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● GREEN BULLET

28th April 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.

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Campaigns

Climate change

- A good time to go Dutch? The Lobby group Urgenda has [won a case in the Dutch Supreme court](#) that governments have a human rights duty to protect their citizens from climate change. Meanwhile, Amsterdam is preparing to adopt the sustainable '[doughnut economics](#)' model to drive its coronavirus recovery
- The UK's net-zero target is failing to account for emissions from overseas manufacturing of products imported into the country, a figure which a [new report from WWF](#) claims accounts

for 46% of the UK's annual carbon footprint. Between 1990 and 2016 emissions within the UK's borders reduced by 41%, but the report found that consumption-based emissions had only dropped by 15%. Domestic emissions in 2017 were 43% below 1990 levels, while the economy grew by two-thirds. However, if the territorial approach was replaced, it is believed that total [emissions reductions are closer to 10% since 1997](#).

- A new report shows that [2019 was the hottest year in Europe on record](#), with 11 of the 12 warmest years occurring in the past two decades
- Models suggest that global CO2 emissions are likely to drop by 5.5% during the lockdown, highlighting that despite the importance of transport and travel modes, the [deeper structural factors](#) that go beyond personal choices are central to tackle climate change
- Only 4 countries have submitted [updated, strengthened emissions reductions commitments](#) in line with the Paris Agreement requirements. All are still due by the end of the year.

Air pollution

- As [national](#) and [international](#) studies show an ever more solid connection between air pollution and COVID-19 hotspots, some cities are taking this moment to overhaul their transport infrastructure in a way that will benefit people's lungs and the environment. It started in [Milan](#), where an expansion of cycle paths and pedestrian zones was announced earlier in week, and continued a few days later in [Paris](#), where 300 million euros will be spent to establish new (though, for the time being, temporary) cycle networks.
- While in the UK, [plans to introduce clean air zones have been delayed](#) in several major cities because of the pandemic

Information update

Covid-19

- The European Commission has pledged that "every euro" spent on economic recovery measures after the COVID-19 crisis would be linked to green and digital transitions as part of the European Green New Deal and as set out in a proposed "[roadmap for recovery](#)" ...
- ..While governments around the world are making no-strings attached [payouts of public money to big polluters](#)
- The Committee on Climate Change's (CCC) chief executive Chris Stark believes the [UK Government should prioritise a green and resilient economic recovery](#) from the coronavirus pandemic that doesn't lock in fossil fuels and puts the nation on an upwards trajectory towards a socially just net-zero transformation...but will it listen?
- A large-scale survey has assessed [changes in public attitudes to sustainability during the lockdown](#), while separate analysis has estimated the lockdown's impact on carbon emissions
- The UN has [postponed the crucial COP26 climate talks](#), to be hosted in Glasgow, until 2021. This means that America will have quit the Paris agreement if trump is re-elected in November, but back in if he is not.
- As [Amazon deforestation accelerates](#) under president Bolsonaro, scientists raise concerns that this could not only be disastrous for climate and biodiversity, but also the [source of the next zoonotic pandemic](#), and that [safeguarding nature has to be a central plank of our recovery](#) from this pandemic in order to avoid another.
- Global environmental campaign organisation Mighty Earth released a [new report](#) shaming five industries as "coronavirus climate profiteers". The report lists the efforts of meat and biofuels industries, carmakers, airlines, illegal loggers in Indonesia, and the fossil fuel industry to siphon bailout packages that have been prepared in response to the economic

crash caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Corporate lobbying groups have been accused of “taking advantage” of the chaos, with oil and gas groups and automotive coalitions [calling for relaxed or postponed environmental regulations](#) as response mechanisms to the virus.

- Environmental charities appear to be particularly [vulnerable to financial loss and turmoil](#) as a result of the outbreak, compounding the steep cuts in funding to statutory environmental agencies over the past decade, and have called on the government to [ensure that sustainability is not sacrificed](#).

Brexit and beyond

- There is a [new opposition leader and shadow cabinet](#) in place – what might that mean for [Labour’s approach to green policies?](#)
- The government has been [urged to delay the post-Brexit phase-out of farm subsidies](#) for at least a year
- A top food policy expert has [called for the Agriculture Bill to be scrapped](#), provoking [outrage among environmental groups](#).

Energy

- Metro mayors Steve Rotherham and Andy Burnham [called for widespread retrofitting of properties across the North West](#), as the region looks to capture positive lessons from the pandemic and create a springboard for change. One way of doing this is to focus on green initiatives that can be accelerated during and after the crisis, with Burnham saying that retraining staff to carry out this work could help combat redundancies made during the Covid-19 outbreak.
- A project to map out the [UK’s first net zero carbon industrial cluster](#) by 2040, located in the North West, has received Government grants to spur its delivery. The North West Energy & Hydrogen Cluster spans Cheshire, parts of North East Wales, Warrington, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester.
- [Solar energy use in the UK](#) broke an all-time peak generation record on Monday 20 April, accounting for almost 30% of UK electricity demand, with the UK also operating for more than 11 consecutive days without coal, while [renewables accounted for more electricity than any other power source](#) in Great Britain for the first quarter of 2020, with 45% of the entire electricity mix.
- Almost [three-quarters of new electricity generation capacity](#) built globally in 2019 uses renewable energy, representing an all-time record. [New data from the International Renewable Energy Agency](#) (Irena) shows solar, wind and other green technologies now provide more than one-third of the world’s power, marking another record.

Planning

- Consultancy Lichfields has set up an online tracker in the form of an interactive map, to show how local authorities are delivering planning functions during the pandemic. The [web resource](#) holds data for 85% of local planning authorities across England, Wales and Scotland, and will enable users to navigate between different council areas to see what approach each authority is taking to developing local plans, determining applications, holding committee meetings and fulfilling other statutory duties made difficult with lockdown restrictions in place.
- Civic Voice is asking communities and local authorities to provide it with feedback on how new regulations for determining planning applications during the coronavirus outbreak are being implemented. They say “We are confident that the government is not wanting to put barriers in the way of communities participating in the planning process. Nonetheless, the

fear is that these new rules will make it much harder for communities to share views and that we might see more mediocre or poor schemes ‘nodded through’ without the usual proper scrutiny.” Contact Civic Voice to share your experiences: info@civicvoice.org.uk

- *The Planner* is keeping track of [coronavirus-related policy changes and pledges on planning](#) as they arise and regularly updating this paywall-free page with links to more detail and useful sources
- The [Coronavirus Act 2020](#) includes regulations allowing planning committees to meet virtually to ensure that planning decisions continue to be made during the current crisis. Members of the public should also be able to access these meetings remotely. Some councils such as [Manchester](#) have delegated unprecedented decision-making powers to officers. PINS is still processing Written Representation Appeals and is considering alternative measures with respect to the processing of Hearings and Public Inquiries. Consultation on emerging Local Plans is often continuing. Physical consultation events will be delayed for (at least) 3 months, but alternatives exist and can be used in order to allow progress to be made, for example using webinars and other online material. Examination Hearings have already been postponed in all locations. Savills summarises these and other implications of Covid-109 for planning [here](#). [PINS has published guidance](#) on how it will continue to carry out its duties.
- The Planning Officers Society has published [guidance for councils on committee decision-making during the coronavirus outbreak](#), including suggestions on virtual committees and emergency delegated powers.
- Based on a survey of their members, the RTPI have [called on the government to urgently issue guidance](#) on issues such as increasing delegated powers for decision-making, flexibility on housing delivery targets and extensions to planning permissions. Various [groups of developers](#) are also [calling for extensions to planning permissions](#) and other flexibilities – the call to extend permissions is also supported by the RTPI and the LGA. A survey by Planning Resource (paywall protected, sorry) shows that more than 1,000 projects, including over 14,500 homes, are [at risk from their permissions expiring in the next three months](#) because work on site is yet to commence.
- The national [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\) on neighbourhood planning](#) has been updated to add the new paragraph 107, postponing all referendums but giving greater weight to pre-referendum plans that have passed examination. New guidance also sets out changes for examinations and consultation
- Property firm Savills has published a research note on the [impact of the coronavirus on the development industry](#).
- Six local authorities have indicated they intend to submit an Annual Position Statement (APS) in a bid to [confirm that they have a five-year housing land supply](#), including Fylde (unsuccessful last time) and Wyre (successful last time)
- An Inspector has suggested that councils’ [five year housing land supply positions may need to be downgraded](#) as a result of the pandemic, due to [unimplemented permissions and to wider economic impacts leading to some sites becoming unviable](#) with some commentators suggesting that this will be a [key battleground for housing applications](#) in the near future. Barton Willmore have estimated that the number of [new homes built may drop by a third this year](#) and not increase for the rest of this Parliament.
- Even before this, new government figures show that the number of applications submitted to and determined by local authorities [continued to fall during the last quarter of 2019](#), while the sum total of homes consented in 2019 was down three per cent from 2018.

Transport

- The Government has published [Decarbonising transport: setting the challenge](#), a policy paper setting out how they intend to work with others to develop a transport decarbonisation plan to align “every mode of transport” with the 2050 net zero target (spoiler – not aviation or maritime emissions. So not quite every mode). It sets out the challenge we need to meet to reduce transport emissions to net zero by 2050; reviews of existing climate policy in transport; and reviews of existing forecasts of future transport emissions from each mode of transport and as a sector. The transport decarbonisation plan itself will be published in later in 2020, and DfT is promising extensive opportunities for engagement between then and now.
- Campaigners have launched a legal challenge to try to prevent billions of pounds of taxpayers’ money being spent on a huge road-building programme, which they say breaches the UK’s legal commitments to tackle the climate crisis and air pollution. Lawyers acting for the [Transport Action Network](#) (Tan) have begun legal proceedings against the Department for Transport calling for the road-building scheme, which was [confirmed last month by the chancellor, Rishi Sunak](#), to be suspended.
- The Liverpool and Greater Manchester City Region’s [light rail networks are under threat](#) if the Government does not support them during the pandemic.
- Active travel pressure groups have urged cycling minister Chris Heaton-Harris to [support the temporary reallocation of road space to cyclists and pedestrians](#) during the current coronavirus pandemic.
- Chris Packham is to seek permission to appeal a Court ruling that dismissed his [challenge to the Transport Secretary’s decision to continue with the HS2 rail project](#). Lord Justice Coulson and Mr Justice Holgate [ruled earlier this month](#) that his application for permission to apply for judicial review should be refused. [HS2 Ltd has issued a ‘notice to proceed’](#), meaning that [construction can go ahead despite the lockdown](#) and concerns about out-of-control costs and the loss of ancient woodlands.

Biodiversity

- The largest global study of insect declines to date gives us the best indication of [how species all over the world are faring](#). It found that land-based insects, which make up the majority of species, have been declining at nearly 1% per year, or almost 9% per decade. But freshwater insects are on the increase. The Wildlife Trusts provide an illustrated explainer on [insect declines and why they matter](#), and a [downloadable Action for Insects guide](#) with all the information and support you need to start helping insects where you live.
- A freedom of information request from the Sustainable Soils Association has revealed that just [0.4% of public money spent on environmental monitoring goes on soils](#), despite their centrality to...well, everything!
- While [wildlife has recolonized some human-dominated spaces](#), conservationists are concerned that the lockdown threatens biodiversity due to the [inability to manage sensitive wildlife sites](#)...
- ...While globally, the pandemic has disrupted what had been scheduled as a [hugely important year for biodiversity policy and planning](#)
- A new paper published in Nature suggests that climate change will not gradually increase risk for and stress on biodiversity, but rather that [species will face a series of ‘climate cliff edges’](#), tipping relatively suddenly into conditions in which they can no longer survive

Publications

Priorities for Planning Reform

The RTPI have published a policy paper [analyzing the government's objectives and proposals for planning reform](#) (remember there is still supposed to be a Planning White Paper proposing potentially radical reforms later this year). It also sets out the RTPI's own objectives and recommendations. It urges the government to consider a wider set of objectives for planning reform, and to recognise the value of strategic, proactive planning in supporting a sustainable economic recovery. It suggests five priorities for planning reform, based on years of research and the expertise of their members.

Nature-based climate interventions

The Natural Capital Committee has published its advice to government on taking a [natural capital approach to attaining net zero carbon emissions](#). It makes a series of recommendations based around the themes of integrating net zero into broader environmental policy (rather than treating it as a stand-alone or economic issue as is often the case); using nature based interventions to deliver net zero; and addressing gaps in the evidence base. The BBC, brilliantly, distils this into advice that [you shouldn't plant forests on peat bogs](#) – but does also draw attention to the vital and underappreciated role that soils have to play in climate and wider environmental (and other) policy.

Resources

Guidance in the time of coronavirus

There is a wealth of guidance and advice to support charities and voluntary sector organisations out there:

- [Charity Commission: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for the charity sector](#)
- [Gov.uk: Claim for your employees' wages through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#)
- [Gov.uk: Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) guidance for Community Interest Companies \(CICs\)](#)
- [NCVO: Coronavirus advice for charities, voluntary organisations and volunteers](#)
- [Big Society Capital: COVID 19 Information for Social Investors](#)
- [UK Youth, National Youth Agency, The Mix: COVID-19 Guidance for young people, youth workers and youth organisations](#)
- [NHS: Coronavirus - advice for everyone](#)

Sites for tree planting – Greater Manchester

[City of Trees](#) are helping to co-ordinate a new funding opportunity to support the delivery of new woodlands in Greater Manchester. If you have any information on potential sites where new planting could take place, are aware of any other land which could be included or landowners who may be interested, please contact Sarah Williams sarahw@cityoftrees.org.uk. They are looking for: Site name; Type of space e.g. park, green space, derelict space, existing woodland which could be expanded; Approximate size of the planting area in meters square / hectares.

Homeschooling

Home-schooling help from [Ordnance Survey](#) covers map skills, GIS and even urban development in an interactive way. The Sustainable Soils Alliance has developed an [open-access learning resource for children](#) of primary school age, available for free download, to engage Yr 3, 4 and 5 pupils with soils - from soil biology and functions to climate change, the causes of soil damage and keeping soil healthy, whilst also connecting with subjects including

maths, science and the arts.

Wildlife Gardening

Can you or the groups you work with use this time to make space for wildlife in your gardens, yards, or window ledge? The Wildlife Trusts can help you with all kinds of [wildlife gardening](#) with [different themes to help guide](#) you

Consultations

The consultations highlighted last month are all still open, on:

High Speed North: a [call for evidence](#) which starts work on a Rail Needs Assessment to inform the Government's [integrated rail plan for the Midlands and the North](#) – basically, the starting point for a coherent vision for rail across the north and midlands. 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, including on environmental impacts and carbon emissions. 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. 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.

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.

Plus a new one:

Contracts for Difference

The Government is consulting on a number of proposed changes to the [Contracts for Difference \(CfD\) scheme](#), intended to support low carbon electricity generation at the lowest possible cost to consumers. CfDs should incentivise investment in renewable energy by providing developers of projects with protection from volatile wholesale prices, and protect consumers from paying increased support costs when electricity prices are high. Deadline: 22 May.

Funding

Guidance on funding and fundraising during the pandemic

Various sources of guidance on funding and fundraising during the pandemic:

- [UK Community Foundations](#): Enter your postcode to find your local Community Foundation to view funding opportunities during COVID-19.

- [The National Lottery Community Fund](#): Overview of all National Lottery funding opportunities and the changes to their programmes due to COVID-19.
- [Charity funding from the government](#) - information on the £750 million promised by the chancellor and how it will be allocated.
- [Other funding opportunities for charities](#) - a list of the key national and regional funds open for applications.
- [Charity Finance Group: Guidance for charities](#) : CFG provides financial management advice & support to the VCSE sector. This page sets out their COVID-19 guidance.
- [Fundraising Regulator: Events Guidance](#)

The 2.6 Challenge

Organisers of the London Marathon and other large events have come together to create [The 2.6 Challenge](#), a nationwide fundraising campaign to raise vital funds for the UK's charities, that are projected to suffer considerably during the pandemic. Based on the marathon length of 26 miles (or 2.6 for short), the 2.6 Challenge runs for a week from last Sunday 26th April. So get moving quickly! All you need to do is dream up an activity based around the numbers 2.6 or 26 that suits your skills and complete it... Hop like a frog for 2.6 minutes or 2.6km, run like a hare for 26 minutes or 2.6 miles, or see how many birds you can spot in 26 minutes...

Give as you Live

Over 4,200 stores are registered with [Give as you Live](#), including eBay, M&S and John Lewis. Simply register your charity of choice and they'll automatically receive a percentage as a donation every time you shop. You can do the same with [Amazon](#). And encourage your members and supports to do the same.

Heritage

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has announced an [emergency £50 million fund to support heritage](#) during the coronavirus outbreak. The new fund is to address the immediate pressures that occur over the next three to six months for those most in need – as well as investing in essential digital skills across the sector. The money will be diverted away from planned new grants. All new grant applications have been halted. Grants of between £3,000 and £50,000 will be available to organisations that have received funding in the past and are either current recipients or still under contract following a previous grant.

Survey

Attitudes to housebuilding

You can still respond to Dr Quintin Bradley's [new survey](#) exploring what changes are needed to our current model of housebuilding. It will inform research that aims to contribute to a more informed public debate on housing supply and distribution, with the aim of helping 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>.

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