

● GREEN BULLET

29th April 2021

North West Environment Link (NWEL) was a partnership of environmental voluntary sector organisations, representing hundreds of thousands of members in the North West, established to respond jointly to regional environmental challenges and opportunities. NWEL was wound down after the termination of regional governance arrangements, and its remaining funds supported the continued production of this bulletin. The Green Bullet is intended to connect and support networks of voluntary, community and public sector organisations in the region across a wide range of environmental and related issues. More recently CPRE North West has supported and enabled its production and retained the same aim.

Please send any items for inclusion in the next bulletin to andyyuille@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. VSNW is the regional voluntary sector network for the North West, whose purpose is to support a connected and influential voluntary and community sector.

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Campaigns

State of Nature: Environment Bill

The [2019 'State of Nature Report'](#) showed that almost half of UK wildlife is in long term decline and 15% of species are at risk of extinction. Over 60 nature conservation groups have joined together to urge the Prime Minister to [write the recovery of nature into the Environment Bill](#). Well over 100,000 people have added their signatures. Will you join us?

Moral right to protest

Six Extinction Rebellion protesters have been cleared of causing criminal damage, despite the jury being told by the judge there was no defence in law for their actions. The [jury acquitted them on moral grounds](#), agreeing with their argument that their actions were a necessary and proportionate response to the harm being caused by Shell. However, the government are [proposing draconian restrictions on the right to protest](#), making many more forms of dissent for progressive causes illegal. "Kill the bill" demonstrations are planned for Manchester, Liverpool and Lancaster on May 1st and every Saturday thereafter. Join the 250 civil society organisations that have written to the government [protesting the threat to protest](#).

Climate Change

- The Climate Coalition are calling on people to [sign a declaration](#) to the Prime Minister to commit to early and adequate action to meet the UK's ambitious new carbon emissions targets. They are also beginning to make plans for the [Great Big Green Week](#) (18th to 26th September), and are inviting communities like yours to host thousands of events and activities across the UK.
- [126 local authorities](#) (of all political leaderships) have set a net zero target of 2030 for their whole District/Borough/County. [Climate Emergency UK](#) are working to get the rest to follow suit, and the local and regional elections on May 6th are a big opportunity to get candidates to commit to net-zero by 2030. They've set up a [2030 pledge](#) for candidates and sitting councillors to sign. Hundreds of candidates, from every major party, have already signed the pledge. Can you ask your local councillors and candidates to sign the pledge?

Grant a Green

The Open Spaces Society has launched a '[Grant a Green](#)' campaign. It's urging councils to register their open spaces as town or village greens, to protect them from development and give local people rights of recreation there. Your organisation can help persuade them why this is a good idea!

Litter

[Eight billion cans, bottles and cartons were thrown into landfill, burned or littered](#) in the UK in 2019. Two year ago, massive public support helped to secure a government commitment to implement a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS), with the potential to cut all forms of drinks container litter. However, rather than introducing the scheme, the government has released another consultation delaying everything until the end of 2024 at the earliest, and suggesting a half-hearted design that would set the system up to fail. Join thousands of others in sending a '[message in a bottle](#)' to the Prime Minister to get a move on!

Trees and woodlands

The Woodland Trust are encouraging [people in Metro Mayoral areas](#) to use their simple tool to email candidates to ask them to prioritise tree-planting and woodland management.

Dark skies

In February, CPRE asked the public to help map the nation's view of the night sky with their [annual Star Count](#). 7,845 counts were submitted - the biggest year ever! The results show a drop in severe light pollution compared to 2020 – with lockdown likely to be the explanation. Discover what they found on their interactive map, and zoom in to find out how your area compares.

Information update

Brexit and beyond

- The Office for Environmental Protection, the new environmental watchdog for England, will be launched on an interim basis ahead of its formal establishment as part of the Environment Bill. From July, the [new Interim Office for Environmental Protection](#) will be set up in non-statutory form to provide independent oversight of the government's environmental progress and to accelerate the foundation of the full body. It will be able to:
 - Produce and publish an independent assessment of progress in relation to the implementation of the government's 25 Year Environment Plan
 - Develop the Office for Environmental Protection's strategy including its enforcement policy
 - Receive complaints from members of the public about failures of public authorities to comply with environmental law
 - Take decisions on operational matters such as staff recruitment, accommodation and facilities
 - Determine approaches for how the Office for Environment Protection will form and operate, establishing its character, ways of working and voice.
- Greener UK have produced a series of briefings aimed at helping civil society to better [understand the changes made to UK environmental law](#) as a result of the UK leaving the EU, to identify and monitor potential concerns and to advocate for changes to legislation where problems are identified. They feature briefings on how to complain if an environmental law is broken, scrutinising statutory instruments (ie secondary legislation that may avoid scrutiny in Parliament), and an analysis of and issues identified in Defra's statutory instruments relating to withdrawal from the EU

Climate change & energy

- The government has accepted the recommendations of the Climate Change Committee in both setting a target to [reduce emissions by 78% by 2035](#), and in including 'our share' of emissions from international shipping and aviation in the targets in the Sixth Carbon Budget. This [major step forward](#) has been widely welcomed as [a credible path towards net zero](#) – with the usual caveats about minding the gap between targets and action, and despite the Prime Minister's derogatory dismissal of environmental action that he hasn't endorsed as "[expensive politically correct green ... 'bunny-hugging'](#)".
- The [EU has also upped its 2030 commitment to a 55% reduction](#), while [America has set a new target of 50-52% emissions reductions](#) by 2030 compared with 2005 levels.
- But meanwhile, a new report by the Public Accounts Committee states that [the Treasury and HMRC are failing to respond to a "climate storm breaking all around us"](#), failing to make the necessary changes to tax systems and short-term funding packages needed for the 'just' transition to net-zero. Building on the Committee's recent [report on net-zero delivery](#), which found that the Government had no credible plans in the short and mid-term to back up its long-term climate goals, the report takes a specific look at the ways in which Government finance must transform to achieve net zero.
- The PAC report comes hot on the heels of [Green Alliance research](#) which shows that eight in ten people believe that the Government should hold the main responsibility for tackling environmental issues, while six in ten support green taxes to drive behavioural change
- A critical Green Alliance report that finds that despite strong progress in decarbonising electricity generation, the UK Government is not doing enough to support the low-carbon

transition in hard-to-abate sectors like agriculture and transport, and that government [complacency over these sectors is threatening the UK's net zero targets](#).

- Three leading climate scientists have published an article suggesting that ['net zero' targets may not only not be fit for purpose, but could actually have perverse effects](#), delaying or preventing adequate mitigation measures.
- New research has found that more than 800,000 [job losses caused by the coronavirus pandemic in the UK could be replaced by new green jobs](#), provided government and private investment is mobilised to push towards the 2050 net-zero target, according to Green New Deal UK's analysis of new ONS job vacancy figures.
- Office for National Statistics figures also reveal that the UK hosted 202,100 low-carbon and renewable energy jobs in 2019 - [30,000 fewer green jobs than in 2014](#).
- The tumbling costs of wind and solar could mean that renewables will push fossil fuels out of the electricity mix by the mid-2030s, in the context of global renewable potential that could [power the world 100 times over](#), according to a new report from think tank Carbon Tracker.
- [Less than 10% of the funding promised](#) to retrofit homes under the UK's Green Homes Grant Scheme been issued, new official Government figures show. £1.5 billion of the £2 billion fund has now been axed.
- The Science Museum in London is [facing a backlash from scientists and environmentalists](#) after it was revealed that Shell will sponsor a major new climate exhibition, due to open in May. ['Our Future Planet'](#) is set to be the flagship show in the run-up to the UK hosting the UN climate conference in Glasgow in November.

Planning

- The most radical undermining of the plan-led system of the last few years has [come into force](#), introducing the new [Use Class E](#) (covering retail, food, financial services, gyms, healthcare, nurseries, offices and light industry – so properties can [change between these uses without planning permission](#), as changing use within a class is not considered development), and also allowing any property within this class to be converted to residential as a [Class MA](#) permitted development right. Government has proposed making it much harder for councils to issue Article 4 directions that would limit this right. The RTPI, RIBA, RICS and CIOB sent a joint letter to the prime minister in protest, calling the move [“not only a failure to “level up” but a threat to our local communities.”](#)
- Further undermining a plan-led system, the government has confirmed that, as proposed in last summer's consultation, [councils will have to support the development of unplanned exception sites with no fixed size limits](#), and which can include market housing, in order to drive delivery of discounted First Homes for first-time buyers. They have also announced that [the existing Standard Method of calculating housing need will be retained](#). They have however [dropped their plans to prevent contributions to affordable housing](#) being required on sites of less than 40-50 houses.
- England's chief planner Joanna Averley has written to local authority planners about the [changes to the planning system and temporary measures](#) that will remain to ease the path out of lockdown and aid economic recovery.
- Despite significant concerns about the potential negative [impact of the government's housing delivery test](#) on the ability of councils to manage unsustainable speculative development, by forcing the presumption in favour on them, new research by Lichfields suggests that the test is "in the vast majority of cases, toothless". The report states that there was only one authority among the 55 penalised earlier this year where the policy would have a significant impact – largely because most of the other councils were already

being penalised with the presumption for lacking the required five year housing land supply, or had a severely constrained land supply.

- Planning committee meetings – and all statutory local authority and parish council [meetings – will be held in person from 7 May](#), after the government refused to either make time to debate legislation to extend the current flexibility to hold meetings online, or to pass emergency legislation to do so.
- A coalition of built environment and climate action organisations has written to the government outlining its [concerns about the current Future Buildings Standard](#), including a failure to set out how to regulate the total energy use of buildings, as .
- The government has announced an additional £2.1million in funding to [support groups in deprived and urban areas to undertake neighbourhood planning](#), strengthening community voice in planning where it is currently often most marginalized. There is also a further £330,000 to trial a new ‘simplified’ neighbourhood planning route, for communities with the will but not the capacity to produce a full plan. It is not yet clear what legal status such a plan would have.
- The government has announced £150 million in funding to [make it easier and more affordable for people to build their own homes](#). The government believes self and custom-build homes could deliver 30,000 to 40,000 homes a year and will benefit small building firms. A third of the new £75 million [Brownfield Land Release Fund](#) (available to local authorities to provide publicly-owned land for housing) will also be dedicated to self and custom-built housing.
- 8,363 [homes on brownfield sites across Greater Manchester](#) are being funded through the government’s Brownfield Housing Fund.

Transport

- Environmental campaigners have [filed papers with the High Court in a bid to overturn the decision by transport secretary](#) Grant Shapps not to review the national policy document on road-building in light of the government’s more recent carbon reduction targets. The government’s [National Policy Statement for National Networks](#) (NPS), adopted in late 2014, effectively sets the planning framework for proposed transport schemes. Transport Action Network has previously said that this “effectively bans campaigners, planning inspectors and judges from considering the carbon emissions of individual road schemes”.
- Air Quality News provides a useful round-up of the argument both for and against [Low Traffic Neighbourhoods](#).
- Transport expert Phil Goodwin explains how carbon [assessments of potential road schemes systematically under-estimate emissions](#) that new roads will cause. He claims that the carbon emissions from the government’s £27 billion road building programme will be [around 100 times greater than the DfT acknowledge](#).
- New research suggests that [cycling is ten times more important than electric cars](#) for achieving net-zero cities.

Nature & biodiversity

- The United Nations has adopted a new framework that [includes the contributions of nature when measuring economic prosperity and human well-being](#). The new framework — the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting—Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EA) — was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission and marks a major step forward that goes beyond the commonly used statistic of gross domestic product (GDP) that has dominated economic reporting since the end of World War II. This measure would ensure that natural capital—forests, wetlands and other ecosystems—are recognized in economic reporting.

- A new report from Natural England shows the [importance of nature and biodiversity in reaching net zero](#), by setting out the impact that different UK habitats can have in taking carbon out of the atmosphere and storing it (with peatlands and native woodlands at the top of the list), whilst delivering for both biodiversity and conservation. It highlights the importance of protecting natural, semi-natural and traditionally managed habitats.
- The UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP15) will take place in October. CBD was originally planned for 2020, and like UN Climate Conference (UNFCCC COP26), will now take place in a changed world. Governments have the chance to make the most of this moment of transformation; to decide that the path out of the current health crisis will also lead us away from the twin biodiversity and climate crises that loom on the horizon. Wildlife and Countryside Link and colleagues are working to give decision makers the [policy tools](#) they need to help forge international agreement to act now - for nature, people and the climate.

Publications

Beauty Still Betrayed: State of AONBs 2021

An increasing number of housing schemes are being granted planning permission in areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs), according to a report by countryside charity CPRE. They have called on the government to use the forthcoming planning bill to strengthen protections for green space and prevent high levels of development in AONBs, saying that development should only be allowed if it meets the needs of local people, nature and the countryside. The report, [Beauty Still Betrayed: State of AONBs 2021](#) finds that the number of homes being built within 500 metres of the boundary of AONBs has increased by 135% since 2012, and there has been a 129% increase in the amount of greenfield land planned to be built over within AONBs.

State of UK's woods and trees 2021

Native woodlands in the UK are 'isolated and in poor ecological condition', with just 7 per cent in good ecological condition, according to a [new report by the Woodland Trust](#). It brings together evidence that identifies the compounding threats that could have "catastrophic" consequences for woods, trees and the flora and fauna they are home to. In some parts of the UK, the report also highlights that significant numbers of people don't have woodland nearby they can visit. This is because woods are privately owned and there isn't any permissive access or there is insufficient woodland cover. This is compounded by cuts to public grant funding for the provision of woodland access. The report makes a series of recommendations to reverse and address the threats and challenges faced by native woodlands.

Events

Nature-based climate solutions

Hear the headline findings at the launch of the British Ecological Society (BES)'s landmark report of the first comprehensive assessment of the potential [of nature-based solutions for climate change in the UK](#). Hosted by Rt Hon Philip Dunne MP, Chair of the Environment Audit Committee, lead authors will take you through the recommendations of the report and answer your questions. Wednesday 12 May, 10:00 – 11:30.

Natural Capital Group Conference 2021.

The Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group, the Natural Course and IGNITION projects and the University of Salford are bringing together leading natural environment practitioners to

discuss the challenge of [increasing nature-based solutions in Greater Manchester](#). Register your interest at GreenCity@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk. The one-and-a-half-day conference is split into three parts so you can pick and choose the elements you want to attend:

- 17th June 10:00am -12:00pm Natural Capital Group Conference including keynote speakers and live panel discussion.
- 17th June 12.40pm – 14.30 pm IGNITION NBS Living Lab Launch at the University of Salford, followed by a regional and international perspective on urban nature-based solutions, including a panel discussion with Mayors from UK, Germany, France, Australia and Canada.
- 18th June 10:00am – 12:00pm Natural Course Greater Manchester's Water Forum bringing together organisations and partnerships from all parts of the Greater Manchester water cycle to share knowledge and experience and to build understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other organisations active in this area, including presentations, facilitated break out groups and discussion.

The Planning Jigsaw

Civic Voice have launched a new training programme on [how the 'Planning Jigsaw' fits together](#), which aims to help civic societies and organised community groups best influence the system today, tomorrow and into the future. £25 for non-Civic Voice members and £10 for Civic Voice members. They have also recently joined up with the University of Reading to [research the strengths of Statements of Community Involvement \(SCIs\)](#). If you have local experience of SCIs and would like to contribute to the research you can get in touch with them at info@civicvoice.org.uk.

City Nature Challenge

City Nature Challenge is back! The [2021 City Nature Challenge](#) takes place in two parts: 30 April - 3 May: Taking pictures of wild animals and plants, and 4 May - 9 May: Identifying what was found. It's really easy to take part - all you need is your phone! To take part, [download the free iNaturalist app](#) onto your smartphone or tablet and start uploading pictures of wildlife. Your records will then be verified by a community of naturalists and you can also help people identify what they find. You can also join a range of [events across Lancashire, Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region](#).

30 Days Wild

And after the Urban Nature Challenge, get even further back to nature with the Wildlife Trusts' [30 Days Wild](#) in June. The Trusts challenge you to do one wild thing a day throughout the month of June - that's 30 simple, fun and exciting Random Acts of Wildness. When you sign up, you'll get a free pack of goodies to help you plan your wild month, plus lots of ideas to inspire you to stay wild all throughout June (and beyond!). To get involved, just choose the option that best suits you, e.g. school, business, family, individual.

Great Cumbria clean-up

The people of Cumbria (and visitors who love the area too) are proud and protective of this beautiful county and many individuals and local groups that have sprung up to take action for their local environment following huge increases in littering post-lockdown. So this year's [Great Cumbrian Litter Pick](#) is not only a chance to create a cleaner Cumbria but to provide a focus for raising awareness that the littering MUST STOP, and celebrate and say a massive thank you to the local people and groups who clean up out of the goodness of their hearts on a daily basis.

You can [register](#) to run your own community or individual litter pick or [sign up](#) to join an organised litter pick.

Resources

Environmental Entrepreneurs Programme

The School for Social Entrepreneurs, in partnership with the Co-Op foundation, are running the [Environmental Entrepreneurs programme](#) for a second year – helping organisations with environmental aims to grow, become more robust and increase their impact. They can help you grow and build capacity, develop sustainability and scale your impact. Across 8 months of support, they'll help you to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes you need to develop robust models and deepen environmental impact. You will be part of a safe and supportive group of like-minded peers committed to environmental causes. The Programme will bring together the leaders from 15 organisations working in the West Midlands, Yorkshire and the North West. Application window open now!

Mapping grassroots campaigns

A huge effort to map grassroots campaigns across the country is now [showing over 400 campaign groups](#) fighting roads, developments, and other environmentally damaging projects. See if there are any campaigns near you that are worth connecting up with, and if you're fighting a campaign that's not registered, add it and build the sense of solidarity!

Carbon calculators

Cumbria Action for Sustainability have developed [free carbon calculator tools](#) to assess your carbon footprint, one for residents and one for small to medium businesses. They're freely available for anyone in Cumbria and Lancashire to use.

Strengthening the relationship between people and nature

A closer connection with nature can boost the wellbeing of people and the wellbeing of the natural world we inhabit. The University of Derby have partnered with the National Trust to produce [Nature and Me](#) - a short guide with suggestions on how to get close to nature and the benefits this can bring. Nature and Me has two parts: 1. Understanding the human-nature relationship and 2. a guide to practically improving that relationship. It is based on research by the [University of Derby's Nature Connectedness Research Group](#) and experiences at National Trust places.

2021 Clean Air Day resources

Global Action Plan has launched this year's [Clean Air Day resources](#) ahead of the June 17 campaign. The 2021 resources will enable audiences across the UK, from individuals, schools, businesses and community groups to demonstrate support for action on air pollution. The resources support 'do and say' actions in line with this year's Clean Air Day theme: 'protect our children's health from air pollution.' Such actions include grassroots behaviour asks such as going polluting-vehicle free, to supporting high-level council action.

Green social prescribing

The lead contacts for the government-funded project on [preventing and tackling mental ill health through green social prescribing](#), which will test how to embed green social prescribing into communities, have been announced. The projects will run from April 2021 to April 2023. The Greater Manchester lead is Giles Wilmore: gmhscp.pcca@nhs.net.

Environmental management decision support tool

The new tool 'E-Planner' from ASSIST (Achieving Sustainable Agricultural Systems) is a free web-based tool that aims to help farmers and land managers [to identify the most suitable places for different environmental management options](#) via interactive maps. E-Planner uses environmental datasets to produce maps of the relative suitability of land for a range of different environmental outcomes

Countryside Code

Natural England last week published a new [Countryside Code](#) to help people enjoy the outdoors as lockdown restrictions ease. The new code allows people of all ages and backgrounds to enjoy the health and wellbeing benefits that nature offers while giving it the respect it deserves.

Consultations

Phone masts

The government has proposed [extending permitted development rights in England for mobile phone masts](#) so that they can be upgraded for 5G and to improve coverage in rural areas. The rights are intended to protect rural areas by minimising the visual impact of masts and reducing build time and costs for new infrastructure. Under the proposals mobile companies will be allowed to make new and existing masts up to five metres taller and two metres wider than current rules permit.

Funding

Lancashire Environmental Fund - Green Grants

Lancashire Environmental Fund are offering [grants of up to £1,000 to not-for-profit organisations, charities and community groups](#), for small stand-alone projects in Lancashire with a 6-8 week turn around on applications. The projects must benefit the wider community so need to have public access and be within 10 miles of a landfill site. LEF cannot fund projects in the unitary authorities of Blackpool or Blackburn with Darwen. Eligible projects include energy efficiency measures at community facilities, wildflower and bulb planting, community orchards, community gardens (but not allotments), pond creation and planting, access improvements in public parks and gardens, benches/seating and health walk waymarking. For more information about the Green Grants and to discuss eligibility before applying please email general@lancsenvfund.org.uk or call 01772 317247.

To subscribe or contribute

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