

* **Green Bullet**

20th December 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!**

CONTENTS

* Campaigns – Climate change, air pollution
* Information update –Brexit & beyond, 25 year plan for nature, energy, planning, transport, waste & recycling
* Publications – Green Belt nature & recreation, National Parks, GM climate change
* Events – Natural capital accounting, ecosystem service science
* Resources – Defra jobswap, local energy futures, design awards, biodiversity net gain, Cumbrian climate change, small charities
* Consultations – Environmental Impact Assessment
* Survey – Learning in natural environments

***Campaigns***

**Climate change**

* A [new report](https://www.tcpa.org.uk/planning-for-the-climate-challenge) by the Town and Country Planning Association concludes that Local Plans are failing to prepare for the effects of climate change, national planning policy on development viability is hampering effective action on the issue, and the duty to cooperate places 'little to no emphasis' on cross-boundary climate change issues. It sets out ten recommendations for change, which organisations concerned with planning and with climate change might possibly want to consider a joint campaign around?
* Almost half of the carbon savings made by Europe's land-based transport by 2030 will be effectively cancelled out by continued emissions growth in the shipping and aviation sectors, according to new research commissioned by green group [Transport & Environment](https://www.transportenvironment.org/sites/te/files/publications/2016_11_CE_Delft_7G93_Share_of_aviation_and_maritime_transport_DEF.pdf).
* [28 Days Later](http://www.edie.net/news/9/28-Days-Later--What-we-know-so-far-about-Trump-s-presidential-reign/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20790a662ec1-dailynewsletter): Edie examines what the month since the US elections suggests for global action to tackle climate change, given the President-Elect’s campaign pledges to cancel the newly-ratified Paris Agreement and "save the coal industry", his famous claim that climate change is a Chinese hoax designed to damage American industry, and his appointment of climate change deniers to his cabinet and to head the Environmental Protection Agency.
* A reform of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), which is being voted on by the European Parliament next week, could end up giving more than €230bn in subsidies to polluting industries, according to [Carbon Welfare](https://corporateeurope.org/sites/default/files/attachments/the_carbon_welfare_report.pdf), a new report from the Corporate Europe Observatory.
* Friends of the Earth are calling on the UN to officially recognize climate refugees, as all predictions indicate the likelihood of increased forced mass migration as a result of climate change, but movement for this reason is not currently afforded international protection – [sign their petition](https://act.foe.co.uk/act/demand-protection-climate-refugees?utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=6c73550cc8-LM1612014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-6c73550cc8-20757677).

**Air pollution**

* The European Commission has started legal action against the UK and six other EU states for [failing to act against car emissions cheating](http://www.omaha.com/news/world/eu-starts-legal-action-against-states-over-vw-emissions/article_a4875470-3e98-540a-9e2c-1a6809623dc4.html) in the wake of the "dieselgate" scandal. The UK is one of four countries accused of issuing approvals for VW Group cars and not applying national provisions or penalties, despite the company’s use of illegal software. The commission also argues that the UK and Germany have unlawfully refused to disclose details of national investigations into potential irregularities in nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions by VW and other carmakers.
* The UK has [agreed to adopt new EU legislation on air quality](http://www.clientearth.org/uk-agrees-new-air-pollution-law-raising-awkward-brexit-questions-new-coalition-launched/), which sets stricter national limits for the emission of some of the most dangerous air pollutants – although green groups say that the Government’s (unlawfully) poor record on sticking to existing pollution laws raises serious doubts about whether it will meet these new targets.
* Sadiq Khan has doubled investment in [tackling air pollution in London](https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-doubles-funding-to-clean-up-londons-air): will the rest of the country follow suit?
* Friends of the Earth are calling for diesel cars to be [phased out by 2025](https://act.foe.co.uk/ditchdiesel?utm_source=Friends+of+the+Earth+Communications&utm_campaign=2196ba04f6-LM1612020&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_383af65c6b-2196ba04f6-20757677)

***Information update***

**Brexit & beyond**

* 13 major environmental organisations have come together to form the [Greener UK coalition](http://green-alliance.org.uk/launch_of_greener_uk_coalition.php) with the primary intention of ensuring that the UK uses the pivotal moment presented by the Brexit negotiations to restore and enhance the UK’s natural environment. 170 MPs from across the UK's political parties have signed up to the coalition’s Pledge for the Environment. This is good news – but it also means that 480 MPs have not yet committed to safeguarding our natural environment. [Find out where your MP stands and lobby them](http://www.green-alliance.org.uk/greeneruk) if they haven’t signed up!
* Theresa May has signaled that she intends to trigger Article 50 in March 2017 and kick-start the UK’s Brexit formalities. Much has been made about the uncertainties surrounding this departure, especially in regards to what it means for environmental legislation. The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment have set out [five key areas](http://www.iema.net/news/news/2016/12/13/iema-shines-spotlight-on-top-five-policy-opportunities-for-2017/) where decisions in 2017 are likely to lock-in the direction of travel in the policy landscape for many years to come: industrial strategy, carbon emissions reduction plan, corporate governance reform, the 25 year Environment and Food & Farming Plans, and the ‘Great Repeal Bill’. [Get to grips with the details](http://www.edie.net/news/11/IEMA-outlines-policy-opportunities-and-challenges-for-2017/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%2073f1ced6c6-dailynewsletter) and plan how to engage now!
* Wildlife and Countryside Link, along with other major scientific and ecological umbrella groups, [met with Brexit ministers to discuss future policy](#sthash.sRtAOmnN.dpuf). Following this, the department publicly pledged “to put Britain [at the vanguard of tackling global environmental challenges](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-we-will-maintain-our-proud-record-on-environmental-science-and-conservation-after-leaving-the-eu), from conservation to climate change.” Watch this space for anything that vaguely resembles a commitment that might give these fine words some substance.
* After a lengthy review, the EU has decided not to “streamline” (ie weaken) its [main nature protection laws](http://www.foeeurope.org/nature-dodges-bullet-huge-campaign-saves-nature-laws-071216), the Birds and Habitats Directives, and indeed have called for them to be better implemented. This is a major victory for environmentalists; British campaigners will have to work hard to ensure that the UK maintains this standard.

**25-year plan for nature**

Little [bits of detail are beginning to emerge](http://www.ciwem.org/chief-executives-blog-a-place-that-is-great-for-living-in-and-sits-responsibly-within-our-world/) about the 25 year plan for the environment through Defra’s [meetings with specific stakeholders](http://www.ciwem.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1.1-Nick-Barter.pdf) – although not publicly from Defra themselves, of course. A Framework Document consulting on the plan’s principles is still awaited (Defra’s own [Departmental Plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020/single-departmental-plan-2015-to-2020), updated this September, still claims that it will be released in summer 2016. So that’s gone well). There will be four pilot “pioneer” areas to test how the plan might function in practice – a catchment, a landscape, an urban area, and a marine area. The urban area will be [Greater Manchester](https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi5q5WErYDRAhUDNxQKHVupDfYQFggaMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk%2Fdownload%2Fmeetings%2Fid%2F1384%2F04_defra_pioneercity_region&usg=AFQjCNFwzKUZ-fVwnfK-dFuJ1RJDSzkPrQ&sig2=8E_LBSlNJvSTIdpRLAAETw&bvm=bv.142059868,d.d2s). The plan is likely to divide England into 14 [‘aligned areas’](http://www.euwfd.com/html/environmental-news-highlights.html) with different priorities and actions, with the North West divided between Cumbria & Lancashire, and GM, Merseyside and Cheshire. Watch this space for more concrete information when it emerges… and in the meantime join the RSPB’s Martin Harper reflecting on the [key issues that the plan needs to cover](https://www.rspb.org.uk/community/ourwork/b/martinharper/default.aspx).

**Energy**

* Sajid Javid has refused permission for a [solar farm in the Green Belt in Surrey](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovered-appeal-land-at-redeham-hall-smallfield-surrey-ref-3146389-5-december-2016)
* Onshore and offshore turbines combined topped 10,000MW of output for the first time this month, producing [23% of the UK’s electricity](http://www.sunwindenergy.com/wind-energy/record-10000-mw-generation-wind-power-uk) – albeit for a very short time!

**Planning**

* If a council does not have a five year supply of land, its policies for housing supply are considered out of date and the presumption in favour of “sustainable” development kicks in. However, the Government have just clarified in a Written Ministerial Statement that where a Neighbourhood Plan that allocates sites for housing is in place, only a three year supply is required, giving [neighbourhood planning areas substantially more protection from speculative development](http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-12-12/HCWS346/).
* A High Court judge has ruled that Neighbourhood Plans only need to take account of their own local housing needs, not wider district needs. He also re-affirmed the need to provide exceptional reasons to permit development within AONBs. The ruling could have [major implications for Neighbourhood Planning and AONBs](https://www.roydswithyking.com/parish-council-wins-decisive-victory-local-authority-new-homes-battle/) across the country.
* Meanwhile, half the parish council in a Sussex village have [resigned in protest](http://www.uckfieldfm.co.uk/2016/local-news/overturned-planning-permission-in-newick-sees-councillors-resign/) at the Secretary of State granting planning permission for an application that was in conflict with their Plan.
* Despite proposing the removal of 4,900 hectares of Green Belt to facilitate the building of 227,000 new homes, a [developers’ lobbying group](http://www.housingthepowerhouse.com/index.html) is calling the draft [Greater Manchester Spatial Framework](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/info/20081/draft_plan) a “handbrake on opportunity” which [plans for too little development](http://www.housingthepowerhouse.com/downloads/Greater-Manchester-Plan-Open-Letter-to-GM-Leaders.pdf). This is what we’re up against!
* After putting a temporary stop on the Birmingham Local Plan to examine concerns about unnecessary Green Belt release, the Secretary of State has [given it the go-ahead](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/building-the-homes-we-need) to continue. [CPRE](http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/sound-bites/item/4437-government-lifts-holding-decision-on-birmingham-local-plan) acknowledged that it was really too late to central Government to do anything, but should have got involved much earlier in the process; the local MP, who got the block imposed originally, has [pledged to fight on](http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/local-mp-pledges-to-fight-birmingham-plan-decision/7017858.article). Interesting to watch to see how the Government intends to use their new powers of intervention and whether this will be a useful instrument for campaigners or not.
* The starting-to-be-long-awaited Housing White Paper has been [delayed until next year](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-11-28/debates/32AED347-3475-4E5B-A910-8E3146336862/TopicalQuestions). As well as responding to the remaining [Local Plan Expert Group](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-plans-expert-group-report-to-the-secretary-of-state) recommendations (including a new way of calculating housing need that [could increase housing targets by more than 20%](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/18/nimby-backlash-fear-cabinet-ministers-ahead-major-new-year-assault/)), it is expected to include further encouragement for [Green Belt swaps](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/11/26/housing-crisis-ministers-urge-councils-build-green-belt-land/) and to contain measures to [combat landbanking](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/building-the-homes-we-need). [CPRE](http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news-releases/item/4434-housing-white-paper-tackling-housing-crisis-needs-realistic-housing-targets) is campaigning for it to require realistic housing targets, priority for brownfield development, and Green Belt protection.
* New figures show [an increase in new build starts](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/house-building-new-build-dwellings-england-july-to-september-2016), and increases in the proportion of new homes built on [brownfield land and in densities](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/land-use-change-statistics-2015-to-2016). There was also a drop in the proportion of homes built in the Green Belt. However, at 61%, we are still building a far lower proportion of homes on brownfield land than in the last decade, despite research showing that the [amount of brownfield land suitable and available for housing is increasing](http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news-releases/item/4414-more-than-a-million-homes-possible-on-suitable-brownfield-land).
* The Government has published its latest proposals for tightening the criteria and thresholds under its ‘[special measures’ regime](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-planning-performance-criteria-for-designation), under which local councils will lose some of their planning decision-making powers if they fail to reach new standards. Based on current performance, the new rules would capture 22 councils, including 8 in the North West: Wyre, Blackburn-with-Darwen, Preston, Lancaster, Wyre, Ribble Valley, Blackpool. Liverpool
* Cheshire East has [pulled the plug on its Neighbourhood Plan grant scheme](http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1879), following a cut in central Government funding to local authorities to support neighbourhood planners in their area.
* The Government has published its latest [checklist of major infrastructure projects](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cmzdiwgm2%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CTemp%5C%E2%80%A2%09https%3A%5Cwww.gov.uk%5Cgovernment%5Cuploads%5Csystem%5Cuploads%5Cattachment_data%5Cfile%5C574523%5C2905918_NIC_Pipieline_pdf_v9.pdf) currently on the drawing board.

**Transport**

* The Government has set out more details of [the £1.3 billion announced for road building](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/roads-funding) in the autumn statement, insisting that new roads will boost the economy and housing growth. It includes schemes in Warrington, Cheshire, and Greater Manchester. The [Campaign for Better Transport](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/media/28-november-2016-roads-policy-too-focused-on-building-more-roads) criticized the focus on new road building at the expense of providing real alternatives to driving.
* Proposals for [major strategic schemes](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/roads-funding), including a trans-Pennine dual carriageway and a trans-Pennine tunnel, are also being taken forward. NW TAR are one of three environmental groups engaging with the tunnel proposals – you can follow their work [here](http://www.nwtar.org.uk/index.php), including a recent submission on sustainability objectives.

**Waste & recycling**

Recycling rates in England have fallen for the first time ever. [New government figures](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-collected-waste-management-annual-results) show that the recycling rate in England has dropped from 44.8% in 2014 to 43.9% in 2015. It also means the UK as a whole is almost guaranteed to miss an EU target of recycling at least 50% of its household waste by 2020, as England’s size means it accounts for much of the rubbish the country produces. [Wales is far ahead of England with households recycling 61% of waste](http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/local-authority-municipal-waste-management/?lang=en), while [Scotland is on 44.2%](https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/219489/2015-household-waste-summary-data-with-commentary.pdf). [Keep Britain Tidy](http://www.keepbritaintidy.org/home/481) has suggestions to help you up your own personal rate!

***Publications***

**Nature & recreation in the Green Belt**

[New research](http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news-releases/item/4455-invest-in-green-belt-for-the-parks-paths-and-woodlands-of-tomorrow-says-cpre) by environmental consultants ADAS on behalf of CPRE shows the huge potential of the Green Belt in terms of amenity and nature conservation. CPRE is calling on the Government to prioritise investment in Green Belts in the forthcoming 25-year plan for the environment and make sure Green Belt protection is enforced.

**National Parks**

Short-term economic priorities are overriding long-established protections and allowing inappropriate development in England’s National Parks, according to a [new report](https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/report-major-developments-in-national-parks) by Sheffield Hallam University for Campaign for National Parks, CPRE and the National Trust. They analyse how National Park rules are applied, identify major threats, and make recommendations to ensure these most important places are adequately protected.

**GM Climate change plan**

Greater Manchester has mapped out the region’s pathway to achieve its low carbon targets for 2020, with the publication of the [GM Climate Change and Low Emission Implementation Plan](http://gmlch.ontheplatform.org.uk/article/climate-change-and-low-emissions-pathway-mapped-out-greater-manchester). In setting and committing to achieving a 48% carbon reduction target by 2020 (from 1990) in 2012, Greater Manchester has set out its stall to be a pioneer in local low carbon energy supply and demand alongside supporting low carbon growth, climate change adaptation and wider environmental and societal goals. And they are still actively seeking ideas about [what Greater Manchester should look like in 2040](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/info/20130/talk_about_energy_efficiency_and_low-carbon_greater_manchester).

***Events***

**Natural capital accounting – learn how!**

A series of [regional natural capital seminars](http://ecosystemsknowledge.net/events/local-accounting-2017) will introduce the process of accounting for the value of the natural environment at the local and landscape scale. They will cover the methods for ecosystem and natural capital accounting applicable at the local and landscape scales; relationship with other tools and methods, e.g. ecosystem service mapping; the resources and skills required to undertake an assessment; and the potential for informing planning, investment and management decisions.It includes a seminar atLiverpool Waters, L3 1DL, on 8th March 2017, 1 pm to 5 pm. Discounted rate of £55 for public and third sector organisations, prices likely to rise by £20 a month before the event.

#### Putting ecosystem service science into practice

London, 27th January 2017. Since 2012, the £15 million [Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service Sustainability Programme](http://www.nerc-bess.net/) has involved over 150 researchers in evaluating the links between biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services (what nature does for people).  The Programme is organising a meeting in London on 27th January 2017 to learn about the latest evidence and progress on tool development. There will be an opportunity to provide feedback on how the findings can be applied. To request a free place contact toshiko.smith@york.ac.uk by 31st December 2016.

***Resources***

**A day in the life…jobswap with a civil servant!**

“A Day In The Life” matches voluntary sector staff with civil servants, giving each the chance to spend up to a day in each other’s work place. It’s free for voluntary sector staff to take part and you still – just - have time to join – deadline to apply is **December 23rd**. They are still looking for voluntary sector staff based in the North West and working in employment and training, social welfare, environment or animals to sign up. [Submit your application](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/cross-sector-working/work-shadow-scheme/planning-your-day) now for the chance to experience life in either the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs or the Department for Work and Pensions. Make connections and find out about how government works in practice. Please contact workshadow@ncvo.org.uk with any questions.

**Local energy futures**

Local communities have a new way to help the country meet its obligation to tackle climate change, following last month’s approval of the historic Paris Agreement. With the need to develop a genuinely sustainable energy system more pressing than ever, a [new consultation tool](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/energy-and-waste/climate-change-and-energy/item/4439-future-energy-landscapes-a-new-approach-to-local-energy-planning)  lets towns, villages and neighbourhoods shape their own genuinely sustainable local energy plans. Created by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) and the Campaign to Protect Rural England, it aims to bring communities together to share their passion for local landscapes with their enthusiasm for a more sustainable future.

**Civic Voice Design Awards**

The [Civic Voice Design Awards](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/designawards/) allows communities in England to celebrate the buildings, places and spaces they love for their high quality design and positive impact on the local community. Civic Voice is inviting nominations from community groups across the country for the 2017 awards. Their categories include ‘New Build’, ‘Historic Buildings’, large and small scale housing, and ‘Public Realm’. To mark the 50th anniversary of Conservation Area legislation in 2017, there will also be a special prize this year for a development within a Conservation Area. The deadline for [applications](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/get-involved/designawards/design-award-2017-application-form/) is 14 February 2017.

**Biodiversity Net Gain – Development Principles and Guidance**

Biodiversity Net Gain is about ensuring that new development leaves biodiversity in a better condition than before. CIRIA (the construction industry research and information association) and professional bodies CIEEM and IEMA have developed a set of [principles on good practice](http://www.iema.net/policy/natural-environment/principles-and-guidance) to achieve this in the UK.

**Changing climate for Cumbrian business**

A new guide to climate resilience for businesses in Cumbria has just been published.

[*Cumbria - Weathering The Storm*](http://claspinfo.org/CumbriaAdapt)explores the changes we might see to our climate and the impact these could have on businesses. It outlines ways that businesses could protect themselves from these impacts and benefit from climate changes. It also includes resources and tools to assess and increase business resilience, with case studies from affected firms.

**Small charities and public services**

The Government has acknowledged that the expertise and knowledge of small charities should be used to help shape and deliver public services across the country. To help make this happen, they have announced [three new policy measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/putting-small-charities-at-the-heart-of-public-services) – a place-based public services incubator to help small charities get commissioned, a commissioning kitemark, and a VCSE crown representative.

***Consultations***

**Environmental Impact Assessment**

The Government is consulting on proposed [changes to the environmental impact assessment regime](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/amending-environmental-impact-asssessment-regulations), ie how environmental impacts are taken account of within the planning system. The changes seem relatively minor and in some cases even benign, but they could surely be better (eg tightening up enforcement measures). Angus Walker highlights the [significant issues](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/734-government-consults-on-new-environmental-assessment-regulations/) (from an infrastructure lawyer’s perspective, that is). Have your say until February 1st 2017.

***Survey***

**Greening learning environments**

There is increasing evidence of the importance of [learning in the natural environment](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/our-work/green-learning-environments/). Playing and learning in nature stimulates the imagination and enhances creativity. The positive impact of a green learning environment appears particularly important in children with special educational needs. The Mersey Forest and a team of partners are working to identify best practice around learning in nature. They are particularly interested in approaches to non-formal learning in the natural environment for children and young people from 2 – 25 years old with special educational needs. Please take a few minutes to [complete their survey](https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TJGFQYD). All responses are useful, whether you are very experienced or just have just begun to develop non-formal learning in the natural environment. Please do not be put off if the questions do not fit exactly with your type of organisation. For each response received, they will plant a tree in The Mersey Forest.

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*To subscribe or contribute*

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