



● GREEN BULLET

26th November 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.

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Campaigns

Climate change

- Despite some good news on coal (see energy update), the latest [UN Emissions Gap Report](#) shows a “[bleak outlook](#)”, with international commitments to cut emissions needing to be five times greater than at present to avoid more than 1.5c of warming. Our current trajectory puts us on track for 3c by 2100. Globally, emissions reductions of around 8% / year are required,

with the [UK needing to reduce emissions by 10% year-on-year](#) to meet its 2050 net zero target.

- The World Meteorological Organisation's latest annual report shows that [atmospheric carbon concentrations have reached another record high](#), up to nearly 408 ppm. "There is no sign of a slowdown, let alone a decline, in greenhouse gases concentration in the atmosphere despite all the commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change" according to WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.
- The UN's [Production Gap report](#) shows that fossil fuel producers are on course to produce more than twice the greenhouse gases permitted under the Paris agreement, due to coal production and countries investing in gas and oil infrastructure that "locks in" fossil fuel use
- In the [annual Lancet Countdown report](#), leading doctors have warned that climate change will be a driving force in the quality of the lifelong health of today's children and could "wipe out decades of public health gains". Children and older people are particularly vulnerable, it says, because of bacteria that thrive in warmer temperatures, because lower crop yields are connected to malnutrition and because older people are less able to regulate their temperature and fluids.
- Unsurprisingly, less than [4% of people in the UK think that politicians tell the truth on climate change](#).
- [Even the CBI are calling for measures that Government still seems to find too radical](#) to touch just yet
- Donald Trump has formally started the year-long process to [withdraw the USA from the Paris Agreement](#)
- Letters are being sent to 30,000 households across the UK inviting people to join a [citizens assembly on climate change](#). The project is an initiative of six commons select committees. The assembly will examine how the UK can reach its net zero emissions climate target

Light pollution

A long-term focus for countryside campaigners [CPRE with their dark skies campaigns](#), including the current [dark skies discovery project in Cumbria](#), light pollution was this month highlighted as also being one of the [main causes of the 'insect apocalypse'](#) – the [rapid and widespread decline in insect species](#). [Planning guidance on light pollution](#) was updated this month to give protection to drivers and astronomers...but not insects or other wildlife. Yet.

Air pollution

- After almost five years and with just months to go until it closes, Highways England has [spent only £12.8m of a £75m fund](#) handed to them by government to reduce air pollution on its road network. The most recent available data has suggested that over a third of Highways England roads have illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide
- A new study suggests [that plants and trees are more effective at removing air pollution than technology](#)
- A new investigation shows that [air quality monitors have not been functioning](#) for frequent and lengthy periods in ten major UK cities, potentially putting the Government yet again in breach of EU law on air pollution.

Scientists

- 11,000 scientists from 153 countries have endorsed a statement to highly-regarded scientific journal Bioscience warning of "[untold suffering due to the climate crisis](#)" which is a "catastrophic threat", unless there are major transformations to global society. The statement was published on the 40th anniversary of the first world climate conference, which

was held in Geneva in 1979. The statement calls for climate change indicators to move beyond average surface temperatures and makes [6 key recommendations](#) for systemic change.

- More than 2,500 European scientists have joined forces and reached out to the EU parliament in a letter urging it to "act on the science and [undertake a far-reaching reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy](#) (CAP) without delay". The letter states that there is an "unequivocal scientific consensus" between the [intensification of agriculture and the ever-increasing loss of biodiversity](#).

Information update

Brexit and beyond - election special

- With another election looming, a lot of promises are floating about. In the Planning section below there are some lesser-known planning-specific details from the [Conservative](#), [Labour](#), [Liberal Democrats](#) and [Green](#) party manifestos. To help wade through the morass is [the ENDS report](#), who provide analysis of all things electoral and environmental, including a [green pledge tracker](#) which directly compares party positions on key issues such as air quality, biodiversity and fracking, as well as the environmental impacts of wider policy areas such as industrial policy, HS2, jobs & training and corporate governance. A must-read. Miles King of the [New Nature blog](#) makes some interesting comparisons between the manifestos.
- Edie summarises and analyses the [Conservative](#) and [Labour](#) manifestos separately from a sustainability perspective, plus a [cross-party range of pre-manifesto promises](#).
- [CPRE](#), [Civic Voice](#) and [Friends of the Earth](#) have both produced their own 2019 election manifestos and would very much welcome your support in persuading your MP / party to adopt more sustainable policies, while the [Wildlife Trusts](#) are promoting 3 key questions to ask your parliamentary candidate. [Wildlife and Countryside Link](#), the national association of major environmental NGOs, have posed seven questions to each party, and will be publishing the responses (if any!) online – so far only the SNP have engaged.
- In two separate letters (one from [the Climate Coalition](#), one from [Greener UK](#)) more than 30 environmental, social and health NGOs, with a combined supporter base of over 13 million people are [urging all political parties to put the environment at the heart of their election manifestos](#). [Greener UK have also published their own manifesto](#).
- More widely, [Full Fact UK](#), an independent fact-checking charity that will point out the more blatant untruths, and the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) if you want to understand the crunched numbers.
- Theresa May's proposed Withdrawal Agreement guaranteed that environmental standards would not fall below their current level – the principle of non-regression. That [guarantee of maintaining environmental standards has effectively gone from the Withdrawal Agreement under Boris Johnson](#). Aspirations to uphold "common high standards" are relegated to the non-binding Political Declaration and must be compatible with the UK's desire to develop an independent trade policy – which is likely to require aligning UK standards with lower standards in the USA, China, SE Asia, etc.

Energy

- The government has confirmed a [moratorium on fracking in England](#) and announced that it has ditched proposals to ease planning rules for the controversial activity, including the introduction of permitted development (PD) rights for fracking exploration schemes. At first glance a victory for the sustained public campaigns against the industry and against the Government's longstanding commitment to ["go all out" for fracking](#), analysis suggests

[loopholes](#) and [fracking by stealth](#) (which there is a [campaign against](#)) and the [potential for reversal](#).

- [Global electricity production from coal is on track to fall by around 3%](#) in 2019, the largest drop on record. Sharp reductions in western Europe are for the first time not being countered by increases elsewhere, with growth in China flattening out and coal use falling in India for the first time.
- ...But meanwhile, the [first new deep coal mine in the UK for decades has just got permission in Cumbria](#). It's for steel production, not general energy production – but oddly, the atmosphere doesn't really care, it's still locking in big increases in carbon for decades to come at a point when we need to be making radical reductions.
- [Renewable energy sources provided more electricity than fossil fuels](#) to UK homes and businesses over the last quarter, contributing 40% of the total
- The Chancellor of the Exchequer has launched the '[Net-Zero Review](#)', the first of its kind, which will assess how the UK can manage the transition to a low-carbon economy. The Review aims to determine how the UK can maximise economic growth opportunities associated with the transition to net-zero carbon.
- The government has formally designated its [national policy statement \(NPS\) for geological disposal](#), setting out the national need for underground nuclear waste infrastructure and the criteria against which the energy secretary would decide development consent order applications for such a facility.

Planning

- The Supreme Court has upheld a Court of Appeal ruling that Forest of Dean District Council had [unlawfully granted permission to a 500kw wind turbine](#) at a farm in Gloucestershire, by taking into account a community benefits package offered by the developer as a material consideration. The barrister representing the resident who brought the case said that the judgement clarifies the rule that "protects against planning permissions being bought or sold. On the facts of this case, the 'donation' on offer was an attempt to 'buy the permission'. [The judgment is essential reading for all planners](#), particularly in fields like renewable energy where "community benefit packages" are commonplace."
- A recently-won flexibility for applicants to alter planning permissions without making a fresh application has been [severely restricted by the latest Appeal Court ruling](#), with "very significant implications" according to barristers involved. The high court had previously approved a decision to allow a developer to increase the height of a wind turbine from 100 to 125 metres without making a new application, in breach of both a planning condition and the scheme description in the original application. The new ruling overturns this and clarifies the restrictions on altering planning permissions without making new applications.
- There have been a number of updates to the National Planning Practice Guidance: The [air quality section](#) has been completely revised with it now advising that councils seek opportunities to actively improve air quality through plan-making and development management decisions. [Guidance on light pollution](#) advises authorities to consider the "functional" nature of lighting proposals and provides protection for groups including astronomers and drivers. [Guidance on health and wellbeing](#) includes reference to the [recently-published National Design Guide](#).
- A few notable planning decisions before the election – the Secretary of State overruled an Inspector to [refuse permission for 500 homes on Green Belt](#) in West Yorkshire, citing harm to the Green Belt despite the lack of a five year housing supply; also refused a 700-home application largely on the basis of ['less than substantial harm' to a listed farmhouse](#); and

refused a 184-home application in Cheshire [against his Inspectors' advice for the second time](#).

- Following the severe flooding this month in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the Midlands, *Unearthed* reveals [plans to build nearly 10,000 homes in high-risk flood zones](#)
- National Grid has revealed a plan to [release 200 acres of brownfield sites](#) over 40 plots across the North West, to bring forward around 1,000 homes
- More than [240,000 additional homes were built in England last year](#), the highest figure since records in this form began in 1991/2 and beating the previous housing delivery peak in 2007/08, according to the latest government data. "[Affordable](#)" housing completions across England hit a four-year high in 2018/19, but the delivery of social rented homes declined, according to the latest government figures. [New build starts have also declined significantly](#).
- General election manifestos and planning (beneath the headlines):
 - [Conservative](#): Councils would be given powers to use developer contributions to discount new homes for "local people" by a third, while infrastructure would have to be provided in new developments before any housing is occupied. Allow every community "to decide on its own design standards for new development. Publish a social housing white paper.
 - [Labour](#): A pledge to "put the voices of local people at the heart of planning" and a requirement that "the climate and environmental emergency to be factored into all planning decisions". More than a million social homes over a decade, with big increases in council house building. A new "English Sovereign Land Trust, with powers to buy land more cheaply for low-cost housing". Developers "will face new 'use it or lose it' taxes on stalled housing developments."
 - [Liberal Democrats](#): Scrap office-residential permitted development rights and "reform planning to ensure developers are required to provide essential local infrastructure". Build at least 100,000 homes for social rent across England every year. "Protect" up to a million acres of accessible green space and create a new designation of "National Nature Parks". "Amend planning rules to promote sustainable transport and land use".
 - [Greens](#): Allow local authorities to calculate their own housing need and set their own planning fees. Creation of at least 100,000 new council homes a year. Ensure that all new buildings built by private developers are built to the energy-efficient Passivhaus standard or equivalent. Incentivise renovation, extension and improvement of existing buildings, rather than relying on new build. Prevent building on flood plains. Ensure that all new housing is served by walking and cycling routes and improved public transport

Nature

- The UK is [on track to miss a whole range of environmental targets in the early 2020s](#), including many that are legally binding and come from the EU, according to an analysis by *Unearthed* and the Financial Times. They include targets on air and water pollution, biodiversity and wildlife, climate and carbon, tree cover, waste and recycling, and commercial fishing. But we're going to [ban plastic straws](#), so, it probably all balances out.
- The number of samples and sampling points in the [Environment Agency's water quality monitoring programme has fallen by nearly 50%](#) since 2013. Labour MP Mary Creagh, who led the Environmental Audit Committee when it investigated nitrate pollution last year, stated that: "Our committee said a year ago that the EA doesn't have the staff and resources to monitor water quality in the UK and these new figures show how that monitoring has fallen off a cliff in recent years. It is completely unacceptable".

- Friends of the Lake District have released "[In Our Hands](#)" online, a bewitching blend of poetry and superlative visual imagery which celebrates the vital connections between people and place, commissioned in 2019 to recognise their 85th anniversary .
- The UK [Government spent almost £20m less on tree planting in 2017-18](#) than it did in 2014-15, according to an analysis of official figures by Friends of the Earth. Government spend on tree-planting equates to less than £2 per person per year. Government subsidies to fossil fuel companies equates to £150 per person per year. A new [Woodland Carbon Guarantee Scheme](#) will do little to rebalance this.
- New research on [how we connect with nature at a micro-level](#) provides evidence for more effective ways of engaging adults with urban nature, eg to inform activity programming, social-media content for nature engagement and the design of green spaces.

Transport

- The [Williams Review](#) into the future of UK rail is likely to recommend sweeping changes including [removing the profit motive](#) from franchising arrangements.
- The government is to [publish a National Bus Strategy in Spring 2020](#). It also announced a £220 million package of measures which "will see many cuts to services reversed". The first Superbus network will be across the county of Cornwall and will have low fares and additional bus priority measures. Other Superbus networks are due to rolled out next year. [Campaigners](#) are very supportive in principle.

Publications

Green New Deal in the North West

A new report, [the Green New Deal in the North West](#), provides an outline of a radical restructuring of the economy that is needed to improve the quality of lives of all species, while increasing biodiversity and enriching the land so that it can provide good, nutritious food and be resilient to extreme weather conditions. Many of these objectives are already being delivered, albeit in some cases, small scale. This is a positive, 'can-do' plan which describes a rapid transition to a smart, zero carbon, nature-friendly economy that will create thousands of rewarding jobs – a 'Green Powerhouse' in the North. It includes good practice examples and nearly 40 concrete recommendations to implement change.

Sustainable Development Goals

Almost every nation within the EU is failing to deliver the amount of progress needed for the bloc to meet any of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a "major" lack of progress recorded against SDG 13, Climate Action. That is according to a [damning new report](#) from the UN's Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP). While emphasising that many European nations are global leaders on SDG progress – with Denmark, Sweden and Finland among the world's closest to achieving the Goals – the report concludes that no EU nation is on track to achieve all 17 Goals by 2030, meaning the bloc is likely to miss all of their overarching ambitions. The UK ranked 12th out of a possible 28th. The report's overarching call to action is for a European Green New Deal including measures to completely decarbonise energy by 2050, transform land use and food systems in line with the Paris Agreement, and make the circular economy a reality.

City regions and climate

UK city regions have the ability to join the dots on transport, energy and the built environment to address the climate crisis and create healthier cities. In its report [Making the Connections on Climate](#), the Urban Transport Group uses practical examples to highlight the links that can be made on the climate at a city-region level between transport and energy, and between transport and the decarbonisation and adaption of the built environment. The projects considered in the report don't just reduce carbon emission or improve climate resilience, but also “have multiple wider benefits”, such as lower energy, operating and maintenance costs of transport infrastructure; the creation of jobs; and improving mental and physical health.

Events

Green New Deals and Greater Manchester

Whatever the result of the General Election, climate change and the actions needed to mitigate it will be major issues. Both the Labour and Green parties, along with many civil society organisations and commentators, are promoting the idea of a Green New Deal. This session, organised by Steady State Manchester, will look at [what this could mean for Greater Manchester](#). Maybe there will be a more supportive national government, maybe there won't, but either way we need to look at what we want locally and how we can get it. The event will start with some short provocations and this will be followed by structured discussion to make the event as participative as possible. 6.30-8.30, Monday December 16, Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester.

Resources

Climate Emergency Support Programme

Hundreds of councils have declared a climate emergency. Virtually none know precisely what that means in terms of concrete actions. CSE's new programme offers strategic advice and practical support to enable local authorities and other public bodies to step up to this challenge. The [Climate Emergency Support Programme](#) builds on CSE's 40 years of experience working with local councils and developing effective and socially just responses to the threat of climate change. It draws on the skills, knowledge, resources, and decision-support tools from all parts of CSE and taps into expertise from key institutions and partners. Use it or recommend it as appropriate!

Protecting greenspace

Fields in Trust has produced [Watch This Space](#), an interactive guide to protecting green spaces threatened by development in three sections: showing that you value your green spaces and use them frequently, watching out for potential threats, and responding quickly to threats.

Countryside Place Champions programme

Create Streets is a social enterprise helping communities to create high density, beautiful and sustainable new homes. They're launching a new programme called Countryside Place Champions. This is an extension of a successful London-based design programme that focused on community-led development of affordable homes. The programme will go a step beyond neighbourhood planning, by working with rural communities to tackle local housing and development issues. It includes a webinar, co-design workshop, and a bespoke action plan.

Countryside Place Champions launches in December 2019. If you'd like to find out more you can contact the Create Streets team at ruralplacechamps@createstreets.com or call 0203 026 0698 and ask to speak to David, Constance or Nicholas.

Heritage in Neighbourhood Plans

The National Trust's [Guide to Heritage in Neighbourhood Plans](#) is intended to help communities to take a lead in planning for historic areas by enabling them to identify and safeguard local heritage in the places in which they live, work and spend their leisure time. It comprises guidance on: planning policy and designations; advice on providing an appropriate and effective evidence base that supports the heritage aspect in neighbourhood plan policies; and a range of tools for assessing design, character and sustainability.

Improving Wellbeing Through Urban Nature

The Improving Wellbeing Through Urban Nature research programme, funded through the Valuing Nature Programme, has a [series of policy and practice guides](#) to improve wellbeing through urban nature. The guides include the principles for policymaking, alongside specific guides for policymakers, local government, greenspace managers, healthcare professionals and voluntary groups.

Why public parks matter

[The Parks Alliance](#) have created a listing of key research [documents that support the economic, environmental and social arguments in support of investing in public parks](#). Evidence reports are available on the topics of: local economic development; environment & climate change; health & wellbeing; and community empowerment.

Mapping global people-nature connections

Researchers at Stanford University have created [an interactive map](#), showing where nature contributes the most to societies, and how many people may be affected by future changes. Analysis suggests that the current environmental governance at local, regional and international levels is failing to encourage the most vulnerable regions to invest in ecosystems.

Consultations

Biodiversity metric

Natural England are currently consulting on [changes to the Biodiversity Metric](#). This measures the biodiversity variations resulting from development or land management change and is used to forecast losses and gains – and its robustness is therefore absolutely vital to nature conservation efforts. It's included in the draft Environment Bill and is used in assessing biodiversity net gain in planning applications. (Closing date 31 December 2019)

Greater Manchester greenspace

The RHS, Groundwork and City of Trees are working together to ask everyone who lives, works, studies or volunteers in Greater Manchester to share their thoughts on making Greater Manchester greener by [filling in a short survey](#). This will inform the €4.5 million IGNITION project that is developing investment streams to [increase green infrastructure across Greater Manchester by 10%](#) by 2038. They are also running 50 citizen engagement workshops and are offering 2-hour workshops focused around valuing greenspace to local community groups - contact rosienaylor@rhs.org.uk if you or other local groups are interested.

Future Homes Standards

There's still time to respond to the MHCLG consultation on [The Future Homes Standard](#). The Future Homes Standard will require new build homes to be future-proofed with low carbon heating and world-leading levels of energy efficiency, and every new home should "typically have triple glazing and standards for walls, floors and roofs that significantly limit any heat loss". Additional carbon-saving methods could also be delivered through heat pumps, heat networks and direct electric heating. (Closing date 10 January 2020)

Home of 2030 – public engagement workshop, Greater Manchester

Home of 2030 is a bold new initiative encouraging people to think innovatively about [how we can design and build affordable, efficient, healthy and green homes](#) in the future. As one of the partners, Design Council is running a series of creative, interactive workshops for people from four focus areas of the UK to share their ideas on the homes that we will want and need in 2030. No technical knowledge required. Tuesday, 10 December 2019, 1-4pm, Manchester School of Art.

Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy

There's still time to comment in the first round of consultation on the Liverpool City Region's high-level [spatial development strategy \(SDS\)](#) - the UK's first outside of London. The consultation is seeking views on the main policy issues in six areas - environment and climate change, housing and communities, town centres, transport and connectivity, inclusivity and infrastructure, giving you the opportunity to shape policy from the outset. After the current consultation, a draft of the SDS will be prepared, after which specific policies will be consulted on again. LCR hope to publish the final strategy within 2 years.

Funding

Pocket parks

The Government is inviting applications from community-led organisations working in partnership with local authorities and other local partners to apply for grants, from a £1.35 million fund, to [establish new 'pocket parks' and/or help to restore and renovate existing parks](#) which have fallen into disrepair, bringing them back into public use. Grants of up to £15,000 are available for new pocket parks and up to £25,000 for renovation of existing parks or parts of a park. Applicants will need to complete the application form, supply the required supporting documents, and send scanned copies along with their applications by e-mail to pocketparks@communities.gov.uk by 5:00pm on 31 December 2019.

Subsidised broadband for rural communities

A new scheme has been launched to [help improve broadband in rural areas](#). Communities may be eligible for government funding towards the cost of installing gigabit-capable broadband to homes or businesses when part of a group project. To be eligible, premises must be located in a rural area where broadband speeds are less than 30 megabits per second (Mbps). Vouchers are worth up to £3,500 for a small and medium-sized business and up to £1,500 per home.

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