

* **Green Bullet**

25th February 2016

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](mailto: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 2016 – very many thanks!**

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***Campaigns***

**Europe**

The referendum is coming, views will get polarized – but the environmental sector seems broadly united on this front, on the basis that being a member of the EU is better for the environment, giving us cleaner air, cleaner water and beaches, more recycling, and better wildlife protection – as well as better [planning](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/683-what-would-happen-to-planning-and-the-uk-with-brexit/)! (Although CPRE are remaining neutral, noting that their members have a range of views on the subject and not wishing to misrepresent those members). A group of senior environmental figures wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment this week, concluding that [“We will be better able to protect the quality of Britain’s environment if we stay in Europe”](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/EU_letter_to_Liz_Truss_MP.php), with the issues raised covered in more detail in [The Independent](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-brexit-poses-huge-risk-to-britains-countryside-experts-warn-a6835426.html). Green Alliance highlight [seven things you should know about the EU and the environment](http://greenallianceblog.org.uk/2016/01/28/seven-things-you-should-know-about-the-eu-and-the-environment/). A new group, [Environmentalists for Europe](http://environmentalistsforeurope.org/) has been set up to try to ensure that the importance of the UK’s contribution to European environmental policy, as well as the contribution EU environmental policy has made to the achievement of the UK’s national goals and objectives, will be fully recognized in the coming campaign. [Friends of the Earth](https://www.foe.co.uk/page/eu-referendum?utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=1c2b13a753-LM1602123&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-1c2b13a753-20757677) have come out for staying in. The [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management](http://www.cieem.net/eu-referendum) warn of “profound and serious implications” for conservation, and have published a table of relevant EU directives and another of [useful links to relevant information](http://www.cieem.net/eu-referendum). FOE, WWF UK, RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts commissioned a report examining the [role of the EU in influencing the UK’s environment](http://www.ieep.eu/assets/1230/Final_Report_-_Influence_of_EU_Policies_on_the_Environment.pdf) and potential outcomes if we were to leave for the “Review of Competences” – a couple of years old now but still relevant. Whatever else your views on Europe may be, it seems clear that staying in is the greener, cleaner choice.

**Woodland Charter**

The Woodland Trust are leading a call to create a [Charter for Trees, Woods and People](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/tree-charter/), supported by several NWEL members including CPRE. They are seeking Charter Champions in communities who will act locally to ensure that everyone in the UK has a chance to play their part in defining the future of woods and trees in the UK. You’ll get training, support and opportunities to apply for funding for local events, activities and projects that bring your community together around a celebration of local woods and trees. They are also asking for individuals to [share stories and memories](https://treecharter.uk/) that show how trees have shaped our society, landscape and lives.

**Air Quality**

After [London broke its annual air pollution limits](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/london-breaches-air-pollution-limit-for-the-whole-of-2016-in-just-over-seven-days-a6811616.html) in just seven days, Friends of the Earth are [campaigning](https://www.foe.co.uk/green-blog/are-you-fuming-about-air-pollution-uk-cities?ic_number=45938935&m_sourcecode=LM1601036&product=CAMP&MID=664e0046d2&utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=email) on the issue and are asking people to [complete a short survey](https://friendsoftheearth.typeform.com/to/FRlyR2?utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=c0dee512a7-LM1602061&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-c0dee512a7-20757677).

**Bees**

Following the partial ban on neonicotinoids in 2013, the evidence continues to mount about the damage they do, not just to honey bees but throughout the food chain. This [new briefing](https://www.foe.co.uk/sites/default/files/downloads/farming-without-neonicotinoids-96676.pdf) shows that these insecticides are poisoning our countryside, getting into soils, wildflowers, hedgerows, streams and trees near to treated crops. All aquatic, soil living, leaf eating, sap sucking and nectar feeding insects are at risk and so therefore are all our farmland birds and other animals that rely on these for food. And we’re still using them!

**HS2**

The Woodland Trust have said that HS2 Ltd’s plans feature multiple errors, flawed calculations, and methods that go against Government guidance in its “vain attempts to justify [loss and damage to 63 ancient woods](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blogs/woodland-trust/2016/02/fury-at-hs2/) along the first phase of the route” when they appeared before the [HS2 Select Committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/high-speed-rail-london-west-midlands-bill-select-committee-commons/) this month. They said that the company is misleading the Government, the Select Committee and the public, and risks setting “dangerous precedents”.

**Climate change**

See the highlights from the [Show the Love](http://fortheloveof.org.uk/show-the-love-overview/) campaign and see if you could save money and cut your emissions with the Climate Coalition’s [Big Deal](https://thebigdeal.com/climatecoalition).

**Gagged again**

Remember the [Gagging Act](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/charities-warn-gagging-law-stops-them-campaigning-on-election-issues-10054889.html)? The Government has now [gone one better](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35509117), banning charities who receive Government money from using it to “lobby” for change. So, if evidence arises from the provision of a service that suggests how public policy could help with the problem – you can’t tell the Government. They don’t want to know. Even better yet, it’s not only charities who will have to keep quiet about what they find in the course of their work if it doesn’t suit the incumbent Government: [publicly funded scientists and researchers](https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/feb/20/scientists-attack-muzzling-government-state-funded-cabinet-office) will have to keep quiet about inconvenient truths as well.

***Information update***

**Energy**

Government Ministers want to [add fracking to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/681-ministers-considered-adding-fracking-to-planning-act-regime-as-appeals-start/) Regime, thereby taking decisions out of the hands of local authorities (at the same time as they are [taking wind power out of it](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/677-government-starts-removal-of-onshore-wind-from-planning-act-regime/)). In the meantime, they have also ordered those same local authorities to [share information with Defra](http://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/dclg-requests-councils-to-share-fracking-planning-permission-information) when they are considering fracking applications. In the meantime, [Cuadrilla’s appeals against refusal](http://stopfyldefracking.org.uk/) for its Lancashire applications opened this month, billed as “[one of the most awaited and most significant planning public inquiries in recent times](http://www.turley.co.uk/intelligence/cuadrilla-planning-inquiry)” . They have had a [refusal overturned to re-use a monitoring station](http://www.lep.co.uk/news/local/cuadrilla-wins-monitoring-station-battle-1-7745230), but the inquiry on the main appeals for Roseacre and Preston New Road will continue into March. Renewables rejections continue\*, with solar farms in [Somerset](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-howgrove-farm-green-lane-nempnett-thrubwell-somerset-ref-3103260-11-february-2016), [Essex](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-land-associated-with-clay-tye-farm-clay-tye-road-upminster-essex-rm14-3pl-ref-3007618-2-february-2016), [West Sussex](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-huddlestone-farm-horsham-road-steyning-west-sussex-bn44-3ad-ref-2218035-26-january-2016) and [Cornwall](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/495935/16-01-28_DL_IR_Butteriss_Solar_Farm_Cornwall_2229290.pdf) turned down by Greg Clark, along with a [small wind farm](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-land-adjacent-to-torr-works-somerset-ref-2227407-25-january-2016) in Somerset. [North Lincs council](http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-policy/local-dev-framework/supplementary-planning-documents/) has published a supplementary planning document focusing solar development on brownfield and industrial land and new and existing rooftops, while [two Devonshire councils](http://consult.torridge.gov.uk/portal/planning/localplan/windpolicy) are consulting on a proposal to declare the whole of their area as potentially suitable for wind turbines in response to the new criteria for onshore wind.

\**Clarification: I stated in the last Bullet that the Government’s wall-to-wall refusals of renewables applications were based on their claim that we don’t need them because we are on target to hit our legally-binding 2020 renewables target already, and contrasted this with a* [*leaked letter from Amber Rudd*](http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_analysis/2986190/leaked_letter_rudd_admits_25_green_energy_undershoot_misled_parliament.html?utm_source=Energydesk+Daily+Email&utm_campaign=88ae359128-Energydesk_Dispatch5_9_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ad1a620334-88ae359128-141760085) *revealing that in fact we have no chance of hitting those targets without some radical changes in policy. However, I missed out a crucial step in the argument: Government policy is based, in part, on this claim, and the refusals are based on Government policy. The decisions themselves make it clear that the individual applications’ contributions towards relevant carbon reduction and renewable energy targets are weighed in the balance, and it is current Government policy to give greater weight to other issues.*

**Planning**

Gardens in villages and the countryside may be classified as brownfield land, potentially unleashing a rash of ‘garden-grabbing’ outside of towns and cities, following a [high court ruling](http://cornerstonebarristers.com/case/high-court-holds-that-some-residential-gardens-are-brownfield-land/). Only gardens “in built-up areas” are excluded from the brownfield classification in the NPPF, so gardens outside such areas will, at least for now, be considered as brownfield and therefore more favourable for development – although exactly what a “built-up area” constitutes is open to interpretation! The [Cities and Local Devolution Act](http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/citiesandlocalgovernmentdevolution.html) has been given royal assent, while the [CLG select committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/news-parliament-2015/devolution-report-published-15-16/) has found “a very significant lack of public consultation and engagement at all stages of the devolution process” so far and “a failure to set out clear, measurable objectives for devolution, rushed timetables for negotiation, and a lack of openness about deals.” A [leading property consultancy](https://portaldirector.wordpress.com/2016/02/18/top-property-consultancy-questions-whether-government-policies-will-increase-housing-supply/) suggests that current Government policy is more likely to slow housing growth than accelerate it, and that they will also hurt people on lower incomes, while the House of Lords National [Policy for the Built Environment Committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/built-environment/news-parliament-2015/built-environment-report-published/) says that current government policy is unlikely to meet demand for either the quantity or quality of houses we need. CPRE has provided [a round-up of recent planning reforms](http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/features/item/4230-more-planning-reform-what-s-going-on) and their [views on the proposed changes to the NPPF](http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/4233-planning-changes-making-our-views-known), in particular the impact on [the social mix in rural villages](http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/features/item/4234-the-housing-bill-bad-for-villages?utm_content=buffera7f82&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer). The Planning Minister says that the resulting changes to the NPPF should come into effect in the summer. The Lords have been critical of the Housing and Planning Bill, accusing it of [undermining localism](http://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/housing-and-planning-bill-house-of-lords-raises-questions-about-its-policies-and-its-%E2%80%98denial-of) and democratic legitimacy and proposed a [series of amendments](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/debate/expert-opinion/peer-review-part-1/7013707.blog). See the consultation section for a link to a consultation setting out (and seeking views on) how some of these measures are intended to be taken forwards.

***Publications***

## Value of Greenspaces to Society

A [social value study](http://thelandtrust.org.uk/charitable-aims/thebenefits/?utm_source=Ecosystems+Knowledge+Network+News&utm_campaign=b4034edaac-E_news_Feb_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d104700fca-b4034edaac-106382577) commissioned by the Land Trust has found that every pound invested in parks and nature reserves contributes £30 towards health and well-being benefits and £23 towards crime reduction and community safety.  Consultants Carney Green surveyed visitors to 12 Land Trust sites in England, with detailed analysis of five. According to the study, for every £1 spent by the Land Trust on its sites, people using them value the benefits as two and a half times higher – making the social amenity value £2.56.

**NIMBY-mania?**

Planning consultants Development Intelligence have released a report claiming that [NIMBYism is at an all-time high](http://development-intelligence.com/nimbyism-at-all-time-high/), with 90% of people saying that their neighbourhood was either over-developed or ‘fine the way it is’ and therefore resistant to new development. Publications mentioned in previous Bullets highlighting the public’s bad experiences with poor quality development, feeling that they lack a voice and that the system is stacked against them, and distrust of national and local Government and the development industry based on previous experience, may go some way to explaining this and suggest how it might be tackled – such as the [BIMBY toolkit](https://www.bimby.org.uk/), praised this week by Planning Minister Brandon Lewis, or the recommendations from Demos about [better community involvement](http://www.demos.co.uk/project/community-builders-report/). It’s not rocket science!

**Farmland ecosystem accounting**

The Office for National Statistics have published the first experimental [farmland physical ecosystem accounts](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/environmental/uk-natural-capital/experimental-uk-farmland-ecosystem-accounts/index.html). These accounts form part of a suite of ecosystem accounts being compiled for different habitats within the UK as part of a strategy to incorporate natural capital into the UK Environmental Accounts by 2020. It shows that between 1998 and 2014 the types of land use within the broad habitat of “farmland” have changed significantly, and the condition of farmland is falling in quality, in terms of soil carbon concentration and species richness.

**Payments for Ecosystem Services**

[Reports](http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18907) on the third round of Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) pilot projects have been published, including the Irwell catchment and Smithills Estate in the North West. Defra have published a table [summarizing the key points](http://ecosystemsknowledge.net/sites/default/files/wp-content/uploads/EKN_PES_Defrapilots.pdf) from the first two rounds of projects, and the [review of key findings from the first two rounds](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/payments-for-ecosystem-services-review-of-pilot-projects-2011-to-2013) is also available.

***Events***

**Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership Annual Forum**

Annual event of the pioneering [spine of the North LNP](http://www.nuclnp.org.uk/agendas-and-papers/). Friday 11th March 2016, 2-4.30pm, Morritt Arms, Greta Bridge, County Durham. Learn about and discuss their work on High Nature Value Farming; developing a results-based agri-environment scheme pilot; progress on work on a natural capital investment prospectus; and natural flood management.

**Fairtrade Fortnight**

Monday 29 February - Sunday 13 March 2016: Sit down for breakfast, stand up for farmers! This year [Fairtrade Fortnight](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-fortnight-2016) will focus on issues of food security in 2016. The Fairtrade Foundation estimate that about 795 million people are undernourished globally and consider it a scandal that the people who grow the food we take for granted can’t always feed their own families. They want to support farmers and workers to put food on the table for their families by harnessing the power of a big Fairtrade breakfast. [Find events in your area](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/supporter-events-map) or [get support](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/~/media/fairtradeuk/get%20involved/documents/current%20campaigns/fairtrade%20fortnight%202016/action%20guide%20fairtrade%20fortnight%202016.ashx) to put one on yourself!

#### Ecosystem Services and Environmental Assessment London, 24th May 2016 / Manchester, 29th June 2016. The Ecosystems Knowledge Network are organising two training courses (although they are not cheap!) on [how to incorporate ecosystem services into environmental assessment](http://ecosystemsknowledge.net/about/events/training-environmental-assessment), including Environmental Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.  Participants will learn why ecosystem services can be useful, how they can be used and the challenges and opportunities they present.

**Energy Saving Fairs - South Lakeland**

Cumbria Action for Sustainability are organizing a series of energy saving fairs around the South Lakeland area: in [Arnside](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0011LQiTJ17PYtSqcUaP70HiFfrP3Dp001Hq_9Xg_KIBo5TrffZOCWtoebz0vEso_SM0S_LymSfknGIufxQ4OpMrKquAIP2wbuaZrztmNZTSmgD7zzCLlZyJCuIB9MLwQr4lpzx4eGbB_OmkwW1mgjaJ3qMckPtvNElu4hUk2Odkw9Z7FLMjhFKjcgncyL1M_f8&c=d7PMuqMlJUTEv0JwqJ13rca2gGFKm8VCRH7OQhLWzBfekLVBBQvbdw==&ch=XHVG2nDEkzq5-Ux5-CLhyRcdWfbBwz0IlWv2asfCUj9NSeBuucv8Vg==) on Saturday 12th March, [Kendal](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0011LQiTJ17PYtSqcUaP70HiFfrP3Dp001Hq_9Xg_KIBo5TrffZOCWtoebz0vEso_SMVKMLFj53pfjeeCi4Exiql8VSKJjKTtM3ryYEsnNiSoktH1P6h3F2NZjPrQPRgxIlKw4IsRZBu_n7e4ogbyzrAPjew1UdkrwGcBz7jgrqkbh6Lj3bV4tetNXI9-sQZKE-&c=d7PMuqMlJUTEv0JwqJ13rca2gGFKm8VCRH7OQhLWzBfekLVBBQvbdw==&ch=XHVG2nDEkzq5-Ux5-CLhyRcdWfbBwz0IlWv2asfCUj9NSeBuucv8Vg==) town hall on Saturday 19th March, [Sedbergh](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0011LQiTJ17PYtSqcUaP70HiFfrP3Dp001Hq_9Xg_KIBo5TrffZOCWtoebz0vEso_SM52mTM5-8QxQ1HR9uyb25izhjb80NNSUrCk81s5_7lyycmi8OvcHtVIoKoZXB0LqGgvqwiF3pGy_RwNr1HoP0aYBr-rfuxL0elyvaBgh_mpFaA8u2q6e9ncmpcyCGDGXu&c=d7PMuqMlJUTEv0JwqJ13rca2gGFKm8VCRH7OQhLWzBfekLVBBQvbdw==&ch=XHVG2nDEkzq5-Ux5-CLhyRcdWfbBwz0IlWv2asfCUj9NSeBuucv8Vg==) on Wednesday 30th March, [Windermere](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0011LQiTJ17PYtSqcUaP70HiFfrP3Dp001Hq_9Xg_KIBo5TrffZOCWtoebz0vEso_SMCeBJYydrQRMZu7rHDrSu_EjLwEN6GHo5IDYLQDoFgUKcekj672aU3HvxsfDdJwyU5sCBZbeFtVXylUY0RIrfnnF3OXRVx0hYAypaCmZHcyi84jw9_76oxa3Xty2Vd9wh&c=d7PMuqMlJUTEv0JwqJ13rca2gGFKm8VCRH7OQhLWzBfekLVBBQvbdw==&ch=XHVG2nDEkzq5-Ux5-CLhyRcdWfbBwz0IlWv2asfCUj9NSeBuucv8Vg==) on Saturday 16th April, [Burneside](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0011LQiTJ17PYtSqcUaP70HiFfrP3Dp001Hq_9Xg_KIBo5TrffZOCWtoebz0vEso_SMlkLTxxlXgSJAVTfiiaFXnuRRkenuD8RF0zw72AEuBiL16Ig85ospzLLLI0YLOYmrEmYS0zEZ6UfBPxyxcNu310F_ZY7fv7tecLv99E59N-mZofcoYI2jfa2mFIj3cMrnZ9RbcKuY-1ABCl35GqSGsJIpdXeoDulfg3NjXqWvyA4=&c=d7PMuqMlJUTEv0JwqJ13rca2gGFKm8VCRH7OQhLWzBfekLVBBQvbdw==&ch=XHVG2nDEkzq5-Ux5-CLhyRcdWfbBwz0IlWv2asfCUj9NSeBuucv8Vg==) on 5th April, and they’ll also be at the [pop up shop](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=0011LQiTJ17PYtSqcUaP70HiFfrP3Dp001Hq_9Xg_KIBo5TrffZOCWtoebz0vEso_SMJocvQXxteaiQdrBIMdg_7PXKJYpux-zJZFUu7h4e7D0ozMni1oqF95idvHtJ7R4kNq6pwtpJGyfxC7sE6Ntud945PjjSyF6_1HdGmzXJBVhN1kNOz7eAAtKn6dTRcq_a&c=d7PMuqMlJUTEv0JwqJ13rca2gGFKm8VCRH7OQhLWzBfekLVBBQvbdw==&ch=XHVG2nDEkzq5-Ux5-CLhyRcdWfbBwz0IlWv2asfCUj9NSeBuucv8Vg==) on Finkle Street in Kendal from Monday 14th – Friday 18th March.

## Local Authority Bus Services – An Endangered Species?

8 March 2016 11:00 - 15:00, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ. This [Future North West workshop](http://www.vsnw.org.uk/events/view/1012) is a must-attend event for representatives of groups interested in ensuring the continued operation or replacement of their publicly funded local bus service. Advance booking is essential so to book your place, please complete the [booking form](http://www.vsnw.org.uk/files/Transport%20Event%20Booking%20Form.doc) and return it by **1st March** to Jess Waugh, Voluntary Sector North West, St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ, or email the information to [jess.waugh@vsnw.org.uk](javascript:location.href='mailto:'+String.fromCharCode(106,101,115,115,46,119,97,117,103,104,64,118,115,110,119,46,111,114,103,46,117,107)+'?').

***Resources***

**Do ecosystem services arguments really help?**

Do ecosystem services really win arguments for biodiversity conservation? A [new report from BESAFE](http://www.besafe-project.net/img/uplf/BESAFE_brochure_online_11.pdf) *(*Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Arguments for our Future Environment) investigates how we can use the value of nature to argue more effectively for conserving biodiversity - but only if we effectively deploy moral and intrinsic value arguments as well.

**Community Consultation**

This [guide from Locality](http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/neighbourhood-planning-community-consultation/) is intended for neighbourhood planning, but could be adapted to other situations where you need to go out and consult your community.

**FareShare FoodCloud**

A free scheme, called [FareShare FoodCloud](http://www.fareshare.org.uk/fareshare-foodcloud/), is being piloted in UK cities (including Manchester) after a successful pilot in a London Tesco Extra, with charities collecting surplus, unsold food such as bakery products and fruit and veg at the end of day to distribute to people in need. FareShare would like to hear from Manchester charities and community projects that use food to support people and might be interested in taking part. Not everyone will be able to take part immediately but if you register your interest they will keep you updated as the project progresses.

**Investing in nature**

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) has launched an online platform to increase awareness of [business opportunities for investing in ecosystems](http://www.naturalinfrastructureforbusiness.org/) (or natural infrastructure). The aim of the platform is to strengthen the business case for investing in natural infrastructure, and that by 2020 companies will be assessing natural infrastructure options when investing in new sites or projects. The Northern Upland Chain have published a [natural capital plan for investing in peatland](http://www.nuclnp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/NUCLNP-Natural-Capital-Investment-Plan-for-Peatland.pdf?utm_source=Ecosystems+Knowledge+Network+News&utm_campaign=b4034edaac-E_news_Feb_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d104700fca-b4034edaac-106382577).

**Co-wheels Car Club**

Social enterprise [Co-wheels car club](http://www.co-wheels.org.uk/) now have new hybrid pay as you drive (PAYD) cars available in Cumbria, at Oxenholme, Penrith, Carlisle and Windermere train stations. The car club model is based on reducing car ownership and creating a cleaner environment by making lower impact transport options available to everyone - and it also works out as a much cheaper form of car use.

***Consultations***

**Rural planning review**

The Government is consulting on [how the planning system is working in rural areas](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/rural-planning-review-call-for-evidence) and how it could be improved. The focus, of course, is on increasing [productivity](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/boosting-productivity-in-rural-areas) and building more houses, so the outcome is likely to be a weakening of regulations – but Greg Clark does say that it’s also about “ensuring local people have more control over planning and the Green Belt continues to be protected” – so respond on this basis and keep him honest! Deadline: 21st April

**Implementation of planning reforms (Housing & Planning Bill)**

The Government are consulting on how their most recent round of [planning reforms will be implemented in practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/501239/Planning_consultation.pdf), including on granting planning permission in principle (extended to major developments), establishing and using brownfield and small sites registers, changes to neighbourhood planning, intervening in local plan production, and privatizing planning application processing. Most of these measures derive from the Housing and Planning Bill. Deadline: 15th April.

**Flooding**

The Government has issues a [call for evidence](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/water-and-flood-risk-management/national-flood-resilience-review-call-for-evidence) on the need to carry out a new assessment of the damage that extreme rainfall could cause across England. They are seeking references to already-published evidence / research rather than views at this point. Deadline: 4rd March. There will be further opportunities to contribute to the [wider flood resilience review](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-flood-resilience-review-government-action-to-tackle-floods). The [EFRA select committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/future-flood-prevention-launch-15-16/) has also launched an inquiry into future flood prevention, including focuses on planning, prediction, protecting communities and managing water flows, with a much more reasonable deadline for submissions of 15th March.

***Funding***

**Free online fundraising training**

The NCVO has a mountain of useful advice on charity funding, development, campaigns and much more at [knowhownonprofit.org](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org). Highlighted here: a free online training course giving step-by-step advice on [writing a winning funding bid](https://knowhownonprofit.org/studyzone/write-a-winning-funding-bid) in a difficult financial climate.

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North West Environment Link (NWEL) is a partnership of environmental voluntary sector organisations, representing hundreds of thousands of members in the North West.

VSNW is the regional voluntary sector network for the North West, whose purpose is to support a connected and influential voluntary and community sector (VCS).

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