

* **Green Bullet**

31st May 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**

There’s only a few days left to [#RegisterToVote](https://twitter.com/hashtag/RegisterToVote?src=hash) for the [#EUreferendum](https://twitter.com/hashtag/EUreferendum?src=hash). Don't lose your vote – [register to vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) by 7 June 2016, and feel free to share this link with your stakeholders, users and contacts. I wouldn’t dream of suggesting how you should vote, of course, but would perhaps re-draw your attention to the succession of heavyweight expert evidence for the positive environmental impacts EU membership has had and the “profound and serious implications” for the environment that leaving the EU would have:

* [Green Alliance’s succinct summary of the issues](https://greenallianceblog.org.uk/2016/01/28/seven-things-you-should-know-about-the-eu-and-the-environment/)
* [The EU Referendum and the UK Environment: An Expert Review](http://ukandeu.ac.uk/research-papers/eu-referendum-and-uk-environment-expert-review/)
* 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/)’s EU and UK environmental policy report
* [Brexit – the Implications for UK Environmental Policy and Regulation](http://ieep.eu/assets/2016/IEEP_2016_Brexit_-_Implications_for_UK_Environmental_Policy_and_Regulations.pdf) - a special independent report commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Environment Group
* Some of the [UK’s most senior environmentalists](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-brexit-poses-huge-risk-to-britains-countryside-experts-warn-a6835426.html), including past leaders of our statutory nature protection agencies (current incumbent are forbidden from expressing an opinion)
* The [WWF UK](http://www.wwf.org.uk/wwf_articles.cfm?unewsid=7824), [RSPB](http://www.rspb.org.uk/news/details.aspx?id=415956) and [Wildlife Trusts](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/EU-Ref)-commissioned [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
* [Friends of the Earth’s](https://www.foe.co.uk/page/eu-referendum-environment) analysis of EU impacts on nature, air quality, green energy, beaches, fish and waste
* The [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management](http://www.cieem.net/eu-referendum), which also provides [useful links to relevant external information](http://www.cieem.net/eu-referendum)
* The [Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment](http://www.iema.net/news/news/) (polls carried out on 11th and 25th May)
* [The Chartered Institute for Waste Management](http://www.ciwm-journal.co.uk/environmental-profession-backs-bremain-surveys-find/) and other environmental professionals surveyed by the Society for the Environment and ENDS
* [Environmentalists for Europ](http://www.environmentalistsforeurope.org/news/)e

**Climate Change**

**Following the signing of the Paris Agreement in New York by 176 countries, a new international** [Climate Transition Commission](http://www.energy-transitions.org/) **has been set up to** help identify pathways for change in our energy systems to ensure both better growth and a better climate. They aim to accelerate change towards low-carbon energy systems that enable robust economic development and limit the rise in global temperature to well below 2°C.Signing is the first of a two-step process for countries to formally join the Agreement - the next is ratification. Once 55 Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, representing at least 55 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, complete this process, the Agreement will “enter into force,” or come into effect and be legally binding. The World Resources Institute has recently unveiled a [Paris Agreement Tracker](http://cait.wri.org/indc/#/ratification), which enables people to monitor countries’ progress toward ratifying the Paris agreement and allows users to create, share and embed their own combinations for bringing it into force.

**Air pollution**

The UK government is to be sued in the high court over its air pollution plans again, just a year after losing at the supreme court and being ordered to fulfil its legal duty to cut pollution rapidly. A request for a new judicial review by environmental lawyers at [ClientEarth](http://www.clientearth.org/judge-decides-uk-government-will-face-legal-action-air-quality/) was granted by a judge at the end of April. ClientEarth argues the government is in breach of its legal duty to produce new air quality plans to cut pollution to legal levels in the “shortest possible time”, despite being ordered to do so by the supreme court in 2015. A [new report](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2016/air-pollution-rising/en/) from the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests air pollution across the world is rising, and in the UK, more than 40 towns and cities are identified as having levels of particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) that the WHO regards as unsafe for health. The report does not include levels of nitrogen dioxide, which is at illegal levels in the UK and which is the subject of ClientEarth’s renewed legal action. And as reported last month, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has just called for urgent Government action to stop up to [50,000 people a year dying early](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/) from air pollution-related illnesses.

**World Meat-free Day**

Change your diet for a day to reduce environmental impacts on [World Meat-free Day](http://www.meatfreemondays.com/), June 13th.

***Information update***

**Energy**

* Figures from [DECC’s Public Attitudes Tracker](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/public-attitudes-tracking-survey-wave-17) show 81% of the 2,105 people surveyed claiming that they are in support of renewables. 70% of respondents are concerned about the adverse effects of climate change, with 56% even saying they would welcome a large-scale renewable development in their own area. Solar is the most popular with the public, with onshore wind and biomass less popular due to their other environmental impacts. 31% opposed fracking, with 19% in favour.
* EU laws requiring member states to use "at least 10%" renewable energy in transport will be [scrapped after 2020](http://www.euractiv.com/section/transport/news/green-transport-target-will-be-scrapped-post-2020-eu-confirms/), as the European Commission hopes to avoid a protracted controversy around the environmental and other damage caused by biofuels.
* The [Energy Bill](http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2015-16/energy.html), which amongst other measures changes the planning regime for larger onshore wind farms, has gained the Royal Assent and is now law. It removes the need for the Secretary of State’s consent for large onshore wind farms (over 50 megawatts) in England and Wales. It also brings forward the closure of the subsidy arrangements for new onshore wind developments across Great Britain which will reduce dramatically the number of wind turbine schemes proposed in the future.
* North Yorkshire County Council has given permission has for an existing well near the village of Kirby Misperton [to be fracked](http://www.edie.net/news/10/North-Yorkshire-County-Council-fracking-sites-approval-for-UK-shale-gas/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%209635b1541a-dailynewsletter) – the first fracking permitted in the UK since the ban following the earthquakes in Fylde. Campaign groups and [environmentalists](https://www.foe.co.uk/act/add-your-name-peoples-declaration-say-no-fracking-b?utm_expid=4681116-67.vX00I5B8QMq2vXCI6phPPw.1&utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=fde2f4cd6f-LM1605032&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-fde2f4cd6f-20757677) have called the decision "bitterly disappointing" and "an absolute travesty". The Lancashire appeals are still awaiting a decision.
* Communities Secretary Greg Clark has allowed a [single wind turbine scheme](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-humberside-farmers-ltd-newbald-lodge-north-newbald-york-ref-2217703-19-may-2016) at a Yorkshire farm, and another in [Cumbria](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/525528/16-05-24_DL_IR__Black_Brow_Farm_Allerdale.pdf). He agreed with the Inspector that it would not have a significant effect on the character and visual amenity of the landscape nor result in undue cumulative impact, and that the planning concerns of the parish councils involved had been addressed. However, he also dismissed three solar farm proposals in [Cheshire](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/525677/16-05-25_DL_IR_Common_Lane_Frodsham_3140162.pdf), [Essex](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-havering-grove-farm-552a-rayleigh-road-hutton-essex-cm13-1sh-ref-3134301-23-may-2016) and [Worcestershire](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-rectory-farm-rectory-lane-upton-warren-worcestershire-ref-3136031-3136033-23-may-2016), all in the Green Belt.
* The [Berkeley Group](https://www.architecture.com/RIBA/Contactus/NewsAndPress/Membernews/PracticeNews/2016/May2016/11May2016/BerkeleyGroupannouncescarbonpositiveplan.aspx) is defying a lack of green policy support – highlighted by last month’s scrapping of the Zero Carbon Hub following the scrapping of the zero carbon homes targets – by unveiling a landmark plan to become Britain's first carbon-positive housebuilder.

**Planning**

* After a [substantial battle](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/news/article/281/housing_and_planning_bill_caught_in_parliamentary_cross-fire) between the Lords and the Commons, the Government has overturned almost all of the proposed amendments to the [Housing and Planning Act](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/briefing-room/news-releases/2016/may/the-housing-and-planning-bill-passes-into-law/) and it received Royal Assent this month. Intended to kickstart a “national crusade to get 1 million homes built by 2020”, amongst other things it introduces:-
  + A requirement for councils to provide 20 per cent of new housing as discounted “starter homes” for first-time buyers
  + ‘Planning permission in principle’ – an automatic consent for sites identified in local and neighbourhood plans and new brownfield registers
  + Further powers for the Secretary of State to intervene in local and neighbourhood plan preparation
  + Measures to boost self and custom build housing
  + Planning permission to be granted for homes in some circumstances under the [Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects](http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/) regime
* A £1bn housing delivery fund, the ‘[New Communities Partnership](http://www.designingbuildings.co.uk/wiki/New_Communities_Partnership)’, has been launched to help the public sector build 10,000 new homes across the UK over the next 4 to 5 years on their own land, while a new report finds that [6% of all land](http://www.telerealtrillium.com/media/publications/research-report-delivering-new-homes-on-surplus-public-secto) in England and Wales is publicly owned.
* The Government-backed [Local Plans Expert Group](http://lpeg.org/)’s recommendations for a new, standardized way of measuring housing need have ['disastrous technical faults'](http://offlinehbpl.hbpl.co.uk/NewsAttachments/RLP/LPPGREPSSUMMARY.pdf) that would further delay and complicate plan-making and require massive uplifts in housing delivery, according to a rival group of experts.
* Consultancy NLP have criticized the [Greater Manchester Spatial Framework](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/gmsf) and its allegedly “[suppressed housing and economic analysis](http://www.housingthepowerhouse.com/downloads/Greater_Manchester_The_Engine_Driving_the_Powerhouse_April_2016_FINAL.pdf)” for failing to plan for the levels of housing growth they say would be required to achieve Northern Powerhouse ambitions. I suspect readers of this bulletin may disagree…
* Government policy exempting small sites from having to deliver affordable housing, which was overturned by the High Court last year, has just been [effectively re-instated by the Court of Appeal](http://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/government-wins-appeal-over-affordable-housing-and-small-sites-policy). This will cause particularly severe problems for providing affordable housing in rural areas, where need is often greatest and sites smallest.
* [CPRE](http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/4295-up-for-a-challenge) provide some useful analysis and guidance with regard to the [Richborough Estates](http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2016/168.html) case reported on last month, which has been interpreted as weakening protection for designated areas from speculative development
* The Government has responded to the [consultation on the National Infrastructure Commission](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523947/national_infrastructure_commission_consultation_response_print.pdf); consultees broadly agreed with what was proposed
* The Queens Speech included a Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill – the main elements of the bill are set out on pages 19-22 of these [background notes](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524040/Queen_s_Speech_2016_background_notes_.pdf)
* Neighbourhood Plans continue to flex their muscles, with Greg Clark [ruling against an application for 120 houses](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-land-east-of-broad-road-hambrook-chichester-west-sussex-ref-3004052-25-april-2016), saying that "The secretary of state agrees with the inspector that granting permission would be at odds with the shared neighbourhood planning vision … and that it would fundamentally undermine confidence in the neighbourhood planning process that has taken place to date." Meanwhile, the [St Ives Neighbourhood Plan](https://stivesnplan.wordpress.com/), which bans second homes, was overwhelmingly passed at referendum. DCLG has launched a new [Neighbourhood Planning microsite](http://www.neighbourhoodplanning.org/) with a step by step guide through the process and a range of other resources
* The online [National Planning Practice Guidance](http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/) has been updated with regard to the following topics: Duty to cooperate, Local Plans, Natural Environment, Neighbourhood Planning, Planning obligations, Rural Housing, When is permission required?

***Publications***

**Global Environmental Outlook**

Degradation of the world's natural resources by humans is rapidly outpacing the planet's ability to absorb the damage, meaning the rate of deterioration is increasing globally, the [most comprehensive environmental study ever](http://www.unep.org/newscentre/default.aspx?DocumentID=27074&ArticleID=36180) undertaken by the UN has found.

**25 Year Plan for the Environment**

Wildlife and Countryside Link are publishing a [series of articles](http://www.wcl.org.uk/blog.asp) in their blog on what their members want to see in the Government’s proposed 25 Year Plans for the Environment and for Food and Farming. Articles in May (from CPRE, the National Trust, WWF and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) highlight the important connections between farm management, soil quality and biodiversity, the need to include the global dimension in the plan, the need for an integrated and sustainable approach to farming, and the importance of land use.

## New vision for trees in and around urban areas

The Urban Forestry and Woodland Advisory Committee Network has set out its thinking on the benefits of a [resilient urban forest](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/urban-forest-final-v4.pdf/$FILE/urban-forest-final-v4.pdf). With a Forward by Minister Rory Stewart, it contains a helpful distillation of evidence, data and case studies that illustrate the variety of benefits of trees in and around urban centres.

**UK Civil Society Almanac**

Published in April 2016, the [UK Civil Society Almanac 2016](https://data.ncvo.org.uk/) is the definitive reference publication for anybody interested in the voluntary sector, and its role in civil society. First published in 1996, it draws together trends, facts and information from NCVO’s own research programme, plus the latest available data from government surveys, academic research, and research by voluntary organisations.

**Affordable housing**

A [new report from the TCPA](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources.php?action=resource&id=1291) (Town and Country Planning Association) shows only seven per cent of councils believe that the government’s starter homes initiative will help address their affordable housing needs, while nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) believe the viability test in the National Planning Policy Framework hinders their ability to provide social and affordable housing.

***Events***

**Open Farm Sunday**

##### [Open Farm Sunday](https://farmsunday.org/)**, on June 5th, is the farming industry’s annual open day. A day when hundreds of farmers all over the country welcome visitors onto their farms to discover the world of farming. It’s managed by**[LEAF](http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/home.eb) (Linking Environment And Farming), the leading organisation promoting sustainable agriculture, food and farming, helping farmers produce good food to high [environmental standards](http://www.leafuk.org/leaf/farmers/LEAFmarquecertification/standard.eb).

**Volunteers’ Week 2016**

Over 21 million people volunteer in the UK at least once a year and this contributes an estimated £23.9bn to the UK economy. Events are being planned across the country to mark [Volunteers’ Week 2016](http://volunteersweek.org/), taking place 1-12 June. NCVO will be providing all the information, guidance and resources you need to make a celebration this Volunteers’ Week a success. Keep up to date with plans and hear first when their resource pack is available by signing up to their [Volunteers’ Week mailing list](http://volunteersweek.org/) or enter your event on the [Volunteers’ Week events map](http://volunteersweek.org/events).

**Small charity week**

13-18 June is [Small charity week](http://smallcharityweek.com/), raising the profile of small charities and providing opportunities around fundraising, volunteering and policy making.

**North West Green Infrastructure Forum**

The next NW [Green Infrastructure Forum](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/north-west-green-infrastructure-partnership-forum-tickets-22508052190) will be on 16th June 2016, starting at 9:30 for registration and coffee, at Risley Moss, Warrington. The main item will be on natural flood management, with other slots to consider GI in the planning process, using GI to improve a challenging housing area, and more.

**Manchester & Pennine Waterway Partnership Annual Outburst**

Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester, 9th June, 9-1. [Something for everyone](http://manchester_outburst.eventbrite.co.uk) with an interest in our waterways, their sustainable future and the important role they have in the local community. There will be discussion tables and your chance to contribute towards the subjects of volunteering, urban cooling, towpaths for sustainable transport, social value, Green Flag, and many more.

***Resources***

**Green Infrastructure**

The Ecosystems Knowledge Network has pulled together a wide range of advice, guidance, tools and evidence relating the functions, benefits and value of [green infrastructure](http://ecosystemsknowledge.net/resources/tools-guidelines/green-infrastructure). Extremely handy!

## An Evaluation Framework for applying the Ecosystem Approach

The ecosystem approach informs public policy and environment-related projects around the UK. Scottish Natural Heritage has recently published a [succinct framework](http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1933741.pdf) to help in the evaluation of policies, strategies, plans or projects that seek to apply the ecosystem approach. It can be used to help design new work or to reflect on work that is either on-going or has finished.

**Social media toolkit**

Not sure why or where to start with the world of social media? This [toolkit](http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/social-media-toolkit-2/) gets you started – how to decide on what channels and how to manage them, from the perspective of a community organisation.

**Devolution**

Voluntary sector alliances in both [Greater Manchester](http://www.vsnw.org.uk/areasofwork/devolution/gm) and [Liverpool City Region](http://www.vs6.org.uk/) are working to promote the role of the sector and give it a voice in the new devolution deals, and [VSNW](http://www.vsnw.org.uk/areasofwork/devolution/gm) continues to maintain a regional view on devolution developments.

**Social prescribing**

Social Prescribing is a non-medical approach to dealing with health issues which can provide opportunities for environmental organisations – the [Natural Health Service](http://www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk/) is an excellent example. It is increasingly recognised that physical and social environments have a significant impact on people’s lives, and often the best prescriptions for patients from GPs are non-clinical ones. For more information, see VSNW’s [briefing on social prescribing](http://www.vsnw.org.uk/publications/view/2015-10-08-briefing-96-social-prescribing) and [interactive map](http://vsnwdata.org.uk/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=3781&qid=61234) of social prescribing projects across the North West. They will update the map as further projects are announced and please send details of any projects you are involved in to [sam.popper@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:sam.popper@vsnw.org.uk).

**Community-led housing**

The Nationwide Foundation and Locality have launched a [programme](http://locality.org.uk/projects/communityled-housing/early-stage-support/) which offers expert mentoring and small grants to help affordable community-led housing projects get started.

***Consultations***

**National Infrastructure Commission**

The National Infrastructure Commission has launched a [consultation](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/525950/National_Infrastructure_Assessment_Consultation.pdf) on the process and methodology for its National Infrastructure Assessment. [Angus Walker](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/701-national-infrastructure-commission-consults-ambitions/) summarises the consultation and provides some food for thought for responses – eg should meeting our carbon reduction commitments be the main driver for the Commission?

**Anaerobic digestion & micro-Combined Heat & Power**

The Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has delivered another blow to the UK's clean energy industries, proposing to completely cut Feed-in Tariff (FiT) schemes for large anaerobic digestion (AD) sites and ["severely" reduce subsidies](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-support-for-anaerobic-digestion-and-micro-combined-heat-and-power-under-the-feed-in-tariffs-scheme) for small and medium scale plants. Consultation closes 7th July.

**Reconstructing heritage assets**

Historic England has issued a [draft advisory note](https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/consultations/guidance-open-for-consultation/) on the reconstruction of heritage assets which has taken account of some significant factors that have emerged since the English Heritage publication "Conservation Principles" was published in 2008. The draft is currently open for consultation.

***Funding***

**Influencers!**

It can often be hard to finding funding for influencing rather than “doing” projects. The Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation looks to support those organisations “working to [influence policy, attitudes and values](http://www.polden-puckham.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2&Itemid=35) at a national or international level. These may be single issue groups working to achieve a particular change, or organisations with a broader remit”.

**Community projects – small grants**

Small grant awards to empower charities and local community projects for the betterment of society are offered by the [Better Community Business Network Grant Initiative](http://www.bcbn.org.uk/grant-initiative.html). The awards scheme will distribute up to £3,000 per month to small but credible community projects that are able to demonstrate the positive impact that they add to the local community. The deadlines for applications in 2016 are 26th August and 25th November.

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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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