

* **Green Bullet**

27th March 2018

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](https://www.vsnw.org.uk/green-bullet) website.

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# *Campaigns*

**Access to environmental justice**

An [Environment Links UK (ELUK) statement](https://www.wcl.org.uk/docs/Environment_Links_UK_Statement_to_A2J_Task_Force_Final.pdf) was presented to the United Nations Economic Commission (UNECE) Access to Justice Task Force in Geneva. It highlighted the UK Government’s poor compliance with the Aarhus Convention (that is intended to ensure that communities and individuals have access to justice), and the importance of new UK institutions that will ensure the Government can be held to account by both individuals and NGOs alike in future. Link has published a [blog](https://www.wcl.org.uk/inadequate-access-to-justice-a-chill-wind-that-blows-nobody-any-good.asp) setting out their concerns in more detail.

**Waste & Recycling**

* Wildlife & Countryside Link’s analysis of Defra’s latest figures on waste shows that [over half the recyclable waste we produce is still being sent to landfil](https://www.wcl.org.uk/scale-of-packaging-waste-mountain-to-be-climbed-means-legally-binding-targets-are-essential-warn-charities.asp)l. This was especially true of paper and cardboard packaging waste, with a 110% increase in the amount going to landfill or being destroyed. Plastic waste recycling rates have increased notably (although research by Eunomia suggest that this is [over-estimated by a third](https://www.edie.net/news/5/Report--UK-overestimates-plastics-recycling-by-one-third/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%203309c17a66-dailynewsletter)), but with more than 55% still going to landfill there is still a long way to go. Link members are calling on Michael Gove to outline a definitive action plan to boost recycling in the UK, including infrastructure investment and binding targets, and to drastically reduce our reliance on single use plastics.
* Recycle Now have added more animations to their [Plastic Planet campaign library](https://partners.wrap.org.uk/collections/209/) for you to download and use.
* With plastics safely out of the news, Government has started rowing back on its public commitments, starting with a [rejection of the proposed ‘latte levy’](https://www.edie.net/news/11/-Warm-words--no-action---Government-rejects-25p--latte-levy--proposal--/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20e7f76b4676-dailynewsletter) on disposable cups…
* …While new studies found [micro-plastics in more than 90% of bottled water](https://www.edie.net/news/5/Microplastics-found-in-more-than-90--of-bottled-water--study-says/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%2090d23ae319-dailynewsletter) tested worldwide and "[microplastics everywhere](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-43363545)" in rivers tested across Greater Manchester, with a site in the River Tame breaking the world record for the highest levels of microplastic pollution.

**Air quality**

* The Government’s Chief Medical Officer has called for [tougher standards on air pollution](https://www.airqualitynews.com/2018/03/02/chief-medical-officer-calls-tougher-air-pollution-standards/), and has rather alarmingly concluded that the country does not have adequate systems in place to monitor, understand and act on data about the health impacts of air, noise, water and soil pollution.
* An [unprecedented joint report from four different select committees](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2017/joint-improving-air-quality-report-publication-17-19/) (the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Environmental Audit; Health and Social Care; and Transport Committees) has strongly criticized the Government’s Air Quality plan as a box-ticking exercise that fails to recognize the gravity of our problems with air pollution, and calls for a new Clean Air Act.
* A [Report](http://naei.beis.gov.uk/reports/reports?report_id=950) presented in a National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory report to the Government concluded shipping is a far greater source of pollution in Britain than estimates made in 2014, [up to 400% greater than previously thought](https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/air-pollution-uk-shipping-levels-record-environment-fumes-damage-nitrogen-dioxide-sulphur-a8189691.html), with about 10 per cent of the country’s NOx emissions coming from ships. It states that *“anyone who is living in a port city is getting badly impacted at the moment because there is such light regulation on the exhaust.”*
* [New references to air quality in the draft NPPF revisions](https://www.airqualitynews.com/2018/03/07/planners-told-consider-air-quality-new-developments/) have been welcomed as important, but criticized for not providing enough detail to make a meaningful difference.

**Water quality**

Michael Gove has severely [criticized water companies](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-43250430) for abusing their monopoly power and failing to protect the environment.

**Mersey Tidal Barrage**

While some are excited about the prospects of renewed investigation into generating tidal energy in the Mersey Estuary, Cheshire Wildlife Trust is concerned that it will repeat mistakes proposed in the past, and be [unnecessarily harmful to wildlife](http://www.cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/merseybarrage). They are campaigning to make sure that ‘green’ energy does not harm the environment more widely.

**Carbon emissions**

Analysis by Carbon Brief shows that for the fifth year running, the UK's CO2 emissions have dropped, and suggests that [the last time UK carbon emissions were this low was 1890](https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-uk-carbon-emissions-in-2017-fell-to-levels-last-seen-in-1890)! The decline, which is largely down to the UK's dwindling coal use, is faster than in almost any other large economy. This s great news – but don’t forget that it doesn’t account for other greenhouse gases, and more importantly, doesn’t account for the carbon emissions that we ‘import’ (by consuming high-emitting products made or grown elsewhere) – and [global emissions are at a record high.](https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/carbon-emissions-record-high-2017-energy-demand-greenhouse-gas-a8269336.html)

# *Information update*

## Energy

* The Court of Appeal has [upheld the Secretary of State’s decision](http://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2018/231.html&query=(C1/2016/4317)) to refuse a 27-turbine wind farm, against the advice of her Inspector, on the basis that the developer had not provided sufficient information to prove that it would not have an adverse impact on a Special Protection Area.
* Plans have been approved for a solar farm on a 97-hectare agricultural site in Lincolnshire in line with a recommendation from planners who concluded that a local policy setting out a presumption against solar schemes on the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land [should not be read in its 'purest sense'](https://democracy.n-kesteven.gov.uk/documents/s85061/17-1546-FUL.pdf).
* Sajid Javid has [refused plans for a coal mine](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/692060/18-03-23_DL_IR_Highthorn_3158266.pdf), against a recommendation for approval from a planning inspector, applying 'very considerable weight' to the scheme's impact on climate change.
* The [UK's first carbon capture utilisation demonstrator plant](https://www.edie.net/news/8/UK-s-first-carbon-capture-utilisation-demonstration-plant-opens/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%2062667982ee-dailynewsletter) has opened in Runcorn, providing a new treatment that can convert carbon dioxide into polyol compounds that can be used in various manufacturing processes.
* The government has refused to release an internal report on the prospects of shale gas for fear that it could “[call into question the industry’s viability](https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2018/03/19/uk-government-admits-secret-fracking-report-could-call-into-question-the-industrys-viability/)” – surely all the more reason for the information to be publicly available and debated?
* A new study suggests that there could be [one spill for every four large shale gas pads](https://drillordrop.com/2018/02/16/controls-needed-to-cut-risk-of-spills-and-leaks-from-uk-shale-gas-industry-new-research/#more-60943) in the UK.
* The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has created a new £15m loan fund for property developers and infrastructure providers to [increase uptake of renewable energy use](https://www.edie.net/news/10/Greater-Manchester-launches--15m-business-renewables-fund/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20e7f76b4676-dailynewsletter) on development projects.

## Planning

* The [revised NPPF](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-revised-national-planning-policy-framework) is out for consultation. See ‘consultations’ section for more details
* New permitted development rights mean that [agricultural buildings can be converted into up to five homes](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/housing-minister-announces-homes-boost-for-rural-families) (rather than up to three, as at present) without planning permission. There will also be a one year extension to the permitted right to convert storage and distribution buildings into housing, and an increase on the size of permitted new agricultural buildings from 465 sq m to 1000 sq m.
* Sport England has updated its policy and guidance on [planning applications that affect playing fields](https://www.sportengland.org/playingfieldspolicy/), with the goal of protecting and enhancing the opportunities for people to take part in sport and activity
* A High Court judge has backed a planning inspector's decision to refuse an appeal for a new car park over noise concerns, ruling that the inspector was entitled to use his own judgement in the case and [come to a decision contrary to expert opinions.](http://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2018/288.html&query=(CO/4058/2017))
* The Court of Appeal has rejected a developer's claim that a West Yorkshire council had no power to [modify a neighbourhood plan](http://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2018/450.html&query=(C1/2016/4308)) in a manner that had not been recommended by a planning inspector.
* Despite claims to the contrary, CPRE research shows that the UK’s ten biggest housebuilders have [increased their landbanks by 20%](https://www.ft.com/content/f693cd76-1591-11e8-9376-4a6390addb44), while building 13% fewer houses, over the last ten years, with real [negative impacts on the countryside](http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/4782-the-scandal-of-land-banking). This is supported by the interim findings of Oliver Letwin’s review into the gap between permissions granted and houses built, which finds that build out rates are mainly constrained by “the rate at which newly constructed homes can be sold into (or are believed to be sold successfully into) the local market without materially disturbing the market price” – ie [the rate at which profits can be maintained, rather than needs met](https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/comment/comment/the-letwin-review-might-just-be-worth-waiting-for-55242).
* [The Wirral](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693940/Annex_A2_-_Wirral.pdf) is one of three councils that the Government has formally threatened to remove plan-making powers from, due to delays in producing local plans. The Wirral council leader has hit back, rejecting what he described as [overtly political interference from Whitehall bureaucrats](https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/wirral-hits-back-at-javid-intervention/#utm_source=Place+North+West&utm_campaign=Place_Daily_Briefing__Tuesday__2018-03-27&utm_medium=email).
* Greater Manchester has secured a £70m package of funding to support housebuilding, including a [£50m brownfield land fund](%E2%80%A2%09https%3A/www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-secures-70m-government-housing-boost/#utm_source=Place+North+West&utm_campaign=Place_Daily_Briefing__Thursday_2018-03-22&utm_medium=email).
* Sajid Javid has [over-ruled his Inspector](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/683251/18-02-22_DL_IR_Bagley_Lane_Leeds_2200640.pdf) to reject a 300-home appeal in Yorkshire despite a lack of five-year supply, on the basis of landscape harm and harm to a conservation area.
* Figures from the national Audit Office show that [spending on planning departments has been cut by more than 50%](https://www.nao.org.uk/press-release/financial-sustainability-of-local-authorities-2018/) since 2010 due to centrally-imposed austerity, more than any other council service – although the number of bus miles subsidized by councils has fallen by almost 50%.

## Transport

* The [Northern Powerhouse Partnership](http://www.northernpowerhousepartnership.co.uk/publications/northern-powerhouse-rail/) has called on Government to [deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail by 2032/33](https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/industry-calls-for-east-west-rail-delivery-alongside-hs2/#utm_source=Place+North+West&utm_campaign=Place_Daily_Briefing__Tuesday__2018-02-27&utm_medium=email), providing high-speed links between regional cities at the same time as HS2 reaches the north.
* Greater Manchester Combined Authority has launched its [growth strategy for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail](https://assets.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/4sSHKQVxGMQuM488IMsWqG/cdc77581d9f6ce8d407b07976a2417e0/17-1060_HS2_Growth_Strategy.pdf)
* Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has announced that he expects [a £3bn programme of upgrades to the Transpennine rail route](https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/yorkshire/news/2017672-transport-secretary-announces-3bn-upgrade-to-transpennine-route-to-start-next-year) to begin from spring 2019
* The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority has approved a package of [£25m to support 15 highway schemes](https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/road-spend-approved-for-liverpool-city-region/#utm_source=Place+North+West&utm_campaign=Place_Daily_Briefing__Monday_1_2018-03-12&utm_medium=email) on its key route network.

# *Publications*

**Viable Villages**

[Shelter and CPRE](http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/4783-villages-are-unviable-without-affordable-homes-closing-the-viability-loophole-in-the-nppf) have published a [joint report](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/item/4781-viable-villages-closing-the-planning-loophole-that-undercuts-affordable-housing-in-the-countryside) on how developers are using loopholes in viability testing to avoid building affordable homes to preserve high profit levels. This has seriously damaging consequences for both rural and urban communities, and for the NGO’s shared aim that people should have decent homes they can afford, whether they live in cities, towns or villages.

**Housing and countryside protection**

There is often conflict between the imperatives to build more houses, and to protect the countryside, wildlife habitat and landscape character. But need there be? [Shaun Spiers](http://www.cpre.org.uk/magazine/opinion/item/4795-how-to-build-houses-and-save-the-countryside), CEO of Green Alliance attempts to square the circle in a new book, [How to build houses and save the countryside](https://policypress.co.uk/how-to-build-houses-and-save-the-countryside).

**Lancashire: a journey into the wild**

The latest book by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, taking you on a journey through the most important, largest and most accessible wildlife sites in modern Lancashire, habitat by habitat, from the uplands down to the coast, is due out in summer 2018, and can be ordered now at a special pre-publication price and subscription offer. You can obtain your copy(ies) at the [pre-publication subscription offer price](http://www.carnegiepublishing.co.uk/new-book-lancashire-journey-wild/) of £15 (plus £1.95 towards postage) if you place your order before 30 April 2018, and you can also get your name (or a friend or relative’s as a very personal gift) printed in the book in a List of Subscribers. There will be a book launch at which subscription copies can be collected post free, and be signed by the author. After publication the book will cost £19.99.

**Land promoters & legal loopholes**

This [short briefing by CPRE](https://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/4792-land-promoters-legal-loopholes-expense-of-communities-and-countryside) sheds some light on how self-styled ‘land promoters’ make lucrative profits by exploiting the planning system and working against the wishes of local communities and councils.

**NIC monitoring report**

The National Infrastructure Commission has published its [first annual monitoring report](https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Annual-Monitoring-Report-2018-Final.pdf), assessing how well the Government has been tackling its 12 priorities and the themes of its specific studies, including future energy supply and northern rail connectivity. Angus Walker provides a [summary](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/790-nic-gives-government-mixed-report-infrastructure-progress/).

**Transport equality**

Walking and cycling charity Sustrans has called for equal representation in transport planning and delivery to help address the low number of women who travel actively in the UK. A new report, [Are We Nearly There Yet](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/report-safety-fears-tend-to-forestall-women%E2%80%99s-journeys-in-cities?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=), highlights gender-specific barriers such as lack of time, complex schedules and fears of personal safety, which stop women from travelling actively more often.

# *Events*

**Debating Nature's Value Conference**

**Cambridge, 11th April 2018. Conference to mark the end of the Debating Nature’s Value project and to ensure that the debate continues from different perspectives.** Keynote speakers including Tony Juniper and panellists will discuss the current critical thinking and nuance around the natural capital concept and ways of valuing of the benefits society receives from nature. Free and open to all, but [registration required as places strictly limited](https://www.anglia.ac.uk/global-sustainability-institute-gsi/research/global-risk-and-resilience/debating-natures-value/dnv-events).

# *Resources*

**Online course – Valuing nature**

The University of Exeter has launched a short online course - [Valuing Nature: Should We Put a Price on Ecosystems?](https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/valuing-nature-should-we-put-a-price-on-ecosystems?utm_campaign=university_of_exeter_valuing_nature_should_we_put_a_price_on_ecosystems_march_2018&utm_medium=organic_social&utm_source=VNwebsite) - to help everyone to understand the many ways that we benefit from the natural world through ecosystem services at different scales, and to address the questions of whether and how we should put a monetary value on them.

**Nature Greater Manchester**

The GM Natural Capital Group’s new website ‘[Nature Greater Manchester](https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/)’ was launched at the GM Mayor’s Green Summit. Its main objective is to connect people with nature, under three main themes: Getting People of GM Involved; Helping Users to Discover GM; and Showcasing Work. The website is a great opportunity to increase understanding of Greater Manchester’s natural environment, discover new places to explore and say “I never knew there was such lovely countryside on my doorstep!” - so please share far and wide!

**Farming & forestry**

A free toolkit full of advice and ideas on planning [local projects to encourage more sustainable farming and forestry](http://pegasus.ieep.eu/resources/toolkit) has been produced by the PEGASUS European research project. It shares experience from 34 case studies across Europe, including both young and well-established projects.

**Planning for natural capital**

The [Natural Capital Planning Tool](http://ncptool.com/) (NCPT) is a free site assessment tool developed specifically for the planning context. The NCPT allows the assessment of the likely impact of proposed plans and developments on natural capital and the ecosystem services that flow from it.

**Introduction to natural capital accounting**

The Landscape Institute has published a Technical Information Note on [natural capital accounting](https://ecosystemsknowledge.us12.list-manage.com/track/click?u=0422cf0f805cd08eadbae5392&id=e032426710&e=324a5c6036). It includes two case studies showcasing accounts prepared at different scales.

**Natural capital investment**

The Ecosystems Knowledge Network has launched a new online forum to facilitate dialogue about [investment in natural features based on their economic value](https://ecosystemsknowledge.net/naturalcapitalinvestmentforum). Open to all, Forum members will receive regular e-news and webinars highlighting the latest developments in natural capital investment (the first webinar is scheduled for 29th March). The initial set up of the Forum has been funded by Defra.

**Greenspace economic benefits**

Green spaces within communities generate a range of economic benefits, including revenue for local businesses, jobs and uplift in nearby house prices. These are the main findings of a [new report published by The Land Trust](https://thelandtrust.org.uk/news/parks-boosts-local-economy-lift-house-prices/?doing_wp_cron=1520518437.1198709011077880859375), which studied the effects of creating Port Sunlight River Park in Merseyside and compared it to nearby areas.

**Staff recruitment**

ACAS has created a [useful guide for small organisations who need help recruiting staff](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4216&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=NTL%20March%202018&utm_content=NTL%20March%202018+Version+A+CID_fed9b250666c70026529d3b2116dc872&utm_source=Acas%20National%20Email%20Marketing%20Live&utm_term=Recruiting%20an%20employee%20a%20step-by-step%20guide). The guide takes you through establishing what skills and experience you require, the advertising and interviewing processes, and obtaining references.

# *Consultations*

**NPPF & related matters**

The revised NPPF is out for consultation. Substantial changes are being proposed throughout the document, including a complete re-structuring, so you’ll need to learn all those paragraph numbers again. We are expecting a [CPRE-inflected summary from Andy Boddington](%E2%80%A2%09https%3A/mailchi.mp/261eed1b26f6/cpre-south-east-ebulletin), but it is not available as yet. There are summaries available from various consultancies such as [Lichfields](http://lichfields.uk/blog/2018/march/5/draft-revised-national-planning-policy-framework-a-change-in-narrative/) and [39 Essex Chambers](http://www.39essex.com/national-planning-policy-framework-newsletter-march-2018/), but obviously from different perspectives. Despite being trailed as putting pressure on developers to deliver on their promises, in practice it piles ever more pressure on local councils to allocate more land for housing and to grant ever more permissions, almost regardless of sustainability concerns. And, in the main it is councils who will be punished, and existing plans and protections undermined, if developers fail to deliver. Plans will be considered sound if they are “an” appropriate strategy for delivering as much as possible of the area’s OAN, including unmet need from outside, leaving the door open to discounting more sustainable approaches. A new Housing Delivery Test will punish councils and undermine plans and protections if developers don’t build out permissions quickly enough. Councils will be able to get their five year supply agreed annually (rather than being tested at each appeal), but only if they add 10% to it. A standard method for calculating housing need will be introduced. Plans must be reviewed every five years, and sooner than that if the new housing need assessment methodology gives a higher figure than currently planned for. Land “outside existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport" are explicitly identified for development in rural areas. There is however renewed protection for Green Belt and a greater emphasis on town centres. Emerging plans will have six months from the publication of the new NPPF (expected in summer) when they can be examined against the existing version. Read and respond! Deadline: 10th May.

On the same webpage there are also significant [related consultations](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-revised-national-planning-policy-framework) on changes to national planning practice guidance (on viability, housing delivery, neighbourhood planning, housing assessment, and plan making) and on methods for measuring the new Housing Delivery Test. Separately, a consultation has been launched into how [developer contributions](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/supporting-housing-delivery-through-developer-contributions) (ie section 106 obligations, CIL, and SIT) will operate as part of gaining planning permission– some experts are saying that this will have [more impact on housing is delivered than the NPPF changes](https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/nppf-tweaks-announced-plus-changes-to-developer-payments/#utm_source=Place+North+West&utm_campaign=Place_Daily_Briefing__Tuesday__2018-03-06&utm_medium=email).

**Future farming**

As trailed last week, the Government has published its consultation on post-Brexit farm support, [The future for food, farming and the environment](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment). It aims to reduce or eliminate payments based solely on owning land, and instead pay for public goods such as environmental protection and enhancement, investment in technology and skills to improve productivity, providing public access to farmland and the countryside, enhanced welfare standards for livestock and measures to support the resilience of rural and upland communities. It also includes an annex of [proposals put forward by stakeholders](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment/annex-a-stakeholder-proposals), including members of NWEL and contributors to this bulletin, although this does NOT imply acceptance of the proposals in the consultation paper. Wildlife & Countryside Link have blogged about their [initial reaction](https://www.wcl.org.uk/health-and-harmony-defras-pitch-on-the-future-for-food-farming-and-the-environment.asp), and Miles King highlights some of the [risks and omissions](https://anewnatureblog.wordpress.com/2018/03/05/health-and-harmony-government-consultation-on-future-of-agriculture-reveals-no-new-detail/), and questions why, if the focus is on environmental improvements, management of [Countryside Stewardship is being taken away from the environmental experts](https://anewnatureblog.wordpress.com/2018/03/09/the-pillar-2-coup-rural-payments-agency-poaches-countryside-stewardship-from-natural-england/)? Deadline: 8th May 2018.

**HS2 phase 2a – revised environmental statement**

A set of amendments to the HS2 phase 2a – West Midlands to Crewe Bill have been introduced in Parliament, with knock-on effects for the predicted environmental impacts. The Government are [consulting on the additional and supplementary environmental statements](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hs2-phase-2a-supplementary-environmental-statement-and-additional-provision-environmental-statement-consultation-march-2018) on the revised impacts as a result of these amendments until May 14th. [Cheshire Wildlife Trust](http://www.whitchurchherald.co.uk/news/16067703.cheshire-wildlife-trust-calls-for-changes-to-hs2-proposal/) has concerns.

**Civil Society Strategy**

The Government is consulting on a [Civil Society Strategy](https://dcms.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6WD0fhMedwfg8o5), seeking views on how it can best support (and perhaps best stop hindering) the voluntary and community sector and beyond.

**SEMMMS**

A consultation has begun into a refresh of the [South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/consultations/consultations.aspx), the plan which guides transport investment into pinch points across the Cheshire and South Manchester boundary. Deadline: 18th April.

# *Funding*

**Off-mains community funds**

Calor has opened its [Rural Community Fund](http://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001_c2KZK9ndjeOWH9nQvFe2enufa2UTMK99-n9THIebz-lwVWKoZyIInuvSJF2p8qjkjK2dwGO276kdmo9aXq0qAPI2pX3m3ZsQLMH68Wkai4nYSzlzTgQYfM_op1NgM2AAZQHw29-cuehddr9iitfA3HjQziPzGwM&c=vUHQ6rt87DgQTBBpmc1BCOaqOyqxIx8KzmHyn3DUQy4xtnH4OW-wnA==&ch=yx1UZg7E-1OUnB2NVPck_TQ7tdj5HB0MQOUG_C3xUelCgPgVlvealA==) offering grants of up to £5,000 for projects to improve local life for communities off the mains gas grid.

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

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

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