funding to facilitate the advancement and rollout of [carbon capture, usage and storage](#) (CCUS) – having [previously spent £100 million](#) on a CCUS competition, only to scrap it in 2017...
- ... While the same Government [committed nearly £2 billion to fossil fuel projects](#) abroad last year, as their support for renewables abroad fell to just £700,000. The Environmental Audit Committee said the UK was sabotaging its climate credentials by [providing "unacceptably](#)

[high” subsidies](#) that locked poorer nations into a fossil fuel future. A separate study this year found the UK led the European Union in [giving subsidies to fossil fuels](#).

- Although National Grid forecast that for the first time since the industrial revolution, [more electricity will be generated in the UK by low-carbon sources than from fossil fuels](#) this year! [Fiddlers Ferry in Warrington is due to close next year](#), leaving the UK with just 5 coal power stations.
- The G20 group of the world’s richest nations, currently meeting in Japan, have collectively [tripled their subsidies for coal power](#) over the last few years.
- Labour say that they will [force private investors to support the ‘green revolution’](#), by backing measures that would deter investment in fossil fuels.
- Energy bills in the UK are inflated partly because households are subsidising nuclear submarines, MPs have been told. Experts provided evidence to the Business Select Committee that one government motive for [backing civilian nuclear power is to cross-subsidise the defence industry](#).

## Planning

- [Building on brownfield sites is at a five year low](#), while greenfield development is still on the increase, according to CPRE analysis of [government figures](#), despite there being enough brownfield sites for a million new homes. The same figures show that [the North West is building on less of its Green Belt than the national average](#), but that there are real pressures in some areas.
- A High Court judge has overturned a secretary of state refusal of 203 homes in a case that commentators say has [‘important implications’ for decision-makers considering whether the NPPF’s ‘tilted balance’ applies](#). Although the Secretary of State was found to have provided inadequate reasons for asserting a five-year supply of housing land (which is why the appeal was successful), the judge supported his approach as to whether or not the presumption in favour of ‘sustainable’ development should be triggered. In effect, this means that all policies that might be considered ‘most important’ for determining an appeal must be considered in aggregate, to decide whether they are collectively out of date or not. Some may be, some may not be. However, this means that it will be much more possible to defend against the application of the presumption, because speculative developers can no longer simply claim that the housing supply policies are out of date (due to a lack of five year supply) – other relevant policies such as countryside protection and environmental policies, which are likely to be much longer-lasting, must also be considered, and may tip the balance towards the set of important policies being collectively not out of date.
- A recent change to the Government’s [Planning Practice Guidance on planning obligations](#) could be good news for rural communities in need of low cost homes. Until March 2019, sites of five homes or fewer in designated rural areas were exempt from providing affordable housing contributions, while sites of 6-10 homes could provide a contribution as a cash payment to the local authority, rather than affordable homes on site. Now the guidance has been updated to give authorities the freedom to set their own thresholds in designated rural areas and demand that affordable homes be delivered on site.
- The Government has [removed its pro-fracking paragraph from the NPPF](#), after the courts ruled that it was unfair, unlawful, and failed to take account of up-to-date scientific evidence.
- An independent report for the Labour party, [Land for the Many](#), puts land squarely front and centre of politics, from which it has been hidden for decades if not centuries. It calls for [radical changes to the way that we manage, develop, tax and govern land](#).
- Built environment organisations have come together to support the [UK’s first national housing design audit](#), which plans to examine large-scale housing developments. The Place

Alliance and CPRE highlight that research has shown that high-quality design makes new residential developments more acceptable to local communities.

- The National Infrastructure Commission has announced the members of its new Design Group, intended to be “champions for [design excellence](#)” in all new national infrastructure, ensuring that design is considered at the outset of every major project, and at every stage of delivery.
- Several appeal decisions by the Secretary of State, [giving great weight to less than substantial harm to the settings of listed buildings](#), seem to be making new settlements of urban extensions very difficult.
- Think Tank IPPR has released a new report saying that [austerity has undermined the North's economy](#) and that it needs greater devolution of powers and funding to be able to flourish and prosper.
- On average, housebuilders currently have 4-5 years' worth of housing land in their supply pipelines, according to [research by Savills](#). But they don't landbank. Oh no.
- Homes England, the [government's "housing accelerator"](#), completed 40,289 houses between April 2018 and March 2019 and started 45,692. 71% of the completions and 67% of the starts were affordable. [Council housebuilding](#) has also reached its highest level since 1990.
- Nevertheless the Publics Accounts Committee has warned that the Government's target of delivering [300,000 new homes a year by the mid-2020s is way off track](#) because of a 'lack of decisive action'. Their Chair added that “The Government has set itself the highly ambitious target of building 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s – levels not seen since World War two - even though there is no clear rationale for this figure and the Ministry themselves say only 265,000 new homes a year are needed.”

### **Transport**

- In what would be a [major reform of how bus services are run in Greater Manchester](#), it has been recommended that buses operate under a franchised system meaning that Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) would take over the day-to-day running of services.
- Northern council leaders and Metro Mayors have written to the prospective Prime Ministers asking them to [commit to the delivery of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail](#), “with the future prosperity of the region balanced on the successful implementation of an effective and forward-facing infrastructure strategy”, following increasing speculation that [a future Government could scrap HS2](#).

### **Publications**

#### **Farmers and conservation**

Wildlife & Countryside Link published a landmark piece of research in June which showed that, despite often being framed as sitting on opposite sides of the fence, [farmers and conservationists are largely on the same page](#) about the direction of future farming policy. The research is a clear call to government to deliver an ambitious Agriculture Bill and future policy that ensures farming and nature survive and thrive. “[Putting our eggs in a better basket: A survey of English farmers' opinions on agriculture policy](#)” shows that 80% of farmers believe the health of the natural environment is important or very important for their farm business. Furthermore, half (50%) of farmers agree with the principle of ‘public money for public goods’ (one third are neutral, and one in five disagree with the principle), and two thirds of farmers say regulation is important or very important to protect standards in the farming industry.

### **Muck and brass: farmland tax breaks**

The latest report from People Need Nature investigates the tax system and how it affects farmland. "[Where there's muck there's brass: revealing the billions hidden in farmland tax shelters](#)" lays out the many, varied, and some frankly bizarre tax breaks available to farmers and landowners, totalling around £2.4 billion a year in England – almost as much as CAP payments at £2.5 billion. They argue that mostly these go to benefit the very largest landowners, encourage speculative investment and price small farmers and new entrants out, provide no benefit to society, and in some cases are operating against things society might want. They argue for reform that would channel this substantial sum of money towards farmers who manage their farms more sympathetically for nature. [This blog](#) summarises the arguments.

### **Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy**

Andy Burnham has published [Greater Manchester's local industrial strategy](#), which aims to consolidate the city-region's leading position in the digital and creative sectors. As part of the strategy, the region's Clean Growth Mission to achieve carbon-neutral living in Greater Manchester has been launched. The target date is 2038 – a stretching 12 years earlier than the newly-enhanced UK target.

### **Natural Capital Committee advice papers**

The Natural Capital Committee advises Government on matters relating to the natural environment in England. Its latest advice papers to Government (the first for almost 18 months) cover [environmental net gain, marine management and the management of soils](#).

### **UK 2070**

The UK2070 Commission is an independent inquiry set up to conduct a review of the policy and spatial issues related to the UK's long-term city and regional development. Its first report, [Fairer and Stronger – Rebalancing the UK Economy](#), has just been published. A central thesis of this first report is that regional inequality disadvantages everyone. It highlights the environmental dimension to spatial inequality in the UK and the role of climate change in this.

### **Events**

#### **Cheshire and Cumbria young people's environmental Question Times**

From Greta Thunberg to the school strikes, there has never been a more important time for our young people to be heard. On the 14th August, Cheshire Wildlife Trust is hosting a [Wilder Cheshire Question Time](#) event for 16-25 year olds to put their questions on the environment to a panel of local politicians. Held in Chester, the panel will include councillors, parliamentary candidates and sitting MPs from several political parties. Potential participants need to submit their questions before midnight on Sunday 7th July for a chance to be selected as an audience member. And on July 5<sup>th</sup>, Cumbria Action for Sustainability are hosting a [Cumbrian children and young people's climate Question Time](#) on July 5<sup>th</sup> in Penrith. Open to the public as well as school groups, this event with a similarly high-profile political panel was organised after children at the first Cumbrian youth climate summit said they wanted more opportunities to speak to, question and influence people in positions of power.

#### **Great Landscapes Week**

Bookings are now open for Friends of the Lake District's [week-long series of events](#) (Saturday 3 – Friday 9 August) celebrating every aspect of our glorious landscapes, with something for

everyone, whatever age or ability. They are inviting you to step into the great Cumbrian landscapes and find different ways to experience what's so special with their (mostly!) free activities, including (but not only!) art walks, woodland walks, dry stone walling, bushcraft, foraging, hazel basket-making, yoga, forest bathing, night running, and dark skies activities.

### **Improving wellbeing through urban nature: Research into Practice**

1st July 2019, 1 to 2 pm. This webinar will present a summary of findings from the [Improving wellbeing through urban nature](#) (IWUN) research project, led by researchers at the University of Sheffield. The webinar will discuss these findings, their implications and how they can be used to help stakeholders better incorporate nature into their decision-making processes. Ties in with further research demonstrating the health [benefits of spending just two hours a week in nature](#).

### **Resources**

#### **Nature-climate change connections**

The RSPB has released a [new set of on-line maps](#) that highlight the amount of carbon stored in some of the most biodiversity-rich parts of the UK. Users can 'zoom in' on areas of particular interest to them. The authors urge for the protection and restoration of biodiversity-rich areas on the basis of both their value for nature and in climate change mitigation.

#### **Green Space Index**

According to this new analysis by parks charity Fields in Trust, 2.6 million people within Great Britain don't live within a ten-minute walk of a park or green space. [Regional maps of green space provision and demand](#) are accessible now, county-level analysis is to follow.

#### **The Nature Pathway**

CitiesWithNature is a global knowledge sharing platform launched by ICLEI, IUCN and The Nature Conservancy. It has launched [The Nature Pathway](#) as a collection of guidance, tools and examples to help city and city-regional governments and others to learn about best practice and tools, with the goal of mainstreaming nature into urban planning.

#### **Urban and rural nature renewal**

A couple of examples that could be adapted... The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan includes the ambition to develop a Nature Recovery Network in England. The West of England Nature Partnership have developed a regional version of this Network. Considering both marine and terrestrial systems, they have created an [adaptive spatial plan that identifies the best opportunities to deliver nature's recovery](#). And the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership's have developed this first-of-its-kind Blueprint for the Glasgow City Region to create both a [habitat network for wildlife and an access network for people](#) through greenspaces.

#### **This is Not a Drill**

Extinction Rebellion has been one the biggest campaigns of mass civil disobedience in decades. This Is Not A Drill, the [Extinction Rebellion handbook](#), is now on its third print run. It claims to be "a book of truth and action. It has facts to arm you, stories to empower you, pages to fill in and pages to rip out, alongside instructions on how to rebel - from organising a roadblock to facing arrest."

### **Conserving bogs: the management handbook**

This [free practical handbook](#) provides a central knowledge base for the methods and techniques to help people effectively manage and conserve bogs. This new edition has been updated to reflect advances and evolution in both understanding and techniques.

### **Consultations**

#### **Heathrow expansion**

The Government has opened a consultation on the controversial [expansion of Heathrow](#), already the country's largest single source of carbon emissions, which critics have said [makes a mockery](#) of new plans to reach net zero carbon by 2050.

#### **Green Infrastructure Partnership**

The Green Infrastructure Partnership is a network of people and organisations that support the creation, enhancement and promotion of green infrastructure in the UK. Help [shape the future focus and direction of the Green Infrastructure Partnership](#) by participating in this 15-minute survey as part of a project aimed at mainstreaming green infrastructure.

### **Funding**

#### **High Street Heritage Action Zones**

Historic England is inviting expressions of interest to a new High Streets Heritage Action Zones Scheme (HSHAZ). The scheme offers [grants of up to £2million to non-profit organisations](#) or partnerships to deliver physical improvements and community activities to regenerate historic high streets or town centres. Deadline: 12 July 2019.

### **Vacancies**

#### **CAfS CEO**

[Cumbria Action for Sustainability \(CAfS\) are recruiting for a new chief executive officer](#). Due to recent growth in the staff team, an increased turnover, and a huge surge in interest and demand for their work, they need to increase our development capacity. They are therefore seeking a new chief executive to reflect the need to develop and grow CAfS, particularly in the light of the increased awareness of climate emergency. This is a hugely exciting opportunity for an experienced leader to guide a respected and dynamic organisation at a point of great challenge and potential, and to be part of global action to protect our environment for future generations to come. Deadline: 9am, 12 July.

---

To subscribe or contribute

To subscribe to NWEL's Bulletin please email [andyuille@gmail.com](mailto:andyuille@gmail.com) with the subject line: "Subscribe to NWEL Bulletin". Please send items for inclusion in the next Bullet to me by **23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019**.

• **GREEN BULLET**

North West Environment Link (NWEL) is a partnership of environmental voluntary sector organisations, representing hundreds of thousands of members in the North West.

VSNW is the regional voluntary sector network for the North West, whose purpose is to support a connected and influential voluntary and community sector (VCS).

To contribute to the NWEL Bulletin, please  
contact:  
Andy Yuille  
[andyyuille@gmail.com](mailto:andyyuille@gmail.com)  
01524 389 915

To contribute to the policy work of VSNW,  
please contact:  
Warren Escadale  
[warren.escadale@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:warren.escadale@vsnw.org.uk)  
0161 276 9307