



• Green Bullet

27th February 2018

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.

CONTENTS

- Campaigns – Climate change, air quality, plastics, water, hedgehogs, Earth, sustainable development
- Information update – Brexit & beyond, energy, planning, transport
- Publications – Brownfield, community housing
- Events – Greater Manchester Spatial Framework & Green Summit, Secure the Environment symposium, natural capital, people, food & land, community forests, plastic
- Resources – “Wholescapes” thinking, climate change & neighbourhood planning, plastic-free Cumbria
- Consultations – Farming, nuclear waste, fracking, Trans-Pennine road
- Funding – Community facilities, food redistribution

Campaigns

Climate change

- The UK Met Office has forecast that global [climate change could start to pass 1.5C within five years](#) – just ten years after the Paris Agreement set that level as the limit to contain warming within by the end of the century. However, its ‘best-guess’ forecast is that warming will more likely remain at around 1C over the next five years.
- However, UK [direct GHG emissions continue to fall](#) – currently down 41% on 1990 levels, halfway to the target of an 80% reduction by 2050. Campaigners are calling for more action on transport emissions, which continue to rise – and warning that we do not currently have plans in place to achieve our fourth and fifth carbon budgets
- The Government have said that *“Reducing global coal consumption should be a vital and urgent priority for all countries and states. Unabated coal is the dirtiest, most polluting way of generating electricity.”* Campaigners are holding them to that by [petitioning against a proposal for the UK’s first opencast coal mine](#) since 2014.

Air quality

- The [EU has warned nine member states, including the UK, that they will face legal action](#) in the European courts if they don't literally clean up their act and reduce air pollution to within legal limits.
- But pipping the EU to the post, back at home [the Government has lost yet another legal action in the High Court](#), which yet again found that its even its plans to tackle this excessive air pollution (much less any actions that may eventually follow), are too weak to enable it to bring it back within the law. As the [judgement](#) concludes: *"It is now eight years since compliance with the 2008 Directive should have been achieved. This is the third, unsuccessful, attempt the Government has made at devising an AQP which complies with the Directive and the domestic Regulations. Each successful challenge has been mounted by a small charity, for which the costs of such litigation constitute a significant challenge. In the meanwhile, UK citizens have been exposed to significant health risks."*
- And it's worth remembering that even these legal limits, deriving from the EU Air Quality Directive, are themselves [twice as high as the levels the World Health Organisation recommends](#) as annual maximum levels
- However, in amongst the (quite reasonable) doom and gloom, it is worth reflecting that [levels of all air pollutants in the UK are better overall](#) (although not necessarily in particular places) than they were in the 70s.

Plastics

- The Government has been criticized by the Environmental Audit Committee for failing to follow through on its apparent commitments to at least investigate [deposit return schemes](#) and a wider [single-use plastics tax](#).
- 18 environmental organisations have urged the Government to '[get drastic on plastic](#)' by setting legally binding targets to deal with the UK's 'waste mountain' revealed by new Defra figures. And that's before [China's waste ban](#) is taken into account!
- Recycle Now has launched a new plastics recycling campaign called '[Plastic Planet](#)'.
- The EU hopes to crack down on the use of disposable plastic bottles by obliging member states to provide [public water fountains](#) and encourage restaurants and cafes to offer free tap water.
- Michael Gove managed to spoil his welcome [advocacy for reducing disposable plastic consumption](#) by saying that he was worried that the EU might in some undisclosed and undefined way try to stop his proposal to [ban plastic straws](#). The EU told him that [this was rubbish](#). [Scotland aims to outlaw plastic straws by the end of next year](#), untroubled by phantasmagorical European interference.

Water quality

The Environment Agency has published a [State of the Environment: Water Quality](#) report. It highlights population growth, climate change, emerging chemicals, plastic pollution, nano-particles and fracking as present and potential future threats.

Hedgehogs

Who doesn't love a hedgehog? No-one loves them enough, apparently: research by the Woodland Trust suggest that [numbers have halved in just 18 years](#). The main causes are identified as habitat loss and lack of landscape connectivity, especially due to woodland edge and hedgerow destruction.

Earth Hour

The annual [Earth Hour](#) is coming up on Saturday 24 March. People across the world turn off their lights for one hour from 8.30pm to show their commitment to protecting our planet.

Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs or 'Global Goals') are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity, agreed by all UN members to guide action until 2030. And, according to the Chair of

the UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee, the Government's performance against them is "[a total fail](#)".

Information update

Brexit and beyond

- The RTPI has prepared a highly critical [briefing on the EU Withdrawal Bill](#). It states that the UK is a world leader in environmental protection and the vote to leave the EU was not a vote to change its world-leading status, but that the Bill fails to ensure that this would be maintained. The briefing notes that the RTPI believes a new joint body should be established to scrutinise and enforce the implementation of environmental laws and policies by the UK and devolved governments.
- Wildlife and Countryside Link (WCL), in collaboration with the UK Centre for Animal Law and supported by more than 40 organisations, has published a detailed analysis of [post-Brexit animal welfare](#) opportunities.
- A WCL [blog](#) about and [response](#) to the 25 year plan for the environment (in case you'd forgotten about it already!) more-or-less sums up NGO reaction: a promising first step, there are many, many more steps still to go. And Unearthed observes that so far, less than [£1 million per year of new funding has been committed](#) to delivering the plan
- Meanwhile, the Government is [refusing to reveal any information at all](#) about 300+ pieces of work aimed at delivering Brexit – even what those pieces of work are. In general terms, we know from the National Audit Office that work on environmental rules and regulations accounts for 120 of these secret work packages.
- As an insight into the green Brexit awaiting us: since the EU referendum the UK Government has opposed new EU [recycling targets](#), tried to make it harder for EU citizens to generate and sell their own [solar power](#), lobbied to weaken EU [climate targets](#), and blocked EU measures to limit the use of [high-polluting biomass](#) to meet renewables targets.

Energy

- The [court of appeal](#) has ruled that national policy requiring the impact of wind turbines identified by local communities to be 'addressed' does not mean that they have to be 'eliminated' or 'resolved', and that they should be weighed in the balance along with other benefits and harms
- Steve Rotherham has said that there is "[no need or justification](#)" for fracking in the Liverpool City Region, stating that they are focusing entirely on renewable and carbon-free energy production
- Cheshire West and Chester have [refused plans to carry out further tests](#) for gas at Ellesmere Port, against a planning officer's recommendations
- There is some confusion as to what the [latest Government expectations for fracking](#) actually are
- Public [support for fracking is now at 16%](#) - this is half the number of those who oppose it (32%).
- New research suggests that [Britain has been leading the EU in low carbon transition](#) progress – although changes in Government policy since 2015 have yet to make themselves felt in terms of new energy generation capacity coming onstream.
- Headline of the month: "[Energy execs sound more like wild-eyed hippies every day](#)" for suggesting that new renewables will be cheaper than existing coal by the early 2020s

Planning

- The [draft revised NPPF should be published before Easter](#), to include planning reforms outlined in the housing white paper published in February 2017; the *Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places* consultation in September 2017; and announcements in the Autumn Budget. There are suggestions that it could include encouragement to build upwards in towns and cities, clarification of Green Belt policy, a requirement for 20% of a council's housing to be built on small sites, and encouragement to develop more housing for older people

- The introduction of the widely-trialed standardized methodology for assessing housing need, initially intended for March, now looks likely to be delayed until the summer.
- The Government has announced how it is going to spend the first £866 million of a £5 billion local housing infrastructure fund intended to help [get council-led local housing projects off the ground](#). 17 of these first-round projects are in the North West.
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and Eden District Council have been allocated money from the Planning Delivery Fund to boost their [capacities for joint planning](#)
- New research by the Local Government Association (LGA) shows that sites for [more than 400,000 homes with planning permission](#) are not being built on. Other LGA analysis suggests that a “fire-sale” of council housing, together with Government restrictions on council’s ability to build, is [undermining their ability to provide enough affordable housing](#)
- An appeal for an [out-of-town shopping centre](#) near Hull was refused at appeal, appearing to bring some strength back to increasingly-emasculated planning policy limiting out-of-town retail. The appeal decision brought back (on a case-by-case basis) the possibility of considering disaggregation, i.e. whether the proposed out-of-town development could be accommodated on two or more sites in or on the edge of the town centre.
- An interesting opinion piece on why our [speculative housebuilding model](#), rather than a failure to build enough homes, lies behind the housing crisis

Transport

- Analysis by IPPR North suggests that, presumably as part of the bid to rebalance the UK economy, the Government transport spending pipeline is set to funnel funds into London at a rate 250% higher per capita than in the North of England. London will receive £4,155 per person in transport investment, while the north of England will receive £1,600 per person. Divisions within the North are as stark, where Yorkshire and Humber will receive £844 per person, the North East will receive £855 per person, and there will be £2,439 per person for the North West.
- A study has been launched into the potential re-opening of the [Skipton-Colne railway](#), providing a faster journey across the Pennines and opening up new potential cross-country passenger routes

Publications

State of brownfield 2018

CPRE analysis of the new statutory Brownfield land Registers confirms that there is [enough space on brownfield land to build at least one million new homes](#), with more than two-thirds of these homes deliverable within the next five years. And [even this is a sizeable underestimate](#). For example, if all councils also included smaller sites (under ten homes) on their registers, it is estimated that this would increase by around 220,000 more homes, and planning to use the land more efficiently could add hundreds of thousands more – even just increasing proposed densities to the current actual average of 37 homes per hectare would provide an extra 130,000. Meanwhile, even though developers are building 15% fewer homes than 10 years ago, they are [concreting over twice as much greenfield land to do so](#) – an irreversible change from green to urban.

Community-led housing

A new report from the Co-operative Councils’ Innovation Network sets out the role the [community-led housing](#) can play in helping to address housing shortages alongside contributing to wider strategic objectives and empowering communities to become more self-sufficient.

Events

Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

CPRE are hosting a second public meeting on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, the plan that will set out the scale and location of development across Greater Manchester until

2035. It is currently undergoing a 'radical rewrite' after widespread opposition to the first consultation. On Tuesday 20 March, 10.30am - 12.30pm (doors open at 10) at the [Friends' Meeting House in Manchester](#), officers preparing the GMSF will present the updated evidence base on which the revised plan will be written, which is due out for consultation in the summer. CPRE will also update you on the work that they have been doing in the city region, be asking for your feedback on what you want from the GMSF and from the Mayor more generally, and how CPRE can help you with that. The meeting is free but you need to [register for tickets via Eventbrite](#), where you can also find more information about the meeting.

Greater Manchester Mayor's Green Summit

There are still places available for the Greater Manchester Mayor's Green Summit '[listening event' for the voluntary sector](#) on 5th March, 1.30-4pm at GMCVO. As with previous 'listening events' GMCA are looking for thoughts, questions and commitments to influence the Greater Manchester Green Charter, which will be launched at the [Summit](#), and will then lead on to the production of a Post-2020 GM Environment Strategy. You can also complete an [online questionnaire](#) to share your priorities and ideas, and can [register your interest in attending the Summit](#) itself.

Securing our Natural Environment symposium

This joint meeting of the British Ecological Society and UK's Statutory Nature Conservation agencies will bring together policy officials, practitioners, natural and social scientists from across the UK and internationally to set the direction for nature conservation in the UK. MMU, Manchester, 23-24 May 2018.

Webinar – Measuring net gain in natural capital

The 25 Year Environment Plan announced in January includes the ambition to "*expand the net gain approaches used for biodiversity to include wider natural capital benefits, such as flood protection, recreation and improved water and air quality.*" In this context, Natural England is developing an extension to the Defra biodiversity metric. This will capture the wider benefits of land-use change on natural capital and the delivery of ecosystem services. The new 'eco-metric' will be designed for use by developers, planners, and environmental organisations. It could help in choosing between different net gain options, and could help developers to make the business case for adopting net gain ambitions. A project led by Oxford University is currently assessing the feasibility of developing a pilot tool for testing in 2018-19. This [webinar, on Thursday 15th March, 1-2pm](#), is an opportunity for potential users of the eco-metric to learn more about its development and provide feedback on the approach

People, food and land

The [Landworkers' Alliance](#), [South Lakes Action on Climate Change](#) and [Cumbria Action for Sustainability](#) present a special viewing of the Landworkers' Alliance new film, [In Our Hands: Seeding Change](#), followed by discussion and Q&A. It is the story of "a new kind of farm, a new kind of food and a new kind of society", following the growing movement of farmers and food workers who are creating a fairer food system for all and reorienting practices towards the fundamental link between people, food, and the very land we stand on.

Community Forests Conference

The [Annual Community Forest Conference](#) will be on Tuesday 20th March 2018, at the Birmingham Midland Institute. With the launch of the new 25 Year Plan for Environment, the conference provides an opportunity to look at what is happening in England's Community Forests and what, in the light of the 25 year Plan, they might aim to do in the future. There is a chance to hear about some ground breaking research from the Natural Health Service, the work across England on planting new woodland with young people and the latest on innovative funding options that are being looked at by the Community Forests.

Plastics reduction

Businesses are facing a challenge to cut down on single-use plastic, and this hot topic is the focus of a forum for small and medium firms ([SMEs in Cumbria on March 21st](#)). Run by Eco-innovation Cumbria and supported by CAfS, the free workshop will explore reducing or replacing single-use plastics and the drivers and opportunities for Cumbrian SMEs in the business-to-business sector.

Resources

“Wholescape thinking”

The Natural Capital Initiative have published a [guidance note](#) on “Wholescape thinking”, which promotes integrated management of land, coast and the sea through partnerships. They are now organising a [workshop](#) on March 29th to discuss how to take Wholescape thinking forward to support the 25-year plan.

Neighbourhood Planning and climate change

This [new guidance](#) from the Centre for Sustainable Energy and the Town and Country Planning Association explores the huge potential of neighbourhood plans to plan for and build a positive future for local communities, through addressing and responding to climate change, the most challenging issue of our times.

Plastic-free Cumbria

[Plastic-free Cumbria](#) is a directory of businesses offering everything from plastic-free toiletries and clothing to milk in glass bottles. Use it if you're in Cumbria – develop one for your area if you're not!

Consultations

Future farming

The government is consulting on new post-Brexit farm support (due out on February 27th, should be [available here](#) by the end of the day). They say they aim to reduce or eliminate payments based solely on owning land, and instead pay for public goods such as environmental protection and enhancement, investment in technology and skills to improve productivity, providing public access to farmland and the countryside, enhanced welfare standards for livestock and measures to support the resilience of rural and upland communities. Options include the range of goods to be supported, how to manage the transition period, and how the system should be monitored and enforced. Deadline: 8th May 2018.

Nuclear waste dump disposal facility

Not one but consultations launched this month to help find the right hole in the ground to bury our higher level radioactive waste. The [National Policy Statement for geological disposal infrastructure](#) consultation seeks views on whether the draft NPS provides an appropriate and effective framework for making decisions on applications to build deep-disposal nuclear waste facilities. The [Working with communities: implementing geological disposal](#) consultation seeks to avoid the embarrassment of the last time the Government was looking for a big hole, which had to be abandoned in 2013 when Cumbria County Council's cabinet voted against plans to bury nuclear waste beneath the Cumbrian countryside, by asking the public / stakeholders in advance how they should be engaged. On offer to stall any similar recidivism this time around is up to £2.5m per year in 'community investment funding', the right to withdraw from the process prior to any approval, and (maybe) a final vote on any proposal via a local referendum. Deadline for both: April 19th, 2018.

Fracking guidance

The CLG Select Committee is running an inquiry into [whether planning guidance on fracking needs to be updated or revised](#). Questions include whether it should be included as nationally significant infrastructure, i.e. avoid having to get planning permission from pesky local authorities who have a tendency to say no. Deadline: 14th March 2018

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Trans-Pennine road building

Highways England is consulting with the public on their proposals for the [Trans-Pennine Upgrade](#) (the latest version of the long-fought-over Mottram bypass) before submitting a planning application to construct the scheme. Deadline: 25th March 2018

Funding

Community facilities

A fantastic new fund has just launched, offering grants up to £150,000 to provide new or improve existing community facilities. The [Weston Anniversary Fund](#) is open to UK registered charities, CIOs, places of worship and state schools with a total income under £3 million. It could be the ideal opportunity to do energy-saving improvements at a local village hall or community centre.

Food redistribution

A new £500K fund has opened providing grants for not-for-profit organisations working in surplus food redistribution. The [Food Waste Reduction Fund](#), provided by Defra and managed by WRAP, can provide grants for such areas as training, infrastructure, partnerships, communications and technology.

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