



● GREEN BULLET

27th September 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 - 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, air & water, (de)forestation, plastics, behavior change
- Information update – Brexit & beyond, energy, planning, transport
- Publications – 25 year environment plan progress, National Parks & AONBs, Our Planet Our Health, climate change adaptation, Natural Capital Committee advice, valuing tidal areas, engaging communities & environments
- Events – Transition Towns North West annual gathering, Breathing Space in Greater Manchester, enhancing habitat networks, North West sustainability,
- Resources – Ecosystems approach handbook, Innovate!, green space & mental health, neighbourhood planning, green infrastructure
- Consultations – Mobile phone infrastructure
- Vacancies – Mersey Forest Community Development Officer

Campaigns

Climate change

- Thousands of UK adults joined the millions worldwide uniting with the school [climate strikes on September 20th](#). The climate coalition is urging people to [hear what the school strikers had to say](#) and to [write to their MPs](#).
- Hopes that the strikes would spur governments into action at the [UN climate summit in New York](#) were short-lived. Despite warnings from the scientific community that [the impact of](#)

[global heating is set to intensify](#) and [a rallying speech from Greta Thunberg](#), the climate summit failed to secure anything more than incremental promises. Of the big emitters, China did not escalate its climate action targets, while Trump attended the summit for a meagre 14 minutes.

- [Glasgow will co-host the COP26 Global Climate Conference](#) in November 2020, along with Italy. The Hoffman Centre suggests what it needs to do to [be more successful than New York](#).
- Global decarbonisation efforts will need to be [seven times greater than current efforts](#), if the world is to stand a fair chance of limiting global warming to 1.5C, according to a new PwC report which found that the rate of global decarbonisation has slowed to its lowest level since 2011.
- The Committee on Climate Change says that the Government [must cap the growth in demand for shipping and aviation](#) as part of policies setting numerical targets for emissions reductions in order to meet Paris targets
- Client Earth, the environmental lawyers who (repeatedly) successfully challenged the government's plans to cut air pollution, has told [100 English local authorities](#) that they have eight weeks to explain how they will "set evidence-based carbon reduction targets" in their emerging local plans, or face legal action.
- The United Nations highlights that climate change is not 'just' an environmental problem, saying that 'The world has never seen a [threat to human rights](#) of this scope'
- Thousands of coastal homes will have to be sacrificed to rising seas and [entire communities in the UK may need to be relocated](#) to higher ground because of [climate change](#), an international commission has warned.
- Since the 2015 Paris agreement and the wave of climate activism in its wake, a growing number of businesses are [divesting from fossil fuel stocks](#). In 2014 only 180 fossil fuel investors had committed to dropping fossil fuel stocks. In 2019 that number has risen to 1,100.
- The NFU has set out a vision for [UK farming to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040](#), without the need to reduce red meat consumption or significantly increase woodland planting
- In a marked contrast to domestic policy, Boris Johnson has announced a [£1bn fund to aid developing nations](#) in transitioning to a low-carbon economy and tackling climate change, alongside a fresh new push to halt deforestation

Air & water quality

- The Court of Appeal has upheld the [first ever refusal of planning permission at appeal over concerns about air pollution](#) and public health
- Road [traffic in the UK has increased by almost 30% since 1990](#), but transport-related emissions of many air pollutants including particulate matter and nitrogen oxide (NOx) have reduced, according to Office for National Statistics (ONS) analysis of the most recent [environmental accounts](#).
- Surfers Against Sewage have recorded a [record number of incidents of raw sewage being discharged on UK beaches](#) this summer

Deforestation

A lack of policy support or ambitious action from corporates involved in agriculture has led to [an area of tree cover the size of the UK being lost globally each year](#) between 2014 and 2018, a new report has concluded. Meanwhile, the Woodland Trust is seeking pledges for 1 million people to join the [UK's biggest ever mass tree-planting campaign](#).

Plastics

Two new surveys reveal [public attitudes towards plastic recycling](#), covering an array of issues from foreign exports to shopping habits. Recent studies reveal that plastic particles are [appearing in the most pristine environments](#) and [even in the rain](#). Now evidence suggests that it will be [in our fossil record](#) too.

Behaviour change

The value-action gap is alive and well, according to [Natural England's latest MENE survey](#). It indicates that the UK public are more aware and concerned than ever about environmental problems and degradation – but no more likely to do anything about it themselves. An indication of apathy or of an awareness that [only systemic change can achieve sustainability](#) and that a focus on individual actions may be dangerously distracting? On the other hand, a separate poll showed that more than two-thirds of the general [public would support measures to limit flights and air travel](#) in order to combat climate change, while more than half believe that reducing meat in diets should also be prioritized.

Information update

Brexit and beyond

- [Prorogation was unlawful](#), MPs are back in the Commons, but the only environmental implications seem to be that the [atmosphere in Parliament is becoming increasingly toxic](#).
- In an announcement that is in no way symbolic or analogous to wider policy movements, ['Green GB' week has been postponed due to Brexit](#).
- The Government's ['Operation Yellowhammer'](#) report on the possible impacts of a no-deal Brexit has been released, detailing either a 'worst case scenario' or a 'baseline scenario', depending on who's being interviewed. The report is strikingly silent on differential spatial impacts and environmental impacts.
- Defra has published a [summary of how farming policy will change](#) once the UK leaves the EU. It is a reasonably straightforward and readable summary of aspects such as how farm support will change and what future environmental payments are likely to cover.
- The new European Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen has said that the [European Green Deal](#) should be the central element of European policy as the EU prepares plans to achieve climate neutrality by mid-century. Presumably an independent UK will want to at least match that ambition?
- The Labour conference saw a slew of environmentally-friendly policies announced, including a [Green New Deal](#), a commitment to [net-zero carbon by 2030](#), [37 new offshore wind farms](#) and the final report from its commission looking into [fixing the broken planning system](#) to be published next month. However, I wouldn't hold my breath.

Energy

- No EU countries have announced concrete plans to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, despite a decade-old commitment to do so. Five of them – including the UK – even have [plans to increase fossil fuel subsidies](#) in the coming years
- A new report from the Renewable Energy Association suggests that the Government must ensure that [bioenergy generation doubles to 16% of the UK's energy mix](#) by 2032, if energy security is to be safeguarded and climate targets to be met.
- More than 17,000 UK citizens have signed a petition calling on the UK Government to scrap proposed plans to [increase the VAT on household solar and storage](#) from 5% to 20%.

• GREEN BULLET

- The amount of [energy generated from coal sources in the UK has fallen to a record-low](#) output of 0.7% - a 63% decline on the same period the year prior - with low-carbon making up more than half of the UK's energy mix.
- [Fracking remains suspended at Preston New Road](#). Meanwhile it has emerged that Cuadrilla fracked just 7 times, [below several permitted limits](#), before apparently causing the record-breaking 2.9ml tremor. They have also received an official warning for their [third breach of the conditions of their environmental permit](#) in just over a year.

Planning

- The little-noticed [Government Spending Review](#) promised "the biggest year-on-year real terms increase in spending power for local government in a decade" (not that that would be hard following 10 years of austerity, the brunt of which has been borne by local authorities), with funding announced for transport and other infrastructure, [including green infrastructure](#) to deliver the 25-Year Environment Plan. It didn't meet the plea made by an alliance of major environmental charities for a ['climate and nature emergency'](#) budget though.
- The [Greater Manchester Spatial Framework has been delayed](#) yet again, with the next round of consultation expected in the new year, and the final version won't be ready until after the Mayoral elections in May.
- The LGA has called on the Government to [scrap permitted development rights to convert barns and farm buildings](#) into homes, as the 230% increase in conversions over 2 years is taking a severe toll on the vital infrastructure and local services in rural towns and villages.
- New housing minister Ester McVey has thrown [commentators](#) into a tizzy by [appearing to conflate greenfield sites with Green Belt](#), saying that "Every blade of grass must be looked at before it is changed – and it is only in the most exceptional circumstances we turn there." The Government has confirmed that this does not represent a change in policy, and that their 300,000 homes a year still stands, but also emphasized their commitment to make better use of brownfield land.
- ...while in the same speech she committed £2 million to aid councils to ['crack down on illegal developments' in the green belt](#).
- [Updated Community Infrastructure Levy \(CIL\) rules](#), which mean that communities will be able to see what developer contributions are spent on, and councils can choose how they consult on setting CIL schedules, have come into force.
- [New government technical guidance](#) has highlighted the need for householders to consult neighbours when seeking permission for home extensions under permitted development rights.
- The Government has released a [list of 100 towns](#), including 45 in the 'Northern Powerhouse' area, that are eligible for the new £3.6 billion Towns Fund
- [14 towns across the North West](#) have been cumulatively awarded £18.7m from the Government's £95m Historic High Streets Fund, to repair buildings, provide training in heritage-based skills, and stimulate commercial investment.
- Boris Johnson has reaffirmed his pledge to [devolve further powers to the north](#) of England,

Transport

- Transport secretary Grant Shapps has issued an order that [suspends the removal of ancient woodland to make way for HS2](#) while an independent review into the project is conducted.
- HS2 chairman Allan Cook has advised the Department for Transport that, if it proceeds, [HS2 phase 1 is likely to open 5 years late](#), saying it would be 'more prudent' to plan for an opening of phase 1 of the project between 2028 and 2031, rather than 2026. Current

schedules would suggest that it “would be prudent to plan on opening phase 2b within a range of 2035 to 2040”. Phase 2b will run to Manchester and Leeds. “Unforeseen complications with ground conditions, miscalculated land values and poor governance” have been blamed for [HS2’s delays and spiralling budget](#)

- Boris Johnson has suggested [more control over rail services could be devolved to the North](#), although details of timings and funding are yet to be confirmed. Breaths are not being held.
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has approved [investment of £172m into public and sustainable transport](#) across the City Region, including into stations, Mersey ferries, and cycling routes.
- [In a new report](#), the Science and Technology Select Committee have said that the Government should ban the sale of petrol cars and vans by 2035 and [phase out personal vehicle use](#) if the UK is to hit its legally binding 2050 net zero carbon target.

Publications

25 Year Environment Plan progress

Earlier this year, the Government published its first [annual review](#) of progress against its [25 Year Environment Plan](#). Wildlife and Countryside Link have published their own, admirably diplomatic [report](#) on progress against the Plan, recognizing its ambition and intentions, welcoming Defra’s warm words over the past few years, but questioning whether the funds, legal underpinning, binding targets and enforcement needed to make these plans a reality will be forthcoming, and whether delivery will happen quickly enough to stop the countdown to environmental disaster. The [Natural Capital Committee](#) felt no such need for reservedness, describing the progress report as “[riddled with inaccuracies](#)”, showing “little evidence of progress” and “[some worrying evidence of declines in our environment](#)”.

Glover review into National Parks and AONBs

The final report of the [Glover review into National Parks and AONBs](#) has been published. It praises the work which has been done to maintain the beauty of places such as the Lake District, Exmoor and the Dorset coast. But it warns that new challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and a changing, urban society mean that new approaches are needed to get the most out of England’s most-loved landscapes, including National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). It makes a series of recommendations to achieve this, including greater powers for AONBs and a National Landscapes Service.

Our Planet, Our Health

The Environmental Audit Committee have published a new report, [Our Planet, Our Health](#), which highlights the extent to which climate change could affect the health and well-being of the UK’s population. The Planetary Health inquiry considered the effect of environmental damage and climate change on health, food security, life in cities and air quality. It emphasises that a high dependency on imported fresh food, coupled with failure to act on climate breakdown, is risking national food security, and calls on the Government to [adopt WHO standards on air pollution](#) and [change planning policy to address climate change impacts](#).

Climate Change adaptation

The world’s [readiness for the inevitable effects of the climate crisis is “gravely insufficient”](#), according to a new report from the Global Commission on Adaptation, convened by 18 nations including the UK. This lack of preparedness will result in poverty, water shortages and levels of migration soaring, with an “irrefutable toll on human life”, the report warns. The study says the

greatest obstacle is not money but a lack of “political leadership that shakes people out of their collective slumber”. A “revolution” is needed in how the dangers of global heating are understood and planned for, and solutions are funded. It also concludes that a more positive response to adaptation could also reap trillions of pounds worth of economic benefits. Meanwhile, new research from the European Environment Agency reports that [any advantages to European agriculture from a warming world will be outweighed by the losses](#) from extreme events and environmental stress, leading to a probable large economic loss for farming in the next 30 years.

Natural Capital Committee Advice

In its [latest advice to the Government](#), the Natural Capital Committee has reiterated its call for an England-wide "environmental census of the stock of natural capital assets". The Committee advocates an increase in ‘citizen science’ and public participation, referring to the role of technologies such as smart phone apps and encouraging "as wide a participation as possible" in collecting data "including the public, landowners, school children, public bodies and National Parks".

Monetary valuation of tidal areas

A [new research report](#) marks completion of the second phase of a Defra project examining how the ‘natural capital approach’ can be applied in marine areas across the UK. The research relates to England’s Marine Plan Areas. This study – undertaken by Plymouth Marine laboratory - examined the ‘willingness to pay’ for changes in the condition of the seabed and seabird populations, as well as the cultural ecosystem service of maritime heritage.

Engaging Environments Programme

Between October 2017 and October 2018 the Engaging Environments Programme sought to support more effective approaches to public engagement on environmental matters, moving beyond standard 'dissemination' methods to co-creating engagement with communities. The [summary project outputs](#) are now available publicly.

Events

Transition Towns North West

Join the [North West Transition Towns](#) community for their annual gathering in Liverpool on Saturday October 12th to share and inspire ideas and actions to ‘Take Action Against Climate Breakdown’. It’s for a chance to explore the problems caused by climate change, encourage active participation in developing solutions, and learn from and with the people doing it.

Breathing Space 2

Save Greater Manchester’s Green Belt (SGMGB) have organised a 2nd free Conference to discuss issues relating to the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and to examine areas that solutions are needed for. The conference will unite experts from across urban geography and spatial planning to suggest how we can respond to these challenges in ways that are truly sustainable. [Saturday September 28th, 10 – 2.30](#), Manchester Metropolitan University.

Enhancing habitat networks

Throughout the UK and beyond, conservation science and public policy highlight the need to enhance the connectivity of habitat networks. Condati is a free, open-source, decision support tool to identify the best locations for habitat creation and restoration to enhance existing habitat

networks and increase ecological connectivity across landscapes. [Join this webinar](#) on Thursday 28th November to learn about the tool from developers at the University of Liverpool.

Sustainability in the North West

Edge Hill University Institute for Social Responsibility are convening an event on [sustainability in North West England](#), which will bring together academics from Edge Hill University working on a broad range of sustainability-related subjects with organisations and individuals from the region involved in sustainability work. It will build Edge Hill University's existing 'knowledge exchange' partnerships in this area and develop new ones. Wednesday 6th November, Ormskirk.

Resources

Ecosystem Approach handbook

The ecosystem approach has influenced environment-related policy in all four parts of the UK over the last decade. This [internationally-agreed set of principles](#) remains important despite the recent emergence of the natural capital concept. The ecosystem approach principles focus on *how* decisions about the environment are made. A handbook to guide local initiatives in applying the approach was commissioned by Natural England in 2014. It remains a valuable resource for those who want to help local communities take a strategic view of their environment.

Innovate!

NESTA, in partnership with designer and developer [Digital Liberties](#), has created a board game called [Innovate!](#), which aims to improve how policymakers work together, strategise and incorporate the views of key stakeholders to address large-scale issues, such as air pollution, data ethics or inequality. Who doesn't know a policy maker who needs this?

Green space & mental health

A new report suggests that [living within 300m of urban green space is associated with greater happiness](#), a sense of worth and life satisfaction. This could be parks, nature reserves or play areas. The authors emphasise that a lot of green space research focuses on poor mental health, or single aspects of wellbeing like life satisfaction, whereas this report considers multi-dimensional mental wellbeing, in terms of happiness, life satisfaction and worth. They also highlight that it is proximity to residents' homes, not just overall amounts of green space, that is significant, with clear implications for planning new developments.

Neighbourhood Planning

New and updated guidance has been published for neighbourhood planners on the overall [roadmap to producing a neighbourhood plan](#) and on [achieving good design](#).

Green infrastructure resources

Green infrastructure is a term used to describe the networks of natural and semi-natural features that provide benefits to people. The Green Infrastructure Partnership now hosts the [Green Infrastructure Resource Library](#), a database of documents, case-studies, videos, tools and other information about green infrastructure created by Ingo Schüder. This is complemented by the [mainstreaming green infrastructure](#) webpages established by Professor Alister Scott (Northumbria University).

Consultations

Mobile phone infrastructure

Mobile network operators could be allowed to [install radio equipment and extend masts without prior approval or planning permission](#) under proposals to extend permitted development rights put out for consultation this month. Deadline: 4th November

Vacancies

The Mersey Forest has a vacancy for a [Community Development Officer](#), to lead and develop the community engagement and involvement objectives of The Mersey Forest Plan and Forest Business Plan working with colleagues in The Mersey Forest Team and the wider Forest Partnership. Deadline: 31st October.

To subscribe or contribute

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