

* **Green Bullet**

31st July 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*

**Climate change**

* The independent Committee on Climate Change (CCC) has published its [annual report](https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/annual-report-and-accounts-2017-2018/), which concluded that the UK is on track to miss its legally binding carbon budgets in 2025 and 2030, due to lack of progress in cutting emissions from buildings and transport. It also said ministers were spurning low-cost options, [such as onshore windfarms](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jun/10/deterring-onshore-windfarms-means-higher-energy-bills-lord-deben), [home insulation](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/06/better-energy-efficiency-measures-could-cut-uk-costs-by-75bn) and [tree-planting](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/19/tories-miss-11m-tree-planting-manifesto-promise-vast-margin/), meaning people would end up paying more than needed to fight climate change. Its usually mild-mannered Chair, Lord Deben, saying that the housing and car industries “[should be ashamed](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jun/28/housing-and-car-industries-should-be-ashamed-of-climate-record)” of their failure to engage with issue of climate change, and that they were “cheating” their customers by providing deliberately sub-standard products.
* The weather’s been fantastic! But the recent heatwave means the [government needs to act quicker to tackle climate change](http://www.itv.com/news/2018-07-24/uk-should-prepare-for-more-heatwaves-and-drought-due-to-climate-change-experts-say/), according to the CCC. The CCC suggested the number of heat-related deaths in the UK could increase to 7,000 in 2050, from the 2,000 it is currently at now, per year. Head of adaptation at the CCC, Kathryn Brown, appeared on [Channel 4 News](https://secure.unearthed.greenpeace.org/page/m/583194af/64002539/41871f64/206433ae/2047838103/VEsHBA/) to explain the heatwave’s impacts, where she suggested heatwaves would become “more frequent and more intense” as a result of climate change – something which the Environmental Audit Committee judges that we are “[woefully unprepared](https://www.edie.net/news/9/UK--woefully-unprepared--for-deadly-heatwaves--warn-MPs/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20c029fea7ef-dailynewsletter_COPY_350)” for.
* Ireland has become the [first country in the world to divest from fossil fuels](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/jul/12/ireland-becomes-worlds-first-country-to-divest-from-fossil-fuels), as a bill passed in parliament means shares in coal, oil peat and gas will have to be sold, which could become law by the end of the year. The Church of England is also threatening to [disinvest from big polluting fossil fuel corporations](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/08/church-england-withdraw-funds-polluting-firms-fail-tackle-climate/) unless they start to adhere to strict environmental standards.
* A pressure group called [“Plan B” is hoping to sue the Government](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44699733) for discrimination against young people for acting too slowly on climate change.

**Charter for Parks**

A coalition of countryside groups and environmentalists are calling on the government to protect the UK’s parks and green spaces which are at “crisis point” following years of swinging budget cuts. The group has put forward a “[Charter for Parks](https://www.parkscharter.org.uk/)” which calls on ministers in England, Wales and Scotland to make it a legal requirement for all parks and green spaces to be maintained and managed to a “good standard.” It also calls on them “to recognise the right of every citizen to have access within walking distance to a good-quality public green space.”

**Wildlife & farming**

[Plummeting butterfly populations](https://www.wcl.org.uk/plummeting-butterflies-and-falling-farming-profits-highlight-the-urgent-need-to-support-nature-friendly-farming-warn-charities.asp), revealed by Defra’s latest figures, have led to a coalition of groups calling on government to prioritise environmental action in the forthcoming Agriculture Bill and a specific Environment Act

**Fracking**

The government want to make it possible to drill test wells for non-hydraulic fracking without needing to apply for planning permission, making it as easy as building a conservatory. They also want to add fracking to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime, enabling promoters to bypass local councils and limit public engagement. Fracking poses serious risks, and unless these risks can be fully mitigated there should be more - not less – scrutiny. CPRE are encouraging people to use a template that can be personalized (or not) to [write to their council leaders](https://takeaction.cpre.org.uk/page/27816/action/1?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=2018-fracking-takeaction-NP&utm_content=2018+Fracking+-+council+leaders+petition-N&ea.url.id=1456513&forwarded=true) to share their concerns and ask them to raise them with their MP. You can also [sign their petition](https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/don-t-fast-track-fracking).

**Wild fires**

Miles King reflects on the [fires on Saddleworth Moor](https://anewnatureblog.wordpress.com/2018/07/03/saddleworth-moor-the-burning-issues/) in the context of climate change and moorland management

# *Information update*

## Brexit and beyond

* The Government has published White Papers on the [future relationship between the UK and the EU](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-future-relationship-between-the-united-kingdom-and-the-european-union?utm_source=e5b3260b-2069-4b57-a5bd-24e9ea02aa88&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate) and on [how it will legislate for the Withdrawal Agreement](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-confirms-detail-on-new-bill-that-will-put-withdrawal-agreement-into-law). It suggests that we might have to leave the EU Internal Energy Market. Greenpeace investigate [what that might mean](https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2018/06/14/brexit-eu-internal-single-energy-market-interconnector/). It calls for a common rulebook over [some environmental protections](https://www.edie.net/news/11/What-does-the-Brexit-White-Paper-mean-for-the-green-economy--/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%205ca5e75931-dailynewsletter_COPY_340), opening the door for the extreme deregulatory Brexiters to cut standards.
* The Environmental Audit Committee is demanding that the government should set up an independent oversight body - the [Environmental Enforcement and Audit Office (EEAO)](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/news-parliament-2017/governments-25-year-plan-report-publication-17-19/), which would be modelled on the National Audit Office - to ensure that environmental governance, enforcement and policy currently carried out by the European Commission are not lost after Brexit and to protect against the “worrying lack of detail” in the 25 year environment plan.
* The RTPI is the latest body to heavily criticize the Government’s post-Brexit environmental watchdog proposals as [“deeply flawed”](http://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36158%3Aplanners-slam-england-only-proposal-for-post-brexit-environmental-watchdog&catid=190&Itemid=122)
* The Government has confirmed that it will [publish an ‘Environment Bill’](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44883501), which has been [welcomed in principle](https://www.businessgreen.com/bg/analysis/3036172/what-should-be-in-the-new-environment-bill). However, the lack of detail, the weak and vague current consultations on post-Brexit arrangements, and the [Prime Minister’s inability to answer related questions](https://www.businessgreen.com/bg/blog-post/3036225/brexit-the-environment-bill-and-the-sun-scorched-uplands) leave many still in doubt about its worth.
* The [Institute of Economic Affairs](https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2018/07/29/iea-hard-brexit-think-tank-access-ministers/) (IEA) is offering to set up discreet meetings with senior ministers and raising money from donors in the US who would benefit from a lowering of environmental standards after the UK leaves the EU. It is also running a campaign for a deregulatory US-UK trade deal. A deregulatory deal would prevent us maintaining the environmental protections we currently enjoy, much less strengthening them. The [Charity Commission](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jul/30/labour-calls-for-inquiry-into-iea-thinktank-over-cash-for-access-claims) has opened an investigation.
* Desmog analyses the [climate change credentials of the new Brexit team](https://www.desmog.co.uk/2018/07/09/introducing-dominic-raab-new-brexit-secretary-ties-uk-s-climate-science-denial-network), revealing their connections with the UK’s network of climate science deniers.
* The ESRC-funded [Brexit and the Environment](https://www.brexitenvironment.co.uk/) website continues to provide up-to-date expert assessments and inquiry into the likely impacts of Brexit on the natural environment.

## Energy

* Cuadrilla has been awarded the [first UK fracking consent](https://drillordrop.com/2018/07/24/cuadrilla-granted-fracking-consent-for-uks-first-horizontal-shale-gas-well/) to carry out horizontal drilling at its site at Preston Road in Lancashire.
* The Government has launched a consultation on [bringing the ‘production’ stage of fracking into the Planning Act 2008 regime](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727044/NSIP_Consultation_Document_Final.pdf). They are also consulting on making [exploratory drilling for fracking permitted development](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/permitted-development-for-shale-gas-exploration), ie subject to approximately the same level of planning control as putting up a garden shed. This is despite the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee issuing a [report](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/767/767.pdf) on 2 July that concluded that these changes should absolutely should not happen: ‘Fracking planning applications should not be brought under the NSIP regime.’ (para 83, p 28); ‘Shale gas development of any type should not be classed as a permitted development.’ (para 91, p 30) because they would be ‘hugely harmful to local democracy’. But why listen to experts, eh? Deadlines: 25th October.
* Almost [30% of the UK's electricity in 2017 was generated from renewables](https://www.edie.net/news/10/Wind-power-drives-UK-renewables-to-30--share-of-electricity-mix-/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20c029fea7ef-dailynewsletter_COPY_350), nearly a 5% increase on the previous year – however this is due to schemes that were already in the pipeline before the government started to withdraw policy support for some forms of renewables. For example…
* Despite [plans to further increase offshore wind capacity](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/uk-plots-course-to-double-offshore-wind-under-%C2%A3557m-package?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=), the Government [has axed subsidies for new small-scale low-carbon electricity](https://www.edie.net/news/10/No-replacement-for-feed-in-tariff--major-blow--for-renewables/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%202bdecfcee9-dailynewsletter_COPY_346) generation, announcing that there will be no replacement for the Feed-in Tariff (FIT) scheme when it ends next March. The scheme has been one of the key factors contributing to the huge increase in solar photovoltaic deployment from 100MW when it was launched in 2010 to 12.7GW at the end of last year, of which 4.8GW is supported by FITs.
* The Government is [set to miss a key fuel poverty target by over sixty years](https://www.ippr.org/news-and-media/press-releases/government-set-to-miss-2030-target-for-delivering-energy-efficiency-measures-for-fuel-poor-households-by-at-least-60-years). This follows the news in April this year that energy efficiency measures installed under government schemes have dropped by over 50% since the scrapping of the Green Deal in 2015, and shocking figures that there has been an excess of over 32,000 winter deaths in the UK over the past five years as a result of fuel poverty. However, a new ‘construction sector deal’ has been announced which aims to [half the energy use of new building by 2030](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/construction-sector-deal/construction-sector-deal).
* At least two [carbon capture and storage plants](https://www.edie.net/news/6/CCS-plants-to-be-operational-by-mid-2020s--says-taskforce/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%20067eef6727-dailynewsletter_COPY_345) should be operational by the mid 2020’s, according to the Government’s taskforce.
* A new survey suggests that almost three-quarters of [UK consumers would purchase products from companies powered by renewable energy](https://www.edie.net/news/10/Majority-of-UK-consumers-prefer-products-made-using-renewable-energy/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%2003a1183cc0-dailynewsletter_COPY_342) rather than firms that aren’t, and want clear labelling to be able to differentiate
* The company promoting the Swansea Tidal Lagoon project has described the BEIS value for money assessment, which it used to reject the scheme, as ‘[a manifest distortion of the truth’](https://www.edie.net/news/11/Government--distorted-figures---says-Tidal-Lagoon-Power/?utm_source=dailynewsletter,%20edie%20daily%20newsletter&utm_medium=email,%20email&utm_content=news&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter,%2043371cc72f-dailynewsletter_COPY_339)

## Planning

* The long-awaited [revised National Planning Policy Framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/revised-national-planning-policy-framework) has been published, to predictably mixed reactions. While the housebuilding sector is generally very much happier than the environment sector, with [CPRE](https://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/sound-bites/item/4923-new-planning-rulebook-heavily-criticised-by-cpre) describing it as “a speculative developers’ charter [that] will lead to the death of the plan-led system”, there were some small eco-victories, with the [Wildlife Trusts](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/some-protection-reinstated-risk-local-wildlife-sites) pleased that protection for Local Wildlife Sites will not be quite as thoroughly decimated as originally threatened, and the [Woodland Trust](https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/press-centre/2018/07/future-of-ancient-woods-and-trees-secured-following-decades-of-campaigning-by-woodland-trust/) rightly proud at having secured the highest level of protection from development for ancient trees and woods (although the new NPPF does say that while such trees are “irreplaceable”, they could still be destroyed if a “suitable compensation strategy exists”, suggesting some fundamental misunderstanding of the word “irreplaceable”). [Client Earth](https://www.clientearth.org/uk-government-clearer-on-coal-irrational-on-gas/) describe the document’s contrasting approaches to fracking and onshore wind as “irrational”, while [Friends of the Earth](https://friendsoftheearth.uk/legal-and-planning/new-planning-rules-put-our-climate-risk-warns-friends-earth) attack its failure to enact joined up policies on climate change, and are looking at options for a legal challenge. The [TCPA](https://www.tcpa.org.uk/news/press-release-tcpa-welcomes-governments-recommitment-garden-city-principles-and-climate-change-in-nppf) has however praised the decision not to get rid of references to the Climate Change Act and Garden City principles. The [Local Government Association](https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-government-announcement-changes-national-planning-policy-framework) calls the housing delivery test a “hugely disappointing” decision that “punishes communities” for the actions of developers. Many organisations will be putting out more detailed commentaries once they have had time to consider the new Framework more fully, but the overall picture is that it provides many more opportunities for developers bringing forward speculative applications, in locations which are often inappropriate and unsustainable, to over-ride local and neighbourhood plans, environmental protections and community objections.
* Qoud have released a [handy NPPF index](http://nppf.quod.com/#80/national-planning-policy-framework-index) to help you find your way around the new Framework. Lichfields have published a list of what they consider the [most significant revisions](https://lichfields.uk/blog/2018/july/25/revised-nppf-a-new-beginning-at-the-end-of-a-long-path/) (although I’d have put the [new standardized methodology](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments) to assess housing need and the [housing delivery test](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-measurement-rule-book) at number 1!), and Strutt & Parker have produced a [summary of the most notable features of each chapter](https://2391de4ba78ae59a71f3-fe3f5161196526a8a7b5af72d4961ee5.ssl.cf3.rackcdn.com/4015/3250/6877/Briefing_paper_-_Revised_NPPF_-_Summary_of_Content_Final.pdf) (in their opinion). The new policies come into effect immediately, but local and neighbourhood plans submitted for examination in the next six months (as well as those already submitted) will be tested against the old rules. The housing delivery test kicks in in November. The standardized methodology was intended to result in more houses being built, but when it is applied to the new household growth projections due out in September, it will result in a substantial national drop in “objectively assessed housing need”. So watch this space for revisions to the revisions!
* A High Court judge has ruled that a planning inspector was entitled to find that [harm to the landscape from a housing application](http://www.bailii.org/cgi-bin/format.cgi?doc=/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2018/1799.html&query=(CO/5381/2017)) significantly and demonstrably outweighed the benefits of the proposal, even though the ‘tilted balance’ in favour of development was engaged.
* The Government has announced [stronger powers for councils to tackle long-term empty homes](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/stronger-powers-for-councils-to-tackle-empty-homes-announced), by increasing the amount of council tax they can charge absentee owners as time goes on – although if a landlord can afford to leave a house empty, the sums of money involved are unlikely to make much impact.
* Homes England has set out plans that aim to bring forward more than [1,250 hectares of development across 221 sites](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/land-development-and-disposal-plan) over the next 12 months. [An interactive online map](https://homesengland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Shortlist/index.html?appid=ec605cdd233f45348e904df6d406d153) allows users to identify sites geographically and view site-level details, including red-line plans.
* The consultation on the [Greater Manchester Spatial Framework](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/article/350/revised_spatial_framework_timetable_to_go_before_leaders?utm_source=Spatial+framework+news+and+updates&utm_campaign=f114331ba5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_05_25_12_29_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ca8994e55d-f114331ba5-91315719) looks like it will be delayed until later autumn this year, in response to the likelihood of September’s household projections significantly reducing their housing need figures.
* Steve Rotheram, the Metro Mayor for Liverpool City Region, has announced a [£5m Town Centre Fund](https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/rotheram-launches-fund-for-town-centres/#utm_source=Place+North+West&utm_campaign=Place_Daily_Briefing__Wednesda_2018-07-04&utm_medium=email) as the first round of investment in supporting improvements in urban centres.
* Wirral council, who are at risk of intervention by the Secretary of State if they do not produce an up-to-date local plan very soon, are considering releasing no fewer than [48 Green Belt sites](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/wirral-council-considers-green-belt-land-release-in-local-plan) for allocation, claiming that they have exhausted all other possibilities.
* The Government has announced that a ‘panel of experts’ has been appointed to identify issues affecting the [health of the British high streets](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/minister-appoints-panel-to-advise-on-the-state-of-the-high-street?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=) and help them to ‘thrive’. At last, [a new idea that’s never been done before](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-portas-review-the-future-of-our-high-streets)!

## Transport

* The government’s long-awaited ‘[Road to Zero’ strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-road-to-zero-strategy-to-lead-the-world-in-zero-emission-vehicle-technology), which deals with high-polluting vehicles, was branded as a ‘[road to nowhere’](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-electric-cars-vans-green-transport-road-to-zero-air-pollution-climate-change-chris-grayling-a8437721.html) by campaigners. The plan is meant to create a transition to electric vehicles, and does lay out plans for installing homes and other locations with vehicle charging points, but the 2040 target for ending the sale of petrol and diesel cars is later than many other countries.
* HS2 Ltd has announced its plans to deliver a [green corridor alongside the High Speed 2 route](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/news/article/570/planning_news_-_28_june_2018?utm_source=PPQ+Newsletter&utm_campaign=67055d98c1-Newsletter_28062018_HTML&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_734e0b63a9-67055d98c1-6976173#two), comprising new wildlife habitats, native woodlands and community landscapes. The aim is to integrate the new line into its surrounding landscape and environment.
* The Campaign for Better Transport launched the [Passenger Railway Challenge](http://www.railtechnologymagazine.com/Fares-rail-policy-and-DfT-news/passenger-railway-challenge-launched-by-campaign-for-better-transport-) to improve rail services by introducing best practice and features across the network. It will focus on areas that passengers have said are important to them, such as new routes and services, more seats, better trains and stations, smart tickets and more flexible, affordable fares.
* [Traffic on rural roads has risen sharply](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rural-transport-travel-and-accessibility-statistics), while falling on urban roads. Statistics from the DfT show that traffic levels in Britain increased to a record high last year, up 1.3% compared to the year before and a 4.2% increase in a decade
* For the eighth year in a row, bus services in England and Wales have been cut - last year by £20.5 million. [Funding for supported bus services has dropped by almost 50%](https://bettertransport.org.uk/buses-in-crisis-2018) since 2010.

# *Publications*

**National Infrastructure Assessment**

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has published its first ‘[National Infrastructure Assessment](https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CCS001_CCS0618917350-001_NIC-NIA_Accessible.pdf)’, an analysis of the infrastructure the country needs up until 2050. It is divided into 8 chapters, including on communications, energy, waste, transport, housing & transport in regional cities, and drought/flooding. If endorsed by Government, the Assessment will become a significant material consideration in planning decisions. Angus Walker provides a [brief overview](https://www.bdb-law.co.uk/blogs/planning-act-2008/801-national-infrastructure-assessment-launched/?utm_source=Blog&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=Planning%20Act%20blog%20801), and The Planner highlights the call for [half of all energy to be renewable by 2025.](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/nic-half-of-uk-power-should-be-from-renewable-sources?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=)

**A new rural settlement: Fixing the affordable housing crisis in rural England**

Coverage of the housing crisis all too often focuses on our towns and cities, principally those in London and the South East. But unaffordability, and the problems it causes, are not isolated to urban areas. [This report](https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/a-new-rural-settlement) sets out a series of policy solutions which would allow rural communities to build the homes that they need and ensure that the English countryside isn’t just able to survive but thrive.

**Future of farming in England**

‘[The future for food, farming and the environment' report](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2017/future-for-food-farming-environment-report-published-17-19/), produced by the EFRA select committee, is in response to the Government's consultation paper 'Health and Harmony: the future for food, farming and the environment in a Green Brexit', which they describe as ‘ambitious’ but ‘with a notable lack of detail’. The committee outline comments including the need for ring fencing of funds for new agricultural policy, and specific timescales.

**UN Sustainable Development Goals**

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should be placed at the heart of the UK's Brexit strategy, according to a new report stating that government policy is [performing inadequately across three-quarters of the Sustainable Development Goal targets](https://www.ukssd.co.uk/measuringup). Of the 143 targets considered relevant to the domestic delivery of the goals, the [report](http://www.ukssd.co.uk/measuringup) notes that the UK is only performing well on 24% of its targets. According to the UKSSD, policy gaps or inadequate performance were listed alongside 57% of the targets, while 15% had “little to no policy in place” to address them.

**Next steps for LEPs**

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are business-led partnerships between the private and public sector, designed to support and promote growth in economic areas defined by local business interests and local government, and agreed with central Government. Great concerns have been raised about the failure of LEPs to take rural and countryside issues into account, as well as their governance, transparency, and accountability. This [research report from CPRE](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/item/4894-next-steps-for-leps) offers twelve policy recommendations for Government and LEPs, based on survey results and best practice examples, in areas such as governance, strategic planning, and rural and countryside policy issues. This follows the news that LEPs in the North of England will form an [influential new body](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-new-northern-powerhouse-body) to support (not to review, challenge, or amend, note!) the government’s ambitions for the Northern Powerhouse.

**Speculation and the housing shortage**

A [new report from the New Economics Foundation](https://www.theplanner.co.uk/news/speculation-and-high-land-prices-are-driving-housing-crisis?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_term=) concludes that excessive land prices driven by speculation are making a major contribution to the country’s housing crisis and putting up significant barriers to solving it.

# *Events*

**Great Landscapes Week**

Great landscapes offer endless opportunities for physical, spiritual and mental well-being. They have been the inspiration for artists, poets and adventurers down the centuries. They also offer up to us the fundamental stuff of life: water, oxygen, fuel, soil to grow food and a place to live for humans, wildlife and nature. But they are also under threat and, in our busy lives, we can take for granted the true beauty and importance of what is above, below and all around us. [Join Friends of the Lake District at a series of free events](https://www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk/Event/great-landscapes-week-latrigg-rally?mc_cid=f4d3ca74da&mc_eid=a859bd1fff) every day between **Saturday 4th August and Friday 10th August** celebrating every aspect of our glorious landscapes, offering you the chance to connect with and learn about landscape, geology, wildlife, water and heritage.

**Valuing urban green infrastructure**

19th September, Birmingham. The Trees & Design Action Group, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Birmingham Institute of Forest Research will host a joint workshop on valuing trees and other elements of green infrastructure in urban areas. The event will provide participants with an overview of the valuation tools available, and the contexts in which they are most appropriate. [Free, but booking essential](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-do-we-value-trees-other-green-infrastructure-in-the-urban-environment-tickets-47279847296).

**Recycle Week 2018**

**With less than two months to go until the biggest ever** [Recycle Week](http://www.wrap.org.uk/content/recycle-week-2018)**, now is the time to get involved!** Since Blue Planet II we have seen an unprecedented rise in concern around sustainability issues, particularly around plastic pollution. To address this, Recycle Week 2018 will be positioning recycling as part of the solution to these issues and will be the biggest ever. There will be a national billboard campaign and a week of creative communications, including stunts, experiential marketing, social content and PR activities around the country. There are a wide range of resources available for participation at different levels, from their [Partner Pack](https://partners.wrap.org.uk/assets/10974/?goal=0_b554dd0387-62a1ea647d-5041921) to a [campaign toolkit](https://partners.wrap.org.uk/assets/10935/?goal=0_b554dd0387-62a1ea647d-5041921).

# *Resources*

**Green Infrastructure Resource Library**

The [Green Infrastructure Resource Library](https://www.tcpa.org.uk/green-infrastructure-research-database) is a unique database of documents, case-studies, videos, tools and other information about Green Infrastructure and its benefits and is free to use. It is produced for the Green Infrastructure Partnership by Dr Ingo Schuder of Brillianto. The database is available on-line and in pdf format.

**Urban Greenspaces**

New research published by Natural England offers insight into the link between [urban greenspaces and mental health](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/visits-to-parks-on-the-rise-as-city-dwellers-head-outdoors), underlining the important role the natural environment can have in people’s lives. The report (based on the annual ‘Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment’ (MENE) public survey explores how people living in urban areas engage with the natural environment and visit urban greenspaces, and shows a 25% increase in visits to parks and greenspaces from 2010 - 2016.

**GM Natural Capital Investment Plan**

Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Natural Course have commissioned consultants to develop the first [Natural Capital Investment Plan for the City Region](https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/project/greater-manchester-natural-capital-investment-plan/?utm_source=Green+Infrastructure+Partnership&utm_campaign=2e8beff78a-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_08_31_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f4eb0dc7a3-2e8beff78a-103374097). The plan will promote investment and delivery of opportunities that protect and enhance Greater Manchester’s natural capital to support a healthy population and economy. It is expected to be completed by December.

**National Flood Forum Community Engagement Hub**

The National Flood Forum provides a series of how-to guides, case studies, toolkits and videos on the Forum's [Community Engagement Hub](https://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/working-together/community-engagement-hub/). It includes work produced during the Defra Flood Resilience Community Pathfinders Scheme (2013-2015), which was designed to stimulate innovate approaches to community flood risk management. Documents and resources are provided on the topics of empowering communities, establishing flood action groups, and flood resilience. Videos and case study documents provide examples of best practice across the UK.

# *Consultations*

**Post-Brexit environment**

The consultation on [environmental principles and governance post-Brexit](https://consult.defra.gov.uk/eu/environmental-principles-and-governance/) **closes on August 2nd**, and currently threatens to leave the UK with no effective means of enforcing environmental legislation. If you haven’t yet responded, [38 Degrees](https://speakout.38degrees.org.uk/surveys/1458?q%5B13289%5D=Yes&utm_source=email&utm_medium=blast&utm_campaign=26_7_2018_brexit_enviro_yes&bucket=email-blast-26_7_2018_brexit_enviro_yes) have set up a simple questionnaire that can be completed in a few minutes, based on the expert advice that they have sought on the consultation’s proposals.

**Fracking**

The Government has launched a consultation on [bringing the ‘production’ stage of fracking into the Planning Act 2008 regime](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/727044/NSIP_Consultation_Document_Final.pdf). They are also consulting on making [exploratory drilling for fracking permitted development](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/permitted-development-for-shale-gas-exploration), ie subject to approximately the same level of planning control as putting up a garden shed. This is despite the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee issuing a report on 2 July that [concluded that these changes should absolutely should not happen](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomloc/767/767.pdf): ‘Fracking planning applications should not be brought under the NSIP regime.’ (para 83, p 28); ‘Shale gas development of any type should not be classed as a permitted development.’ (para 91, p 30), because they would be ‘hugely harmful to local democracy’. But why listen to experts, eh? Deadlines: 25th October.

**Planning appeals inquiry process**

The Government has commissioned an independent review which will examine how the current [planning appeal inquiry process](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/independent-review-of-planning-appeal-inquiries-call-for-evidence) is working from end to end and to identify what improvements can be made, in particular, how to speed up the process without harming the quality of decisions. This is almost always code for reducing the scope for public participation, so well worth responding to this consultation! Deadline: 18th September

# *Vacancies*

**VSNW Trustees**

There are new opportunities to join VSNW as a trustee – they want trustees to represent Lancashire, Cumbria, Merseyside, Cheshire and Greater Manchester. If any of these opportunities appeals to you, please contact Warren Escadale: warren.escadale@vsnw.org.uk or call 07753 147664.

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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).

To contribute to the NWEL Bulletin, please contact:
Andy Yuille
andyyuille@gmail.com

01524 389 915

To contribute to the policy work of VSNW, please contact:
Warren Escadale
warren.escadale@vsnw.org.uk

0161 276 9307