



# ● GREEN BULLET

23rd February 2021

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](mailto: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

### Transport and Planning

In a new report, [Net Zero Transport: the role of spatial planning and place-based solutions](#), the RTPI warns that unless urgent action is taken to integrate transport and land use planning, the UK is highly unlikely to reach its 2050 net zero targets. The [joint planning coalition](#) continues to

push for a more inclusive, just and sustainable planning system, as the government wade through the 40,000+ responses to the planning white paper.

### **Climate change**

- The results of the largest opinion poll ever taken on climate change were published this week and it's good news for those demanding action. [Almost two thirds of those taking part in the poll now view the issue as a global emergency](#). Although young people were overrepresented, even when it came to over-60s, the majority agreed that climate change is an emergency.
- The Centre for Sustainable Energy and the Town & Country Planning Association are seeking funding to encourage communities to engage with their council and its local plan in order to press for stronger climate-focused policies. Examples of the types of support that could be offered range from freephone and email support to help individuals respond to public consultations, to examples of best-practice policies from around the country that councils could adapt. But in order to make successful bids for funding they need evidence that the programme is needed - and that people with high levels of concern about climate change will engage with local planning policy-making if given the right support. Please help us make the case by responding to [this survey](#).

### **Bees**

The Wildlife Trusts are putting pressure on Government to reverse its decision to lift the recently-imposed ban on [bee-killing neonicotinoid pesticides](#). They are exploring a legal challenge to the decision and you can add your voice to their campaign by signing a joint letter to the Prime Minister. [Over 30 other organisations have also written to Defra](#) to voice their concern. This U-turn is seen as particularly worrying as Ministers explicitly promised that the ban would be retained after leaving the EU, casting doubt on other assurances that Brexit will not lead to environmental regression.

### **Environment Bill**

The most recent delay to the Environment Bill (see Brexit and Beyond section) provides a window to lobby MPs and Ministers to make it fit for purpose. The Greener UK / Wildlife and Countryside Link briefings [setting out the key elements](#) that the Bill needs to provide robust protection for the environment and on the [amendments to the Bill that they are supporting](#) provide a good basis. You can also take action now [with the RSPB here](#) and [with the Wildlife Trusts here](#).

### **Coal**

[Organisations opposing the Workington coal mine](#) proposals will take advantage of the reprieve while Cumbria County Council agrees to reconsider its decision to permit the first deep coal mine in the UK for 30 years. Cumbrian residents and organisations can take this time to [write to their councillors](#) and you can write to Robert Jenrick to [ask for the decision to be called in](#) with a few clicks via a CPRE mass action.

### **Air Quality**

A [new air quality report](#) from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee, calls on the UK Government to beef up air quality policies by adopting the World Health Organisation's (WHO) guidelines on air pollution and improving funding and communications to help businesses and communities deliver on stricter goals to reduce particulates. Independently, [city mayors representing more than 17 million people across the UK](#)

are urging Boris Johnson to commit to tougher air pollution targets and, likewise, enshrine in law a commitment to achieve [World Health Organization air pollution guidelines](#) by 2030. The [Greater Manchester](#) Combined Authority aims to sign off a final plan to improve air quality in the city region by this summer ahead of a proposed 2022 rollout, despite a lack of clarity on funding.

### **Information update**

#### **Brexit and beyond**

- The [Environment Bill has been delayed again](#), probably by around six months, because having a framework for environmental protection and regulation is basically a luxury. However, the Bill as it stands does not provide an adequate basis for future environmental protection: Caroline Lucas sets out some of its [key weaknesses and omissions](#). So the delay gives environmental organisations and individuals more time to lobby MPs and Ministers to make the requisite changes! Greener UK and Wildlife And Countryside Link have produced two briefings, one a [summary setting out the key elements](#) that they believe the Bill needs to provide robust protection for the environment, and one on the [amendments to the Bill that they are supporting](#) in order to get these elements in place.
- The European Parliament have voted to pass the EU's €672.5bn recovery and resilience facility, unlocking [unprecedented funding aimed at helping Europe "build back better"](#) after the COVID-19 crisis. It reserves 37% of the fund for spending on climate-friendly measures.

#### **Climate change & energy**

- The UK Government is gearing up to hosting the COP climate talks this autumn, with hope of real progress now that the [USA has rejoined the Paris Agreement](#). Climate leaders have welcomed the appointment of the first African and first female head of the WTO, elected on a platform of [taking climate and environmental issues more seriously](#), although at home the Business Secretary has admitted that the government's recent performance on climate change, including its failure to call in the decision on the Cumbria coal mine (see below) and its failure to prevent North Sea oil companies releasing the [equivalent of a coal power station's worth of greenhouse gases](#) into the atmosphere every year by burning off or dumping unwanted natural gas into the atmosphere, [gave 'mixed messages' about the UK's commitment to emissions reductions](#). Climate Home suggests [seven key climate issues](#) where the UK will need to build alliances to make a success at COP26.
- In the face of huge opposition and [a coordinated last-minute campaign](#) to put pressure on the Westminster government, Cumbria County Council have agreed to [reconsider their decision to permit the UK's first deep coal mine](#) for 30 years. However, campaigners fear that this will simply lead to its approval again, with the Council now able to say that they have taken into consideration the [Committee on Climate Change's letter criticizing the decision](#) and the [sixth carbon budget](#). There are reports that 40 Conservative MPs, including the 31-strong group of 'Red Wall' MPs, have [written in support of the mine](#).
- A judge has overturned the secretary of state's approval of a 158-turbine offshore wind farm due to a [failure to assess the cumulative impacts](#) from the scheme alongside those of a separate nearby wind farm project. Alok Sharma went against the advice of his inspectors who had recommended that the project be refused due to the potential impact on protected habitats. The decision was overturned on the basis that the SoS decided to defer all consideration of cumulative environmental impacts until the second scheme came forwards, in the face of fierce local opposition on landscape and visual impact grounds.
- The 600-acre Moorside site adjacent to the Sellafield nuclear complex has been included in a bid to host the [UK's first prototype nuclear fusion plant](#) and surrounding science,

technology and business park. Up until last year it was the subject of a failed plan to develop a new nuclear fission power plant.

- More than two dozen Conservative MPs have committed to [championing green policies and solutions that will help the UK meet its net-zero target](#) in Parliament, amid concerns that major policy gaps remain. Convened by the Conservative Environment Network, the new Net Zero Champions initiative is designed to help MPs within the party deliver unified calls to action on sector-specific net-zero policies.
- The Government is facing criticism for a [decision to pull the majority of funding for the £2bn Green Homes Grant](#), less than a year after it was unveiled to improve household energy efficiency and play a key role in an economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.
- [Renewables overtook fossil fuels as UK's main electricity source in 2020](#), generating a record 42%, while fossil fuels accounted for 41% of electricity generation, according to a major new analysis.
- State owned fossil fuel companies are planning to invest £1.4 trillion over the next decade, according to [a new report](#) from the Natural Resource Governance Institute. At least \$400 billion of these investments would only be profitable in a world that failed to stick to the 2C degrees of warming commitment laid out in the Paris deal. National oil companies produce two-thirds of the world's oil and gas and own about 90% of global reserves. China, India and Russia are expected to make the biggest investments.

## Planning

- Proposed [changes to the NPPF and the new draft National Model Design Code](#) (see consultations section for more info) aim to improve the quality and design of new development and put more emphasis on beauty and placemaking (although they also go more widely than this [incorporating other environmental issues](#)). The changes seem broadly positive and are desperately needed as research has shown that the [design of new housing is overwhelmingly mediocre or poor](#). However, the changes to the NPPF also further [restrict the ability of councils to resist permitted development](#) by applying 'article 4' directions on conversions to residential use, which will tend to pull in the other direction and undermine any new design policies, which will not apply to permitted development.
- Alongside the above consultation, [MHCLG also announced](#) the establishment of an interim Office for Place, re-launch of the [Community Housing Fund](#) to support community-led approaches to housebuilding, and the government's [response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report](#), which has influenced many of the proposals put forwards.. A [pilot programme](#) has also been launched for local authorities to apply design coding in their areas.
- The primacy of development plans in the English planning system has been reaffirmed by a [Court of Appeal ruling](#) on two appeals by land promoter Gladman, which emphasised that where a council lacks the required five-year housing land supply, this may tilt the balance in favour of proposed residential schemes but it does not render grants of planning permission automatic, development plan policies still hold weight, and must come first in determining applications.
- A [second significant court of appeal ruling](#) established that the 'great weight' given to protecting the landscape of AONBs by the NPPF could also, by itself, provide a reason for rejecting a planning application, even if the 'tilted balance' is engaged.
- The housing secretary has endorsed a report by the influential Policy Exchange think tank proposing that residents [prepare and vote on "street plans" allowing the creation of larger and denser residential buildings](#) in their roads, a move the study claims could create more than 100,000 new homes a year.

The proposed new permitted development right for the conversion of commercial premises to housing would "[precipitate the decline](#)" of local centres, according to a joint letter to housing secretary Robert Jenrick co-signed by leaders from high street, property and planning organisations. The Construction Industry Council, an umbrella group for the UK built environment sector, warned that it could result in "poorly designed and unneighbourly" housing that become "[ghettos for the least well off](#)".

- The New Homes Bonus is a scheme by which the government matches the council tax earned by local authorities from each new home built, converted or brought back into use over a set number of years, and has become a significant source of council revenue. [94 per cent of English councils will see their bonus payments fall in 2021/22, according to the latest government figures, with a total fall in payments of about £285 million](#), or over 30%. The government has proposed (see consultations section) a range of measures that will restrict councils' ability to access the bonus and therefore place more pressure on them to approve the maximum amount of planning applications.
- Following Stockport's decision to withdraw from the Greater Manchester Strategic Framework, the remaining nine councils will take forward a plan for the conurbation minus Stockport, now entitled [Places for Everyone](#).
- Liverpool City Region has published a vision that aims to deliver "[prosperous, future-proof local town centres](#)" to drive the city region's post-Covid recovery, and sets out a series of recommendations for developing and managing town centres for policymakers.
- Homes England, and United Trust Bank have announced a £250 million fund with the aim of [supporting small and medium-sized builders](#) with development finance at up to 70 per cent loan to gross development value, while the government has published an update to its [Self-build and Custom Housebuilding](#) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), fortifying the requirement for local authorities to consider local demand for self-build and custom-build homes when preparing local plans.

### **Biodiversity & nature**

- Defra has announced That they will bring forward legislation to [prevent the burning of heather and other vegetation on protected blanket bog](#) habitats. Unfortunately the proposal is [more loophole than substance](#).
- The Government intends to introduce a mandatory requirement for the planning system to deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG) through proposals in the Environment Bill. This will place new burdens on local authorities both in terms of capacity to deal with the increase in workload, and in the professional expertise necessary to address the additional technical, planning and legal issues involved in preparing for and implementing the measures. DEFRA, ALGE and ADEPT are conducting a [survey to determine current levels of expertise and capacity](#) to establish the current baseline and then seeks to identify the additional skills and capabilities required to deliver BNG through the planning system. Please complete it or encourage your local authority to do so!
- At the end of 2020, Defra announced funding for [new planting in England's Community Forests](#) over the following five months. The programme is being delivered by a collaboration of ten Community Forest organisations, supported by The Community Forest Trust. Funding is from the £640 million Nature for Climate fund for England.

### **Transport**

- The [High Speed 2 \(West Midlands to Crewe\) Act 2021](#) was enacted on 11 February 2021. This makes provision for development of HS2 Phase 2a – the 36 miles between the West Midlands (Staffordshire) and Crewe. Phase 2b, with increasing amounts of doubt cast over



some or all of it due to spiralling costs, would run from Crewe to Manchester and Birmingham to Leeds.

- The leaders of Liverpool City Region, Warrington and Cheshire West and Chester have strongly objected to what appears to be the preferred [route for the Manchester- Liverpool section of the Northern Powerhouse Rail](#) project, saying that the preferred option would 'short-change' the region. However, by re-using and upgrading existing track, 'option 5.1' via Fiddlers Ferry would reduce the environmental impacts of building new lines. Arrangements within the centres of Manchester and Liverpool are still strongly contested. However, Transport for the North have been asked to delay providing their strategic case outline until after the government has published its Integrated Rail Plan for the Midlands and the North. Meanwhile, [cost estimates for NPR have increased by 15%](#).
- The NIC has welcomed the move to give [eight metro mayors five-year budgets](#) starting 2022/23 - the cash includes £4.2bn for urban transport - but called for the programme to be expanded, and for the Government to provide £30 billion in funding by 2040 for [infrastructure projects in 'priority cities'](#).
- There are reports that the [£27 billion expansion of England's road network has been "thrown into doubt"](#), due to transport secretary Grant Shapps overriding official advice by his own department's civil servants to review the National Policy Statement for National Networks on environmental grounds. The details are set out in court papers that form part of a legal challenge to the policy by environmental pressure group Transport Action Network. Ministers have been legally required to take into account the environmental impact of such projects since 2014.

### **Publications**

#### **The Dasgupta Review of the Economics of Biodiversity**

The [Dasgupta Review of the Economics of Biodiversity](#) was published earlier this month, outlining how businesses and policymakers can include and account for nature as part of economic decisions, with [many claiming the findings could be as influential as the Stern review](#) on climate change. It was commissioned by HM Treasury and lays out key recommendations for reversing manmade declines in biodiversity. As the largest and most comprehensive review of its kind, it finds that the demands on nature now far exceed its capacity to supply resources and vital services. It calls for the expanding and improvement of Protected Areas as well as increasing investment into nature-based solutions. Policies should also be created or tweaked to discourage damaging consumption of natural assets. It also calls for different metrics to be adopted that would align natural resources with today's economic accounting, as part of a shift towards a more inclusive measure of wealth. Thankfully, the Scottish Government's Rural & Environment Science & Analytical Services Division has produced a [short 3-page summary](#) of the 600-page analysis.

#### **Food systems & biodiversity loss**

The [global food system is the biggest driver of destruction of the natural world](#), and a shift to predominantly plant-based diets is crucial in halting the damage, according to a new report by Chatham House, supported by the UN Environment Programme. Agriculture is the main threat to 86% of the 28,000 species known to be at risk of extinction, and more than [80% of global farmland is used to raise animals](#), which provide only 18% of calories eaten.. Without change, the loss of biodiversity will continue to accelerate and threaten the world's ability to sustain humanity. The root cause is a vicious circle of cheap food, where low costs drive bigger demand

for food and more waste, with more competition then driving costs even lower through more clearing of natural land and use of polluting fertilisers and pesticides.

### **‘Growing back better’**

The Environmental Audit Committee has published its report on '[growing back better: putting nature and net zero at the heart of the economic recovery](#)'. It finds that the Government's 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution is a good starting point, but needs to front load investment in issues like energy efficiency, and needs to go beyond low-carbon electricity and transport to provide policy support for nature restoration and the circular economy. They make a series of recommendations for delivering a green recovery, including that the Government's road building programme must be 'rigorously assessed against the UK's air quality, biodiversity protection and climate change targets before individual projects proceed'.

### **(Not)Achieving the government's long-term environmental goals**

The UK Government is not on track to deliver its vision of improving the natural environment within a generation, due to "serious delays" implementing legislation and "painfully slow", "disappointing progress" against existing goals and requirements on air, water and wildlife, according to a damning [new report](#) from the Public Accounts Committee, published at the conclusion of its inquiry into the delivery of the government's long-term environmental goals. The specific focus of the report is the 25-Year Environment Plan. The PAC criticises Defra for failing to build upon the Plan, released in 2018, with a coherent set of long-term objectives or interim milestones. While the Plan has ten goals, the Committee heard from businesses, local authorities and NGOs that confusion remains around focus areas for delivery and tracking progress. Only 38 out of 66 indicators are in place to measure progress.

### **Events**

#### **Going live: Care Farming North West**

[Care farming](#) is the therapeutic use of farming practices – where service users regularly attend the care farm as part of a structured health or social care, rehabilitation or specialist educational programme. The powerful mix of being in nature, being part of a group and taking part in meaningful farming-related activities is what makes care farming so successful. Care farms deliver a range of farming-related activities as part of their service provision, including care of livestock, growing crops and vegetables, horticulture and land management. There are currently 22 care farms and 25 prospective care farms registered in the North West and they are all keen to learn, network and develop their offer with other relevant organisations, especially with the significant effects on Covid-19 on mental health and more [green social prescribing](#) places being needed to help address this need. The Growing Care Farming project is kicking off the development of a regional network in the North West with an event called [Going live: Care Farming North West, Thursday 25th February, 10am - 12pm](#). For more information, or if you're interested but can't make the event, contact the Growing Care Farming project's Regional Support Officer, Sarah Marrison at [sarahm@farmgarden.org.uk](mailto:sarahm@farmgarden.org.uk).

#### **The climate and ecological emergency**

While the Covid-19 pandemic is unresolved it is essential that we do not overlook the far greater existential threats of climate change and ecological breakdown. Dieter Helm has proposed responses to both these existential threats in two recent books: Green and Prosperous Land: A Blueprint for Rescuing the British Countryside and Net Zero – How We Stop Causing Climate Change. He proposes a 'no regrets plan' that would cover approaches to natural resources and

natural capital, agriculture, transport and electricity. This online discussion will address the issue of [what such a 'no regrets plan' should deliver and the responsibility for implementing it](#). What are the barriers to achieving positive outcomes and how do we overcome them? Speaker: Dieter Helm, Dame Fiona Reynolds, Shaun Spiers. 16 March, 4-5.

### **Trees and bees**

Climate Action North's [Trees and Bees online conference](#) will be celebrating the UN International Day of Forests and they're teaming up with Wildcraft to bring you an event focusing on the benefits of rewilding with Trees and Bees and the role of both species as an essential solution in the current Climate Emergency. This online conference, livestreamed via Youtube, will take place on Friday 19 March 2021, 10-2, and will feature speakers from the world of Trees and Bees.

### **North West Mayoral Debate**

Place North West host a one-off event as candidates discuss their [priorities and policies for Greater Manchester and Liverpool city region](#). Candidates due to take part in this free-to-attend event include, in Greater Manchester, Labour's Andy Burnham and Simon Lepori from the Liberal Democrats. In Liverpool, Labour's Steve Rotheram, the Green Party's Gary Cargill, and the Conservatives' Jade Marsden will set out their stalls as they campaign to be elected as metro mayor of the Liverpool City Region. 2-4.30, 16 March.

### **Greener Recovery Festival**

[The Landscape Institute's Greener Recovery Festival](#) (online, 22-26 March) welcomes a diverse audience to debate a green recovery from COVID-19. Topics range from climate to biodiversity action with key discussions around net zero, environmental net gain, adaptation, and natural capital accounting. Rebecca Pow, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Defra, will give a keynote speech on the natural capital approach to a green recovery.

### **Environmental options for upland farms**

The Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership in Lancashire is working to understand the value that the landscape and heritage of the area offers its communities. Over the last year, Natural Capital Solutions has been working with the Partnership to understand the public benefits that upland hill farms in the area could provide under the proposed Environmental Land Management scheme. This webinar on 31 March, 1-2pm considers [environmental options for upland farms](#) to plug the income gap and deliver public benefits

### **Greener cities innovation summit**

This virtual 'summit' seeks to bring together an international audience to explore how to shift to sustainable, greener cities that deliver for their citizens using by working with natural processes and features. It is Co-hosted by Glasgow City Council and greenspace Scotland as part of Connecting Nature; an international consortium [promoting nature-based projects in urban areas](#). The event will share the learnings from the cities involved in Connecting Nature and introduce tools and methods being developed through the project

### **Accelerating Woodland Creation & Management conference**

Following the success of the inaugural Woodland Creation Conference last year, a second online event is being held by the Ecosystems Knowledge Network on 26-27 May 2021. This timely conference will examine the ways in which bold [ambitions and targets for tree planting and increased woodland](#) cover can be met in England and Wales.



### **Applied Environmental Economics Conference**

Now in its 19th year, 'envecon' brings together delegates from academia, private, public and third sectors to showcase the [latest research and applied practices in environmental economics](#). Organised by the UK Network for Environmental Economists (UKNEE) it features a keynote from Alessandra Alfieri, Chief of Environmental Economic Accounting in the United Nations Statistics Division. Online, March 9.

### **Resources**

#### **Green social prescribing – North West support**

[Social prescribing](#) is the growing practice of recognising the value of alternatives to medicine that are available within communities which have the potential to help people's mental & physical health and one that has received growing funding and attention in recent years. Natural England has become the lead organisation for the green (environmental /nature) sector which could cover everything from beach clean groups; friends of parks groups; allotment projects and caring for animals; outdoor meditation sessions; walking for health style groups; and of course traditional conservation volunteering. Natural England staff will be able to help support organisations to provide those opportunities for people to connect to nature to improve their health and to highlight these opportunities to link workers who support the patient & GP to make the right 'social prescription'. Your contacts in the north west are Jen Green [[Jen.Green@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Jen.Green@naturalengland.org.uk)] covering Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Merseyside and Kerry Rennie [[Kerry.Rennie@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Kerry.Rennie@naturalengland.org.uk)] covering Lancashire and Cumbria.

#### **Farming and environment evidence packs**

Defra have produced useful new [evidence packs on UK farming and environment](#) updated with new statistics on agriculture to summarise the current state of the agricultural industry in the UK.

#### **Landscape and Marine pioneers – lessons learned**

In 2016, Defra initiated four Pioneer projects as test-beds of how to respond in England to the challenges set out in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Over the last month, two of the four pioneers (the Landscape Pioneer and the Marine Pioneer) presented their learning and recommendations. [Recordings of the webinars are now available](#).

#### **Commercial renewable energy and the historic environment**

Historic England Advice Note 15: Commercial Renewable Energy Development and the Historic Environment has now been published. This advice explains how the historic environment should be taken fully into account during the planning and delivery of commercial renewable energy development. The HEAN covers renewable energy from on-shore and off-shore wind power, solar photovoltaics, biomass and energy from waste. The HEAN shares broad principles and advice to help decision makers to consider key issues across different types of commercial renewable energy development.

#### **Park Protector Awards**

Campaign for National Parks, Ramblers Holidays Charitable Trust and BBC's Countryfile Magazine have launched the [Park Protector Awards 2021](#). The awards recognise the efforts of staff and volunteers working in National Parks in England and Wales in what has been a very challenging year. This year's theme is 'Innovation and Agility in the Face of a Global Pandemic' with a £1,000 first prize and 2 x runners-up prizes of £500 each. The prize money is

for supporting and celebrating the work of the person/team/project. Anyone can nominate a person, team or project for the work they've undertaken in a National Park in England or Wales in 2020/21. Please feel free to nominate yourself/your own team/ project!

### **Infrastructure and environmental net gain**

The National Infrastructure Commission carries out in-depth studies into the UK's major infrastructure needs. Its recent discussion paper on '[Natural capital and environmental net gain](#)' examines how infrastructure development can contribute to protecting the country's natural environment. The report discusses the role infrastructure can play a part in reversing declines in the natural environment through the integration of environmental net gain and the natural capital concept.

### **Place Standard – guiding local dialogue**

The [Place Standard tool](#) provides a framework to structure conversations about places; localities that have meaning and identity to people. It allows users to think about the physical elements of a place (including the natural environment) as well as the social aspects (such as whether people feel they have a say in decision making). It has been developed by Scottish Government with partners, but has potential for application across the UK and beyond.

### **Welsh area statements: example resource**

In April 2020, Natural Resources Wales published the first versions of Area Statements for all of Wales. These webpages are designed to serve as [collective statements of the challenges and opportunities connected with the natural environment](#) in an area and what appropriate responses might look like. These Area Statements point towards the opportunity for integration of environmental information with dialogue about the needs and capabilities of different groups in society and could be used as a resource to develop progressive approaches elsewhere.

### **Consultations**

#### **NPPF changes and National Model Design Code**

MHCLG has finally published the [draft version of its long-awaited National Model Design Code](#). Alongside proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that were [published for consultation at the same time](#), the document aims to improve the design quality of new development. The national code document says that it "sets out clear design parameters to help local authorities and communities decide what good quality design looks like in their area, based on local aspirations for how their area will develop, following appropriate local consultation". Once finalised, the national design code will form part of the government's Planning Practice Guidance alongside the previously-published [National Design Guide](#).  
Deadline: 27 March.

#### **New Homes Bonus**

The New Homes Bonus was introduced in 2011 to provide a financial incentive for local authorities to encourage housing growth in their areas. [The consultation](#) covers a number of options for reforming the programme. It proposes increasing the threshold of national housing growth below which no NHB will be paid, and that no NHB will be paid to councils without an up-to-date local plan.

### **Electricity North West**

[ENWL are consulting](#) on their Environmental Action Plan, potential projects to contribute to a green recovery (deadline: 19 March) and community and local energy strategy.

### **Lancashire Flood Risk Management**

Blackpool, Blackburn with Darwen and Lancashire Councils are consulting on their joint [Lancashire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy](#) 2021 -2027.

### **Funding**

#### **Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund**

The Government announced that nature projects in England which tackle climate change, create and restore habitats, or improve water quality could soon benefit from a [new £10 million fund](#) to help them both deliver environmental benefits and attract private sector investment. The [Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund](#) will provide grants of up to £100,000 to environmental groups, local authorities, businesses and other organisations to help them get specialist advice, engage investors and build capacity to develop their nature projects to the point where they can attract and repay private investment.

#### **Green Match Fund**

The Big Give have recently launched a new match funding campaign, the [Green Match Fund](#), which will match funds raised from the public for charities which are working on environmental issues as part of their core mission. They have a match funder that is looking to exclusively fund charities in the North West of England. Applications for the Fund close at 5pm Friday 5th March, and shouldn't take more than an hour. The full criteria for their funding requirements is as follows:

- Geographically: North West of England
- Thematically: Biodiversity (in farming/horticultural methods); Local community agriculture; Eliminating food waste through redistribution / community cafe schemes; Connecting people with nature
- Relationally, they tend to prefer to support: smaller (i.e. local or regional) charities rather than nationals; with good levels of diversity and community support; where we can be involved in/close to the activity, add value to the funds and understand the impact.

#### **Restoring your Railways Ideas Fund**

The Department for Transport has opened bidding for the third round of the [Ideas Fund element of the Restoring Your Railway programme](#). This programme reopens railway lines and stations to reverse the Beeching cuts to the rail network in the 1960s. It aims to reconnect communities, regenerate local economies and improve access to jobs, homes and education. The Ideas Fund is one element of this programme, and provides development funding for early-stage ideas to explore options to restore lost rail connections to communities. Submissions are currently being accepted for the third round of the Ideas Fund until 5 March 2021.

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