



● GREEN BULLET

25th March 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 - 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

Nature Recovery

The Prime Minister has called on world leaders to turn round nature's decline by 2030. But there's no commitment in law to do the same here at home. Almost half of UK wildlife is in long term decline and 15% of species are at risk of extinction. The Environment Bill is the last chance to set this right. By writing the recovery of nature into law, the Environment Bill could start to address the nature and climate crisis. But the current wording fails to reflect the ambition or

urgency we need. [Join over 50 nature conservation groups](#) to urge the Prime Minister to make sure this crucial change gets through.

Local and mayoral elections

The 2021 local elections are fast approaching, and CPRE has produced a [manifesto identifying four priority areas](#) where local councillors and mayors can promote countryside solutions to the climate emergency; create a planning system that works for people, nature and the environment; develop a comprehensive bus network for rural communities; and urge central government to introduce an 'all-in' Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers.

Air pollution

- The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has ruled that the [UK has 'systematically and persistently' exceeded legal limits](#) for dangerous nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) since 2010.
- New government data, which has been analysed by environmental lawyers ClientEarth, shows that the UK is also [set to miss four out of five of its legally-binding 2030 targets](#) for air pollution.
- A new report led by King's College London and published by the government estimates that between 28,000 and [36,000 people die as a result of air pollution every year in the UK.](#)

Protest

Protest is a fundamental democratic right, and a major tool for the environmental movement, but today it's in very real danger. Last year Priti Patel branded Extinction Rebellion activists "criminals". Her solution to the inconvenience of protest is the sinister Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, containing amongst other things contain numerous threats to the right to peaceful protest and access to the countryside. Join these [246 leading civil society organisations](#) in calling on the Government to rethink its approach.

Information update

Brexit and beyond

- The Government has launched the first pilot phase of the Sustainable Farming Incentive. This is part of the government's plans to reward future sustainable farming practices, now we have left the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Defra are looking for a large number of farmers to take part in this first phase of piloting the scheme. Farmers will be able to express their interest by completing a [short online form](#). There are some eligibility criteria, [specified in the full report](#) (under "[launching the first phase of piloting](#)"). Farmers will receive payment for taking part in the pilot, however Defra stress that it will require a significant time commitment. Deadline to apply: 11 April. Please share widely.
- In response to Defra's reluctance to include, in ELMS, measures that work for organic, pasture-fed and agroforestry farm systems, the Sustain alliance have [published a policy paper](#). This challenges Defra to stick to their commitments of creating a scheme that is accessible for all farms and which also delivers the aspirations of the 25-Year Environment Plan, Carbon Net Zero, and the premise of 'public money for public goods' in the Agriculture Act 2020.

The Government is consulting on a policy statement on environmental principles, which will set out how the crucial principles of integration, prevention, rectification at source, polluter pays, and precautionary should be interpreted and applied in making Government policy.

This will frame the environmental context and debate on all post-Brexit Government policy development. See 'Consultations' section for more detail and links.

- In [this year's Budget](#), Rishi Sunak announced plans to issue £15bn of green sovereign bonds this financial year; allocate £1bn of funding to net-zero innovations and create eight freeport regions where green business investment processes will be streamlined. However, fuel duty was frozen for a twelfth consecutive year, while the Green Homes Grant and National Nature service went unmentioned, and [domestic air passenger duty is set to be cut](#). Environmental groups and others have criticized it as [greenwashing](#) and a [missed opportunity](#): "Our response to the climate crisis should have been front and centre of the Budget, not a footnote". [Carbon Brief analyse the climate and energy-related measures](#) in detail. Following the budget, the Treasury has provided more than 30 updates to tax rules in the UK, but has [failed to provide the VAT breaks for energy-efficient and resource-efficient materials](#) and business models that many had hoped for. The paper updating the tax rules makes no specific mentions of "energy" or "climate".

Climate change & energy

- Ahead of the COP26 climate summit, the UK Government has boasted about its improved climate goals and urged other nations to match its ambition. But at home, the government's [recovery plans are pulling in the opposite direction](#).
- Government has been accused of "outrageous hypocrisy" for their new [£16bn sector 'bailout' for the fossil fuel industry](#). It pledges to align the oil and gas sector with the national net-zero target, while also ending financing for overseas fossil fuel projects, but does not commit to ending licensing for new oil and gas projects, and sets no timeframe for decarbonization.
- The Public Accounts Committee has published its [latest report on 'achieving net-zero'](#), outlining policy changes relating to the UK's low-carbon transition and summarising evidence supplied by Government bodies and representatives. The overarching conclusion is damning – that the Government has "no plan" for achieving Net Zero, two years after setting target in law, and is likely to miss long-term climate targets due to the absence of a joined-up policy approach. The fact that there is no coordinated planning between departments has left many high-emitting sectors without clarity on how to transition, or support to do so, the document states.
- In the face of overwhelming pressure, Robert Jenrick has finally [called in the West Cumbria coal mine](#) for his own decision. There will now be a public enquiry. The Business Secretary has said that there are [very compelling reasons to reject](#) it; while Jenrick seemed to shrug of his department's responsibility for climate change
- The Environmental Audit Committee has published a report which finds that the [UK will miss its long-term, legally binding climate targets](#) unless the Government addresses energy efficiency in homes as a priority, which it is currently failing to do. It describes the Green Homes Grant, the government's flagship for this, as "woefully inadequate".
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has approved its [Year One Climate Action Plan](#), which aims to ensure that opportunities for early action in the fight against climate change are not missed, as the city region strives to become zero-carbon by 2040. The Plan features projects that will either start, continue or finish during 2021/22.
- New analysis published by UK100, a group of more than 100 mayors and local government leaders, indicates that more than [three million jobs could be created](#) if the Government committed to a national shift to the green economy, with construction and manufacturing accounting for 1.2 million.

- New research suggests that bottom-trawling – dragging heavy nets along the sea bed to catch fish – is responsible for emitting [as much carbon dioxide as the entire aviation industry](#). Scientists and economists are lobbying for these emissions to be included in national inventories. The UK is the fourth highest global emitter from this practice at 48m tonnes per year, but is dwarfed by China's 769m tonnes. A few weeks ago, as a direct response to a Greenpeace campaign, the UK Government announced [proposals to ban bottom trawlers in two Marine Protected Areas](#), and proposed partial restrictions in two more sites.[2] It's an important start - but proper protection in two out of 76 just isn't good enough.
- An analysis by DeSmog reveals that [4 in 5 UK bank directors have connections to high-emitting corporates](#) in industries linked to climate change and pollution, prompting concerns that the boards' personnel pose a systemic obstacle to climate action.

Planning

- The law allowing all council meetings, including planning committees, to meet online is due to expire on May 7. Government has said they don't have Parliamentary time to pass new legislation to allow a continuation; Local Government associations have [lodged a legal challenge](#).
- The National Infrastructure Commission has been commissioned to carry out a new study looking at [how English towns' local industrial strategies are "joined up" with their local plans](#) and other planning documents. The study aims to support regeneration and economic development in "towns and suburban centres" to support the government's 'levelling up' agenda, and will "explore local delivery and capability, including how to ensure that regionally-significant but locally-owned projects can be co-ordinated across a wider area".
- The [Quality of Life Foundation](#) has launched a framework that seeks to address the changes that the development industry can make to make sure that homes are 'acquired, planned, constructed and managed to actively provide a better quality of life for everyone'. The foundation highlights that more than 170,000 homes were developed in 2019, but too many of them were built without consideration of people's long-term quality of life. It warns that this results in developments that are of "poor quality, badly designed or built in the wrong place".
- A Centre for Cities report on ['levelling up' the UK's economic performance](#) has called for spatial planning powers to be transferred from local authorities to combined authority 'metro mayors', which should be established in every city region and prepare London Plan-style strategies.
- A framework that identifies a [set of principles for large-scale development](#) to ensure that it delivers the high-quality homes needed to meet demand and the needs of local communities has been published, as a poll finds that two-thirds of the public think new development is poor. ULI UK and YouGov said green space and parks was the number one factor that would help gain the support of the public.
- Robert Jenrick has appointed commissioners to [oversee all of Liverpool City Council's "executive functions](#) associated with regeneration, highways and property management at the authority", including planning, following publication of a government [report into the council's work](#) over the past five years. The council are [working to implement an improvement plan](#) that, if achieved, will prevent the commissioners taking full control of these functions.
- In better news for Liverpool, the city council is entering into a partnership with Fields in Trust to [safeguard 2,500 acres of Liverpool's parks against future development](#) in the hopes of realising its ambition that every resident will live no more than a 10-minute walk from a

“high-quality green space”. Under the terms of the agreement, Fields in Trust would have the power to prohibit the sale of protected land and block development plans.

Waste & recycling

- New analysis shows a direct correlation between regions tied into incineration contracts and low recycling rates, and that hundreds of thousands of tonnes of carefully sorted household waste are simply being burned after they're collected. In England, [more waste is now burned than recycled](#) – 11.6 million tonnes was incinerated in 2019 while 10.9 million was sent for recycling. There are 48 energy-from-waste incinerators across the country, and industry figures show 18 more are planned.

Transport

- The Government has officially confirmed that the [ban on sales of new petrol and diesel cars](#) has been moved forward to 2030, while also announcing a new £20m funding pot for electric vehicle innovation. There are some exceptions to the ban, with some plug-in hybrids and some full hybrids still able to be sold up until 2035.
- Transport for the North has urged the Government to back the “future-defining” [Northern Powerhouse Rail](#) now that it has formally lodged its proposals for the project, which includes plans for a new line between Manchester and Liverpool. The group said the Government should “commit to the full, transformational vision for both Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2...that will define the North’s economic future for the rest of this century, boosting jobs and growth”
- The government has unveiled its new [National Bus Strategy](#) for England, involving hundreds of miles of new bus lanes and price caps on tickets. While the government said [its £3bn plan](#) would make buses cheaper and easier to use, Labour has said it would not be enough to reverse years of cuts and reduced services. Passenger numbers in England have fallen in the last decade, although buses are still the most frequently used form of public transport. The [Campaign for Better Transport](#) has broadly welcomed the new strategy, with promising policies on fares, bus priority, local authority role and capabilities, funding and electric buses. CPRE (see Publications section) points to the need to go further to make rural public transport a viable option.
- [Greater Manchester’s bus network will be brought back under public control](#) and will operate a London-style system. It will be the first area outside London to have a regulated bus service since the 1980s. Fares, timetables and routes will be set by local authorities instead of private companies, but operators may be able to continue running services under a franchise system.
- A new report from the International Transport Forum states that [Governments must reallocate road space](#) in order to improve the environment and create healthier cities.

Nature & biodiversity

- A new [report from wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation](#) on the state of Britain’s larger moths shows a worrying 33% decline in their populations over the last 50 years. This decline is of great concern because moths play a vital role in our ecosystems – as pollinators of many plants and as an essential food source for thousands of animal species.

Publications

Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy

The Government has scrapped its Industrial Strategy and replaced it with an [Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy](#). It aims to align manufacturing and construction sectors to the national net-zero target, creating the world's first low-carbon industrial sector while supporting the public sector to decarbonize. It claims that more than £1bn will be funnelled into industry, schools and hospitals, in the hope of supporting 80,000 UK jobs over the next 30 years, whilst cutting emissions by two-thirds in just 15 years. The new strategy is built on an expectation that by 2030, heavy industry will source 40% of its energy needs from low-carbon technologies. It has been [largely welcomed, but criticized for a lack of detail](#).

State of the Green Belt

CPRE's [2021 State of the Green Belt report](#) shows that right now, there are a quarter of a million homes planned to be built on Green Belt land – a rise of 475% since 2013. And right alongside this worrying news, a CPRE poll shows that two-thirds of adults think that protecting and enhancing our green spaces should be a higher priority after lockdown. This shows just how much communities would suffer if these local patches of green are lost.

Rural buses – every village, every hour

Building on CPRE's previous research into rural 'transport deserts', new research from CPRE and [Transport for Quality of Life](#) shows that with the right investment, our towns and villages could have a reliable, frequent and cheap bus service. The government's [National Bus Strategy](#), also launched in March 2021, while full of ambitious plans, won't succeed in giving travellers the 'more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better coordinated and cheaper' buses that it aspires to. To run services that meet everyone's needs, and especially those living in rural areas, the data in the [Every village, every hour report](#) shows that the government needs to make continuous year-on-year investment. And this could be fully paid for by redirecting just a portion of the funding planned for the government's legally embattled and widely-criticised multi-billion pound road-building schemes.

Green jobs in Cumbria

Green industries and investment could create 9,000 jobs over the next 15 years as Cumbria seeks to hit its 2037 net-zero target, according to a [new independent report by Cumbria Action for Sustainability](#). The report calculates that around 9,000 jobs could be created for local people during a 15-year 'transition period' towards the county reaching net-zero, and 3,800 jobs in the longer term across sectors including transport, industry, retrofitting, renewable heat, renewable electricity and waste.

Events

Rewilding the Knepp Castle Estate

CPRE Sussex invites you to join a virtual event with Sir Charles Burrell, who'll give his inspirational account of the [innovative landscape rewilding project at the Knepp Castle Estate](#) in West Sussex. 31 March, 7pm. You'll hear about the journey of transitioning from intensive and unprofitable farming to an open-ended, low cost, landscape restoration project. All 3,200 acres of the Estate are now devoted to a process-led rewilding project involving free-roaming herds of cattle, horses, pigs and deer as drivers of habitat creation. Since it began in 2001, numerous Red Data species have colonised Knepp and populations of common species are rocketing.

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 (post-Brexit agri-environment support).

Wildflower meadows

With spring in the air, there's a real buzz around wildflowers at the moment. We can all do our bit in our own outdoor spaces, but what about parks, road verges and community spaces? Whether you're thinking of setting up your own community project, asking your council to mow less or are simply wanting to create your own meadow patch, Cheshire Wildlife Trust have brought together an online [panel of guest speakers from all over Cheshire](#) to give you all the hints, tips and inside knowledge you might need. 14 April, 5-6pm.

Natural Capital register and account tool

The Environment Agency has created a [natural capital register and account tool](#) which allows the user to create an account within days and for free. In this webinar the team that developed the tool will share what that looks like and how it is being used. As reflected in the Dasgupta Review, nature is the foundation of our economy, health and wellbeing, and yet is often valued as zero and invisible in decision making. A natural capital register and account presents the value, quantity and quality of natural resources in a place. The outputs can change the way we see the environment and the value it gives to our lives and the economy, as well as helping to monitor net gain, or net loss, of natural assets.

Accelerating woodland creation & management

The 2021 [Accelerating Woodland Creation & Management Conference](#) will help delegates to get to grips with the challenge of increasing woodland cover in England and Wales in line with calls for a green recovery, as well as managing existing woodland for multiple benefits. 26-27 May.

Reimagining public farmland

Public farmland is land owned by local authorities. It's often an unknown and underutilised resource that is inaccessible to the public. [Research carried out by](#) CPRE, [New Economics Foundation](#), [Who Owns England?](#) and [Shared Assets](#) has shown that much of it has been sold off over the last 40 years. The [Reimagining Public Farmland online event](#), 30 March 2021 at 10am, will consider how we can collectively reimagine the purpose and use of public farmland in the England as part of our recovery from the coronavirus pandemic, and in the context of the climate emergency and Brexit, to create a more just and sustainable land system in England.

Nature and health at the heart of design

The Trees and Design Action Group are hosting a webinar on urban design, green space and communities, [rethinking cities to make space for both nature and people](#). 14 April, 2-4.

Resources

The path to net zero

The Climate Change Committee has held eight excellent online seminars on the [sixth carbon budget and the path to net zero](#). Recordings are now available to watch and the accompanying slides available to download.

Net zero targets

The Energy & Climate Intelligence Unit's latest report [Taking Stock: A global assessment of net zero targets](#) provides the first systematic assessment of net zero targets across nations, states & regions, cities and corporates, asking not only how far they cover emissions, population and GDP, but how rigorous they are.

Green Infrastructure Resource Library

The Green Infrastructure Resource Library provides access to a searchable database of documents, case-studies, videos, tools and other [information about green infrastructure and its benefits](#). It is produced by the Green Infrastructure Partnership and hosted by the TCPA.

Nature connectedness – free online course

This free online course, provided by the University of Derby, provides an opportunity to learn about [the value of a strong sense of connectedness to nature](#). It is divided into eight units that provide 20 hours of self-guided learning. The course content is written by Miles Richardson, Professor of Nature Connectedness, together with colleagues from the Nature Connectedness Research Group.

Marine Pioneer: summary and recommendations

This [interactive pdf](#) provides a summary of all the work carried out by the Marine Pioneer in Suffolk and North Devon between 2017 and 2020. The Marine Pioneer tested ways to deliver the ambition of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan for the marine environment. The pdf also details recommendations for applying a natural capital approach, integrating planning and delivery, using innovative finance, managing fisheries, managing marine protected areas, empowering communities and applying a net gain principle.

Making urban nature bloom

This (free) new book co-ordinated by ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) Europe seeks to [inspire cities to co-create nature-based solutions](#). It shares stories, insights and case studies from co-creative processes for nature-based solutions in six European cities, including Newcastle in the UK.

Disabled Ramblers

Accessing the countryside can be a challenge at times and for those using a mobility scooter or wheelchairs there are even more barriers. [Disabled Ramblers](#) is a small charity offering online information to help people using wheelchairs to access and enjoy the countryside. They also organize 20-30 walks each year in different parts of the country so people with disabilities can enjoy the huge social benefits of being part of a rambling group.

Climate and the economy primer

This six-minute piece broadcast on national television explores the value of the natural environment in economic decisions. The central question is whether there is [a "more climate-](#)

[friendly" way to assess an economy](#). It includes a conversation with Sir Partha Dasgupta (lead of the recent international review of the economics of biodiversity).

Consultations

Environmental Principles

In anticipation of the [Environment Bill](#) becoming law, whenever that might be – it has been delayed three times since its initial introduction in October 2019 – the government has set out a draft '[policy statement on environmental principles](#)'. The statement is the subject of a [consultation that runs until 2 June](#). The statement expands on the five principles in the Environment Bill: integration, prevention, rectification at source, polluter pays, and precautionary, and sets out how these principles should be interpreted and applied. It will apply when any government policy is being decided. Getting this right will be crucial, but [environmental groups are critical of the proposals](#), not least the fact that some ministries, notably the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence, are exempt from the commitments.

Local government and the path to net zero

The Homes, Communities and Local Government select committee has launched an [inquiry to scrutinise the government's plans](#) to make all new homes "zero carbon ready" by 2025, through the introduction of the Future Homes Standards, and to explore how local government can help the UK to reduce its carbon emissions to "net zero" by 2050, including by incentivising and decarbonising public transport and facilitating green growth. The inquiry follows on from the findings of the Climate Assembly UK report in 2020. Deadline: 30 April.

Deposit refund scheme

Defra has (finally) launched a [consultation on a deposit return scheme](#) to increase the recycling of single-use drinks containers including bottles and cans. The national rollout of this system – which has boosted recycling rates of those items in some countries to more than 90% - is proposed to be pushed back to 2024 – and there remains a risk that industry pressure may incline government to dilute the most effective 'all-in' approach. Deadline: 4 June.

Extended Producer Responsibility

Defra is consulting on plans for manufacturers to pay the full costs of handling their packaging, through the [Extended Producer Responsibility system](#). With approximately 11.7 million tonnes of packaging placed onto the UK market in 2019, the Government is also proposing higher levies for materials deemed harder to recycle or reuse. This consultation focuses on specific policy proposals for the scheme's introduction, including the scope of full net costs, producer obligations, scheme governance, regulation of the scheme, and packaging waste recycling targets. Deadline: 4 June.

Cumbria local government

In an astonishing display of unity (ahem), local authorities in Cumbria have put forward not one, not two, but [four different proposals](#) for how local government in the county should be re-organised in response to the Government's now-delayed devolution proposals: a whole-Cumbria unitary, an east-west split, and two variations on a north-south split, one incorporating Lancaster to create a Morecambe Bay unitary. You can respond to all or any of the proposals until 19 April.

LOCAL Lancashire

LOCAL ([Locally Organised Communities Across Lancashire](#)) is a conversation process which has been set up to develop a collective vision for the VCFSE sector across Lancashire as well as in specific districts. We need to be able to make the case for our communities, for our sector and for ideas that make a real difference. This is an opportunity for the sector to develop what “building back” looks like for us.

Funding

Green Recovery Challenge Fund

The government has announced the [second round of its £40 million Green Recovery Challenge](#) fund for environmental charities and their partners across England to retain and create jobs while restoring nature and tackling climate change. For grants of up to £2 million each, the government says that all projects must contribute to at least one of the following themes of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund: nature conservation and restoration; nature-based solutions, particularly focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation; and/or connecting people with nature. The deadline for applications under £250,000 is 14 April.

Treescaping

The government has announced a new £2.7 million initiative as part of its plans to increase tree planting and natural regeneration in local communities. The £2.7 million [Local Authority Treescaping fund](#) aims to establish more trees in places such as riverbanks, hedgerows, parklands, urban areas, and beside roads and footpaths. Applications will be open to all local authorities through top-tier authority applications from early April. Local authorities are strongly encouraged to work with other organisations, NGOs, community groups and private individuals to deliver the most “exciting” projects – so take the initiative to your council!

Community Renewal, Community Ownership, and Levelling Up Funds

The government has published prospectuses and further information for the new [UK Community Renewal Fund, Levelling Up Fund and Community Ownership Fund](#).

Recycle for Greater Manchester Community Fund

The [Recycle for Greater Manchester Community Fund](#) will soon be open for applications. The fund aims to support projects which prevent, reuse, or recycle household waste, and also reduce contamination, promote sustainable use of waste and resources, and generate wider social benefits for the communities of Greater Manchester. It wants to encourage and support innovative projects that are novel and involve a new and untried approach to tackling an issue in the key waste areas.

Community-led housing

A new housing fund (led by the social investment arm of the Charities Aid Foundation) has launched, aiming to empower community groups to plan and build 1,000 affordable homes in communities across England. The [Community Led Housing Fund](#) (CLH) is open for applications for loans, standby facilities and, in partnership with Power to Change, grants at every stage of the project. The maximum amount of funding available is £150,000, including financial help in purchasing land.

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To contribute to the NWEL Bulletin, please contact:
Andy Yuille
andyyuille@gmail.com

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