



The
countryside
charity

● GREEN BULLET

28th July 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 collaboration between the New York Times and ProPublica suggests that [while 1% of the world is a barely livable hot zone today, in 50 years, that number could reach 19%](#). Reporters link the mass movement of people from central America to the United States to crop failures that are only expected to rise in frequency as the climate changes, and consider impacts extending much further than that — from the Middle East to the Ganges and the Pacific islands.

- Vast quantities of methane, a potent greenhouse gas, are believed to be stored under the sea floor around Antarctica. Scientists have long warned that rising ocean temperatures could trigger the release of large amounts of the gas, accelerating warming. Now the [first active leak of methane in Antarctica](#) has been recorded.

Regenerate the countryside

CPRE, the countryside charity, has launched a detailed 'manifesto' for a green recovery that can [support the regeneration of the economy, our wellbeing and the environment](#). This vision urges the government to use this post-coronavirus moment as an opportunity for real change, laying out recommendations for ways to stimulate the economy while making life greener and more resilient for the countryside and its communities. They are also urging people to sign a petition to Rishi Sunak to deliver a greener and fairer recovery to achieve a post-pandemic society that respects nature, the countryside and each other. #JointheRegeneration!

Insects

The Wildlife Trusts have published a new report, [Reversing the Decline in Insects](#), as part of their [Action for Insects campaign](#). Reversing the Decline of Insects is a positive look at the great work that is being done across the country to stop the potentially catastrophic loss of insects and help them to recover. With examples from farming, community groups, landowners, Wildlife Trusts, local authorities and individuals they hope to inspire more people to become insect champions and make a real difference for insects!

Air quality

The clean air campaign group, Mums for Lungs, have launched a new campaign to encourage parents and children to [walk, cycle or scoot to school when classes resume in September](#). They are also asking the government to help encourage this shift by implementing further road closures, pop-up cycle lanes and other measures that will help families move away from their polluting vehicles.

Water

[England is at "serious risk" of running out of water within 20 years](#) because of policymakers', regulators' and the water sector's failure to tackle leakage and align with net-zero, according to a damning new report from the Public Accounts Committee, as part of its inquiry into the UK's water sector and infrastructure..

Great Cumbrian Litter Pick

[The Great Cumbrian Litter Pick](#), organized by Friends of the Lake District, will be going ahead on Saturday 15 & Sunday 16 August. You can sign up to join an existing pick, get resources to help you organize your own, or register your own local community picks.

Information update

Covid-19

- The vast majority of people in the UK think that the [post-Covid recovery should be specifically green and low-carbon](#), and that not ensuring that would be bad for the economy.
- Darren Jones, Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Committee and Philip Dunne, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), have written to the Chancellor warning that [time is running out to 'avert an even greater future global crisis caused by climate change'](#). They stress that the UK's post-COVID economic recovery

package should be used as an opportunity to accelerate investment on climate adaptation and cutting emissions to net zero, as both Committees launch inquiries into post-Covid recovery plans (see 'consultations' section).

- Countryside charity CPRE wants to see a “radical rethink” of the role of the countryside in tackling the climate emergency, as a key part of the Covid recovery. The countryside should be at the forefront of climate action so that rural communities “do not bear the brunt of the climate emergency”. [Greener, Better, Faster: Countryside Solutions to the Climate Emergency and for a Green Recovery](#) sets out the countryside’s role in achieving a net-zero society, for which the UK government has set the target date of 2050. It contains recommendations on [planning and building, transport, energy, and food and farming](#)
- A new report from IPPR warns that up to 2.1 million Brits could file for unemployment within the next five years – equivalent to 10% of the workforce – without strong policy support for industries driving the transition to a low-carbon, more socially equal nation. The figure is similar to that raised in [recent research](#) by UK 100 and the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment. But the IPPR is, ultimately, optimistic, concluding that [strong policy support for building retrofits, low-carbon heat, social care, health care and public transport could minimise job losses](#), creating 1.6 million roles on a net basis.
- The Local Government Association has launched a guide for engagement and alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which it claims should be accelerated by [local authorities in efforts to "build back better" post-pandemic](#). It argues that the SDGs provide a strategic framework for streamlining planning and policy review; that SDG-aligned action will improve health, wellbeing and the economy on a local level, minimising healthcare costs; and that the SDGs can help councils foster productive, mutually-beneficial partnerships with each other, NGOs, charities, businesses and other stakeholders. SDG alignment is also the natural next step following a climate emergency declaration
- A group of businesses, mayors and political leaders have called on the government to [spend £5bn to deliver on its promised manifesto pledges in order to unlock £100bn](#) in capital investment on energy efficiency and create more than 300,000 green jobs.
- The world’s richest countries, including the UK, are [spending vastly more in support of fossil fuels than on low-carbon energy in rescue packages](#) triggered by the coronavirus crisis, despite rhetoric from many countries in support of a green recovery. Almost two-thirds of the interventions [which fossil fuel lobbyists made in policymaking](#) between March and June were successful
- A new report from the World Economic Forum finds that by [embedding 'net-positive' nature requirements into their Covid-19 recovery strategies](#), governments and businesses could collectively realise a \$10trn (£7.9trn) economic opportunity and create 395 million new jobs within a decade. The new report provides advice for finance ministers and corporates looking to create ‘green’ Covid-19 recovery packages, noting that, despite strong verbal support for a low-carbon ‘new normal’, far less discussion time and finance has been allocated to nature-based solutions than to clean energy and energy efficiency.
- The government has announced a £3bn package of long called for energy efficiency measures to be spent in 2020-21: £2bn for households and £1bn for public buildings, and a £350m funding pot for technologies like carbon capture and storage (CCS) and hydrogen [to help decarbonize heavy industry](#), alongside £400m (half public money, half from the aviation sector) to make flying more sustainable, to be spent as part of the UK's Covid-19 recovery effort. Green campaigners have described the Government’s recovery plans as [inadequate and “clearly unlawful”](#) as they do not match up to the government’s legal obligations under

the Paris climate agreement and the UK's own net zero emissions target, and [environmental experts are reported as 'dismayed'](#) by the "[false start](#)" made by the paucity of the plans.

Brexit and beyond

- In October 2018, the government published regulations that meant the system of environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) would be substantially the same after the UK leaves the EU. However, the withdrawal agreement passed in January removed these previous commitments to align environmental regulations with the EU. Now, the government has announced that it is to launch a consultation later this year on "[changing our approach to environmental assessment and mitigation in the planning system](#)". This will implement the Prime Minister's promise to get rid of "[newt-counting delays](#)" (aka [environmental protection](#)) so that we can get on with the build build build [whatever whenever however](#) agenda.
- Environment Minister George Eustice has also announced a new £5m [Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment](#) to protect the UK's environment as part of a new package of Environment Bill measures
- The EU has committed to a €750 billion covid recovery package, but green groups and MEPs are concerned that the [environmental commitments contained within it have been watered down](#).

Energy

- Following months of delays and amid mounting pressure from businesses and climate advisors alike, the UK [Government will publish the Energy White Paper, Heat Strategy and Buildings Strategy](#) alongside the Autumn Statement, Alok Sharma has confirmed.
- The UK Government has announced that planning legislation will be relaxed to ['make it easier' to construct large batteries capable of storing renewable energy](#) from solar and wind farms. "Barriers" to energy storage projects, according to the government, are discouraging bolder investment decisions in larger battery facilities. Removing them could "treble" the number of batteries serving the electricity grid.
- The operating firm for National Grid is predicting that the [UK's electricity grid could capture, offset or absorb more carbon than it emits by as early as 2033](#), if efforts to scale up renewable energy generation and carbon capture technologies are accelerated.
- Climate campaigners have been granted the [right to appeal a High Court ruling](#) that backed the secretary of state's decision to approve plans for Europe's largest gas power plant at Drax. ClientEarth claims that the secretary of state failed to properly assess the climate impact of the project in accordance with the Energy National Policy Statement, granting approval despite the Inspector's recommendation that the application should be refused because the project would "undermine the government's commitment...to cut greenhouse gas emissions".
- After the Greater Manchester Combined Authority pledged to reach net-zero by 2038 last year, the city-region's gas and electricity network operators have developed a delivery roadmap for its energy sector. [The roadmap](#) states that annual energy consumption across Greater Manchester must fall by 25% in the next 18 years, so that low-carbon heating technologies can become cost-competitive with traditional processes and that energy security can be maintained as more renewable generation comes online.

Planning

- Build, build, build = deregulate, deregulate, deregulate. Not [build back better](#). The Government has introduced new permitted development (PD) rights allowing [upward](#)

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[extensions](#) on individual homes and blocks of flats, [demolition of vacant or redundant residential and commercial buildings](#) to replace with housing, and a “wider range of commercial buildings” to be converted into flats, without planning permission. There has been widespread criticism of this deregulatory drive from the [housing](#) and [planning](#) sectors. A Government-commissioned review found that homes constructed through PD rights are of a “[worse quality](#)”; the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission said PD rights had “[inadvertently permissioned future slums](#)”; the Local Government Association say it “risks giving developers the [freedom to ride roughshod](#) over local areas”; while the RTPI, RIBA and RICS warn that they may “lock in more unacceptable standard development” causing future “[social disasters](#)” that will hit the most vulnerable hardest. Previous PD conversions have been so bad that the Government has just [had to legislate to require that all PD homes must have windows](#). Hard to imagine a much lower bar. And of course [it allows new development to sidestep biodiversity and other environmental regulations](#).

- The Government has also introduced [new ‘high street’ use class orders](#) making it easier for town centre properties to change uses (including to residential), which is effectively another increase to permitted development rights. The new use classes are: Class E (Commercial, business and service), Class F.1 (Learning and non-residential institutions) and F.2 (Local community).
- Mobile phone operators will also be able to [build taller masts and attach more equipment](#) to existing masts without the need for planning permission
- The government is to launch a consultation later this year on “[changing our approach to environmental assessment and mitigation in the planning system](#)”. This will implement the Prime Minister’s promise to get rid of “[newt-counting delays](#)” (aka [environmental protection](#)) so that we can get on with the build build build [whatever whenever however](#) agenda.
- In light of all this, 18 conservation and built environment organisations have sent an open letter to the Prime Minister urging him to turn away from his apparently intended “[deregulatory race to the bottom](#)”.
- The long-awaited Planning White Paper, promising to rethink the planning system from first principles, may have been downgraded, as Rishi Sunak [pledged that the Government would publish a ‘planning policy paper’ this month](#). A ‘[recovery and devolution’ White Paper](#) is still due to be published later this year. The [Planning Advisory Service](#) has produced a summary of recent legislative changes to planning
- The latest iteration of the [Greater Manchester Spatial Framework](#) will be released for consultation later this year. In September and October the final draft of the plan will be subject to scrutiny by all councillors across Greater Manchester’s 10 boroughs. If approved for publication, the plan will be brought forward for an eight-week public consultation in early November.
- The [latest official household projections](#) make the government’s insistence on using 2014-based figures to calculate housing need ever harder to sustain. According to these 2018-based projections, the number of households in England is set to increase at an average annual rate of 149,960 over the next 25 years. This figure represents a drop of about six per cent compared to the previous, 2016-based, estimates. The decline vis-à-vis the 2014 based projections is even starker. These projected a much higher (23 per cent) growth over the subsequent 25 years, translating into an additional 214,130 new households per annum. However, despite the lower projections nationwide in the latest figures, the South West, East Midlands, North East, North West, and West Midlands are all forecast to see an increase in household formation compared to the 2014-based figures.
- The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) has suggested that a review of green belt policy should be conducted because ‘perpetual tinkering’ with it does not deliver

certainty for farmers, planning authorities or developers. This is one of a number of short and longer-term recommendations for changes to the planning system outlined in the organisation's new report [Rural Powerhouse: A Planning System Designed for the Rural Economy](#).

- Defra has published its [flood and coastal erosion risk management policy statement](#), to "foster a common approach" by local authorities to using flood risk information in spatial planning in order to encourage "the right kind of sustainable growth in the right places". Separately, the Environment Agency has published its [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#). This sets out how the agency will deliver the government's policy statement. This strategy says it describes what needs to be done by all risk management authorities "involved in flood and coastal erosion risk management for the benefit of people and places".
- [Twenty 'key principles'](#) have been identified and published in a report to inform the second stage of the [Home of 2030](#) competition, backed by the government, and run by the Building Research Establishment (BRE), Design Council, RIBA Competitions and the Ministry of Building Innovation + Education (MOBIE), created to drive innovation in the provision of affordable, efficient and healthy green homes for all. The report also seeks to provide guidance to the housing sector as a whole.
- The government's First Homes proposals for discounted homes for first-time buyers and its continued expansion of permitted development rights both [threaten the provision of social housing](#), according to a new report by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee. The report says that 90,000 new social homes will be needed every year to meet the country's housing needs, requiring around £10 billion extra grant funding. But it concluded that the Government could significantly reduce the extra public spending needed by reforming land value capture, assembling and using public land for social housing, and redistributing expenditure from existing budgets.

Transport

- Transport for Quality of Life has published [their latest research on transport and climate change](#). Using data collected by Highways England, they calculate that the £27 billion Road Investment Strategy, RIS2, will add 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (20 MtCO₂) to UK emissions between now and 2032. The research shows that extra emissions as a result of more road capacity will negate 80% of the benefit arising from the switch to electric vehicles on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) between now and 2032, and that in order for us to meet our climate commitments, emissions from the SRN need to be cut by 167 MtCO₂ over the next 12 years (2020 – 2032), over and above the savings that will occur because of the switch to electric cars. The added emissions due to RIS2 will make this challenging task still harder. They argue that RIS2 should be cancelled and the £27 billion road budget should be repurposed to make it easier for people to cut their car use.
- The Infrastructure and Projects Authority has just released their [annual report](#). The HS2 project has fallen from a classification of Amber/Red which it has held for 7 years to Red in the latest report. A red classification means "*successful delivery appears to be unachievable, and the project may need to be rescope or have its overall viability reconsidered*". The Court of Appeal has agreed to hear broadcaster Chris Packham's appeal regarding an application for permission for [judicial review of the Prime Minister's decision to proceed with HS2](#)
- The Greater Manchester Mayor welcomed a Government pledge to fund the [upgrade and electrification of the TransPennine main line between Manchester, Leeds and Huddersfield](#) in Yorkshire, but added that "upgrading the existing railway between Manchester and Leeds

does not diminish the need for a new line as part of Northern Powerhouse Rail, nor does it solve the capacity issues in central Manchester, which require a separate solution.”

- The Government aims to build on the [significant increase in people cycling during the lockdown](#) by funding thousands of miles of new protected bike lanes, cycle training for everyone and bikes available on prescription

Biodiversity

- ‘[Urban rewilding](#)’ case studies are showing that even small-scale initiatives can successfully bring back biodiversity – and other benefits - to towns and cities
- Scientists have [mapped the entirety of the planet’s terrestrial habitat](#), creating a resource that will help businesses and investors measure and minimize their impacts on natural resources and biodiversity. The map, which claims to be the first of its kind, was published in the journal Biological Conservation following extensive research from scientists at the UN’s Environment Programme arm (UNEP). Before its publication, such in-depth data was only available for areas classed as ‘protected’ and ‘key for biodiversity, which are accountable for just 15.1% and 8.8% of land respectively.
- New analysis from CEH shows that nearly [two million acres of British grassland have been converted](#) to urban development or woodland over the last 25 years
- [Protecting 30% of oceans and land globally would reap economic benefits five times greater](#) than the initial costs of conservation and restoration, a major new scientific report has concluded. Compiled using research from more than 100 economists and scientists, the report considers various pathways to restoring 30% of the world’s natural habitats, in line with the UN’s [draft 10-year strategy on biodiversity](#). The draft strategy is intended to create a “Paris-style” deal for nature, uniting nations and states in averting the Earth’s sixth mass extinction.

Publications

Nature and climate

Restoring degraded habitats would see them absorb a third of the UK’s carbon emissions, suggests a new report from the Wildlife Trusts that insists that the climate and nature crises should be tackled together as one. It urges the government, industry and local authorities to “step-up” investment in nature’s recovery and climate mitigation. [Let Nature Help – How Nature’s Recovery is Essential for Tackling the Climate Crisis](#) outlines that a wide range of land habitats – grasslands, peatlands and wetlands – should be restored to store carbon. It explains that the UK’s peatland soils store around 3.2 billion tonnes of carbon, but as they are “heavily degraded” they release the equivalent of 23 million tonnes of CO₂ every year. Restoring them to prevent this emission is one of “the most cost-effective nature-based solutions”. The government has missed its targets to help peatlands recover, as well as to plant trees. The Trusts want the government to identify, map and protect a wide array of ecosystems and restore them locally as part of a national Nature Recovery Network.

Ocean plastics

The [world’s plastic pollution problem](#) is vastly outpacing efforts to stop it, meaning that the volume of plastics in oceans globally will be four times higher in 2040 than in 2016, new research backed by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has concluded. It found that, despite increasing numbers of pledges by corporates and governments aimed at stemming plastic pollution – and higher ambition levels of such pledges – they will ultimately fail to solve the problem. On a business-as-usual trajectory, based on current policy packages and corporate

targets, the volume of plastic on the market will double within 20 years. At the same time, the volume of plastic entering oceans and waterways will triple, and the global ocean plastic stock will quadruple. The report sets out some of the immediate actions needed to tackle this threat.

Green Space Index

The latest findings from the [Fields in Trust annual Green Space Index](#) has found that 2.7 million people across Great Britain do not have access to a local green space within a ten-minute walk of where they live. This is set to increase by 6.5% over the next five years. Five English regions fall below a minimum standard of green space provision as measured by the Green Space Index Score. Taken as a whole, Scotland and Wales both exceed the Green Space Standard

New 'Biodiversity, Forestry and Wood report'

Confor - which represents the forest industries UK-wide - has produced an analysis that illustrates [how forests planted in the UK for wood production can have significant value for biodiversity](#), as well as having a vital role in climate change mitigation. The new report highlights the benefits for nature and people of increasing the proportion of home grown timber usage.

Events

Cheshire Beavers

The Eurasian beaver (*Castor fiber*) is a large herbivore, a mammal that used to be native to the UK. They played an important part in moulding our landscape from prehistoric times until they were sadly hunted to extinction in the 16th century for their fur, meat and scent glands. The loss of this charismatic species also led to loss of the mosaic of lakes, meres, mires, tarns and boggy places that they so brilliantly built. Wildlife Trusts have been [reintroducing beavers to the UK since 2009](#). Cheshire Wildlife Trust has some exciting news about beavers in Cheshire and they want you to hear it first at their [live online announcement](#): Monday 17th August, 8:00pm - 9:00pm.

Local landscape stewardship

Project Skyline was a feasibility study that examined the possibility of local communities managing the landscape that surrounds where they live. It involved working with the communities of Caerau, Treherbert and Ynysowen in the valleys of South Wales, exploring the history, meaning and potential of each place. [Register your interest](#) to join [this webinar](#) (in September, date TBC), to hear the experience of those involved in facilitating the work, as well as to hear about plans to grow the work already started

Land Management 2.0

Over the last two months, The Land App and the Duchy of Cornwall have brought together experts from across the land management sector to help shape best practice for the future of land management. In the final episode, the panel will be discussing how we can create a common vision to transform the future of land management by providing a summary of how the component parts that have been presented so far fit together as part of an integrated whole. [Register here](#) for this final webinar in the series (Thursday 6th August, 16:30 - 17:30) or [view previous webinars](#).

Resources

England's natural capital atlases

The new 'natural capital atlases' map Natural England's Natural Capital Indicators to show the quantity, quality and location of ecosystem assets, as well as the flow of some ecosystem services. They provide an England-wide baseline assessment to show the state of natural capital. At the beginning of July, atlases for 44 county and combined authority areas were released, showing the data in more detail, along with the GIS layers in a data package with user guide. [This webinar recording](#) gives an overview of them and how they could support your work.

Financing nature-based solutions

[This webinar](#) discusses the IGNITION project and presents the nature-based solutions evidence base, created for the project in partnership between BITC and GMCA. IGNITION is a project that aims to develop innovative financing solutions for investment in Greater Manchester's natural environment. This project brings together 12 partners from local government, universities, NGOs and business. The aim is to develop the first model of its kind that enables major investment in large-scale environmental projects which can increase climate resilience

Green Infrastructure

The latest paper of the PERFECT project on the multiple benefits of green infrastructure entitled '[What does good green infrastructure policy look like?](#)' considers best practice for developing a policy assessment tool to assess plans, policies and programmes.

Natural Flood Management

Viridian Logic, a specialist in the design of nature-based solutions, has created a [new tool to estimate the flooded damage costs that can be avoided](#) through existing and planned natural habitat. The 'VET-NFM' tool considers various properties of the landscape to calculate the impact of natural flood management measures within a catchment, and the correlation between these elements and the damage costs to property.

Creating Green Cities

Creating Green Cities is a podcast on [urban nature-based solutions](#), explained through stories of innovators across Europe who are making cities greener. This series, developed by the NATURVATION project talks about topics such as green roofs, urban forests and the challenges and opportunities for community groups.

NCVO

You can still access the NCVO [Knowhow members resources](#) free of charge, covering most everything you might want to know about setting up and running a charity, community enterprise or community group. You may also find the [information to support charities during coronavirus](#) useful.

Consultations

Greening the post-Covid 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 three-month 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. The overarching aim of the inquiry is to determine whether the allocation of the funding in the package, along with any changes to policy, are aligned with the UK's long-term climate goal of net-zero by 2050. Climate impacts generated by the plan abroad, as well as domestically, will be considered.

Post-pandemic economic growth

The BEIS Select Committee have opened an inquiry into [post-pandemic economic growth](#), including questions on the priority that should be given to environmental goals, the need for the recovery to be both economically and environmentally sustainable, and the contribution to be made to priorities such as net zero.

Decarbonising transport

DfT has launched a consultation asking the public about their ideas for the [steps we should take to reduce emissions from transport](#) and creating a plan to ensure the UK transport is net zero in emissions by 2050. This consultation and plan builds on the information in '[Decarbonising transport: setting the challenge](#)' released in March 2020.

Industrial Strategy

The BEIS Select Committee are launching an [inquiry into the UK's Industrial Strategy](#), questioning whether major updates to the policy package are needed in light of the 2050 net-zero target and the Covid-19 crisis and other challenges and barriers to growth. The UK is [off track to meeting its fifth carbon budget](#) and now attempting to grapple with both the climate crisis and the economic fallout of Covid-19, MPs and others have begun to question whether the Industrial Strategy is fit-for-purpose post-2020.

Rail Stations

Network Rail and RIBA Competitions have launched an international competition to [design how Britain's railway stations will look in the future](#). It will ask entrants to reimagine small to medium-sized railway stations in Britain, about 80 per cent of all stations, so they better serve the needs of passengers and local communities. Entries are asked to be creative and address the changing character of our society. They should address how future stations can provide value but also the impact on the environment and their sustainability in order to be net zero.

Funding

Green Recovery Challenge Fund

Defra has announced a [Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) with the aim of creating 3000 jobs and safeguarding up to 2000 others. Nature-based solutions to tackling climate change and connecting people with the outdoors were part of the areas of focus of the fund of "up to" £40 million, to create jobs in nature recovery and conservation to kickstart the nation's green recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

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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).

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