



# ● GREEN BULLET

28<sup>th</sup> February 2017

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 [andyuille@gmail.com](mailto:andyuille@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](#) website.

**CPRE has agreed to continue funding the Green Bullet throughout 2017 – many thanks!**

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## Campaigns

### **Enemy of the people!**

Who is? You are, that's who. According to Myron Ebell, one of the Trump administration's senior advisers, the environmental movement is "[the greatest threat to freedom and prosperity in the modern world](#)". So now you know.

## **Greener UK manifesto**

[Greener UK](#), the coalition of environmental NGOs, launched its manifesto setting out 8 key recommendations that it says are necessary for a greener post-Brexit UK.

## **Access to environmental justice**

The Government has [scrapped the automatic cost-cap on individuals and NGOs that want to bring legal challenges to protect the environment](#). This will make it far harder, if not impossible, for citizens and civic society to hold Governments, councils and corporations to account using the legal system, as it is impractical for them to allow themselves to be exposed to unpredictable and unlimited claims for costs against them should they not succeed. This move is probably illegal under both European Law and the Aarhus Convention on access to environmental justice. Client Earth, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace are [challenging it in the courts](#). This is a very worrying move and indicative of the Government's approach to post-Brexit environmental protection – ie it doesn't matter much what the law says, if no-one is able to enforce the law. Outside of the EU, with communities excluded by cost, there will be no-one to hold Governments and other powerful actors to account.

## **Air quality**

- A new coalition of environmental, transport, health and other organisations has formed to [campaign for a new clean air act](#). They suggest ways that you can [support](#) them as an individual or an organisation. A YouGov survey suggests that [65% of the British population](#) would support such a new Act.
- The European Commission has sent a "final warning" to the UK for failing to [address repeated breaches of legal air pollution limits](#) in 16 areas, saying that if we (and four other countries) failed to take action on the issue within two months, it may decide to take the matter to the European court of justice.
- While the draft Airports National Policy Statement has been published (see consultations section), the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) has found that there is [no sign of the "step change" needed](#) in the Government's approach to mitigating the environmental impacts of the proposed runway. They insist that a new air quality strategy is urgently required to ensure that airport expansion is not granted at the expense of public health. The Government's own [health impact assessment](#) says that a new runway will increase health inequalities, including for vulnerable groups and children.

## **Climate change**

- A rising majority (64%) of British adults understand that climate change is real and is primarily caused by human activity, according to a [new survey published by the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit](#) (ECIU). The poll follows a Government public attitudes [tracker](#) published last week which showed that 74% of Brits support renewable energy, while more people are opposed to fracking than support it.
- The National Trust are [trailblazing onsite renewables](#), managing the delicate balance between preserving historic significance, managing 'difficult' buildings and shifting to greener energy sources, with a 50% drop in oil consumption since 2009, 12% of its heat coming from on-site renewables, and over 140 renewables installations on its properties.
- The EAC report on Heathrow referenced above also notes that as of now, the Heathrow expansion plans leave a "[black hole](#)" in the Government's carbon budgets that it is simply assumed will be filled by emissions reductions from elsewhere, with no indication of how this might be achieved. It states that the EAC has "no confidence" in the Government's ability

to increase growth in the aviation sector by 60% while also meeting national carbon reduction requirements.

### **Lancashire fracking**

Cuadrilla are getting ready to [frack on two sites in Lancashire](#). The local community are challenging the government's decision to force fracking on Lancashire in the courts, and the first stage of their court hearing is in March. However, Cuadrilla is trying to get its drill in the ground before the case has even been heard, and, crucially, before completing the 12 months of groundwater monitoring that is now a legal requirement. Friends of the Earth are asking people to write to the Environment Agency, using a template email, to ask that they insist on the proper legal procedures being followed before allowing drilling to start.

### **Sustainable Development**

More than 80 businesses, co-ordinated by WWF, have called on the UK Government to place the spirit and aims of the [UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) at the heart of its emerging policy and to work with business to deliver them.

### **Litter & waste**

- Coca-Cola has reversed its position to support a [bottle and can deposit scheme](#) in Scotland. The Scottish Government are committed to finding a way to make the scheme work in Scotland. English Ministers are far more reluctant to consider such a scheme, but a successful moves north of the border is likely to help change their minds.
- Meanwhile, Keep Britain Tidy are calling for [simplified domestic waste recycling collections](#), claiming that complicated and non-standardised practices are holding back England's recycling rates compared to Wales, where recycling rates are nearly 20% higher.
- The Environmental Industries Commission is [calling on Government to set new 2025 recycling targets](#), amidst fears that the UK will miss the EU 2020 target of 50% of waste recycled, and that after Brexit, without the EU impetus that is universally agreed to have driven UK recycling improvements, rates will start to fall again.

### **Green Belt**

The Green Belt should be preserved and [treated as a key part of the country's natural capital 'asset register'](#), according to the chair of the Natural Capital Committee. However, he also said that we should see the environment as a key part of the economy, which is where many people diverge from the natural capital approach, insisting instead that the economy should be seen as a key part of the environment.

### **Parks**

The contribution that parks make to public health, community integration and climate change mitigation needs more recognition, according to a Communities and Local Government committee report. [Public parks: securing a sustainable future](#) suggests that public parks face a number of challenges, including reduced council spending, with parks management budgets cut by up to 97 per cent, and planning policy not giving them enough weight. The committee calls on councils to publish strategic plans that recognise the value of parks beyond leisure and recreation and set out how they will be managed to maximise their contribution to wider local authority agendas, such as promoting healthy lifestyles and managing flood risk, which they hope will provide access to additional funding. Clive Betts, committee chairman, said that "Parks make vital contributions to physical and mental health and bring significant community benefits. They also contribute to biodiversity and climate change mitigation and can assist in local

economic growth”, and that the decline in funding and attention to parks could have severe consequences.

### **Information update**

#### **Brexit & beyond and the 25 year plans**

There has been a flurry of activity around the 25 year plan for the environment this month, although still no sign of the actual plan, or even the plan for how to produce the plan, which is what the first stage will be. As it will effectively set out what the UK’s environmental policy will be after we have left the EU, these two issues merge into one.

- The [Brexit White Paper](#) gave very little clarity on environmental matters (or indeed anything else).
- [Greener UK](#), the coalition of environmental NGOs, launched its manifesto setting out 8 key recommendations that it says are necessary for a greener post-Brexit UK. Yes, this is also mentioned above under ‘campaigns’, but as (currently) the main rallying point for the biggest battle UK environmental NGOs have ever had to fight, it deserves being said twice at least!
- The EU Energy and Environment Sub-Committee published its report “[Brexit: environment and climate change](#)”, which highlights the key actions that will be needed to ensure environmental protections are not eroded as a result of Brexit. One of the main concerns of witnesses was the Government’s “worryingly complacent” attitude towards the loss of the enforcement regime, while concerns also arose regarding Defra’s ability to handle the transferal progress, despite its “laudable” determination.
- The House of Lords EU select committee today published [its report on the impact of leaving the EU on UK environmental regulation and policy](#). Peers said they were [disappointed with Defra’s responses](#) and were very concerned that complex but vital environmental protections would be lost – around a third of all environmental legislation could be lost through the ‘Great Repeal Act’, and concerns are being raised that legislation that does survive will be ‘[zombified](#)’: on the books but not enforced.
- Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party, has published a report outlining the “[cocktail of threats](#)” in 10 distinct ways that Brexit could threaten environmental policy in the UK, calling on Government to commit to 5 guarantees on the environment, and identifying the major pieces of EU legislation affecting Defra.
- Dieter Helm, Chairman of the Natural Capital Committee said that work on the plan would have to be “[fast and furious](#)” to make up for lost time – while recognizing that Brexit both added huge extra pressures to the plan, and hugely reduced the chances of its production being adequately prioritised and resourced.
- [Client Earth](#) set out their concerns in the Independent. [Green Alliance](#) have published [a new report](#) questioning how our post-Brexit environmental ambitions will be paid for, and setting out how the government could step up private investment from the UK’s food sector into farmland. The NFU has set out a [position statement](#) in advance of the 25 year plan. The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust have called for our existing environmental laws to be [reinforced, not reviewed](#).

#### **Energy**

- The European Union is on track to hit a [20% renewable goal for 2020](#), despite nations such as the UK, Ireland and Luxembourg struggling to increase the share of renewables in transport and heat sectors, a new European Commission report has found. The UK currently generates 20% of its power from wind, solar and biomass, but when combining all areas of

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energy demand – including heat and transport – the renewables share drops to 8.2% in the UK.

- Low-carbon technologies are now reaching [cost-parity with fossil fuels](#), according to a new report which states that solar cell technology is likely to have a "major impact" in the near future.
- The Government needs to "act urgently" to [deliver a more flexible power system](#) and avoid "spiralling" costs from the integration of renewables, the UK Energy Research Centre has warned.
- Sajid Javid has refused permission for a [solar farm on Green Belt](#) in the Midlands, saying that it would significantly harm the openness and purpose of the Green Belt. He also ruled that the applicant's evidence that other sites were not available was 'not conclusive'.
- A fall in coal use, and subsequent rise in renewables and nuclear electricity sources, has been listed as a prime driver in the UK registering a [4% decline in carbon emissions in 2015](#), figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) have revealed. The current downward trend in emissions has placed the UK on track to surpass its [second carbon budget](#), which requires a 29% reduction in emissions below the 1990 baseline by the end of 2017.
- Almost [90% of new energy capacity in Europe](#) in 2016 was renewables. Which is lucky, given a new report from Climate Analytics, which states that [Europe will have to phase out coal](#) entirely by 2030 if it is to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

### Planning

- The much-anticipated [Housing White Paper](#) has been published, with the overall aim of 'fixing the broken housing market' and getting more houses built faster. I recommend [Andy Boddington's excellent summary](#) of the most significant points from a CPRE perspective. There is also a very handy [House of Commons Library briefing note](#) which summarises some of the main proposals, brings together a set of related documents that were published at the same time (Government responses to relevant consultations and select committee reports explaining how and why they are taking proposals forwards), and initial responses to the White Paper from some key stakeholders. [Consultation on the White Paper](#) and associated changes to policy and legislation is open until May 2<sup>nd</sup>. In brief, key proposals include:
  - a standardized method of calculating housing need, and annual five-year supply assessments approved by the Planning Inspectorate;
  - changes to local plan making (including the potential for "strategic policies" to be set out not in a council's Local Plan, but in joint plans with neighbouring councils or in spatial development strategies produced by Combined Authorities, and changes to the test of soundness);
  - changes to the presumption in favour of sustainable development;
  - changes to affordable housing definitions and delivery;
  - changes to the neighbourhood planning system;
  - proposals to speed up and ensure development happens once permission is granted;
  - an increased focus on brownfield land, higher-density building and small sites;
  - continued Green Belt protection and a requirement for 'improvements' elsewhere in the Green Belt if Green Belt land is released for development; and
  - probably most worryingly, a proposal (the Housing Delivery Test) that penalties will apply if less than a certain proportion of a council's housing target is built out each year, including ultimately the imposition of a presumption that any housing applications should be approved unless there are overriding reasons to refuse them.

Further consultations on implementing these measures (eg through changes to the NPPF) will follow. [CPRE](#) and the [National Trust](#) have broadly welcomed the White Paper, albeit with concerns about some of the proposals and subject to [further analysis](#) as details are worked out; the [Woodland Trust](#) is pleased by its increased recognition of the value of ancient woodland; while [Friends of the Earth](#) were highly critical.

- A court ruling confirms that old or [out-of-date planning policies can still be given considerable weight if they are consistent with national policy](#). This means that it cannot be taken as a given that where a development plan is dated and where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, planning permission for housing proposals will ordinarily be granted.
- A group of 25 developers have now [launched a legal challenge](#) against the Government's decision to [only require a three year supply of land](#) to prevent the presumption in favour of development being engaged in areas covered by a Neighbourhood Plan that allocates land for housing
- The Treasury has published a [framework](#) for the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC), which has been established permanently as an executive agency of the Treasury. Amongst other things, this allows that recommendations put forward by the NIC, and backed by Ministers, will effectively become national planning policy.

## **Publications**

### **Nature and health**

New research from Natural England highlights good practice in using nature-based interventions in social prescribing for mental health. It builds on the findings from earlier Natural England reports (accessible from the same webpage), and explores the options for improving the commissioning of, and referral to, these services as well as scaling-up the provision of nature-based interventions. Meanwhile, the first year's results from the Mersey Forest's [Nature4Health](#) programme show that participants have seen a marked improvement in both their mental wellbeing and their daily levels of physical activity.

### **Forgotten opportunities: the rural economy**

This new report from IPPR presents a fresh, [place-based approach to rural policy](#) that addresses local, national and global issues, and recommends the introduction of 'rural devolution deals' that would give local and combined authorities powers and obligations to improve food production and sustainability, the environment, industrial strategy and capital spending to support infrastructure and development.

### **Zero carbon Britain: making it happen**

The latest report from the Centre for Alternative Technology explores the [barriers to getting to net zero greenhouse gas emissions and how these can be overcome](#). The report brings together thinking from researchers working in psychology, sociology, political science, economics and other social sciences, as well as faith and spiritual practice, arts and culture. Drawing on a wide range of peer-reviewed journals, books, reports and articles, as well as stories from real-life projects, it explores ways that we can overcome barriers in innovative ways.

## Events

### **2017 Community Forest Conference**

Birmingham Midland Institute, 23rd March 2017. The focus for the day is how to help shape the new policy and support programmes for trees, woodlands and forestry over the next few years. Some of the speakers will be at the heart of the consultation and policy writing, so the conference provides a great opportunity to highlight key issues and put forward good ideas. There are also presentations on some exciting new programmes and initiatives that are about to be rolled out across England, with lots of time for discussion and networking too. The event costs £25, the charge covers the costs of the room and refreshments. [Full programme and booking](#) online.

### **Liverpool City Region Mayoral hustings – just for you!**

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 6.30 - 8.30pm, Liverpool Cathedral. In the run up to the Liverpool Metro Mayor election on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2017, VS6 is holding a special hustings to give members of the [voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sectors](#) the chance to quiz the candidates as they lay out their visions, priorities and strategies for the future of Liverpool City Region. Join them to debate with the candidates how they will use their influence and devolved powers to work with the sector to improve the lives of all communities in the Liverpool City Region. On registration, you will be given the option to submit a question to the candidates.

### **Greater Manchester Garden City?**

Thursday 2 March, 6.30pm, Methodist Central Hall, Oldham. Steady State Manchester host a screening of a film reviewing the Garden City concept in relation to contemporary cities, and discussion as to whether and how it could be applied to Manchester, as a viable [alternative to the Spatial Framework](#) which they claim sets out a “dystopic future of high rise flats and offices in the centre and housing estates and warehouses on the Green Belt, all justified by fantasist “growth” projections.”

### **Northern Upland Chain Forum**

The Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership’s Annual Forum will be held at The Morrill Hotel, Greta Bridge on the afternoon of Thursday 9 March. The theme of this year’s Forum will be: ‘Natural Capital in the Northern Upland Chain’. There will be an opportunity to hear about some of the LNP’s work and cutting edge projects from elsewhere, and – most importantly - to participate in discussion about future priorities for action. You can also put yourself forward for one of the two ‘open seats’ on the LNP board. Please contact [ann.williams@yorkshiredales.org.uk](mailto:ann.williams@yorkshiredales.org.uk) for a reply slip and full programme details by 2<sup>nd</sup> March.

### **South Lakes Energy Extravaganza**

[South Lakes Energy Extravaganza](#) on Saturday 4 March in Ulverston – an energetic buffet of eco workshops, talks, displays and stalls about all things green and sustainable. It’s just the thing if you want to live a bit greener and get your carbon footprint down. Or just enjoy a bumper day of eco goings-on and take away inspiration, hands-on skills, information and advice in equal measure!

## **Resources**

### **Green Belt Myths**

CPRE have updated their "[Green Belt Myths](#)" factsheet, tackling some common misconceptions or "alternative facts" put about primarily by the development industry in the media, as part of their advocacy to open the Green Belt up to development. This resource addresses why these myths are wrong and advances arguments in favour of continued protection. It includes the results of new research showing that [over 360,000 homes are currently planned for Green Belt land](#).

### **Valuing green spaces and outdoor recreation**

The Land Trust has produced a synthesis of economic and other valuations of two of the sites that it manages. It describes a [green spaces value cycle](#), involving environmental enhancement, healthier communities, more productive economies and increased investment in the local economy, that is transferable to other sites. Meanwhile, a new report from the Sport and Recreation Alliance sets out the [economic, health and social value of outdoor recreation](#), prepared as a resource to help demonstrate the value of outdoor recreation to stakeholders such as policy makers and funders.

### **Payments for ecosystem services**

The Ecosystem Knowledge Network have gathered together a wide range of resources on [payments for ecosystem services](#) (PES), including a summary of the results of a recent survey of perceptions about PES and its uptake in the UK, a Defra review of pilot projects, a best practice guide, and a Green Alliance/ National Trust proposal for a "Natural Infrastructure Scheme".

### **Wake up, freak out – then get a grip!**

This [short animated video](#) gives a good and accessible explanation of the positive feedback mechanisms that are likely to lead to 'runaway' climate change, setting out why we need to give more consideration to tipping points rather than linear emissions / warming scenarios, and what we might need to do to address it.

### **Nature connections**

Miles Richardson reflects on [why connection with nature matters](#), what good it does us., and how we can improve it, drawing on several years of original research.

## **Consultations**

### **Airports National Policy Statement**

The draft [Airports National Policy Statement](#) has been released for consultation, until May 25<sup>th</sup>. It sets out that Government believes that there is a need for additional airport capacity in the south-east of England; why they believe that need is best met by a north-west runway at Heathrow Airport; and the specific requirements that the applicant for a new north-west runway will need to meet to gain development consent. They are also running a separate consultation, on the same timeframe, on the [design and use of UK airspace](#), with the aim of maximising social and economic benefits and minimising negative local impacts. Negative global impacts seem to have been forgotten.

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