

● GREEN BULLET

29th June 2021

The Green Bullet connects and supports networks of voluntary, community and public sector organisations across a wide range of environmental and related issues, in North West England and beyond, originally produced by North West Environment Link (NWEL).

NWEL was a partnership of environmental NGOs established to respond jointly to regional environmental challenges and opportunities. NWEL was wound down after regional governance arrangements ended, and remaining funds supported the continued production of this bulletin. More recently CPRE North West has supported its production and retained the same aim.

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 [VSNW](http://vsnw.org.uk), the regional voluntary and community sector network.

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Campaigns

Climate change

Ahead of world leaders coming together in November as part of the global climate summit, we have an opportunity to show Boris Johnson and the UK government that we want them to be climate leaders and deliver urgent and ambitious action to tackle climate change. You can help [put pressure on decision makers](#) to create a cleaner, greener future by hosting an event in your community as part of [Great Big Green Week](#), and by promoting the Week and encouraging the individuals, groups and organisations you work with to do so. From litter picks to wildlife-friendly gardening, to climate coffee mornings and climate faith services, whatever your idea, you can get involved by hosting an event that shows some love for your local area.

Nature

A coalition of over 70 nature and conservation organisations, led by Wildlife and Countryside Link, are calling on the government to amend the Environment Bill to enshrine a [law for nature's recovery](#) by 2030. This will require a clear definition of species abundance, a firm target date, and a precise level of ambition. Current government proposals fail on all three counts. You can

[add your voice](#) to the calls to Boris Johnson to take this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to [improve the state of nature](#).

Oceans

Some campaign success - Defra has announced it will begin the process for [designating Highly Protected Marine Areas](#) (HPMAs) by the end of 2022, setting an ambitious commitment to protect our seas. HPMAs would see a ban on all damaging activities, offering the strictest possible protections for the marine environment and giving nature the best chance of recovery.

Plastics

You've probably heard of Veganuary and Stoptober... But now summer is upon us it's time to try giving up single-use plastic for a month! [Plastic Free July](#) is a global movement that helps millions of people be part of the solution to plastic pollution. Their website offers a wealth of useful resources, tips and ideas to help you reduce or eliminate single-use plastic waste at home, at work and in other aspects of your lives. But don't forget that the most effective driver of change is personal change alongside lobbying decision-makers! You could take the challenge and invite your MP or local councillors to join you... meanwhile, new research shows that just [20 companies produce over half the world's single use plastics](#).

Air quality

Over [a quarter of all UK schools](#) are in areas with air pollution above the WHO recommended 'safe' limits. This year's [Clean Air Day](#) theme was 'protect our children's health from air pollution.' The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Cycling and Walking has launched a new inquiry, aimed at [influencing the government second walking and cycling investment strategy](#). The first, published in 2017, was widely criticised for lacking ambition and funding.

Information update

Brexit and beyond

- Following last month's rather celebratory reporting of the Government's commitment to add a new target to the Environment Bill to halt species loss and nature decline by 2030, they have [entirely predictably reneged on their pledge](#) and put in place a weak and watered-down amendment that explicitly does not set a target to halt the decline of nature. Which, along with the Climate Change Committee's finding that they are good at setting targets and bad at doing anything to achieve them, takes a bit of the shine off otherwise positive announcements this month – see Nature, biodiversity and landscape section.
- Alongside this weakened species recovery target, [amendments](#) to the Environment Bill reported last month could be [used to weaken the Habitats Regulations](#), the UK's most important legal protection rules for wildlife. This action was supposed to bring these regulations into line with, and support, a strong new species abundance target but could instead water down protections for wildlife. A weak target with diminished regulation is undermining confidence in the Government's commitment to meeting the PM's 30x30 nature recovery promises.
- Defra have released more details on the [Sustainable Farming Incentive](#), and reported that [over 2000 farmers had expressed interest](#) in joining the first pilot which will start in October 2021. It is made up of a series of optional standards with introductory, intermediate and advanced levels with rising payments to correspond. This part of ELM will also be launched in a simplified form in 2022 with only a couple of these standards used possibly in a modified form. The government has now published more detailed information about the 8 standards in the SFI pilot: [arable and horticultural land ; arable and horticultural soils; farm woodland; hedgerows; improved grassland; improved grassland soils; low and no input](#)

[grassland; water body buffering](#) The two other ELMS components (Local Nature Recovery and Landscape Recovery) are being developed for launch in later years.

- Greener UK have produced a series of briefings to inform the [House of Lords Committee Stage debate on the Environment Bill](#).
- Brexit is making the UK's transition to net-zero more complex, a new report has warned, stating that Covid-19 has further delayed efforts to set strong decarbonisation policies for an independent UK. Published by the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC), [the report](#) on 'Brexit Implications for UK Decarbonisation Objectives' concluded that "there has not been enough time nor the right political space to establish effective replacement" to the numerous energy and climate rules and regimes that previously applied to the UK as an EU member state.
- The UK's [new National Investment Bank was launched](#) in June, with tackling climate change as a key objective. It was first announced by Rishi Sunak at the 2020 Spending Review. It is designed to support major infrastructure projects, replacing the role that the European Investment Bank (EIB) played before Brexit and assisting with the delivery of [the National Infrastructure Strategy](#). That Strategy was updated in November 2020, with the UK's 2050 net-zero target and impact of Covid-19 on the economy in mind.

Covid recovery

- A new report from the Trades Union Congress assesses [how much "green" Covid-19 stimulus has been offered by each of the G7 governments](#). Activities classed as "green" include renewable energy generation and related infrastructure, energy efficiency, electric cars, nature conservation and restoration, public transport and active travel. Funding is assessed on both a total level and a per-person basis. On a total funding level, the UK comes bottom of the seven, with £12.13bn pledged. The UK is second-last in the funding per-person table, with only Japan faring worse. While the UK Treasury is investing £180 per person, the USA is planning to allocate over £2,960 per person and Italy has earmarked more than £1,380 per person
- The UK government is being urged to ensure that its ongoing review of financial services regulations properly accounts for the scale of the twin climate and nature crises by influential business coalition the Aldersgate Group. Their latest report, entitled '[Financing the Future: Driving Investment for Net-Zero Emissions and Nature Restoration](#)', warns that the government could miss a "unique opportunity" to ensure that financial systems are compatible with its long-term commitments on climate and the environment as part of its Covid-19 recovery plans.

Climate change & energy

- The Climate Change Committee (CCC) has delivered its [annual report to Parliament](#), stating that the Government has done "surprisingly little" to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They gave the government a score of nine out of ten for the targets it has set, but ["somewhere below four" for delivery](#). And as [many commentators](#) have pointed out, setting targets for the future, which will necessarily be missed due to a failure to act now, but for which future Governments will have to take accountability, is not a very good strategy for the country or the planet. There has been "an alarming lack of net-zero progress" with ["no coherent plan to reduce emissions](#) this decade". The CCC have provided a handy Twitter thread [explaining the key points](#) of their report.
- And not only are we failing to mitigate climate change, we are not preparing for the inevitable effects that are already 'baked in. In a separate [report on adaptation](#), the CCC has concluded that [the UK is woefully unprepared](#) for the effects of climate change, with the country now in worse shape for future crises than it was five years ago. The CCC said that

UK homes, infrastructure and services must be made resilient to the threat of severe heatwaves and intense rainfall and flooding.

- [The G7](#), meeting in Cornwall this month, once again failed to put in place measures that would plug the gap between the target they had set to support developing countries address climate change (with a deadline of last year) and the reality of their actual investments. Despite the high profile that talking the climate talk had, this failure has prompted fears of a loss of trust internationally that could undermine this autumn's COP26 climate talks. They did, however, jointly sign up to a [G7 Nature Compact](#), which commits to a range of action to conserve and restore biodiversity. Edie summarises [what was and wasn't agreed](#).
- The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has produced another alarming report. The research, which was due to be published after this year's climate conference but has been leaked in advance, highlights [the dangers of twelve 'tipping points'](#), events that are likely to be triggered when temperatures reach a certain level and would lead to positive feedback spirals, causing even greater warming. Examples include the melting of the Arctic permafrost which would release huge amounts of methane, or the possibility that the Amazon could turn into savannah. They represent "the largest potential risks of climate change," according to Bob Ward, policy and communications director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment.
- Despite renewable energy pledges, a new report by REN21 finds that [global fossil fuel use is not declining](#). At all. Fossil fuels accounted for some 80% of global final energy consumption in 2019, the same share of the energy mix as a decade ago.
- New offshore wind farms must improve the state of nature and avoid irreparable damage to the environment, Natural England explains in their new [Approach to Offshore Wind](#), setting out the role offshore wind has in nature recovery and tackling climate change. Marian Spain, chief executive, said: "Offshore wind energy provides much-needed clean energy to millions of homes and businesses. Natural England is committed to playing its part in enabling it to happen, but we are also committed to making sure that nature is not forgotten".
- A global group of climate scientists and thought leaders in the field have launched a new independent group, tasked with advising and criticising national governments on their policy response to the climate emergency. Called the [Climate Crisis Advisory Group](#), the new entity is headed up by the UK's former chief scientific advisor Sir David King and has been modelled on Independent Sage – a group of scientists that has scrutinised the UK Government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic since early 2020.
- A new report by Energy Systems Catapult has called for a systematic approach to planning, funding and powers to [meet net-zero ambitions at the local level](#), rather than the current 'sporadic funding' described as 'stifling'. More than a [third of the UK's population](#) is now represented by local authorities that are planning to reach net-zero emissions ahead of the government's 2050 commitment.
- Moorside, next to the Sellafield nuclear complex in West Cumbria, and Heysham near Morecambe, have both made it through to the next stage of a siting competition to host the [UK's first prototype fusion power plant](#).

Planning

- Planning has been hot news again, with most commentators agreeing that the Government's planned reforms (along with HS2 plans) were a major factor in the [shock by-election defeat](#) in Chesham and Amersham. Pressure is mounting on the Government to row back on key aspects of the Planning White Paper on a number of fronts, such as John Major suggesting that the reforms may be [Boris Johnson's "poll tax moment"](#); the heavyweight [HCLG select committee](#) of senior MPs publishing a report calling for a fundamental re-think of key elements of the proposals; Labour's opposition day motion calling on government ["to protect the right of communities to object to individual planning"](#)

[applications](#)"; and reports that [almost 100 Conservative backbenchers are organising](#) against the proposals. The Government response to last summer's consultation was expected imminently, but it may be delayed yet again by the political turmoil. It is still unclear how Government will respond to increasingly intense calls for changes to the proposed zoning scheme, reduced community rights to comment on individual applications, binding housing targets, and developer contributions – but they have ruled out a national review of Green Belt and its purposes.

- During the [opposition debate](#), the housing minister promised "a holistic review of council planning resources" – hopefully a recognition that the system can't function properly when overall [planning department funding has been cut by over 50% in the last ten years](#).
- A bit of shameless self-promotion: The Conversation has published an article of mine on how [neighbourhood planning has all but been forgotten](#) in the rows over planning reforms, and how it should be reformed in a new system to enable more diverse communities to champion more sustainable approaches to development that cater to community needs and foster environmental quality, rather than corporate profit.
- An open letter from housing minister Christopher Pincher has revealed that the government's ["end-to-end" review of the major infrastructure planning regime](#) will begin in July, with a "clear progress update" by the autumn. Amongst other things this aims to cut timescales by up to 50 per cent for some projects entering the system from September 2023, partly through a quicker and simpler framework for assessing environmental impacts. Not ominous at all.
- UNESCO has proposed [removing Liverpool's World Heritage Site status](#), due to damage done to the quality and character of the protected area by new developments.
- Liverpool city region is offering [£15 million for remediation of brownfield sites](#), which it hopes will create up to 4,000 new homes for the region. Any registered provider, private sector or charitable body can apply for the money.
- 2.78 million people in the UK live farther than a 10-minute walk from their nearest park or green space the latest [Green Space Index \(GSI\)](#). The Index reveals the scale of inequality of access to local parks despite their vital role in the nation's wellbeing during lockdown. The total green space provision in Great Britain stands at 201,000 hectares. Seven of nine English regions, including the NW, do not meet a minimum standard of green space provision.
- Campaigners Rights:Community:Action have revived their efforts to overturn the government's recent [permitted development and use class changes](#) by securing a hearing at the Court of Appeal, after their legal bid proved unsuccessful at the High Court last year.

Transport

- [New analysis by IPPR](#) has found that the Government's efforts to decarbonise transport are focusing too much on electric vehicles (EVs) and could fail to provide affordable and clean transport alternatives that cut overall car use. They urge Government to prioritise public transport, walking and cycling outlining a vision for a transport system that is fair to all, works to improve people's health and wellbeing and provides a better environment for nature.
- The Welsh Government has announced a [freeze on new road building projects](#) as part of the country's efforts to cut carbon emissions. and many environmental NGOs have been pushing the UK Government to take the same step, but they are still determined to push ahead with the £27 billion road building programme; Transport Action Network are due to have their [legal challenge to the programme](#) heard imminently
- Following reports that government [support for Northern Powerhouse Rail was waning](#), Boris Johnson has said that he is ["absolutely committed"](#) to delivering the scheme as a key part of

the levelling up agenda. But as the [levelling up agenda remains entirely undefined](#), that may not be much comfort.

- The LGA has published [lessons from the Emergency Active Travel Fund programme](#), in particular the creation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.
- [Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#) has declared that a clean air zone which will charge non-compliant commercial vehicles for entry will be introduced from May 2022. It also announced a new bike-share partner. GMCA said that the £120m it has secured from Government for vehicle replacement programmes will “kickstart the city region’s green revolution”

Nature, biodiversity and landscape

- As part of their interim response to the [Glover Landscapes Review](#), the Government has announced that Natural England will consider plans to protect more of England’s countryside, including plans to create a [new area of outstanding natural beauty \(AONB\) around the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge](#), which runs between Frodsham and Helsby in the north, to Malpas in the south. They also propose a new AONB in the Yorkshire Wolds and extensions to the existing Surrey Hills AONB and Chilterns AONB. However, the designation process could take several years and will involve extensive collaboration and discussion with local stakeholders. However, as a recent CPRE report highlights, [protections in AONBs are often not well-enforced](#). Meanwhile, Rewilding Britain are calling for [wilder national parks](#) that are better able to withstand the shocks of the extinction crisis and climate emergency.
- In [a parliamentary statement on the proposals](#), environment secretary George Eustice also outlined further plans to drive nature recovery and people’s access to nature in protected landscapes. These will include a new Farming in Protected Landscapes programme and the potential to designate new National Nature Reserves. The status and support for AONBs may be strengthened, and the way that protected landscapes are structured will be reviewed.
- The Government has [committed to a “nature-positive future”](#) in response to the [Dasgupta Review of the economics of biodiversity](#). This will include requiring biodiversity net gain from major infrastructure projects, including the Crewe-Manchester section of HS2, ensuring all new UK bilateral aid spending does no harm to nature. The key message of the Dasgupta review was that we need to fundamentally overhaul how we measure economic success to stem the decline in nature that threatens lives and livelihoods. Green groups have said the announcement is a [step in the right direction, but not adequate](#) as a response to Dasgupta’s recommendations.
- [A debate in the House of Commons](#) considered a motion put forward by Tory MP for East Surrey Claire Coutinho on the Wildlife Trust’s proposal for [officially-designated “wild belts”](#) to complement existing environmental protection designations. MPs spoke overwhelmingly in favour of a “wild belt” land use designation being embedded in the planning system, with the housing minister saying he is “open to some of the proposals”.

Publications

A wilder recovery

The restoration of nature can afford society 'wide-ranging' benefits and help to rebuild the economy following the Covid-19 pandemic, according to [A Wilder Recovery: How to Build Back Smarter, Stronger and Greener](#), a new report from The Wildlife Trusts. It also emphasises that improving the state of nature will help the UK reach net-negative carbon emissions. It says a transformational approach will be required, with nature at the heart of a sustainable, green economy. This starts with managing at least 30 per cent of land and sea for nature by 2030. To achieve this, nature-based solutions should be invested in and there must also be more nature-

positive planning. A Nature Recovery Network should be established to join up initiatives to restore what has been lost and ensure that people “live within the means of the natural world”.

Devolution and levelling up

A new report from the Local Government Information Unit has called for a new settlement for place that reconnects the government’s levelling-up ambitions with the decentralisation of power in England. [A New Settlement for Place](#) finds that “the implementation of a new constitutional, political and social settlement, centred around the needs of local places” will help the government achieve its plans for levelling up and building back better from the Covid-19 pandemic. The report comes after the government said its devolution white paper has been replaced by its levelling-up proposals.

Events

Degrowth & ecological economics

Registration is now open for the free, online [International Conference on Degrowth and Ecological Economics](#), 5-8 July, hosted by the University of Manchester. Lives and livelihoods have been unequally impacted and threatened by climate change, ecological degradation and the global pandemic. The construction of alternative livelihoods requires a radical transformation of economy, culture and society. What are the institutional arrangements which safely provide for basic needs, social stability and democratic legitimacy in the transition to environmental sustainability? How can both social justice and ecological justice for the populations of the Global North and the Global South be ensured? How can political support be mobilised for the necessary transformations? Be informed and contribute to the debate with workshops, roundtables, keynote speakers (including Naomi Klein and George Monbiot) and artistic and other participatory events. Take part in as much or as little of the conference as you choose.

Biodiversity net gain

Defra have announced that Biodiversity Metric 3.0 – which will be used to assess biodiversity net gain in development proposals - is being released with a [webinar launch](#) on the morning of the 7 July. This will also cover release of a trial companion metric for use on small development sites and an Environmental Benefits from Nature (EBN) tool.

Increasing tree and woodland cover in the NW

The NW Forest Forum is hosting a short online information session (12 July 2-4.45) on recently announced opportunities to increase tree and woodland cover. This applies to private and public landowners, managing large or small areas of land that might be suitable for woodland establishment. It will cover: what funding is available where, who can apply, how to apply, who can help you access funds, and links to key policy such as Climate Emergency. Contact mail@merseyforest.org.uk if you’re interested; full details will be sent out closer to the time.

Managing road verges for nature, the environment and people

In this webinar (8 July, 1-2pm), Ben Phillips (University of Exeter), Kate Petty (Plantlife) and Phil Sterling (Butterfly Conservation) will discuss their work to [improve road verges for nature, the environment and people](#). They will ask questions such as: "why do road verges matter?" and "how can we better manage our verges?".

Green infrastructure and a healthy green recovery

This free online conference, organised by the TCPA on behalf of the Green Infrastructure Partnership and Natural England, will provide an opportunity to gain an understanding of [the role of green infrastructure in the delivery of a healthy green recovery](#). It includes webinars on

the developing Green Infrastructure Standards Framework for England, and on the delivery of net gain.

Governance: what's the right structure for you?

There is a wide range of not for profit structures ranging from registered charities to community interest companies. They all have specific benefits, and some drawbacks. This session will look at the main structures, and [explain the benefits and issues](#) associated with each of them. 10-11am, 5 July, online.

Resources

Environmental benefits from nature

Natural England has announced that they will be releasing their new [Environmental Benefits from Nature \(EBN\) tool](#) (formerly known as the Eco-metric) as a Beta Version in July and are now actively looking for volunteers to take part in its evaluation. Find out more about the tool here. You can also express an interest in being a [future evaluation case-study](#).

State of nature data survey

Wildlife and Countryside Link are keen to hear from stakeholders for their '[State of Nature Data Survey](#)'. The survey is part of a review of environmental data and infrastructure and environmental policies at local and national levels in England. Please encourage NGOs, local groups, local authorities etc that you work with or for to take part!

Natural Capital user guide for Greater Manchester

This new guide, produced by GMCA and Natural Course, is designed to help users [understand and use the award-winning Natural Capital tools](#) that have been specially developed for Greater Manchester. The guide gives an overview with links to the range of tools available, with step by step instructions on how to use them. Short case studies provide examples of how people have used the tools, and a 'frequently asked questions' section helps to address some of the barriers users have met in the past. The Natural Capital User Guide is designed as a 'one stop shop' that will help you to deepen your knowledge about the value of Greater Manchester's natural capital; understand and explain the wide range of ecosystem services that the natural environment provides; develop environmental programmes, projects and policies; examine how developments can deliver biodiversity and environmental net gain; and provide evidence for the local planning process

Local Green Spaces

Locality have produced a new guide to [designating Local Green Spaces through neighbourhood plans](#). It covers what is meant by 'local green space', how a neighbourhood plan can address green space and green infrastructure and the evidence base required for local green space designation and policies on green space.

Artful Ways

A new project called [Artful Ways](#) brings together walking, creativity and culture in Cumbria. The project invites people around Cumbria to take part and put creativity and culture on the map. Those taking part will be creating a new map of Cumbria showing walking routes between artistic and cultural places, and connections between the wonderful creative people around the county. There will also be an exhibition of artworks with reflections on creativity, culture and place from people who've taken part which tours Cumbria in 2022

Free funding information

The free [Charity Excellence Funding Finder](#) has been updated with another 500+ funders. Categories include core funders and links to a range of other free funding databases and online funder lists.

Consultations

Decarbonising transport in the North

Transport for the North, the sub-national transport body for the region, recently launched a 12-week consultation on its [draft Decarbonisation Strategy](#). The strategy provides a major opportunity to encourage decision-makers to take carbon emissions from transport, particularly road building, seriously. They are hosting an [online event for the North West on 14 July, 2-3pm](#) to find out more about the plans. The Transport Action Network (TAN) have organised two online workshops in conjunction with regional transport campaigners, on [Thursday 1 July from 10am - 1pm](#) and [Monday 5 July from 6.30 - 9pm](#) to help NGOs and community campaigners get to grips with the strategy. You can email questions to info@transportactionnetwork.org.uk. Deadline 31 August.

House of Lords: built environment committee

The House of Lords has created a new select committee to look at the [built environment](#). They have been appointed to look at housing, planning, transport and infrastructure. They will be taking on the housing crisis in the UK for their first inquiry, looking at the government's target, the impact of reforms to the planning system and how barriers to meeting housing demand can be overcome. Deadline 10 September.

Funding

Landscape Grants – Cumbria

Applications are open for Friends of the Lake District's 2021 'Landscape Grants' to support [improvements to access, landscape enhancements and free events](#). They are intended to help visitors and residents throughout Cumbria to experience and reconnect with the landscape. As well as helping to fund the creation and repair of pathways and bridges, enhance habitats and help with local history projects, the grant scheme also supports community groups, charities, not for profit organisations and schools in delivering innovative free events and activities that provide opportunities for people to get outside, discover and enjoy something new about their natural environment. Grants of up to £1000 for landscape enhancements and up to £500 for events are available.

The Schroder Charity Trust

The Schroder Charity Trust awards [grants of up to £5,000 towards core and project costs](#) to charities registered in the UK for work under a selection of categories including Training and Employment, Health and Wellbeing and Environment and Conservation.

The Onward Community Fund (Greater Manchester/Lancashire/Merseyside)

Local voluntary and community groups can apply for [up to £2,500 for projects in their neighbourhood](#). Projects should aim to address one or more of several themes, including building stronger communities, food resilience, and mental wellbeing and green spaces. Organisations must be a constituted/community group and have their own bank account. The project must benefit Onward neighbourhoods. Deadlines: Round 2: Thursday 15th July, Round 3: Friday 15th October, Round 4: Saturday 15th January 2022.

Tree Council's Hedge Fund

The Tree Council have just opened their [Close the Gap Community Hedge Fund](#). The fund provides grants up to £2,500 for community groups in England to plant new hedgerows and fill in existing ones during winter 2021/22. Planting needs to take place by 30 January 2022 and can be in rural or urban areas on private or public land, so long as the local community will benefit. The fund is open for applications until midnight on Sunday 8 August 2021.

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