

* **Green Bullet**

28th April 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 - 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***

**Climate change**

175 countries [signed the COP21 Paris climate change deal](http://www.zmescience.com/ecology/97-of-diesel-cars-dont-respect-official-pollution-limits/) in New York, which [110 major global businesses](http://www.ceres.org/press/press-releases/companies-salute-paris-agreement) supported with a joint call for swift action on a clean power plan. The Transition Network has recently released their new film, ['8 days @ COP21'](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6nISyrLGGo&feature=player_embedded), capturing those days last December when the climate negotiations took place in Paris, and the experiences of some of the Transitioners who were there. The [Energy and Climate Change Select Committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/energy-and-climate-change-committee/news-parliament-2015/fifth-carbon-budget-report-published-15-16/) has urged the Government to accept its advisers’ recommendations on setting the fifth carbon budget, work to secure a deal to control international aviation emissions, and analyse what further levels of cuts are needed following the Paris agreement. However, since May 2015 [national policy changes](http://www.campaigncc.org/backwards) mean that clean energy technology has been sidelined in favour of a dash for gas, insulation cuts and fracking, with roads and runways pushed through despite strong local opposition. The Campaign against Climate Change is launching a new campaign this spring focusing on the [Government's backtracking on climate change](http://www.campaigncc.org/goingbackwards). The main event will be a protest on 8 May in Whitehall (a march literally 'going backwards'); there will also be other [local](http://www.campaigncc.org/goingbackwards_local) and ongoing events.

**Planning reforms**

Right now, the Government is pushing through a raft of changes to the way planning works in England. These changes are eroding your right to a fair say on planning decisions that shape our towns and cities and could mean losing precious countryside forever. [CPRE](http://www.cpre.org.uk) is calling for Government to: allow local authorities to set realistic housing targets based on local need; make developers build out the developments for which they already have planning permission before they can have further sites; make building on brownfield land a priority before building on greenfield land; and give a clear commitment to a Green Belt policy that protects the countryside. They are asking people to [write to their MPs](http://takeaction.cpre.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=21&ea.campaign.id=46682&ea.tracking.id=campaigns-update-e&utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=Tell-the-Government-to-stop-allowing-unnecessary-greenfield-development&utm_content=Tell+the+Government++to+stop+allowing+unnecessary+greenfield+development&ea.url.id=585168) before a decision is made in the next few weeks – changes to the NPPF are expected in June (based on [this consultation](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-consultation-on-proposed-changes) specifically on these proposed changes – but see also the [Housing and Planning Bill](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/implementation-of-planning-changes-technical-consultation) and [Local Plan Expert Group](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-plans-expert-group-report-to-the-secretary-of-state) consultations for flavours of further changes!)

**30 Days Wild**

The Wildlife Trusts are encouraging everyone to get better connected with nature in June with a re-run of their successful [30 Days Wild](http://action.wildlifetrusts.org/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1823&ea.campaign.id=48499) campaign: sign up for your inspirational pack. The evaluation of last year’s campaign has been [published](http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0149777) in the Open Access peer-reviewed journal PLOS One, with [highlights](https://findingnature.org.uk/2016/04/06/30-days-wild/) in the lead author’s blog.

**Air pollution**

Government tests this month show that Britain’s diesel car emissions are [on average 5 times higher](http://www.edie.net/news/6/Diesel-vehicles-emitting-five-times-the-EU-limit--Government-test-shows/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%200a8b818842-dailynewsletter) than EU safe limits – all cars tested were above the limit, some as much as 12 times. A major new report from the [Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/air-quality-report-published-15-16/) says that urgent Government action is needed to stop the UK's air quality crisis causing up to 50,000 deaths a year, including the introduction of clean air zones in towns and cities, a diesel scrappage scheme and steps to tackle farming emissions, according to. Read seven genuinely alarming stats about [air pollution](https://www.foe.co.uk/green-blog/shocking-air-pollution-facts-5-unbelievable?utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=f32371c3b1-LM1603036&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-f32371c3b1-20757677), and sign Friends of the Earth’s petition calling on the Government to tackle the problem much faster!

**Meat-free May**

Damaging environmental and health impacts are associated with our eating habits. Break up your daily routine with delicious ideas and resources for a [meat-free May](https://www.foe.co.uk/page/meat-free-may) and put some variety on your life!

**Deer survey**

The British Deer Society manage a five-yearly deer survey to help understand areas of population and distribution. If you see a deer when you’re out and about, please [let them know](http://www.bdsdeersurvey.org.uk/) broadly where and when!

**Grant funding**

The Directory for Social Change is co-ordinating a campaign to try to arrest the decline in [public grant funding to voluntary bodies](https://www.dsc.org.uk/grants-for-good-2/) – a decline of 60% since 2004. Find out how you and your organisation can [get involved](https://www.dsc.org.uk/grants-for-good-2/get-involved/).

***Information update***

**Energy**

* 2015 saw [record-breaking renewable energy generation and declining coal production](http://www.edie.net/news/10/The-UKs-ever-changing-energy-mix-2015-in-charts/29968/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20a899c69876-dailynewsletter), with a fall of 4% in the UK's annual carbon dioxide emissions, but a raft of green policy changes have left future clean energy deployment levels hanging in the balance.
* The [Zero Carbon Hub](http://www.building.co.uk/cash-strapped-zero-carbon-hub-to-close/5080952.article), which helped make zero-carbon homes a reality, has closed following the Government’s decision to scrap targets to make homes zero-carbon (although the [Lords have voted to make Government reverse its decision](http://www.edie.net/news/11/Lords-reject-Government-decision-to-scrap-zero-carbon-homes/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%200669f55f25-dailynewsletter) as part of their wider resistance to the Housing and Planning Bill). Its [website](http://www.zerocarbonhub.org/) will remain available as a resource for the immediate future.
* However, last month the [Commons Energy and Climate Change Committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/energy-and-climate-change-committee/) called on the government to reinstate the zero carbon homes policy, and argued that energy efficiency should be a national infrastructure priority.
* Greg Clark has refused permission for four solar farms, in [Surrey](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-barrow-green-farm-haxted-road-lingfield-surrey-ref-3133066-30-march-2016), [Hampshire](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-limolands-farm-vaggs-lane-hordle-lymington-hampshire-ref-3006387-30-march-2016) (against the Inspector’s recommendation), [Warwickshire](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-land-at-park-farm-claverdon-warwickshire-ref-3029788-20-april-2016) and the [New Forest](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-land-off-lepe-road-exbury-so45-1aj-ref-3132171-7-april-2016) National Park, and a wind turbine in [Staffordshire](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-land-near-stone-park-farm-pingle-lane-stone-st15-8qt-ref-2212769-21-october-2015).
* An application for the UK’s first coal and biomass-fired [power station with carbon capture and storage technology](http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/yorkshire-and-the-humber/white-rose-carbon-capture-and-storage-project/) has been refused by the Government, on the grounds that they’ve withdrawn funding for carbon capture and storage.

**Planning**

* The High Court judgement which, for now at least, means that [gardens outside of “built up areas”](http://cornerstonebarristers.com/case/transcript-now-available-in-significant-brownfield-land-judgment) can be treated as brownfield and therefore prioritized for development is now available.
* A significant Court of Appeal decision means that in the absence of a five-year supply of housing land, [*any* policies that may restrict housing development](http://www.plan-it-law.com/2016/03/court-of-appeal-decision-on-nppf-paragraph-49.html) (eg relating to Green Gaps, Green Belt or landscape protection) can be considered out-of-date; however, it also establishes that out-of-date policies can continue to attract significant weight. The key paragraphs are [here](https://andrewlainton.wordpress.com/2016/03/31/suffolk-coastal-case-precisely-defines-how-to-apply-out-of-date-local-plan-policy-when-oan-shortfall/), and the [industry is suggesting](http://us8.campaign-archive1.com/?u=e54b5c76c2427fac5b4a41c47&id=025ee7881b&e=13908b8fd1) that it may make some proposals more likely that would previously have been considered off-limits (although Cheshire East and Suffolk Coastal are seeking to [appeal the decision in the Supreme Court](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/media_hub/media_releases/council-seeks-supreme-court-ruling-in-bid-to-protect-planning-powers.aspx), and if it is overturned it will not set these precedents).
* The Court of Appeal has also ruled on the [meaning of inappropriate development in the Green Belt](http://www.39essex.com/meaning-inappropriate-development-green-belt-peter-village-qc-ned-helme-succeed-court-appeal-lee-valley-glasshouse-case/) in relation to agricultural buildings.
* The [CLG Select Committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/communities-and-local-government-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/dclgs-consultation-on-national-planning-policy-15-16/), responding to the consultation on changes to the NPPF, has called for a comprehensive review of national policy before the end of this Parliament (almost exactly the opposite of what the [Local Plans Expert Group](http://lpeg.org/)’s recommended!) They also raised concerns about proposals for a new “[presumption in favour of small sites](http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/sound-bites/item/4267-clg-select-committee-report)” and about effective prioritization of brownfield land.
* An industry-led group has been set up to try to develop a method for working out just [what on Earth “sustainable development” means](http://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/sustainable-development-commission-launched-by-industry) in practical terms for planning and development.
* 152,440 permanent dwellings were completed in the UK in 2014/15, an increase of 10% on 2013/14 but relatively low historically – [this graph](http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN02644) captures the historical perspective nicely.
* The Housing and Planning Bill is getting a rough ride, with the [Lords](http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/january/lords-housing-bill/) voting against the Government on [Starter Homes](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/news/article/267/peers_overturn_20_per_cent_starter_home_requirement), office-to-residential conversions, [community right of appeal](http://www.spbroadway.com/politics-of-planning/lords-insert-community-right-to-appeal-into-housing-and-planning-bill/), and granting planning permission in principle – but these could well all be overturned when the Bill returns to the Commons.

**Waste**

[England’s recycling rate fell](http://www.letsrecycle.com/news/latest-news/england-recycling-rate-in-reverse-data-shows/) for the first time since national records began in 2000, from 45% to 44.3%. The Welsh rate of 56.2% shows that much more can be done in very similar circumstances!

***Publications***

**Europe**

Three new reports on the environmental impacts of EU membership for the UK this month:

WWF UK, the RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts commissioned a [new report on the potential environmental and policy consequences](http://www.ieep.eu/assets/2000/IEEP_Brexit_2016.pdf) of a UK departure from the EU. The broad headline is that **"it is likely that a UK departure from the EU would leave the British environment in a more vulnerable and uncertain position than if the country were to remain as a member of the EU."**

The [Environmental Audit Committee](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news-parliament-2015/eu-uk-environmental-policy-report-published-15-16/) have issued their report following an inquiry into EU and UK Environmental Policy. They found that EU membership has been a crucial factor in shaping UK environmental policy on air and water pollution, and biodiversity. They say that EU membership has given the UK a platform to pursue its environmental objectives internationally, and influence the strategic, long-term direction of policy, and also ensured that environmental action in the UK has been taken on a faster timetable, and more thoroughly than would otherwise have been the case.

# And [The EU Referendum and the UK Environment: An Expert Review](http://ukandeu.ac.uk/research-papers/eu-referendum-and-uk-environment-expert-review/) by independent thinktank [The UK in a Changing Europe](http://ukandeu.ac.uk/about-us/) provides a detailed review of the academic evidence on how EU membership has influenced UK policies, systems of decision making and environmental quality. It documents how the EU has affected UK environmental policy and how, in turn, the UK has worked through the EU to shape wider, international thinking. It has been authored by 14 international experts, who have drawn on the findings of over 700 publications to offer an impartial and authoritative assessment of the evidence. It reports that EU membership has been a major factor behind the “marked improvement in environmental quality in the UK” since the 1980s and found many more risks for the environment in leaving the EU than staying.

**Green Belt building**

New research from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) shows that [275,000 houses are now planned for England’s Green Belt](http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news-releases/item/4278-more-than-a-quarter-of-a-million-houses-now-planned-for-green-belt-land), an increase of 50,000 on last year and nearly 200,000 more than when the Government introduced its planning reforms back in March 2012. Green Belt boundaries are being changed to accommodate housing at the fastest rate for two decades, as Green Belt policy is gradually being weakened through loopholes in planning guidance.

**National Parks Plan**

The Government has published an 8-point plan setting out their priorities for [improving National Parks](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-parks-8-point-plan-for-england-2016-to-2020) in England from 2016 until 2020. It includes plans to connect more young people to the environment through National Parks, increase visitor numbers, develop apprenticeships through National Park Authorities, and to protect and enhance the natural environment.

**National Infrastructure Commission: Government responses**

The Government has responded to the NIC’s first three reports, including on [energy infrastructure](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smart-power-government-response-to-the-national-infrastructure-commissions-report) and [transport in the North](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/high-speed-north-government-response-to-the-national-infrastructure-commissions-report). Basically, they re-confirm that they agree with the recommendations. Angus Walker summarizes the responses [here](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/694-government-responds-three-nic-reports/).

**Heath & climate change**

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change launched this month to highlight the [links between health and climate change](http://www.ukhealthalliance.org/2016/03/29/most-recent-story-added-here/). In their inaugural report, the heads of the UK’s health institutions warned that UK health services are currently unprepared for the risks posed by climate change.

**Culture White Paper**

The Government has published a [Culture White Paper](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/culture-at-the-heart-of-our-communities), that calls for cultural strategies to be embedded in Local Plans, sets out plans for 12 (and at least four rural) pilot “Great Places” schemes and five Heritage Action Zones, and calls for greater partnership working locally and nationally to promote and protect our cultural heritage, including valued landscapes.

**Environmental externalities**

A [new report by Trucost](http://www.trucost.com/published-research/99/natural-capital-at-risk-the-top-100-externalities-of-business) on behalf of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) program sponsored by United Nations Environmental Program examined the money earned by the biggest industries on the planet, and then contrasted them with 100 different types of environmental costs, grouped into six categories: water use, land use, greenhouse gas emissions, waste pollution, land pollution, and water pollution. The report found that when you take the externalized costs into effect, virtually NONE of the industries was actually making a profit.

***Events***

**Basecamp**

For three days, from the 3-5 June, 450 grassroots **activists from all over the country will gather at Losehill Hall in the stunning Peak District countryside** for what they describe as an **‘activist wonderland.’** [Basecamp](https://www.foe.co.uk/page/basecamp-2016?utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=a8fe808ea2-LM1604008&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-a8fe808ea2-20757677) **is for everyone, from seasoned campaigners to curious people with good hearts.** Even if you wouldn’t describe yourself as an ‘activist,’ but you still care about the issues and want to do your part to make the world a better place**, then Basecamp could be for you.**

 **Spring in the Bay**

Check out a wide range of springtime events in and around Morecambe Bay in the Morecambe Bay Partnership’s new [Spring events](http://morecambebay.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7c707f7f7b43753097969d216&id=ae3cb77a2e&e=3da27c2f6c) [leaflet](http://morecambebay.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7c707f7f7b43753097969d216&id=bf5dbcd6dc&e=3da27c2f6c) or [online](http://www.morecambebay.org.uk/events)

**North West Green Infrastructure Forum**

Save the date – the next NW Green Infrastructure Forum is planned for 16th June 2016, starting at 10am at Risley Moss, Warrington. More details next month!

***Resources***

**Land use statistics**

New [land use change statistics](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-change-statistics-2014-to-2015) show that 58% of residential development was on brownfield land in 2014-15, 2% down compared to 2013-14. Average density was also down 1% to 31 dwellings per hectare; 3% of new dwellings were in the Green Belt (no change from last year); and 8% were in high flood risk areas, up 1%.

**The Carbon Trust Green Business Fund**

Get help (and cash!) to save money and energy for your organisation! For small and medium sized businesses (with fewer than 250 employees) in England, Scotland and Wales – the new [Carbon Trust Green Business Fund](http://www.carbontrust.com/client-services/technology/implementation-and-finance/#greenbusinessfund) offers an energy opportunity assessment, equipment procurement support, and a financial contribution towards energy saving equipment.

**De-cluttering roads powers**

New regulations came into force this month which mean unnecessary and out-of-date [road signs can be removed from English roads](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/councils-get-new-powers-to-tear-down-pointless-road-signs), as well as making sure traffic signs are visible on unlit roads. The new arrangements will also help de-clutter streets and roads by removing adverts and distracting logos. The number of signs on England’s roads more than doubled from 2.45 million in England in 1993 to an estimated 4.57 million in 2013, according to the Department for Transport. Contact your council and suggest where they should start!

**Nature and mental health evidence**

A study published by Natural England shows that taking part in nature-based activities helps people who are suffering from mental ill-health and can contribute to a reduction in levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. The report [A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care](http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4513819616346112) suggests making greater use of ‘green care’ to help people suffering from mental ill-health.

**Supporting Parks possibilities**

Nesta, Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund have published a report [‘Learning to Rethink Parks’](http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/learning-rethink-parks) which presents the lessons from Rethinking Parks, an 18 month programme designed to find and test ways for Britain’s parks to source new sustainable funding in the future.

***Consultations***

**Cycling and walking**

The Government is consulting on its first [draft cycling and walking investment strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy), which aims to double cycling activity by 2025, reverse the decline in walking, reduce the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured on English roads, and increase the number of children walking to school. While this is very welcome, it falls short of the recommendations in the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Cycling’s report](https://allpartycycling.org/inquiry/), and has been [criticized by cycling groups](http://www.cyclinguk.org/press-release/2016-03-27/cycling-walking-investment-strategy-worthless-without-meaningful-fundi) as lacking ambition and adequate funding. Deadline: 23rd May.

**Greater Manchester devolution**

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is consulting on its [proposed new powers](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/devopowersconsultation) and how they will be governed. Relatedly, Eamonn Boylan, lead chief executive for housing and planning at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, was recently quoted as saying “we want to push the boundaries of the spatial framework further so that it can fulfil the function of the local plan for all intents and purposes" for all of Greater Manchester’s 10 local authorities – a very significant development for the GM area!

**National Parks**

As part of their 80th anniversary activities, the [Campaign for National Parks](http://www.cnp.org.uk/news/help-shape-national-parks-future) is consulting on how their work promoting and defending the Parks should be prioritized in future – take the short online survey to give your views.

**North West Marine Plans**

The Marine Management Organisation is consulting on their draft Statement of Public Participation for the [North West marine areas](http://mis.marinemanagement.org.uk/north-west) and a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, in the first stages of the development of two marine plans for North West England. Deadline: 13th May.

***Funding***

**Online fundraising – support and match funding**

[Localgiving](https://localgiving.org/about/mission/) has teamed up with the [People’s Postcode Lottery](https://www.postcodelottery.co.uk/Charities.htm) to provide environmental groups in the North West of England the chance to develop their online fundraising capabilities. Eligible groups will receive a year’s free membership of Localgiving, access to free training and mentoring, and support to develop and deliver an online fundraising campaign, as well as up to £500 for each group in matched funding. Groups must be running projects which enable people to engage with the environment, and this can include groups where the environmental benefit is secondary, for instance a befriending service running a gardening project. For further information, and to see if your project is eligible, please contact Joe Burns on 07872041989 / joe.burns@localgiving.org, or check out their [dedicated webpage](http://join.localgiving.org/northwest)

**Community Woodland Programme – Support Grant Deadline**

The Woodland Trust’s pilot Northern [community woodland grant programme](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/get-involved/communities/community-woodland/how-to-apply/) allows community groups to apply for start-up grants and project support grants. The deadline for the Support grants is 5th May, but the start-up grants will be available on an on-going basis. For more information contact Paul Mosley, Community Woodland Officer on 0343 7705895 or paulmosley@woodlandtrust.org.uk. You can also find advice and inspiration on the [Community Woodland Network](https://communitywoodland.org/).

**Bags of Help**

The second round of funding for the [Tesco Bags of Help scheme](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/Sites/tescocommunityscheme) opened for applications on 18 April 2016. Community can apply for grants of £8,000, £10,000 and £12,000 to improve local green space. Projects that will get the green light as a result of the funding will include new pocket parks, sports facilities, schools, woodland walks and community gardens. For inspiration on how you can improve your local community visit the [Community Project Toolkit](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/sites/projecttoolkit).

**Power to Change**

The Power to Change is taking applications for its £10 million [community business fund](http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/funding/grants/) until 1st June. It offers grants of £50,000 - £300,000 to businesses that are accountable to their local community and whose profits flow back into the community to deliver positive local environmental, social or economic impact. Locality offer [advice](http://locality.org.uk/blog/tips-winning-power-change-funding/) on writing applications.

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*To subscribe or contribute*

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