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countryside
charity

● GREEN BULLET

29th June 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

- There is still time to sign up for the virtual mass lobby of MPs on Tuesday 30th June... Have an online cup of tea with your MP and other constituents and tell them that [The Time Is Now](#) to put a healthy, greener, fairer future at the heart of plans to rebuild from the Coronavirus crisis. CPRE have created a [virtual lobby guide](#) to support you and help you prepare.
- To mark World Environment Day, the UK Government has launched its "[Race to Zero](#)" global campaign to mobilise support for the net-zero transition across businesses, cities and nations, with new data finding that 53% of global GDP is covered by a net-zero ambition in

some form. Edie considers the [measures likely to be backed by UK Government Ministers](#), while others are skeptical of [the role they seem to envision for major fossil fuel companies](#)

- UK Climate Assembly, the ‘citizens assembly’ made up of 108 people selected to be representative of the UK, to listen to experts and debate on how the UK should reach its net-zero target by 2020, has [published its interim briefing](#). Almost 80% agreed that steps taken by the government to aid economic recovery should all also contribute to the transition to net-zero
- Following the Pope’s [groundbreaking climate change encyclical](#) in 2015, the Vatican has [called on all Catholics](#) to abandon investments in fossil fuels and the arms industry, in what is being touted as a major victory for the divestment movement
- A temperature of 38c in Siberia is estimated to be the highest ever recorded in the Arctic circle. Meteorologists say that this is [weather that was expected for 2100, coming 80 years early](#).
- [The New York Times](#) reports that global carbon emissions for mid-June were just 5% lower than in the same period in 2019, despite falling by 17% in the spring

Marine protection

Around half the UK’s wildlife lives in the sea – from microscopic plankton to mighty whales. But our seas are under pressure from all sides. A sustainable society and economy needs productive and healthy seas. Yet for many years pollution, unsustainable development and the way we fish have damaged and depleted our seas. We believe that the UK can do better in balancing the needs of both people and wildlife. The Wildlife Trusts are [calling on Government to introduce Highly Protected Marine Areas](#), as a review into marine protection has just recommended, as the current levels of protection in our seas are not enough.

Air pollution

- The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee has today (12 June) launched a new inquiry into Air Quality. Concerns have already been raised about whether discouraging the use of public transport will lead to more cars on the road and levels of air pollution exceeding pre-lockdown levels. To look at this issue and to see what can be done to keep pollution to lockdown-levels, the EFRA will scrutinise the government’s 2019 Clean Air Strategy and Environment Bill.
- The majority of drivers have noticed a decline in air pollution during lockdown and would be willing to purchase an electric vehicle (EV) to help keep it this way, according to [a survey carried out by Smart Home Charge](#).

Light pollution

Four-fifths of the participants in CPRE’s annual Star Count want their local councils to [do more about light pollution](#) (82%). Almost all say children should be able to experience dark skies (96%). CPRE have created an interactive map of everyone’s star counts that shows where the starriest skies were found and where people’s view of the stars is most affected by light pollution.

Stay safe – lockdown loosening

Following scenes from the country’s biggest game of sardines on Bournemouth beach this week, we can all [support Lake District National Park staff](#) by following and sharing their latest advice to help support and protect rural & coastal communities, special landscapes, and visitors.

Future pandemics

The wildlife trade and the destruction of forests and other natural habitats have accelerated the transfer of disease from animals to humans, [making humanity more susceptible to global pandemics like coronavirus](#). The leaders of the UN, WHO and WWF International, are calling for humanity “to mend our broken relationship with nature”.

Information update

Covid-19

- The Committee on Climate Change has published [open letters](#) to the [Prime Minister](#) and First Ministers in [Scotland](#), Wales and Northern Ireland, setting out 6 key principles which should drive urgent action to the recovery to rebuild the nation and deliver a stronger, cleaner and more resilient economy:
 - Use climate investments to support economic recovery and jobs.
 - Lead a shift towards positive, long-term behaviours.
 - Tackle the wider ‘resilience deficit’ on climate change.
 - Embed fairness as a core principle.
 - Ensure the recovery does not lock-in greenhouse gas emissions or increased risk.
 - Strengthen incentives to reduce emissions when considering tax changes.
- These principles are expanded on in their [annual progress report](#) (see Publications section)
- Nearly [700,000 direct jobs could be created in England’s low-carbon and renewable energy economy by 2030](#), rising to more than 1.18 million by 2050, according to a new report from the Local Government Association.
- The UK's net-zero transition can be the perfect remedy to the economic and health crises caused by the coronavirus, according to a new WWF-commissioned report that suggests that net-zero could deliver more than £90bn in annual benefits to the UK while growing the job market.
- Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL) have [sent an open letter to Chancellor Rishi Sunak](#), detailing how investment in 330 ‘shovel-ready’ nature conservation and restoration projects in the UK could create thousands of jobs while spurring progress towards key climate, biodiversity and social equality targets. One of the signatories of the WCL letter, The Wildlife Trusts, has produced [an additional report](#) detailing how one-third of the UK’s annual carbon emissions could be sequestered using nature-based solutions, if adequate investment and policy support is provided to key forest, wetland, saltmarsh and peatland regeneration projects.
- Green Alliance has issued a string of policy recommendations for [creating a "green and resilient" Covid-19 recovery package](#), which, if enacted in full, could close the £14.1bn annual investment gap between current levels of finance and those needed to meet net-zero by 2050.
- [The Climate Coalition](#) has coordinated an open letter signed by more than 50 UK charities to put pressure on the government to develop a "truly green" Covid-19, lest the nation miss its 2050 net-zero goal and play host to widening social inequalities.
- Business For Nature, supported by a range of NGOs, has sent [an open letter to CEOs](#), urging them to embed nature regeneration in their business strategies post-Covid-19.
- A poll commissioned by CPRE and the National Federation of Women’s Institutes found nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents think [protecting and enhancing green spaces should be a higher priority after the lockdown](#)
- The International Renewable Energy Agency has published a [recovery route map](#), with practical advice on key investment and policy decisions for the crucial post-COVID recovery.

It is rooted in the comprehensive long-term energy transformation strategy provided by IRENA's first [Global Renewables Outlook](#). The International Energy Agency has, separately published its own [roadmap to recovery](#).

Brexit and beyond

- Greener UK, a coalition of 13 of the UK's largest environmental organisations, this week published its latest [green policy risk tracker](#). The tracker states that there is a high risk of environmental policies weakening across the board post-Brexit, or of key policy ambitions going unmet due to insufficient supporting actions. This is Greener UK's most negative assessment of risk to the environment since the Brexit process began, illustrating the hollow nature of warm government words on the environment earlier in the process. The tracker covers air pollution; chemicals; water; waste and resources; farming and land use; climate and energy; fisheries and nature protection.
- The [Agriculture Bill](#) continues its progress through the house of Lords, with a [highly-critical general debate](#) this month, to be followed by the detailed scrutiny at Committee stage in July. In response to MPs' refusal to protect food standards in the bill, more than a million people have signed an [NFU petition](#) calling for a ban on food being imported if it is produced in ways that would be illegal in the UK
- The Aldersgate Group, a coalition of business and civil society leaders is urging Ministers to ensure that post-Brexit Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) not only include non-regression clauses on environmental standards, but [actively promote stronger requirements on a global scale](#), driving a 'race to the top' rather than the 'race to the bottom' that the current government strategy makes likely

Energy

- According to the energy minister, [fracking in the UK is officially over](#), at least for now. [The trial of 12 protestors](#) campaigning against the Preston New Road site, who were arrested for blocking the entrance to the site, has been dropped "in the public interest"
- A new report from Aurora Energy Research suggests that [half of the UK's energy demand in 2050 could be met by hydrogen](#)-generated power - around 500TWh - provided that ambitious supports from policy and large businesses are put in place.
- According to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) latest [energy trends data](#), renewables' share of electricity generation was 47% during the quarter, up from 35.9% in the first quarter of 2019. The proportion is also notably higher than the previous quarterly record of 39%, set last summer.
- Ministers are reportedly [considering moves to ban the UK Government from financing fossil fuel projects overseas](#), following a series of high-profile exposés
- Decisions on two [major offshore wind proposals](#) have been delayed, while a third has been rejected
- A proposal for by far the [UK's largest solar farm](#) has been approved, despite substantial opposition, including from environmental groups such as CPRE, the RSPB and Greenpeace.
- The government's consent for a [new gas-fired plant at the Drax power station](#) in Yorkshire, taken against the recommendation of a planning inspector, has been upheld by a High Court judge who ruled that the ministerial approval was in line with national planning policy.

Planning

- Still no clarity on what the Government's planning reforms will consist of, but Secretary of State Robert Jenrick continues to insist that he wants to "[rethink the planning system from first principles](#)", with rumours from well-placed sources suggesting proposals to move to a

[zoning system, developer-led development companies and reduced powers for local councils.](#)

- In a landmark case, a Neighbourhood Planning Forum has [succeeded in a judicial review against Leeds City Council's Site Allocations Plan, for releasing green belt](#) for housing on the basis of out-of-date housing need figures. The courts have not yet decided whether all green belt allocations in the Plan will be quashed, or just those in the neighbourhood area. The case shows the dangers of ed-allocating green belt only on the basis of housing need, especially if figures are at risk of being revised downwards.
- In another landmark case, the housing secretary has backed down in a council's legal challenge to an appeal decision and conceded that the National Planning Policy Framework's [\(NPPF's\) definition of a "deliverable" housing site is not a "closed list"](#) but leaves room for decision-makers to exercise their planning judgement. The concession by secretary of state Robert Jenrick, concerning a four-home scheme in East Northamptonshire, is likely to mean that local authorities find it easier to satisfy their five-year housing land supply targets.
- A consortium including CPRE and Civic Voice have called on the government to set up a dedicated [Design Quality Unit for England](#) to build on the work of the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission
- Consultation on the [Greater Manchester Spatial Framework](#) looks like being delayed yet again due to Covid-19. A new report suggest [that brownfield sites in Greater Manchester could deliver more than half of the 201,000 homes](#) the combined authority wants to build by 2024. It finds that GM has 1,500 undeveloped brownfield sites across its 10 boroughs.
- Councils in Lancashire have agreed to press ahead with plans to form a new [county-wide combined authority](#). Details of governance arrangements and potential responsibilities are yet to be decided, although [a report considered by Lancashire County Council's cabinet](#) last week notes that most combined authorities established in other areas have appointed an elected mayor and that responsibilities have included spatial planning, housing and transport.
- The Government has introduced a '[Business and Planning' Bill](#) to Parliament, which includes proposals including automatic extensions of planning permissions that lapse during the pandemic, allowing PINS to conduct appeals using more than one kind of procedure (eg written representations and inquiries) at once.
- The Local Government Association (LGA) has [called for councils to be given powers to build 100,000 council homes a year](#) to 'spearhead' the recovery from COVID-19.
- [New permitted development rights](#) allowing two-storey upwards extensions to blocks of flats have been published, and will come into force on 1 August.
- Based on the recovery from the 2008 financial crash, Barton Willmore estimate that the [pandemic could cause annual housing completions to fall dramatically](#), with an average of 150,000 homes being built each year over the next four years, half the government's target with rates not reaching those of the past year for another 10 years.
- The Centre for Cities has published a [report](#) advocating [replacing the planning system with a zoning system](#). As reported in previous Bullets, the [Government has been heavily rumoured to be considering such a shift](#) in its forthcoming planning white paper
- A new report claims that tackling the under-occupation of family homes is the [solution to meeting housing demand](#) in the UK, says a think tank report.
- And it would probably be remiss not to mention that the SoS responsible for planning remains in hot water over his ["apparent" bias in permitting the controversial Westferry housing development](#) against the advice of his Inspector, and just before new CIL charges were brought in

Transport

- Research by Transport for New Homes into [20 new 'garden communities' reveals that most are planned in the wrong locations and will be primarily care-dependent](#). The settlements lack local facilities and their streets are designed around car use. Funding for walking, cycling and public transport is missing. Non-driving residents will have to walk up to seven miles to buy a pint of milk or access a railway station. In some cases, these new communities are being used by councils to fund major road schemes. The amount of space devoted to parking leaves little room for urban trees, gardens or grass verges. They have called for an urgent re-assessment by government of sustainable transport in all garden villages and towns
- The NW TAR have submitted a compendium of papers to the Government to influence their thinking over transport's contribution to achieving net-zero through the forthcoming transport decarbonization plan, featuring a series of renowned transport campaigners, consultants and academics: Keith Buchan, Lisa Hopkinson, Lynn Sloman, Alistair Kirkbride, John Whitelegg and Lillian Burns. Copies of the compendium are available from Lillian Burns at BrLln@aol.com. It has featured in [Local Transport Today](#), which is free for the duration of the pandemic, and will be published in its entirety in the next edition of the [World Transport Policy and Practice Journal](#).
- The Transport Action Network has [launched judicial review proceedings against the Government's latest roads investment strategy](#), claiming it breaches the Government's own commitments to tackle global warming and reduce air pollution.
- The public accounts committee has accused the DfT of [hiding information about HS2 cost overruns and delays from MPs](#), undermining confidence in the project. Committee members said they could not be sure that there would not be future cost increases. Meanwhile, 80 anti-HS2 protesters from Extinction Rebellion and Stop HS2 have begun [125-mile march along the HS2 Phase 1 route](#) to highlight the damage it will do to wildlife and woodland. A new proposal has been put forward to [radically reconfigure HS2 phase 2](#).
- Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is [expanding the number of publicly owned electric vehicle \(EV\) charging networks](#) across the city.
- The Government has [still not funded the Liverpool City Region Merseyrail service](#) as it is not classified as light rail, despite serving the same function as public transport services which have been supported elsewhere, including Manchester

Biodiversity

- Four projects focused on [protecting and restoring natural habitat across the UK](#) are being backed by Government funding as part of a pilot scheme to funnel more private sector investment into the natural environment.

Publications

Committee on Climate Change progress report

The Committee on Climate Change has published its [annual report on emissions reductions](#). Emphasising that producing a Covid-19 recovery plan which is fully aligned with the UK's 2050 net-zero climate target is "absolutely necessary and entirely possible". It states that territorial emissions have decreased by 30% since 2008, despite economic growth of 15%. The alternative measure of 'Consumption emissions', which also account for imported goods and international transport, decreased by 18% in the same timeframe. Unlike previous editions of the report, the document also provides [time-bound policy recommendations](#) which develop the

themes set out in its letter to Government, designed to help the UK recover from the recession caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It contains specific recommendations for surface transport, heavy industry, buildings, agriculture and land use, and energy, with five key short-term investment priorities:

- Low-carbon retrofits and buildings that are fit for the future
- Tree planting, peatland restoration, and green infrastructure
- Energy networks must be strengthened
- Infrastructure to make it easy for people to walk, cycle, and work remotely
- Moving towards a circular economy.

The report's headline conclusion is that there is a sizeable "policy deficit" between recent, current and planned short-term action, and what is required to put the UK on track to meet its long-term climate targets.

Environmental crisis UK

A new report by the IPPR, published after a [year-long investigation into the UK's green policy frameworks and the state of nature nationally](#) – including soil, biodiversity and oceans – finds that UK policymakers have 'historically disregarded' the economic, social and environmental risks posed by the degradation of nature, meaning more ambition and action is now desperately needed to mitigate further damage and adapt to changes which are already baked-in. The report tracks the UK's progress against 21 "measures of readiness" to adapt to existing environmental degradation and mitigate further harm, such as the ambition of existing legally-binding goals, the measures in place to avoid unintended consequences of these goals and address breaches, and the embedding of natural and social value in core economic strategies. In 15 of these categories, only partial progress was found to be present. In the remaining six, the UK is either "completely failing" or "almost completely failing". It also proposes key measures to drive the UK towards meeting the criteria for a more sustainable, just and prepared society.

Nature in the North

The IPPR (who have been busy on nature-based things this month!) have also published a call for a pan-regional effort, led by the North's leaders, to join up and coordinate local efforts to build environmental resilience, and to [set out a strategic Plan for Nature in the North](#), that will make an unanswerable case for new powers and funds from Westminster. They argue that leading by the North, for the North can allow for leaders to embed social and environmental justice into the wider agenda to 'level up' the country. The report reviews the state of nature in the north, the relationship between the North's landscapes, people, and economy, its future challenges, and proposes a way forward. The call has been [supported by GM Mayor Andy Burnham](#)

Greenwash

A new report from think tank Carbon Tracker, which analysed the climate targets of nine large oil and gas firms, their policies for meeting these goals and metrics for tracking progress, found that [most oil majors' net-zero strategies are greenwash](#). Despite a major trend towards strengthening climate commitments in recent months, oil and gas majors are broadly failing to take responsibility for their entire emissions footprint, with some on track to deliver just a 3% cut in absolute emissions by 2050.

Resources

Guidance in the time of coronavirus (again)

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](#)

National Youth Activity guidance

The government has published [guidance for National Youth Activity in England](#). The guidance is contextualised for youth sector organisations and intends to support organisations as they prepare for their reopening of services.

Rural Resilience

A [new guide](#) by Communities Prepared and Action with Communities in Rural England aimed at helping rural communities become more resilient in the face of emergencies. The guide provides practical tips for rural residents to prepare for, and help each other, at times of crisis. It shows how volunteer groups can be set up to develop emergency plans that identify local risks, and maps out the resources and support which can be mobilised should situations arise that threaten the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of people in the local area.

Consultations

Green Recovery?

The Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) has launched a new inquiry into the environmental and social implications of the UK Government's Covid-19 recovery package. The inquiry will run for three months. Called '[greening the post-Covid recovery](#)', the inquiry will see MPs on the Committee analyse the key facts, figures and mandates of the recovery package. They will also quiz key figures from across the green economy. Business leaders, experts from NGOs and local authorities, academics and the Climate Assembly for citizens are expected to take part. You can submit evidence until Friday 14 August 2020.

Tree Strategy

Defra is consulting interested parties on [how to 'accelerate' tree planting and improve the management of existing trees and woodlands](#) – the results of which will inform an England Tree Strategy. The strategy, which to be subject to consultation itself, would set out policies that seek to expand tree cover, support woodland management and increase public engagement with trees and woodland.

Funding

Covid-19: Fundraising key principles and public fundraising guidance

[Two new pieces of fundraising guidance](#) by the Fundraising Regulator and Chartered Institute of

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Fundraising have been published this month for charities in England ([see previous Bullets](#) for other guidance on fundraising and sources of funding during the pandemic). The guidance sets out a responsible framework to help charitable organisations return to fundraising as restrictions are eased, whilst still adhering to social distancing measures. In particular the guidance provides advice on: How to plan your future fundraising, How to interact safely with the public , How to safeguard the public, volunteers and staff, and How to undertake a risk assessment

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