



The
countryside
charity

● GREEN BULLET

27th March 2020

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

- Coronavirus – COVID-19
- Campaigns – climate change, air pollution, water, rights of way
- Information update – Brexit & beyond, energy, planning, transport
- Publications – Biodiversity net gain, agriculture bill update
- Resources – NCVO, Charity Commission, Thriving Places, Hope for the Future (communicating climate change to MPs), very local nature, Planetschooling, Local Plan evidence
- Consultations – High Speed North; Environmental Land Management Scheme; green mobility; the historic environment, renewables and tall buildings
- Funding – Lancashire Environment Fund – green grants
- Survey – Attitudes to housebuilding

Coronavirus – COVID-19

This changes everything – at least for now. There is info relating to COVID-19 dotted throughout this month's Bullet. Most organisations' workplans will have changed dramatically this month, and will be continuing to adapt for the next few months, and this Bullet reflects that. However, the natural environment is still out there, even if we're all in here. Please follow the [government's advice](#) to 'Stay home, protect the NHS, save lives'. Remember that a phone call or online contact with a vulnerable person can make a huge difference to their lives, and that [nature can help you cope](#), even if you can't get out into it. If you need help or would like to

support your local community, then there is a [great website](#) with links to community groups organising mutual aid work in response to coronavirus, and [lots of examples of big and small things communities can do](#). With so much pressure on our supermarkets, many people are buying food locally, and you may find [this map](#) of over 8500 local outlets useful to promote in your area. This week also saw the launch of the government volunteering initiative to help the NHS. You can find out more about this [here](#).

Eddie have collated some facts and figures about the [pandemic's impact on energy and environment](#). I would be very cautious about claiming any environmental or sustainability 'gains' from the pandemic, or assuming that it will lead to improved performance in future – [the myth of a silver lining](#). Any suggestion that the responses that we've seen in response to coronavirus are related to the responses we need to tackle the climate and ecological crisis would be dangerous and counter-productive. However, it has demonstrated that we are capable of rapid and far-reaching action when necessary and makes us reconsider [the relationship between citizen and state](#), and what that mean for climate change – although in the short term, understandably, it has of course [taken attention away from the need for rapid climate action](#).

Campaigns

Climate change

- The economic crisis created by the coronavirus pandemic could create an [“historic opportunity” to transition to a green economy](#), according to the International Energy Agency, and the World Resources Institute also suggests [how transitioning to a green economy](#) could be key to growth after the pandemic. Meanwhile, [investment manager BlackRock](#) has insisted it will retain tough priorities on climate change in light of the economic downturn.
- The Climate Coalition have compiled some of the [highlights of their Show The Love campaign](#) - to remind you that your voice can make an impact too – and [provide inspirations for actions](#) that you can take even during these difficult times
- Extinction Rebellion has launched [Alone Together](#), a 'regenerative rebellion' as part of the response to coronavirus, based on personal and community wellbeing; mutual aid, community resilience, care and outreach; actions and mobilisations; telling the truth; and community democracy.
- Sustainable transport group Transport & Environment have agreed that [airlines should be supported during the pandemic, but on condition that they pay fuel tax afterwards](#), removing the effective multi-billion pound subsidy that Governments pay to the most polluting form of transport. IPPR and Common Wealth have called for [any support to include strong conditions for workers' rights and decarbonisation](#) aligned to the Paris Agreement.
- The European Commission has published a [cost-benefit analysis of increasing the EU's climate ambition for 2030](#) in order to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, although other 'Green Deal' initiatives such as the biodiversity strategy and the farm-to-fork strategy will be [delayed due to the pandemic](#).
- 5 separate House of Lords Committees have [launched climate change inquiries](#)
- Research reveals climate concerns are now
- Britons believe climate change is the [second most important issue facing the country](#) in the next 20 years, second only to Brexit and highlighting rising fears over flooding and heatwaves.

Air pollution

Air pollution is responsible for shortening people's lives worldwide on a scale far [greater than wars, violence, tobacco and diseases such as HIV](#) and Aids, according to a [study](#) published in the journal *Cardiovascular Research*.

Water

- 2.2 billion people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water, while 4.2 billion don't have access to sanitation. That is, [2/3 of the world's population cannot safely wash their hands](#), the most basic precaution against coronavirus. According to the United nations, [climate change will make this figure considerably worse](#).
- There were 5,600 flood warnings in England last year, while groundwater levels were lower than normal in 25 areas, [threatening both people and wildlife](#). Rewilding Britain advocates [natural flood management](#) solutions.
- The National Audit Office has warned that [parts of England could run out of water within 20 years](#), and makes a string of calls to actions for policymakers, water companies and other businesses.
- The Environment Agency has sent out a national framework setting out [how England will manage water resources to avoid shortages by 2050](#) – putting a huge emphasis on regional plans developed with water companies, regulators, the government and key users. Meanwhile on the frontline, new data shows that [the Agency is being overwhelmed by staffing cuts and increases in pollution incidents](#)

Rights of Way

An estimated 10,000 miles of paths across England and Wales could soon be lost forever, unless we come together to save them. The Ramblers' are [leading a campaign to help map them before it's too late](#), launching a new tool that splits the country into 150,000 1km squares and makes it easy to compare current and historic maps side by side. Our paths are one of our most precious assets and are often taken for granted. They allow everyone to enjoy the countryside, both on our doorstep and across our most iconic landscapes, and tell the story of the history of our countryside. But many paths are not recorded on the definitive map of rights of way, and if they're not found and added by the cut-off date of 2026, they could be lost to public access forever. The Ramblers

Information update

Brexit and beyond

- The UK Government announced that the House of Lords and House of Commons will be closing in the evening of March 25 after [emergency laws](#) to deal with the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak are passed.
- The [Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill](#), which would require Ministers to fully consider the long-term environmental and social implications of all policy changes, was introduced in the House of Commons on 24 March, receiving cross-party support. It would require Ministers to develop impact assessments of the likely impact on future generations of all major proposed changes in expenditure, policy or legislation; publish a national risk assessment on future and emerging risks, including management plans; publish annual future trends reports highlighting the expertise of the Committee on Climate Change and IPCC; and publish work and wellbeing goals for the short, mid and long-term. Compliance with these, and the Bill's other requirements, would be overseen by a Future Generations Commissioner and by a Joint Parliamentary Committee for the Future which would scrutinise legislation and hold

Ministers accountable for any decisions deemed to prioritise short-term benefits over long-term impacts. It is not currently supported by Government, but [in these uncertain times it sounds like an idea that should be pushed hard](#)...

- But meanwhile, the pandemic has [delayed progress](#) on the [Environment Bill](#) and Agriculture Bill, and the [Government voted down an amendment](#) that would bring the Environment Bill section on air pollution into line with WHO guidelines. Government are presenting themselves as open to engagement but show "[little sign of further flexibility](#) on the detail of the Bill".
- There is concern that [11 ongoing court cases](#) in which the UK Government is being challenged over environmental crimes will slip through the cracks of the Brexit process, and will not be picked up by a new, weaker, UK regulator.
- [The Budget](#) (feels a very long time ago now!) contained [multi-million-pound packages](#) for flood resilience, tree planting, peatland restoration, air quality, electric vehicles (EVs), carbon capture and storage (CCS) and low-carbon heat. It also pushed the introduction of a tax on plastic packaging manufacturers and importers who fail to include more than 30% recycled content in their products forward, providing a final introduction date of April 2022. But green campaigners were [disappointed to see the inclusion of a multi-million-pound pot for roads, continued freezes to fuel duty and "weak" action on red diesel](#). The Chancellor boasted that this was the "[biggest ever investment](#)" in [strategic roads](#). The Committee on Climate Change described the budget as a [small step in the right direction](#), but one that conspicuously failed to close the climate policy gap. Carbon Brief estimate that the [fuel duty freeze has increased the UK's emissions by 5%](#) since it was brought in 10 years ago

Energy

- New Government data shows that the [UK's total carbon footprint](#) - a term used to cover consumption-related emissions wherever in the world they occur - fell by 21% between 2007 and 2017, although emissions directly attributable to UK housing and transport related to households stagnated.
- The UK's [domestic greenhouse gas \(GHG\) emissions underwent a 3.6% year-on-year fall](#) in 2019 - during which time renewable energy rose to a record 36.9% share of electricity generation.
- But a report by Carbon Brief says that the [UK will have to more than double the rate](#) it is currently reducing CO2 emissions in order to meet its 2030 target, despite strong progress in 2019
- In light of the Heathrow decision (see Transport section), environmental and legal campaigners have begun proceedings to force a [judicial review of the government's 2011 national policy statements on energy](#), arguing that the documents are incompatible with ministers' own net zero carbon commitments.
- Campaigners have secured the right to a [judicial review of Cumbria County Council's permission last year for a new coal mine](#), arguing that the approval failed to properly consider greenhouse gas emissions and the government's net zero carbon emissions target.
- An [energy and hydrogen cluster set to be developed in the North West](#) has pledged to create a roadmap to combat existing skills gaps for the low-carbon transition, as part of wider government plans to fully decarbonise industrial clusters in the UK.
- More than [80% of the highest-emitting listed companies are failing to deliver emissions reductions](#) aligned to the Paris Agreement's 2C global warming limit, with many companies also failing to account for climate mitigation and risk strategies.

- The world's largest investment banks have [funneled more than £2.2tn \(\\$2.66tn\) into fossil fuels since the Paris agreement](#), new figures show, prompting warnings they are failing to respond to the climate crisis.
- In the same week that the UK Export Finance's (UKEF) direct lending facility has allocated more than £2bn for clean growth projects, a global NGO has accused the government body of "rank hypocrisy" for [breaching OECD guidelines by supporting overseas fossil fuel projects](#).
- The number of [new renewable energy projects applying for planning permission](#) reached a four-year high in the UK last year as energy companies raced to meet the rising demand for clean electricity. Planning submissions for clean energy projects are expected to rise in the years ahead due to the government's decision this month to [lift a block against subsidising onshore wind](#) projects that was put in place almost five years ago.

Planning

- The Planning Advisory Service has compiled and will keep updated a list of [Covid-19 planning related FAQs](#)
- Steve Quartermain's last [Chief Planner's Newsletter](#) provides more planning-related COVID-19 information, plus updates on new airport noise guidance and the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's final report. Plan-making and planning decision-taking should continue during the coronavirus pandemic, albeit sometimes to extended deadlines, and with the potential to shift some activity (e.g. committee meetings) online and delegate authority to officers. MHCLG and PINS are considering whether inquiries, hearings and local plan examinations can be moved online – [currently these have all been postponed](#), but the page is regularly updated with new guidance as it emerges.
- On 12 March the Secretary of State made a [statement in Parliament](#) on [Planning for the Future](#), a consultation document setting out some of the housing and planning reforms that the Government intend to introduce. It includes
 - a permitted development right to "build upwards" and another consultation on a right to demolish office buildings to build new homes
 - changing the standard method for calculating housing need to encourage "greater building in urban areas"
 - a requirement for all local authorities to have an up-to-date local plan by December 2023 or face central government intervention
 - commitments to review the New Homes Bonus and planning for housing in high flood risk areas,
 - commitments to publish a national brownfield sites map and provide £400 million to help develop brownfield sites
 - a commitment to produce a Planning White Paper that will increase the use of zoning, make changes to fees and CPOs, encourage permissions to be built out more quickly, and increase the use of new technology..Boris Johnson's new housing and planning advisor has recently [advocated a "complete break" with the current planning system](#) and a shift to a very simple zoning system where development is either allowed, or not, with no input from councils after zones are designated.
- The High Court has dismissed a bid by land promoter Gladman to overturn two appeal decisions that blocked its plans to build 360 homes in Essex and Northamptonshire in [a ruling that gives primacy to development plan policies](#) and clarifies that, where a local authority lacks a five-year housing land supply, grants of permission should not be 'automatic'. Gladman has said they are now starting to avoid the appeals system as success is uncertain and that they are finding the 'presumption in favour' "substantially weaker" than

it had been previously. Gladman have submitted more than twice as many appeals as any other developers since the introduction of the NPPF in 2012.

- England's population is expected to grow at a slower rate over the next 10 years compared to previous projections, with growth rates dropping considerably in London and the wider South East against the 2016-based figures, according to [new government data](#), and even more so compared to the 2014-based ones. However, the [North West shows a very slight increase in growth](#) compared to the 2014-based figures. These numbers are used as the basis of the government's household growth projections figures, which are due out in the autumn and form a key component of the standard method of assessing housing need. The standard method is used by local authorities to calculate their housing need when preparing their local plans. Given that the data no longer fits the Government's housebuilding plans, we can probably expect a new standard method for calculating housing need that no longer relies on household projections as their basis.
- The [National Infrastructure Strategy has been delayed](#) again, raising hopes that it may be re-oriented towards meeting the 2050 net zero emissions target
- Government schemes intended to promote and increase the level of housebuilding are 'skewed' towards London and the South East, according to [CPRE's breakdown of government figures](#), directly contradicting the government's agenda to 'level up' the whole county.

Transport

- The Court of Appeal has judged the UK government's plans for London's Heathrow Airport expansion illegal on climate grounds, for failing to take into account the Government's commitments under the Paris Agreement. This ruling is an historic and ground-breaking result for climate justice and could set a precedent for similar cases in the future. [This explainer shows you exactly why this is such a big deal](#). [Dozens more projects may be similarly affected](#).
- Environmental campaigner Chris Packham has begun legal action [seeking to overturn the Prime Minister's recent backing for HS2](#), arguing that the evidence supporting the decision was "flawed" and does not comply with the government's net zero carbon goal.
- Transport for the North is demanding a major role in preparing the [Government's new integrated rail plan for the North and Midlands](#), and a key role in subsequent project delivery. However, the National Infrastructure Commission seems to have sidelined them (see Consultations section)
- The [Government has taken control of many rail services across the North](#), a month after transport secretary Grant Shapps stripped Northern of its franchise, and will pursue an "ambitious plan" to improve the ailing network with the help of an advisory panel of local leaders.

Publications

Biodiversity net gain

Research by Ecological Planning & Research Ltd (EPR) outlines [how developers can respond to the biodiversity net gain requirements](#) set out in the forthcoming Environment Bill in a cost-effective way. The UK Government aims to deliver 300,000 homes a year by the mid-2020s, but EPR warns that if this is not handled properly, the level of construction required to meet the targets could cause "significant damage" to wildlife habitats, including the 14 per cent of species facing extinction. The report argues that the tools which developers have been given to measure biodiversity and implement net-gain are "fundamentally flawed". These flaws could

lead to developers investing in “ineffective” habitat enhancements that “add little true value to the environment”. In order to avoid this, EPR is calling on developers to work with master planners and ecologists from planning to final delivery, and offers practical advice on creating and improving spaces for wildlife on-site and working with local councils to create nature recovery strategies more broadly, while improving wellbeing and property value for residents.

Agriculture Bill update

This policy update provides [further detail of the agricultural policy for England](#) over the next 10 years. It also outlines how the Agriculture Bill will help to achieve this. It was published in conjunction with the consultation on the Environmental Land Management Scheme (see Consultations section)

Resources

NCVO resources for charities – currently FREE

NCVO have lifted the pay-wall from their member-only resources to give everyone access who requires it during these difficult times. The resources cover a wide variety of subjects including [risk management](#), [writing applications to charitable trusts](#), [governance](#) and [community engagement](#). It's a great opportunity to benefit from this and carry out some development work whilst your face to face activities are on hold. A [toolkit to help you manage impacts on your workforce](#) during the pandemic is available from Croners, NCVO's HR partner.

Charity Commission resources

The Charity Commission (CC) has a [valuable page on its website](#) to help charities during the coronavirus pandemic, e.g. on getting support to pay staff, using reserves and restricted funds, postponing AGMs and other key meetings, submitting accounts and other reporting, and moving activity online. Helpful to ensure (and demonstrate!) the good governance of your charity.

Thriving Places

The newly-created [Thriving Places Index](#) identifies local conditions for wellbeing and measures whether those conditions are being delivered fairly and sustainably. [Salford achieved the highest score in the country for sustainability](#). The Index is designed to give a balanced and easily read 'dashboard' of information on the different elements that support places to thrive. It cuts across different policy areas and is structured to provide a holistic way of approaching different priorities.

Hope for the Future

Hope for the Future offers training and support to [help people transform MPs' hearts and minds on climate change](#) by effectively communicating the climate emergency with politicians across the UK. They provide workshops, briefings and much more to support climate campaigners, academics, faith communities, schools, local groups, NGOs and individuals across the UK to have their voices heard on climate change.

Nature in a time of Coronavirus

Cheshire Wildlife Trust suggest a [host of activities to engage with and help nature](#), including during the pandemic that you can do or promote in your home, garden, yard, or other local areas (minimal travelling, no contact with people outside your household)

Planetschooling

During this planetary self-isolation or social distancing moment, [Planetschooling](#) have been organising their resources on permaculture living and homeschooling for you! The resources are a compilation of 30 years of permaculture experience in Brazil, Argentina, Portugal, USA, Haiti, China and Australia and with people from all around the world.

Local Plan evidence

The Planning Advisory Service have been working with local authorities and other organisations to produce an [advice note on focused and proportionate local plan evidence](#). This note sets out advice and information that should be considered when collating evidence to support a local plan with good practice examples from authorities. It is designed for LPAs to use themselves but PAS can work with other organisations to use it as a “critical friend”.

Consultations

High Speed North

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has opened a [call for evidence](#) which starts their work on Rail Needs Assessment to inform the Government’s [integrated rail plan for the Midlands and the North](#) - which will put forward proposals for joining up High Speed 2 phase 2b, Northern Powerhouse Rail, Midlands Rail hub and other proposed infrastructure investment. They are asking for evidence on the areas where investment would most benefit the regions, and unlock capacity and connectivity, but also more general responses relating to how the assessment of the rail needs of the Midlands and the north should be taken forward. The Commission is aiming to gather a wide range of views and data from different stakeholders, with this Call as a first step to building this evidence base to be supported by broader analysis and stakeholder engagement over the course of the assessment. Respondents are asked to detail the potential costs and environmental impact of their plans, and how Scotland could be integrated into the high speed rail network. Interested groups are invited to send responses of up to 20 pages to railneedsassessment@nic.gov.uk by 29 May.

Environmental Land Management Scheme

Defra is consulting on a “policy discussion document” on the [new Environmental Land Management Scheme \(ELMS\)](#), the cornerstone of environmental policy for undeveloped land. It sets out their initial thinking for ELM scheme design, provides an update on progress and overview of high level design options. There are key questions in the document which they would like views and evidence on. This document is not intended to set out the detailed delivery arrangements for ELM. The responses they receive to this document will help to inform the detailed scheme design policy for both the national pilot, which is due to start in late 2021, and for the start of the ELM scheme in 2024. There’s a [simple, high-level overview](#) on Defra’s Facebook page. Deadline: May 5th. You can also register to take part in one of a [series of consultation webinars](#) in April.

Green mobility

The government is seeking views on [how to make journeys in England greener, smarter and easier](#) using new technology. The consultation, part of the [Future of Transport regulatory review](#), will consider the small changes that could be made to everyday travel decisions and whether walking, cycling or using public transport would be better than using a car. Deadline: 22 May.

Historic environment, tall buildings and renewables

[Historic England are consulting](#) on a) a new Advice Note which describes the potential impacts on the historic environment of commercial renewable energy proposals, either as individual projects, or as projects which when taken together cover large areas of land (deadline 28th May) and a revised Advice Note on planning for tall buildings (deadline 26th April).

Funding

Lancashire Environmental Fund - Green Grants

Lancashire Environmental Fund are offering grants of up to £1,000 to not-for-profit organisations, charities, trusts, community groups, parish or community councils or voluntary organisations, for small stand-alone projects in Lancashire, with a 6-8 week turn around on applications. The projects must benefit the wider community so need to have public access and be within 10 miles of a landfill site. LEF cannot fund projects in the unitary authorities of Blackpool or Blackburn with Darwen. Projects might include; energy efficiency measures at community facilities ie insulation, double glazing, water saving, low energy lighting, wildflower and bulb planting, tree planting, community orchards, community gardens (but not allotments), pond creation and planting, improvements to access to public parks and gardens, benches and seating and health walk way marking. For more information about the Green Grants and to discuss eligibility before applying please email general@lancsenvfund.org.uk or call on 01772 317247. Guidelines and application forms for the Green Grants and information on the Fund's other major funding schemes can be found on the LEF website: www.lancsenvfund.org.uk.

Survey

Attitudes to housebuilding

What changes are needed to our current model of housebuilding? A [new survey](#) aims to gather the views of local residents about housing development and the planning system. It is being run by Dr. Quintin Bradley, senior lecturer in planning and housing at Leeds Beckett University. He has carried out interviews with community groups and the aim of the survey is to get the views of many more people concerned about housebuilding. The survey asks only a small number of questions but it leaves plenty of room for people to write their views. It asks about housing targets and housing need, the allocation of housing land and the impact of development on the environment. Quintin says: "I hope my research will contribute to a more informed public debate on our model of housing supply and distribution. My aim is to help communities to have real influence over planning decisions". You can find details about the objectives of this research, articles about planning and housebuilding, and information about Quintin's previous work with community groups at <http://www.criticalplace.org.uk>.

To subscribe or contribute

To subscribe to NWEL's Bulletin please email andyuille@gmail.com with the subject line: "Subscribe to NWEL Bulletin". Please send items for inclusion in the next Bullet to me by **23rd April 2020**

• **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
01524 389 915

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