



## • Green Bullet

20<sup>th</sup> December 2017

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.

**CPRE has agreed to continue funding the Green Bullet throughout 2017 – many thanks!**

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### Campaigns

#### **Air quality**

Four ministers appeared before a select committee ‘super-inquiry’ to discuss the [Government’s plans to tackle air pollution](#). Their – and the Government’s - performance was described as “shambolic”, “utter disarray” and “chaos” by Client Earth. Client Earth are taking matters into their own hands and are drafting [legal guidance to help Local Authorities](#) take recent High Court rulings into account when drawing up local clean air plans.

#### **Climate change**

- A note for those that ask if climate change is really happening, then why isn’t it getting warmer, eh? Not only is the planet’s surface, on average, getting [measurably warmer year on year](#), but recent research suggests that [93% of the excess heat trapped by greenhouse gases has been absorbed by the oceans](#) – and if it hadn’t been for this, the average surface temperature would be 50C!

- More than 50 global companies including Unilever, M&S and Adidas have called on the nations meeting in Paris to discuss climate progress, to [phase-out fossil fuel subsidies by 2025](#) and create the framework to limit global warming increases to well below 2C.
- ...and meanwhile, Donald Trump has [dropped climate change from the list of the USA's national security concerns](#).

### **Re-use / recycling / litter**

The Co-op and Iceland have come out [in favour of a bottle Deposit Return Scheme](#) to reduce plastic pollution and increase reuse and recycling rates. Other supermarkets and major players are being challenged to follow suite, following years of [campaigning and research](#) by a wide range of organisations and the widely-welcomed pledge in the budget to [consult on a tax on single-use plastics](#). However, experts warn that [household recycling rates are stagnating](#) and the UK looks set to miss its 2020 targets. And China's announcement that it will no longer import foreign plastic waste poses real problems for the UK waste sector – we have [shipped 2.7 million tonnes of plastic scrap to China](#) in the last five years alone, and have no obvious alternative destination and insufficient capacity to deal with it here (without significant Government support and encouragement to develop our domestic recycling industries)... especially as we currently ship a further [3.6 million tonnes of general waste per year](#) to the EU. The [UN has committed to preventing marine plastic waste](#) – but we need to globally co-ordinate around this global problem.

### **Marine protection**

Five Arctic countries and five major fishing powers (including the EU) have reached unprecedented agreement on a legally binding international accord that will [protect nearly three million square kilometres](#) of the Central Arctic Ocean from unregulated fishing. Closer to home, the [UK's 'blue belt' of marine conservation](#) is to be expanded with two coastline areas (in Cornwall and between the Isle of Man and Anglesey) granted special protection, covering 150,000 rare seabirds. Four other sites have been extended, in Liverpool Bay, Poole Harbour, the Outer Thames Estuary and Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay.

### **Thirlmere 'activity hub'**

A planning application has been submitted to the Lake District National Park Authority by TreeTop Trek for a 'Thirlmere Activity Hub' to include 8 zip wires right across Thirlmere with the lines stretching from one side of the lake to the other from Swirls on the east side of the lake to Fisher Crag on the west ([application 7/2017/2298](#)).

Friends of the Lake District along with CNP (the Campaign for National Parks), CPRE, the Open Spaces Society, the Fell and Rock Climbing Club and the BMC (British Mountaineering Club) are all opposed to this application for the following reasons:

1. Conflict with the purposes of the National Park
2. Impacts on the landscape character of the Thirlmere Valley
3. Impacts on views
4. Impacts upon the tranquillity, particularly on the western shore of Thirlmere
5. Increased transport pressures
6. Impact on World Heritage Site Outstanding Universal Values.
7. The issue of precedent – if this development was approved it would open up the whole Lake District National Park and other national parks and AONBs to inappropriate development
8. Introducing commercial development to an area where it was not present. Whilst this application does not include any ancillary commercial development we consider that it is likely that further development could follow on the back of this if approved.

Comments (objecting to or supporting) this proposal can be made by [writing to the Lake District National Park Authority](#) with your concerns. Deadline for submissions is 2nd January 2018. More information about the application and how to respond can be found on [Friends of the Lake District's website](#).

### **Information update**

## Brexit and beyond

- To coincide with the debates on the EU Withdrawal Bill this month, Wildlife and Countryside Link members united to [call for environmental principles to be enshrined in legislation](#). While members have warmly welcomed recent Government commitments for a strong new environmental regulator in England, and to consult on retaining environmental principles, they remain concerned that vital EU legal principles which protect our environment could be omitted from the Withdrawal Bill.
- Link members continue to blog about all things Brexit and beyond, this month with Richard Benwell at WWT asking [if Michael Gove will set a new green gold standard](#), Alice Roberts at CPRE outlining why [landscapes are important to protect](#) in the 25 Year Environment Plan, and Matthew Stanton at WWF responding to the [nod to a new Environment Act](#) in the House of Commons. Ruth Bradshaw at the Campaign for National Parks highlighted why [national parks must be protected post-Brexit](#), and Mark Jones at the Born Free Foundation called on the Government to [think seriously about wildlife crime](#).
- Cumulus consultants have produced a report for the RSPB on the potential [impacts of Brexit for farmers and farmland wildlife](#) in the UK
- Following the recent debates around the incorporation of animal sentience into UK law, the Government has [announced](#) a new Animal Welfare Bill. Crucially, the draft bill currently states that “Ministers of the Crown must have regard to the welfare needs of animals as sentient beings in formulating and implementing government policy.”

## Energy

- The [troubled nuclear power station proposed for Moorside](#) in Cumbria looks slightly less shaky now that State-owned South Korean company KEPCO have stepped in as preferred bidder for NuGen, the developer, after withdrawal of financial backing for the project from Toshiba. The change in company could lead to long delays though, if new reactor designs have to go through the four-year regulatory approval process. This raises the probability of renewed consultation on the National Grid’s North West Coast Connections Development Consent Order once a deal has been signed.

## Planning

- An Inspector has refused an application for 51 homes due to landscape harm, ruling that the local plan’s [housing policies were not out of date](#), even though they were based on the long-revoked regional spatial strategy. The council could demonstrate a five year supply (although they would not have been able to under the new proposed methodology, which the Inspector gave little weight) and so the presumption in favour did not apply – but the Inspector said that even if it had, he would still have refused it.
- The Government’s new industrial strategy (see ‘publications’ section) includes £170 million for the construction sector to [boost building rates and quality](#), and a deal with the sector to [halve greenhouse gas emissions from construction](#) by 2025. It also promises greater collaboration between councils and a more strategic approach to planning housing and infrastructure, and says that talks are underway to establish a new housing deal for Greater Manchester.
- CPRE Kent won a [landmark victory at the Supreme Court](#), which overturned the decision by Dover District Council to grant planning permission for 521 houses and a retirement village in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – supposedly one of the most highly protected landscapes in the country, which major development should not be permitted. [The Supreme Court](#) agreed with CPRE Kent’s arguments that the Planning Committee at Dover District Council did not give legally adequate reasons for granting the application, which they acknowledged would cause significant harm in a protected landscape.
- A recent court case established a useful precedent for the [need to re-consult](#) if changes are made (as they often are) to major infrastructure projects after the application has been submitted.

- Nearly half of all housebuilders are ‘[serial appealers](#)’, bringing more than 30% of rejected applications to appeal, undermining trust in the planning system and contributing to a culture of ‘planning by appeal’
- On average, council [planning departments have lost around 15% of staff](#) in the last decade, with 51 per cent of councils experiencing larger losses
- A new report from the independent Institute for Government argues that a [commission for public engagement](#) would reduce costly delays by giving people a genuine opportunity to influence decisions, drawing on the example of the Commission Nationale du Débat Public in France, which has reduced public opposition to major projects.
- New research by the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) has suggested that, since 1st April 2016, over [33,000 people have signed up to the new self-build registers](#) across England, over an 80 per cent increase on this time last year. Councils will have to grant enough permissions on serviced plots to meet this growing demand.
- The relentless focus on five year housing land supply is putting unsustainable [pressure on employment land](#), according to research by the Chambers of Commerce.

### Transport

- [Transport for the North’s strategic plan](#) will be published in the new year for a 13 week consultation (presumably [here](#), but watch this space!). [The plan will include](#) a new high-speed line from Liverpool to Hull and Newcastle, dubbed Northern Powerhouse rail, which would include new track and station enlargements along with upgrades to existing lines at an estimated cost of about £25bn. Road investment will link ports, airports, the east and west coasts, and big population centres with seven transport corridors linking key complementary business clusters, such as the energy businesses in Cumbria and the North East. But plans for one of the world’s longest road tunnels — 20 miles under the Pennines, to link Manchester and Sheffield — have been shelved.
- Chris Boardman, Greater Manchester’s cycling and walking commissioner, has recommended that a [£1.5 billion infrastructure fund](#) should be established to help deliver walking and cycling infrastructure across the city region, while Andy Burnham has been setting out [other transport priorities](#).

### Publications

#### Unlocking brownfield potential

[New research commissioned by CPRE](#) from HTA Design LLP examines the identification and assessment of brownfield sites by local planning authorities in light of the Brownfield Land Register Regulations, 2017. It finds that national and local government could be doing far more to identify more brownfield land and make the task more efficient in the process. In particular, it notes that the new Registers haven’t recorded small brownfield plots that could provide up to 188,734 homes. Meanwhile, [the Gracechurch Group](#) argue the other way, claiming that the new Registers demonstrate the shortfall between housing need and brownfield land availability (although their assumptions, such as a 33% attrition rate (it’s normally 10-20%) are a bit sketchy). Both organisations agree that community and local interest groups should be encouraged to put forward sites for inclusion in the Registers.

#### Industrial Strategy

The Government has published its long-awaited [industrial strategy](#) which, alongside the [Clean Growth Plan](#), will steer the UK economy for the next few years. It received a [broadly positive reaction](#) from environmental campaigners and industry, especially for its focus on clean energy, but it was noted that other recent decisions and actions undermine the strategy’s objectives. Liverpool Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham also said that it would fail unless the Government managed to overcome the ‘[hard-wired bias](#)’ towards London and the South East.

#### Long term nature monitoring

Since 2009 Natural England has been monitoring 37 sites across 10 habitat types to provide evidence on the effects of changing climate, air pollution and land management on the natural environment. It has now produced a report on the [initial baseline surveys](#), completed in 2016.

### **Natural capital**

- The final report from Defra's [Local Action Project](#) contains many useful resources for working with local communities in urban areas to enhance the benefits from natural capital. It includes tools for assessing ecosystem service provision and case studies from around England.
- Published by the Natural Capital Coalition, "This is Natural Capital 2017" is the first [annual review of trends and activities](#) within the natural capital concept. It includes headline facts (e.g. 68 countries are currently planning to produce natural capital accounts) and perspectives from a number of leading experts on the topic
- A groundbreaking study published in November 2017 shows - for the first time - the [economic value of health benefits](#) that Londoners get from the city's public parks and green spaces. It suggests that every £1 spent by councils gives £27 of value to citizens. Where the capital leads, expect and encourage our cities to follow and learn...

### **Homes on our High Streets**

[New research](#) by the Federation of Master Builders suggests that 300,000 – 400,000 new homes could be created by converting empty spaces above high street shops, and provides guidance for including proposals to do so in local plans. The report has been [welcomed by MPs](#) and Sajid Javid. Campaigners promoting [smart growth](#) have, of course, been saying this for years.

### **Council house builders**

A new study suggests that over [90% of all English local authorities are engaged in some form of housebuilding](#), amid concerns at private developers' failure to deliver homes. The report says that authorities have tried to make government policies work by increasing planning permissions and taking decisions that are "frequently unpopular with the local electorate". But authorities feel frustrated when private housebuilders have "subsequently failed to respond by building permitted homes or sought to renegotiate away the development contributions, infrastructure of affordable housing originally agreed".

### **Green rules = green growth!**

A [new report from the Aldersgate Group](#) concludes that the economic benefits of strong environmental regulations far outweigh the associated compliance costs. It finds that well-designed green regulations can help deliver new jobs, investment in innovation and skills, high-quality products and infrastructure, and strong business competitiveness. It highlights various examples of regulations driving economic growth, including 4,000 jobs created in the construction supply chain since 2015 thanks to the London Plan for building out planning applications.

### **Events**

#### **Tyndall Centre lecture hosted by CPRE**

Professor Kevin Anderson, Deputy-Director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research at the University of Manchester, will give a [public lecture on 23 January 2018 hosted by the CPRE Northwest Regional Group](#). Climate change is a major issue for our future energy use, health, and towns and cities, but it will also have a dramatic impact on our countryside. In this event we will begin to highlight those impacts and explore how in the North West we can help to build the resilience of our natural environment. 10.30am (doors open at 10am) at the [Friends' Meeting House in Manchester](#).

#### **Greater Manchester: 'Connecting People with Nature'**

Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group is hosting their 2018 Annual Conference '[Connecting People with Nature](#)' on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018. The conference will bring together leading practitioners from across the public, private and third sectors exploring how we can support Greater Manchester's natural environment as a destination to visit, volunteer at and enjoy as part of a healthy lifestyle. Manchester Museum, Manchester M13 9PL, 9.30-4.00pm.

### **Community Forests Conference**

The [annual conference](#) for community woodlands and forests is taking place in Birmingham on 22nd March 2018. This year the focus will be on resourcing, managing woodlands in the heart of communities, and nature-based solutions. Booking early is essential!

### **Resources**

#### **Building With Nature**

'[Building with Nature](#)' is a new benchmark (a "green infrastructure certification scheme"), developed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the University of the West of England, to encourage developers to create schemes where people's well-being, as well as wildlife, are given priority. It has support from several national housebuilders and to date three housing schemes have been designed using it.

#### **Resource pack for marine NGOs**

The Marine Socio-Economics Project (MSEP) has been working since 2012 to improve understanding of economic and social issues surrounding the use of the sea. It has now produced a range of resources for marine NGOs, including briefings on key economic concepts, statistics and trends, case studies and data sources.

#### **"Sustainable development" scorecard**

A 'scorecard' to help planners, developers and communities to assess the sustainability of proposed developments has been launched by the industry-led "Sustainable Development Commission" (no connection with the well-respected public body of that name, which was axed in the first round of austerity cuts by the Coalition Government) and Iceni Projects. The [Sustainable Development Scorecard](#) is a free online resource that claims to judge proposals by how well it meets the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) definition of sustainable development.

#### **Recycle Christmas**

WRAP have produced a [Christmas recycling resource pack](#) to help you promote recycling and waste reduction in this most wasteful of seasons. But without the bah-humbug.

#### **Community Shares booster**

£3 million funding is available for local people wanting to put business into community hands. If you're a local group needing an extra boost to set up or grow a community business, you can access up to £10,000 to help launch your community share offer and up to £100,000 match funding when the share offer goes live. [Community shares](#) enable groups to get projects off the ground, with local people investing often small sums of money and becoming co-owners of vital local enterprises - from affordable housing to community pubs to green energy.

### **Consultations**

#### **New Nuclear NPS consultation open**

BEIS are consulting on the new [nuclear National Policy Statement](#) that will guide the designation of sites for new power stations. It will sit alongside, rather than replace the old one,

and you can find a [summary](#) of what is proposed here The consultation closes on 15<sup>th</sup> March, BUT the consultation for the Appraisal of Sustainability closes on 11<sup>th</sup> January. Sneaky.

### **Geological Disposal consultation imminent**

BEIS will also be consulting on an NPS for disposal of nuclear waste and rules around community engagement in the New Year. Dates for this have yet to be published, but the consultation is reported to be imminent.

### **New roads**

Highways England has published its first [Strategic Road Network Initial Report](#), setting out their advice to government about where they believe priorities should be focused for the second road period, which runs between 2020 and 2025. Although the report does not recommend specific schemes, it shows how they are developing their thinking on the future investment priorities across the country. They want your views on whether these are the right areas to focus on for the second road investment period. This is part of a [wider consultation on funding for road-building](#). Deadline: 7<sup>th</sup> February.

### **Thirlmere activity hub**

Major development in the Lake District National Park. See item under 'campaigns'. Deadline for responses: 2<sup>nd</sup> January.

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