



## ● GREEN BULLET

28<sup>th</sup> February 2019

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.

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### Campaigns

#### Climate change

- This month saw the UK's first ever nationally coordinated [schoolchildren's strike](#), with over 15,000 pupils in 60 towns and cities protesting against government (and, more broadly, adult!) failure to take adequate action on climate change. Wisdom from the mouths of babes...

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- [At least 32 UK local authorities](#) (including Manchester, Liverpool, Lancaster, South Lakeland and Trafford in the North West), the Greater London Authority and 10 town and parish councils have so far [declared a climate emergency](#), with motions still to be debated at many more. Five have been declared in just the two days between now and the news story link above! The declaration allows them to take enhanced local action on climate change, as part of an [international movement](#). Encourage your council to take up the challenge!
- The [environmental standards of new and existing homes must be improved](#) or the UK won't reach its climate change targets, the Committee on Climate Change has warned. They have also issued "unequivocal advice" to the government [not to carry forward an emissions surplus](#) from the second carbon budget to subsequent accounting periods.
- Communities in the developing world are already bearing the brunt of climate change and the media isn't reporting on it. [A new analysis by Care](#) shows that Madagascar, Ethiopia and Haiti experienced food crises in 2018, after experiencing extreme weather events, but these disasters got little coverage in the press.
- Britain must [get rid of fossil-based natural gas by 2050](#) if the country is to meet its long-term climate change objectives, according to a report published by the conservative Bright Blue think-tank, while the Met Office warns that the threshold below which the Paris Agreement aims to keep - [1.5C of warming – could be reached in just five years](#).
- 2018 was globally the 2<sup>nd</sup> hottest year on record. The [five hottest years since records began have been the last five years](#). The ten hottest years have all been within the last twenty years.

### **Biodiversity**

- A new global review has found that more than 40% of insect species are declining and a third are endangered. The [rapid decline of insects](#) threatens to destabilise all ecosystems with catastrophic effects for humans and the rest of nature
- The world's [capacity to produce food is being severely undermined](#) by humanity's failure to protect biodiversity, according to the first UN study of the plants, animals and micro-organisms that help to feed us. The report warns that plants, insects and organisms that are crucial to food production are in 'steep decline'.
- The Wildlife Trusts are encouraging people to [write to the MPs calling for the new Environment Act to ensure](#) legal targets for nature's recovery, a joined-up network of habitats, and a strong independent watchdog.
- Liverpool City Region are encouraging people to get involved in their greenspace challenge, to [record all the wildlife spotted in the city's green spaces](#) with a simple app.
- Natural England have announced two [new grassland SSSIs](#) in England to protect endangered fungi – although NE is also reported to be [reaching crisis point](#) due to struggles with understaffing, slashed budgets and an increasing workload resulting in thousands of environmentally important sites coming under threat.

### **Fracking**

- Cuadrilla has applied to vary the conditions of its environmental permit at Preston New Road, Little Plumpton, Blackpool, in order to change the composition of the fracking fluid it uses. You can [view the documents and make comments online](#).
- CPRE are encouraging people to write to their MPs to urge the Prime Minister to reject the current calls from the fracking industry to [weaken regulations on how severe earthquakes must be](#) before fracking operations in the area are paused

## **Plastics**

- A group of MPs from across the political spectrum have given their backing to a new draft bill on plastic pollution, which [calls for all "non-essential" single-use plastics to be banned across the UK by 2025](#). Drawn up by Friends of the Earth and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI), the draft Phase-out of Plastic Pollution Bill urges the Government to ban "the vast majority of [polluting, single-use plastics](#)" within the next six years, including sachets and coffee cup lids.
- Another coalition of 12 cross-party MPs and researchers at [Policy Connect](#) are calling for plastic waste legislation which follows the framework of the Climate Change Act, setting ever-stricter and legally binding recycling targets.
- Friends of the Earth are challenging people to take on the [plastics timer challenge](#): set off a timer when you wake up, and see how long you can go for before being compelled to use unwanted single-use plastic.

## **Trees**

Since September 2018, [1,161,000 trees have been planted](#) by the Rural Development Programme for England, equivalent to 742 hectares of coverage, and more than the total planted in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Since 2010 the North West has had the highest rate of tree planting in England, with 18% of all trees planted, equating to 2.8 million.

## **Information update**

### **Brexit and beyond**

- Energy: As the Brexit deadline looms and Ministers struggle to take a no-deal option off the table, leading energy and policy experts have argued that leaving the EU without a deal would [considerably increase the price of the UK's low-carbon transition](#).
- Agriculture: The Agriculture Bill authorises new expenditure for certain agricultural and other purposes; makes provision about direct payments during an agricultural transition period following the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union; and confers power to modify retained direct EU legislation relating to agricultural and rural development payments and public market intervention and private storage aid. The Bill concluded report stage on 20 November, the details of which can be found [here](#), with the next report stage in the House of Commons yet to be announced. The Bill as amended in Committee is available [here](#), explanatory notes [here](#), and a briefing paper [here](#). Further amendments to the Bill were proposed on 23 and 31 January and can be found [here](#).
- Fishing: The Fisheries Bill makes provision about grants in connection with fishing, aquaculture or marine conservation. Introduced in October 2018, the Bill went to a Public Bill Committee on 17 December, with the report stage (and subsequent third reading) due on a date to be announced. The Bill is available [here](#), and explanatory notes [here](#). Meanwhile, the government is on course to [ditch a landmark EU legal commitment to end overfishing](#) by 2020, despite promises not to reduce UK environmental standards after Brexit.

### **Energy**

- The Communities secretary has [refused plans for a shale gas fracking site at Roseacre Wood](#) near Preston in Lancashire after concluding that the scheme would have a "very significant adverse impact" on road safety, despite attaching "great weight" to "the benefits of onshore oil and gas development".

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- A coalition of 20 charities, green campaigners and community energy groups has published a new [manifesto calling for stronger support for community energy schemes](#) to help improve their dwindling prospects
- The backers of the [Swansea Tidal Lagoon project](#), rejected by government as being so costly, have decided to go ahead anyway and try to build it without government subsidy, a first for a UK power station.
- [Wind energy in the UK set another record](#) this month, with new figures revealing that more than 15GW of renewable energy was generated by wind technologies on Friday 8 February.
- A pilot project at Drax has, for the first time, successfully [captured carbon dioxide released from burning 100% biomass](#)

### Planning

- The first [results of the Housing Delivery Test have been published](#), which measures homes built in each local authority area over the last three years against the council's housing requirement. A third of councils face sanctions this year (producing action plans to increase delivery or adding 20% to their housing targets as a 'buffer'), but none face the most severe penalty of having the presumption in favour of 'sustainable' development imposed on them.
- An [updated version of last year's updated NPPF has been published](#). The key changes include restricting the use of any method of calculating housing need other than the new wobbly 'standard method' to 'exceptional circumstances' in plan-making, and prohibiting any other method when working out current land supply; confirming that 'deliverable' sites should usually include non-major sites that have outline consent; and that for development affecting European protected wildlife sites, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is disapplied only where an appropriate assessment has concluded that there is no suitable mitigation strategy in place.
- The Government's response to the consultation on the standard method has also been published, confirming that [out-of-date figures from 2014 must be used to calculate housing need](#) until the method is changed. The online [planning practice guidance has also been updated](#) to reflect these changes, emphasizing that the standard method figures are a minimum starting point, and including new circumstances for when it might be appropriate for councils to plan for a higher housing need figure than the standard method indicates, including where there are growth strategies for that area, where there are strategic infrastructure improvements, or where previous assessments of need had been higher.
- This has caused a spat between Government and the GMCA, with both blaming the other for [need for the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework to allocate Green Belt sites](#) for development. Andy Burnham said that Kit Malthouse's statements in parliament were "unfair and dishonest" in suggesting that government policy left local flexibility to revise down housing targets due to constraints such as Green Belt.
- The second reading of the [Planning \(Appeals\) Bill](#) is scheduled for March 22<sup>nd</sup>. This Private Member's Bill seeks to limit the grounds of appeal against decisions on planning applications consistent with a neighbourhood development plan or local plan.
- [Four commissioners and nine advisors](#) have been named to join Roger Scruton on the controversial 'Building Better, Building Beautiful' Commission, while Housing Minister Kit Malthouse has called for architects to [meet him halfway](#) in pushing developers to avoid bland, identikit developments.
- MHCLG has published a [Letter to Chief Planning Officers](#) outlining the changes brought in by the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018 (ie that mitigation measures cannot be considered in

screening opinions, and that neighbourhood plans can be subject to Appropriate Assessment if necessary).

- The report of the [Rosewell Review of Planning Appeal Inquiries](#) has been published. It summarises the findings of the review (which investigated the current inquiries process and how it could be improved), and makes 22 recommendations on how the planning appeal inquiry process can be improved and decisions made more quickly
- Housing minister Kit Malthouse has announced £9 million of additional funding to speed up the building of [new garden towns and villages](#) and £6 million to enable [community-led housing](#) schemes to progress.
- [Over the past six years more than 165,000 homes for social rent have been lost in England](#). This breaks down to 140,828 council homes and 57,869 housing association homes. At the same time, [CPRE analysis of Government figures](#) show that it would take 130 years at current rates of building new social housing in rural areas to house everyone currently on the waiting list.
- The North West now has the second-largest pipeline of [‘speculative sheds’](#) (i.e. massive warehouses, usually for road freight, built without specific end users in mind) in the UK. I’m sure someone somewhere is proud of this.

## **Transport**

- Transport for the North has confirmed concrete proposals for a [£39 billion investment package for Northern Powerhouse Rail](#), that have now been submitted to Government as statutory advice. It features high-level concepts aimed at fully integrating with HS2, which will be worked up in more detail over the next 18 months – the document itself remains confidential (so zero points for transparency!) while this is done. This forms part of their newly-released [Strategic Transport Plan for the North](#), which calls for a total of £70 billion investment in the areas of local and sustainable transport, smart and integrated travel, strategic rail, major roads, and strategic development corridors – a mixed bag environmentally. TfN hope that it will be used to inform local authorities’ strategic planning work, as well as guiding central government’s investment decisions. They have also called for a significant strengthening of their role over all rail projects in the North, including HS2, to ensure coherence and effectiveness.
- However, it has been pointed out that the most urgent need for transport spending is not on big shiny regional projects but on [local transport infrastructure, especially buses](#). Campaigners are [calling for free bus travel](#) for the under-30s.
- Meanwhile, other politicians, industry figures and campaigners continue to call for HS2 to be scrapped or modified and the money saved to be spent on east-west, local and overcrowded commuter lines. Problems for the project include [rising costs](#), with some suggesting an eventual 300% increase on the original approved budget, energy consumption (which would [increase total rail sector electricity demand by up to 67%](#), and estimates from 2016 suggest it would need [half a new nuclear reactor](#) to power it) and [calls to reduced its maximum speed](#), which would save on energy and carbon emissions, reduce costs, reduce noise pollution and enable the route to be realigned to avoid [sensitive wildlife and habitat](#)

## **Publications**

### **State of Natural Capital 2019**

The Natural Capital Committee has published its [annual review of progress](#). It finds that despite some successes since the 2011 white paper, The Natural Choice, overall progress has not



been good. Based on the partial assessment of available data, it appears that only moderate / limited progress has been made towards some of the 25 Year Environment Plan's ten goals. Improvements include the quality of bathing waters, reductions in emissions of sulphur oxides, mercury and lead into the atmosphere, and increases in the number of marine protected areas and heritage sites. Areas where progress has been much slower or declining include a decrease of over 35% of the surface water bodies in England in high or good ecological status, with only 14% of rivers in England meeting these standards. Wildlife including bees, butterflies, farmland birds and bats have either continued to decline or stagnated in number. Only half of priority habitats are meeting the favourable status target of 80%. In addition, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the transport sector have increased by 3%. The gap between the ambition and the outcomes remains considerable and in order to meet the 2011 objective to be the first generation to improve the environment, substantive action is now very urgent. They conclude that "*business as usual is going to lead to failure*".

### **Environmental breakdown**

A new report from the IPPR, [This is a crisis: facing up to the age of environmental breakdown](#), argues that mainstream political and policy debates have failed to recognise that human impacts on the environment have reached a critical stage, potentially eroding the conditions upon which socioeconomic stability is possible. Human-induced environmental change is occurring at an unprecedented scale and pace and the window of opportunity to avoid catastrophic outcomes in societies around the world is rapidly closing. These outcomes include economic instability, large-scale involuntary migration, conflict, famine and the potential collapse of social and economic systems. The historical disregard of environmental considerations in most areas of policy has been a catastrophic mistake. In response, this paper argues that three shifts in understanding across political and policy communities are required: of the scale and pace of environmental breakdown, the implications for societies, and the subsequent need for transformative change. Seven of its key facts and stats are highlighted [here](#).

### **Planning for New Homes**

The National Audit Office has published [Planning for New Homes](#), its report into how effective MHCLG is in supporting local authorities, the Planning Inspectorate and developers in getting new homes built and provided with adequate infrastructure. It found that the planning system was not working well and that the system does not currently provide value for money in terms of delivering new homes, and that there were significant weaknesses in the new standard methodology for calculating housing need. It noted that only 44% of local authorities have up-to-date local plans. [Related research by Lichfield's](#) suggests that almost 60% of local plans adopted since the (first) NPPF was brought in will now have to be reviewed within two years, with around half of them facing increases in housing requirements. 25% of local authorities have still not submitted a local plan for examination since the NPPF was introduced, and of those that have, 46% had an increase in their housing requirement imposed at examination.

### **Northern Powerhouse**

The Northern Powerhouse Partnership has published a new report, [Next steps for the Northern Powerhouse](#), setting out a series of recommendations to Government for rebalancing the economy and investing in the north of England, focused around transport, housing, education, devolution, digital technology and Government funding.

### **Town Centres**

In a new report, [High Streets and Town Centres in 2030](#), the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has said that the government should undertake a "*comprehensive review of planning as it pertains to the high street*", including restricting the use of permitted development rights. They conclude that unless "*urgent action is taken, we fear that further deterioration, loss of visitors and dereliction may lead to some high streets and town centres disappearing altogether*". They join the [TCPA](#), [RTPI](#), CPRE and many others in condemning the poor quality of development, loss of affordable homes and other negative outcomes arising from the expansion of permitted development rights.

### **Climate and food**

The Climate Coalition report, [Recipe for disaster: climate change threatens British-grown fruit and veg](#), is published as part of their *Show The Love* campaign which celebrates things that we love but could lose to climate change, as Britain experienced its two warmest winter days since records began.

### **Events**

#### **More & better regeneration of brownfield land**

Join CPRE Lancashire and political and policy leaders from the Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region Combined Authorities to discuss the best way to achieve [effective reuse of brownfield land](#). 26 March, 10:00 for 10:30 to 12:30, at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester, M2 5NS.

#### **National Parks' 70th birthday!**

2019 marks 70 years since the 1949 Act of Parliament was passed which established the family of National Parks in England and Wales. This was the result of decades of dedicated struggle including mass protests and political lobbying. It means that today the most beautiful countryside in England and Wales has the strongest levels of protection. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, Campaign for National Parks, the Youth Hostel Association and others will be marking this incredible achievement with a special 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary walk at Castleton in the Peak District. And [you're invited to come along!](#)

#### **Energy distribution in Cumbria**

The electricity distribution network in Cumbria is changing to meet the needs of a low-carbon future. Come along to an [interactive workshop](#), run in partnership with Electricity North West and Cumbria Action for Sustainability, to hear more and share your feedback and priorities for future investment. 28 March, 12.30- 4.30, Castle Green Hotel, Kendal.

#### **Morecambe Bay Partnership Conference**

The [Morecambe Bay Partnership Conference](#) will be held on Wednesday, 13 March 2019 from 10:00 to 16:30 in Lancaster to give people the chance to hear about the latest projects and developments, including the Eden Project for the north.

### **Resources**

#### **Heritage Planning Case Database**

Historic England maintains a [searchable online database of appeal and call-in decisions](#) relating to planning permission that affects a heritage asset and listed building consent. Cases have

been summarised using a [standard list of search terms](#), for ease of use; searches can also be carried out by address, date or decision reference.

### **Net gain**

Development projects increasingly quantify and aim to mitigate their impacts on biodiversity, with an objective of achieving 'no net loss' or a 'net gain' of biodiversity overall. Seeking these outcomes can affect people because society relies on, uses and values biodiversity, but these social impacts are often not adequately considered. [This document](#) outlines good practice for addressing the social impacts that arise from all losses and gains in biodiversity from a development project.

### **Protecting ancient woodland**

Planning has a key role in protecting ancient woodland and trees which are threatened by the cumulative effects of inappropriate developments on their fringes as much as permanent loss and damage. The RTPI said large-scale housing, intensive agriculture, roads, campsites and golf courses that have been sited inappropriately would have adverse "edge effects" on ancient woodlands and wildlife. Together with the Woodland Trust, the institute has developed a [one-hour training module](#) for planners that highlights planning's key part in protecting ancient woodland and trees, and what tools are available to planners to help. Encourage your local planners to take this up as part of their (mandatory) CPD (continuing professional development).

### **Growing Health case studies**

Growing Health is building a series of case studies from across England to [show how food growing is delivering health and wellbeing](#) outcomes in different areas. This includes examples of projects being commissioned by Public Health England or the clinical commissioning group.

### **Free online course on climate change science**

The University of Exeter is offering a [free four-week online course](#) for anyone interested in learning about the science of climate change, the risks it poses and how human activity is changing our world.

### **Consultations**

#### **Conservation covenants**

The Government are consulting on introducing legislation to enable [conservation covenants](#). Conservation covenants would allow landowners to set legally binding obligations on their land for themselves and subsequent owners. This would allow landowners to secure environmental benefits for the long term. Deadline: 22 March

#### **Aviation 2050: the future of UK aviation**

The Department for Transport is seeking feedback on its green paper which outlines [proposals for the long term future of UK aviation](#). The strategy will set out the challenges and opportunities for aviation to 2050 and beyond and will emphasise the significance of aviation to the UK economy and regional growth. If you think it should maybe emphasise something else, please respond by April 11.

#### **Deposit return scheme**

The Government has released its long-awaited consultation on introducing a [deposit return system](#) in England to help tackle problems of plastic pollution, litter, and resource inefficiency. It



was released alongside three other consultations on waste and resource reforms (accessible from the bottom of the website) covering packaging producer responsibility; consistency in household and business recycling collections; and a tax on plastic packaging containing less than 30% recycled content. It claims the proposals add up to a [“world-leading” approach](#) to revamping waste and recycling. Deadline: 13 May.

### **Young people and sustainability**

Young people of 25 years old and younger are invited to take part in a [national survey](#) exploring how much they know about sustainability and how they feel about it in relation to their lives. There’s a version for primary school students aged 6 to 11, and another for 12 to 25 year olds. The survey is by Sustainability and Environmental Education (SEEd), to improve their practice and workshops to better meet the needs of the young people they work with. It can also be used by teachers to find out levels of understanding among their students. If you know and/or work with young people please share this survey with them!

### **North West Marine Plan**

The Marine Management Organisation’s online consultation on developing a [marine plan for the North West](#) remains open until March 29<sup>th</sup>. This (3<sup>rd</sup>) stage of consultation involves commenting on draft policies and supporting text.

### **Nuclear waste**

The consultation on how Government will [evaluate sites for burying nuclear waste](#) in England is still open until March 29.

### **HS2 Phase 2a**

HS2 Ltd is consulting upon the [Supplementary Environmental Statement 2 and Additional Provision 2 Environmental Statement](#) related to proposed amendments to the [High Speed Rail \(West Midlands - Crewe\) Bill](#) (deadline: 29 March). These cover amendments to the Bill which are outside its existing powers and limits, and updated environmental information and changes to the design and construction assumptions.

### **Light Rail and Other Rapid Transit Solutions in Cities and Towns: Call for Evidence**

The Department for Transport has issued a call for evidence on [how to better use and implement light rail and other rapid transit solutions](#) in cities and towns. It is inviting views on how to better harness the opportunities for building on the popularity of light rail and how to build the UK’s manufacturing and engineering capacity. Deadline: 19 May.

### **Funding**

#### **Partnerships fund**

The National Lottery Community Fund is offering grants of up to £10,000 to organisations, who, [through partnership working](#), bring people together and build strong relationships in and across communities; improve the places and spaces that matter to communities; and enable more people to fulfil their potential by working to address issues at the earliest possible stage.

#### **Sport England small grants**

Sport England are offering small grants (£300 - £10,000) to fund projects that will [help people to become more physically active](#).

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