

* **Green Bullet**

21st December 2015

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 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](http://www.vsnw.org.uk/publications/nwel-green-bullet) website.

**CPRE North West have kindly agreed to continue their support to enable the Green Bullet to be produced throughout 2015 – very many thanks!**

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***Climate change – Paris agreement***

You may have noticed there was a little shindig in Paris this month on this theme. Reports of the outcomes are mixed, to say the least, and it would be impossible to summarise all the column inches given over to it, but a few key points, with links, are given below (NB very few sites or organisations deal with just one of the points below, so many links point to stories that cover the agreement as a whole, but I’ve tried to make them specific where possible. This has been easier from the critical perspective).

[Ambitious and historic](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/paris-climate-deal-cop-diplomacy-developing-united-nations)?

* For the first time in history, all [195 nations have agreed to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions](http://newsroom.unfccc.int/unfccc-newsroom/finale-cop21/), with [zero net emissions](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/world-agrees-historic-global-climate-deal) by the end of the century.
* They committed to [keeping temperature rises well below 2C](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-35084374), with an ambition to limit rises to 1.5C
* Progress will be [reviewed every five years](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6308_en.htm), with post-2030 targets to reduce emissions every five years to be agreed from 2025
* Developed countries will collectively [“mobilise” $100 billion per year](http://climateobserver.org/special-cop21-ambitious-and-balanced-agreement-finally-reached-in-paris/) from the public and private sectors, to help the poorest and most vulnerable countries take action
* The pledges and promises made can provide great [opportunities for campaigning](http://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2015/12/13/why-we-should-feel-positive-about-paris/) for deeper and further change, and

[Or failing humanity](http://ittakesroots.org/call-to-action-the-cop21-paris-failed-humanity/)?

* [No concrete actions have been agreed](https://roarmag.org/essays/three-reasons-paris-climate-deal-fraud/), it’s not legally binding, and there’s no way to enforce any of it
* Even if all the unsubstantiated pledges made in Paris are achieved to their fullest extent, that still actually leaves us on course for a [temperature rise of at least 2.7C](http://www.smh.com.au/environment/un-climate-conference/paris-2015-carbon-promises-lock-in-27-degrees-of-warming-un-says-20151030-gkmuw5.html)
* The pledges are in reality no more than nations pursuing their own [narrow economic interests](http://climateparis.org/Christiana-Figueres-INDCs) – and if these interests change, the pledges will fall by the wayside
* The $100 billion annual pledge from all developed nations collectively pales into almost non-existent insignificance next to the current [$5,300 billion annual (direct and indirect) cost of international fossil fuel subsidies](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/fossil-fuel-subsidies-cost-5-trillion-annually-and-worsen-pollution/)
* It [fails to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people](http://oneworld.org/2015/12/12/too-weak-too-late-says-climate-justice-campaigners/) and nations, and is no advance on the situation in 1992.
* It [fails to take account of the greater burden of responsibility of ‘developed’ countries](http://www.foei.org/press/archive-by-subject/climate-justice-energy-press/paris-climate-deal-sham) that have got rich by burning fossil fuels, and penalises ‘developing’ countries unfairly

Whether you’re celebrating or despairing, there’s no doubt that the hard work still has to be done. This graph from <http://climateparis.org/> perhaps gives the best indication of the task ahead – and while I suspect the article that it is taken from deliberately misinterprets the words of Christina Figueres, the UN climate chief, this picture speaks a thousand words.



However, more locally, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has joined a worldwide coalition of city leaders to tackle climate change – the [Compact of Mayors](http://gmlch.ontheplatform.org.uk/article/greater-manchester-commits-compact-mayors). Friends of the Earth are organising a [Climate Rising event](http://www.foe.co.uk/act/climate-rising-london-30-january?utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=9f7b187753-LM1512081&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-9f7b187753-20757677) in January to keep up the momentum – the pressure and organisation from civic society and the voluntary sector has been incredible!

But on the bright side, we did get to hear [the Terminator telling us to cut down on eating meat](http://www.mtv.com/news/2683674/arnold-schwarzenegger-says-go-vegetarian-to-look-like-terminator/?xrs=_s.fb_up)! And he’s [not the only one](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/nov/19/population-crisis-farm-animals-laying-waste-to-planet?CMP=share_btn_fb) to point out that the meat industry is responsible for higher levels of emissions than all global transport.

***Campaigns***

**Defending nature**

The Government, in the form of Environment Minister Rory Stewart, has [come out in defence of nature](http://www.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/martinharper/archive/2015/12/16/good-news-on-the-eu-nature-directives-bad-news-on-fracking.aspx?utm_source=DefendNatureDec2015&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=thankyou) and said that the UK is not in favour of the threatened watering down of EU Nature Directives, but rather to improve their implementation, joining the nine other countries who have been [standing up for environmental protection in Europe](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/oct/28/uk-criticised-for-failure-to-defend-european-nature-protection-laws?&utm_source=DefendNatureDec2015&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=thankyou) since this most recent threat was announced.

**Alien invasion!**

[Alien Futures](http://www.alienfutures.org) is a new research project collecting and examining issues that may affect the future global and local management of biological invasions. This project aims to complement these existing activities by exploring the wider environmental, social and technological issues external to invasion ecology that may have implications for the future management of invasive species. The project coordinators are inviting people working with or interested in biological invasions to share and fill in a survey on their website.

**Storm Desmond**

Storm Desmond hit Cumbria and North Lancashire particularly hard, flooding thousands of houses and businesses and leaving tens of thousands more without power for days at a time. It also had a big impact on landscapes and habitats. If you want to help with the recovery effort, Friends of the Lake District have launched a [Landscape Flood Appeal](https://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/appeal/landscape-flood-appeal) to help with their restoration work. The Cumbria Community Foundation is raising funds to support the [individuals and communities](http://campaign.justgiving.com/charity/cumbriafoundation/cumbriafloodappeal2015) devastated by the storm. The Cumbria Wildlife Trust is calling on Government to support more nature-based flood prevention schemes like their [Slow the Flow partnership](http://www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk/news/2015/12/15/slowing-flow-water-will-help-tackle-flooding).

***Information update***

**Energy**

Secretary of State Greg Clark has called in a group of four controversial appeals related to fracking in Lancashire to decide himself. Cuadrilla appealed after Lancashire County Council rejected the applications. However, [the Council has passed a motion](http://www.lep.co.uk/news/local/council-takes-frack-protest-to-prime-minister-1-7633883) asking that Greg Clark does not make the decision, stating that “as the Secretary of State is a member of the cabinet with a clear policy in favour of fracking and has made statements in favour of fracking, it is therefore inappropriate for him to determine the planning appeals in Lancashire because of clear evidence of 'predetermination’.” (ie he knows what he’s going to decide before hearing the evidence, grounds for barring councillors from making planning decisions) Watch this space! In the meantime, he has [refused permission for another solar farm](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-os-plot-8200-badsell-road-five-oak-green-tonbridge-kent-tn12-6qx-ref-2226557-1-december-2015), based on use of best & most versatile agricultural land, harm to the setting of a listed building, and harm to the Green Belt, [refused permission for an anaerobic digestion plant](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-fletcher-bank-quarry-ramsbottom-bl0-0dd-ref-2224754-26-november-2015) in a quarry in the Green Belt in Greater Manchester, and [called in the decisions](https://portaldirector.wordpress.com/2015/12/10/clark-intervenes-over-englands-biggest-onshore-wind-farm/) by Rossendale and Rochdale councils to permit the expansion of the [Scout Moor](http://www.scoutmoorwindfarm.co.uk/planning-application.html) windfarm. On the last day of parliament, the Government announced that they are [cutting solar subsidies by 2/3 and granting significant new licences for onshore oil and gas](http://www.buzzfeed.com/jimwaterson/life-is-hard-if-you-dont-make-government-pdfs-searchable#.qhvOOmbx5), including to [frack under AONBs and National Parks](https://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/issues/uk_fracking_map_41274). A House of Commons briefing paper has been released which deals with the [funding, planning and impacts of solar farms](http://offlinehbpl.hbpl.co.uk/NewsAttachments/RLP/CBP-7434.pdf).

**Transport**

The much-heralded decision on new national airport capacity, promised before the end of this year, was….[to not decide just yet](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/669-no2-runway-decision-but-it-is-a-dco/). Further work on carbon emissions, noise and air pollution, [as recommended by the Environmental Audit Committee](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmenvaud/389/389.pdf), will now be undertaken on all three options said to be “credible” by the [Airports Commission](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/airports-commission-final-report), with air pollution considered the most significant issue. The Crewe-Birmingham phase of HS2 is now intended to open 6 years earlier than planned, in 2027. The Government has also published a [progress report on the Northern Transport Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-transport-strategy-autumn-report), which includes a progress update across the full range of the strategy, including international connectivity, freight, smart and integrated ticketing, strategic roads and “Northern Powerhouse” rail.

***Publications***

**Air pollution**

A [new World Health Organisation report](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/air-pollution/en/) estimates that around one in eight total global deaths – 7 million people in 2012 – are a result of air pollution. At home, despite being [ordered to take urgent action on air pollution](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-32512152) by the Supreme Court in April for failing to meet agreed standards, the UK Government is pushing for a [dramatic watering-down of EU air pollution regulations](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/dec/13/uk-pushing-for-limits-air-pollution-relaxed-documents-reveal?CMP=share_btn_fb), to allow cars in Britain to pollute vastly over current standards into the indefinite future. The Government acknowledges that vehicular air pollution causes around 50,000 premature deaths per year.

**NIMBYs? No.**

In a bid for the 2015 stating-the-obvious award, a [new report by Demos](http://www.demos.co.uk/project/community-builders-report/) finds "a significant lack of trust in the planning process" because "many residents feel that developers will say anything to win permission, and that councils deliberately make it difficult for residents to scrutinise proposals, and that residents’ concerns are ignored when raised". They discovered that decisions to oppose or support schemes are based on "concern for collective, community goods such as local aesthetics, green spaces, community facilities, infrastructure and access to public services is" and that housing schemes put forward by community groups were more likely to be supported and get planning permission. However, while it’s easy to say that readers of this bulletin are likely to know this already, it is useful to challenge the widespread NIMBY discourse that attempts to portray any resistance to development as selfish, narrow-minded and unrelated to wider concerns: changed behaviour and priorities by developers and councils are more likely to win over objectors than attempts to belittle their views.

**Bye-bye, butterflies?**

A new [report from Butterfly Conservation](http://butterfly-conservation.org/48-10679/40-year-slump-for-uk-utterflies.html) and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology has found that 75% of UK butterflies have declined in the past 40 years, with some common species suffering significant slumps. Conservation efforts have arrested the decreases of some species, but others are still in serious decline.

***Resources***

**What has nature ever done for us?**

**Why protect nature? Many reasons, of course, but partly (and only partly!) because of what it does for us. The** [Ecosystem Services Assessment guide](https://www.the-ies.org/sites/default/files/reports/ecosystem_services.pdf) **from** the Institution of Environmental Sciences is one of the few guides to the process of appraising the full spectrum of things that nature does for people in and around any one locality. It explains what ecosystem services are, why an ecosystem services assessment needs to be made, and how it can add impact to your work. It addresses assessment of likely ecosystem service outcomes across a range of contexts, and contains guidance to help you through every step of the process.

**Engagement with nature**

The latest update of [Natural England’s MENE survey](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-2014-to-2015) examining people’s engagement with the environment was published this month. Headlines include that 59% of people surveyed had visited ‘the natural environment’ at least weekly over the last 12 months, with 3.12 billion visits over the year in total.

**CPRE maps**

The [CPRE maps website](http://maps.cpre.org.uk/) has added a new interactive map, showing areas of countryside protected by different designations (Green Belt, AONBs and National Parks) mapped onto parliamentary constituency boundaries and areas with and without up-to-date local plans.

***Consultations***

**National planning policy**

The Government is consulting on major [changes to the National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-consultation-on-proposed-changes), including [allowing “Starter Homes” to be built in the Green Belt](https://andrewlainton.wordpress.com/2015/12/08/telegraph-thousands-of-starter-homes-on-the-green-belt/), broadening the definition of affordable housing to include Starter Homes (that are not affordable in perpetuity, so reducing the supply of affordable homes); increasing the density of development around commuter hubs; supporting new settlements; increasing development on brownfield land (including in the Green Belt) and small sites; measures to penalise councils if developers don’t build in their areas ([likely to result in significant new greenfield land releases](http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/sound-bites/item/4185-concerning-government-consultation-on-nppf-fails-to-address-existing-problems)); and requiring the release of land allocated for employment for housing. The closing date is 25th January, but CLG select committee chairman [Clive Betts has called for a month’s extension](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/communities-and-local-government/151210-Chair-to-SoS-DCLG-re-planning-consultation.pdf) as the consultation was launched with no notice over the Christmas period. His committee are also [taking evidence for their own inquiry](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/news-parliament-2015/dclgs-consultation-on-national-planning-policy-launch-15-16/) until 11th January.

**Cutting red tape – housebuilding**

The Government is quietly consulting with those with an interest in the housebuilding sector “[to identify and remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to growth](http://cutting-red-tape.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/house-building/)” – ie how to remove environmental and infrastructure requirements on builders. Please respond to send a message that these requirements are very far from unnecessary!

**Local communities and ‘benefits’ from development**

Ministers have launched a [review to into local community benefit from development](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ensuring-local-communities-benefit-from-development) under CIL.  The [review](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/community-infrastructure-levy-review-questionnaire) will come forward with proposed measures to ensure that developers are meeting their contribution to improved local infrastructure. It’s part of the government’s ongoing reforms to streamline the planning system and build more houses, and is open until 15th January 2016.

**Fundraising reforms**

**The Institute of Fundraising and the Small Charities Coalition are working together on a joint initiative aimed to engage smaller charities on the fundraising reforms coming into effect next year.** Responding to concerns that smaller charities traditionally struggle to have their voices heard, and mindful that any new future developments on fundraising policy need to be fully informed and responsive to the needs of all fundraising organisations, [the IoF and the Small Charities Coalition](http://vsnwdata.org.uk/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3387&qid=52320) will launch an online survey and hold a forum to discuss issues and priorities.

***Opportunities***

**Demystifying economic valuation**

The Valuing Nature Network are convening a group of economic value evidence producers and users, to write a paper on ‘[key principles of economic valuation](http://valuing-nature.net/economics)’ of nature in the first half of 2016. The group’s activity is the first of many to come under the VNN’s ‘demystifying…’ series. The purpose of the series is to bring together experts to explain the key concepts that cause confusion in the wider community, and agree on principles of good practice. For further information and to express your interest in joining this group, please contact Ms Ece Ozdemiroglu, Economics Lead of the Valuing Nature Programme Coordination Team (ece@eftec.co.uk) by **6 January 2016**

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