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● GREEN BULLET

24th September 2020

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 - 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

- As the court cases brought by various US States against ExxonMobil and others for their decades-long "campaign of deception", the BBC reflects on [how the oil industry used dirty tricks to confuse the public](#) and undermine the science on climate change, thus frustrating global efforts to tackle the problem. Just in case anyone had [bought the greenwash](#) from BP's [latest announcements about the end of oil](#).
- A new global poll shows that public concern about climate change continues to rise, but that discrepancies about the need for urgent action are growing, with [poorer countries' populations being considerably more likely to support urgent action](#). This correlates with fewer people in rich countries having direct experience of climate change, and also to recent research showing that the world's [wealthiest 1% were responsible for double the carbon](#)

[emissions as the poorest 50%](#) from 1990 to 2015, pointing to tackling the climate crisis as a social justice as much as an environmental or economic issue.

- European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has confirmed [EU plans to target a 55% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030](#) as part of a broader European Green Deal programme aimed at reaching "climate neutrality" by mid-century. This is predicted to cause [carbon prices to increase by 50%](#) over the next decade.
- An estimated [1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050](#), as the climate crisis and a growing population drive increasing migration, according to a new analysis by the Institute for Economics and Peace. It found that 31 countries are not sufficiently resilient to withstand ecological threats, such as natural disasters, water and food shortages, saying that "Ecological threats pose serious challenges to global peace".

Planning reform

- The Wildlife Trusts have warned that the planning reforms will increase the threat to wildlife in the UK (already in significant decline – see Biodiversity section), and that a [new designation of 'wildbelts'](#) are needed to protect it. They are encouraging people to read [their analysis of the proposals](#) and to respond to the consultation.
- CPRE have described the proposals as an [attack on local democracy](#), and are encouraging people to [sign an e-petition](#) which already has over 30,000 signatures.

Join the regeneration

During lockdown, many people found that connecting with nature and the countryside nourished them, refreshed them and regenerated them. Now CPRE are campaigning for us to do our bit in return. They are running a campaign to help everyone get out, get going and [get regenerating the countryside](#), providing practical tips and inspiring stories to help you nurture your corner of countryside (even if you live in a city!), from discovering wildlife to getting active in the great outdoors. The campaign builds on their [Regeneration Manifesto](#), published as lockdown lifted in July 2020, which lays out CPRE's position and recommendations for the ways that the government can build a resilient countryside after the pandemic. It explains how we don't need to make a binary choice between recovery for the economy and for the planet, and how a green recovery, one that builds back better and also cares for our wellbeing, is possible.

Teach the Future

[Teach the Future](#) is an inclusive, well organised and persistent campaign by secondary and tertiary education students to repurpose the education systems of the world, around the climate emergency and ecological crisis. They are calling for a review of how current systems are preparing students for the climate emergency and ecological crisis; teacher training in sustainability issues; priority for sustainability in school inspections; and a new Climate Emergency Education Act in parliament. Local North West activists and volunteers at the university of Manchester are organizing a conference in January on climate change in the whole school curriculum: watch this space!

Plastics

A new report from the Changing Markets Foundation, [Talking Trash](#), accuses Giant consumer goods companies such as Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Danone of "working behind-the-scenes to delay and derail legislation and ensure they can continue flooding the world with cheap, disposable plastic packaging" – despite the fact that they all have public targets around issues such as recycled content and recyclability. Many of the firms are also members of prominent

joint initiatives which aim to tackle plastics pollution, like the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's [New Plastics Economy Global Commitment](#) and the [Alliance to End Plastic Waste](#).

Air quality

- Achieving the World Health Organisation (WHO) targets for [air quality could boost the UK economy by £1.6bn a year](#), according to a new study by CBI Economics on behalf of the Clean Air Fund. It finds that 3 million working days are lost every single year because of air pollution, and improving air quality could not only prevent 17,000 premature deaths every single year, but it also boost the economy by reducing premature deaths, sickness absence and lower productivity at work. This £1.6bn benefit would be on top of savings to NHS and social care budgets from treating fewer patients with health conditions associated with air pollution.
- Local authorities have been invited to bid for a share of £2m from the latest round of the Government's [Air Quality Grant](#), which is available for projects helping to improve air quality and create cleaner and healthier environments.
- The government has instructed [Greater Manchester to introduce a Clean Air Zone](#) affecting buses, coaches, taxis, heavy good and light goods vehicles. Two consultations will run from October 8 to December 3.

Pesticides

In the EU - and the UK - a number of pesticides are banned because we consider them too dangerous for human health or the environment. EU and UK authorities have determined that these substances pose hazards like reproductive failure, cancer, endocrine disruption, groundwater contamination, and the poisoning of fish, birds or bees. So instead [corporations manufacture banned pesticides here and then export them overseas to poorer countries](#), like Brazil, the Ukraine and India. This investigation by Greenpeace shows that in 2018, the EU issued plans to export over 81,000 tonnes of banned pesticides to poorer countries. The UK was responsible for almost 40% of that figure, giving it by far the largest share of the exports.

Information update

Covid-19

- Friends of the Earth have published a [Green and Fair Recovery Plan](#), based on 5 key principles: prioritise health and wellbeing; put green jobs and livelihoods at the heart of the recovery; fix the broken economy; co-operate globally and act responsibly; and empower communities to lead the recovery
- ... And the British public backs just that kind of ambitious transformation of the UK into a [greener, fairer more equal society as it emerges from the Covid-19 crisis](#), according to an inquiry by a cross-party group of MPs. The consultation exercise on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Green New Deal, which involved polling, in-depth workshops and telephone conversations with a representative sample of the public, found support for ambitious plans on equality, the future of work and the environment. The findings come amid growing concern that the government is attempting to rush the country back to a pre-Covid "business as usual" model, rather than learn the lessons from the pandemic and build a more resilient "fairer, greener Britain".

Brexit and beyond

- An alliance of campaigners, legal experts, leading scientists, MPs and academics has come together to propose a [new bill that is designed to tackle the climate and ecological crises in](#)

[a safe, fair and democratic way](#). The “[Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill](#)”, sponsored by a coalition of MPs from six political parties, would significantly expand the remit and scope of the Climate Change Act 2008, assigning new duties to government, parliament and the advisory Committee on Climate Change to enact a strategy that meets more ambitious targets for both climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as stronger criteria of justice, responsibility and safety.

- The Government has [watered down its plans to ensure that all farming subsidies would deliver “public goods for public money”](#), and is planning to introduce a new scheme that would pay some farmers for complying with legislation and undertaking routine farming practices, leading to fears that this will divert money from activities that could produce significant environmental improvements.

Energy

- By scaling up energy efficiency efforts and deploying renewable energy generation capacity far more rapidly, the world could “technically and economically” [transition to net-zero by 2050 for the cost of less than 1% of global GDP](#), according to a new report from the Energy Transitions Commission (ETC), backed by 40 leaders from major energy companies, finance giants, high-emitting sectors like steel and transport and bodies such as the World Resources Institute (WRI).
- Japanese firm Hitachi has [abandoned plans to build a new nuclear power station in Anglesey](#), North Wales. The Tokyo-based multinational said that it was permanently scrapping plans for the £16bn Wylfa power station, which would have provided around 6% of Britain’s electricity. Albeit without any immediate prospect of delivery, the project is still being considered under the development consent order regime, with a final decision by the secretary of state due.
- Robert Jenrick has [rejected plans for a coal mine](#) near the Northumberland coast (Druridge Bay) for a second time, citing changes to the NPPF that had been implemented since the High Court quashed his predecessor Sajid Javid’s decision to refuse permission.
- BP has become the first oil major to predict that global oil demand may not rebound to pre-Covid-19 levels if national governments collectively align their recovery strategies with net-zero – ie [we may already have passed peak oil](#). However, with the industry’s strong, decades-long history of [greenwashing, distorting and undermining science and misleading the public](#), a pinch of salt may be required.
- [UK-based fossil fuel firm Ascent Resources is suing the Slovenian government](#) for having the temerity to ask them to submit an environmental impact assessment before fracking near a water source.

Planning

- The planning reforms proposed in the two live Government consultations, and in particular the [changes to the methods for assessing and allocating housing numbers](#), have caused considerable disquiet on the Government’s back benches, with reports that a group of Tory MPs that are larger than the Government’s majority are considering rebelling to defeat the proposals.
- The Local Government Association has also [condemned the government’s formula to calculate the number of new homes](#) needed in local authorities, saying that it will drive an unsustainable boom in housebuilding in the south of England while depriving Northern cities of the growth needed to ‘level up’ the country. It will also tend to focus growth in rural rather than urban locations.

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- A group of professors specialising in planning, housing economics and property have criticized the proposed planning reforms as likely to [deepen regional inequalities and jeopardise the delivery of affordable homes](#)
- The negative reception of the proposals, especially around new methods for determining housing numbers, has led MHCLG's director of planning to say that there is likely to be "[further consultation and discussion into next year](#)" on the proposals to introduce a standard method of setting "binding" local plan housing requirement figures
- Nicholas Boys Smith, founding director of social enterprise Create Streets and former co-chair of the government's Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission, has been [appointed to set up and lead a new national advisory body on design](#) that aims to "embed beauty and quality" into the planning system. RIBA welcomed the establishment of the new body, but said it was undermined by the expansion of permitted development rights, which "[opens the door to the next generation of slum housing](#)", asking: "How can this possibly support aims to 'place beauty and design quality at the heart of all new developments'?"
- A new report endorsed by Nicolas Boys Smith calls on ministers to make further changes to the planning system to [help the delivery of 75,000 modular homes a year](#), including the "fast-tracking" of consents for such developments.
- The [Greater Manchester Spatial Framework](#) is still (just) on track to be launched for public consultation in November, after [Stockport councillors defeated a motion to withdraw](#) the borough from the plan. However, the issue will be debated and voted on again at their full council meeting in October, by which time [a draft of the strategy should be ready for councillors to consider](#)
- Mayor of Liverpool City Region Steve Rotherham has established England's 'first' Land Commission to [improve the management and use of land](#) in the region. The commission will review the use of public land for community wealth building rather than corporate profit.
- A new industry group, [Housing Diversification](#), has called on the Government to open up the housing sector to a more diverse range of builders, claiming that reliance on the volume housebuilders will prevent ambitions to 'build back better', echoing the views of planning campaigners like CPRE. This view is supported by a new research report by Capital Economics, which finds that [community-led housing offers high value for money](#) by delivering significant economic, social and environmental benefits, which far outweigh the cost of public investment in them.
- The [local authority green belt statistics](#) for 2019/20, published by MHCLG, reveal that 15 councils reported changes to their designated green belt boundaries over the year, with losses ranging from 10ha to nearly 1,500ha, accelerating the national loss of Green Belt year-on-year since 2011 when records began. None were in the North West this year.

Transport

- The Government is expected to [bring forward its ban on the sale of new fossil-fuel powered cars](#) from 2040 to 2030
- New research suggests that [hybrid vehicles emit 2.5 times more CO2 than official tests indicate](#) when they are driven in 'real world' conditions

Devolution

Sources in [Surrey](#), [Yorkshire](#) and [industry insiders](#) are reporting that the government's plans to create more large single-tier authorities, which would then lead on strategic planning, appears to be in doubt and that the Devolution white paper setting out the plans will now be delayed and watered down.

Biodiversity

- Environmental charities are [urging UK and devolved governments](#) to begin a 'new era for nature', following the [confirmation by the UN](#) of the failure of the international community and UK governments to halt environmental decline and that more than a million plant and animal species are threatened with extinction. They are calling for the Government to commit to protecting at least 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030, and support a new global target and action plan to restore species and habitats, with equivalent targets to be set in UK law under the Environment Bill.
- The [Global Biodiversity Outlook 5](#), published by the United Nations, has confirmed that the international community will fail its [global targets](#) to reverse losses in wildlife and the natural environment by the end of 2020. This announcement follows hot on the heels of [research from RSPB](#) which highlights that the UK's performance on restoring nature may be considerably worse than previously thought (failing to meet at least 17 of 20 targets from the Convention on Biological Diversity, and actually performing worse against 6 targets than a decade ago, as opposed to 'merely' failing 14, which official estimates suggest), and WWF and Zoological Society of London (ZSL)'s [Living Planet Report 2020](#) which shows that wildlife populations globally have plunged by 68% in the last 50 years. This confirms the negative trajectories identified in the 2019 State of Nature report, highlighting that:
 - 41% of UK species are in decline and 15% of species are now threatened with extinction from Great Britain.
 - The Government has missed its 2020 target for 50% of Sites of Special Scientific Interest to be in favourable condition; in England just 38% were in favourable condition at the last count
 - The Government has missed its 2020 target for UK seas to meet Good Environmental Status, failing on 11 out of 15 indicators of marine health
 - The Government is set to miss its target for 75% of rivers and streams to be in good condition, with just 16% in good condition in England and a final deadline of 2027 looming
 - UK Government figures suggest we are protecting large areas of land (28%) and sea (24%), but RSPB analysis suggests the amount of land protected and well-managed for nature could be as low as 5% of the UK. At sea, only 10% of protected areas are being actively managed
 - RSPB's analysis also shows that adjusting for inflation, public funding for the environment and nature has decreased by over a quarter of a billion pounds (£256m in real terms)
- This is all made much more digestible by everyone's favourite national treasure Sir David Attenborough, who explores how this crisis of biodiversity has consequences for us all, threatening food and water security, undermining our ability to control our climate and even putting us at greater risk of pandemic diseases in in [Extinction: The facts](#) (available for 11 months).

Publications

UK Climate Assembly final report

The [UK Climate Assembly](#), made up of a representative sample of the population balanced for age, class, gender etc as well as views on climate change, has produced its [final report](#). They were tasked by six select committees to produce recommendations for meeting the 2050 Net Zero target. Citizens Assemblies are recognized as an effective method for widening democratic participation in decision-making and understanding the parameters of public opinion. While not

commissioned by the Government, there is some optimism that their support from Parliament and methodological pedigree will convince Government that the public are supportive of measures that go beyond existing proposals.

Nature-based solutions to the climate emergency

The [IGNITION project](#) has published its first report for businesses, titled '[Nature-based solutions to the climate emergency: The benefits to business and society](#)'. It provides organisations with the data they need to make informed decisions about the types of urban nature-based solutions (NBS) available to them and how these can help meet sustainability objectives to benefit business, society and the environment. It highlights the benefits of using NBS across the built environment and aims to inspire confidence in business leaders and investors to increase the use of NBS. The information in the report is based on key findings from research conducted by the project team into the vast quantity of available scientific literature on NBS. The full detail of the research is stored in the [NBS Evidence Base](#). For those too lazy or busy to read the report, key points are highlighted in this [video of the launch event](#).

Events

Tiny Forests and Building with Nature

The Trees and Design Action Group is a pioneering group of individuals, professionals and organisations from wide ranging disciplines in the public, private and third sectors who aim to increase awareness of the role of trees in the built environment. Their [latest online seminar](#) (Monday 7th October 14:00-16:00), will provide briefings on Natural England's new Building with Nature Standards, and on '[tiny forests](#)' in the UK, including explaining opportunities to identify potential urban sites (about tennis court-sized, on public or private land), particularly in deprived areas and/or close to a school, for Earthwatch's next round of (funded!) planting (Nov 20-Mar 21).

The Community Forest Conference

The Community Forest Conference is on Wednesday 30th September 10am – 1pm. Chaired by Sir Harry Studholme, speakers will cover topics including carbon, Trees for Learning, as well as an update on the Community Forests and plans for future projects. Register in advance: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3cYNIRbiS9yvjLdZttxYoA.

Clean Air Day

On October 8 [Clean Air Day LIVE](#) will involve a full day of virtual events with a focus on clean air activities. Clean Air Day usually comprises of events and gatherings all around the country, last year saw more than 600 events taking place, attracting almost half a million people. This year, in order to ensure that the events are Covid secure, they will take place virtually.

Greater Manchester Green Summit

The [online GM Green Summit](#) is now over, but you should still be able to register in order to have access to all the content until the end of December 2020.

Resources

Valuing nature – demystifying the difficulties

The Valuing Nature Network has published a series of papers bringing together experts from across disciplines and fields of practice to explain the key concepts that might cause confusion

when [trying to explain the value of nature](#), and set out principles of good practice. The series covers Economic Valuation, Health, Health Metrics, Cost Benefit Analysis, Green finance, Shared and Social Values, Valuing Arts and Arts Research, and Interdisciplinary Working.

Access to green space

Friends of the Earth have analysed data from the Office of National Statistics on gardens and public green space, to identify [neighbourhoods that lack both public green space and gardens](#). They have produced an interactive searchable map to identify the neighbourhoods that are best supplied, and most deprived, of green space. They conclude 1,257 neighbourhoods in the UK – home to 10.9 million people, almost 20% of the population – are deprived of green space, with black and brown people more than twice as likely to live in a neighbourhood with minimal access to green space, and children from the most deprived areas 20% less likely to spend time outside than those in affluent areas. They also provide a set of recommendations to Government to help tackle the problem as part of a [green and fair recovery](#) from Covid.

Air quality calculator

A new air pollution calculator will enable the public to better understand how their lifestyle choices affect the quality of the air we all breathe. The charity behind Clean Air Day, Global Action Plan, has teamed up with Imperial College London to launch a new [online air pollution calculator](#). The calculator is designed to provide the public with an indicator of their personal contribution to air pollution by focusing on their travel choices and the use of wood-burning stoves. It will also provide meaningful guidance on how they can reduce air pollution by changing their habits, and connect people to the [Clean Air Hub](#), where they can access more in-depth information about air pollution.

Consultations

Review of judicial review

The Government-commissioned [Faulks review of administrative law](#) has put out a call for evidence. The commission is tasked with answering the question, “*Does judicial review strike the right balance between enabling citizens to challenge the lawfulness of government action and allowing the executive and local authorities to carry on the business of government?*” It is a [threat to the ability of citizens and third and public sector organisations to hold Government to account](#) in the courts and to prevent them from acting unlawfully, especially over issues of environmental harm. Deadline 19th October

Also a gentle reminder that all the **consultations highlighted in the last Bullet** are still open:

- The [Planning White Paper](#): The key points of the extensive proposals very briefly overviewed in the last Bullet, are summarized in a bit more detail in various places, such as [Inside Housing](#) or [Savills](#) for a short read, or the excellent [Andy Boddington](#) or [Lichfields](#) for more in-depth analysis. Deadline October 29th.
- [Changes to the current planning system: changes to the standard methods of assessing housing need, changing affordable housing rules to favour ‘First Homes’ over social housing, preventing councils from securing affordable housing on medium-sized sites \(up to 40 or 50 units\), and extending Permission in Principle to major developments](#). Deadline October 1st.
- A revised [draft Waste Management Plan for England](#), primarily about the quantity of waste there is in England and how that waste is managed. Deadline October 15th.

- All-Party Parliamentary Group for Dark Skies: [consultation seeking proposals and evidence of dark sky preservation and light pollution](#), including environmental, economic, energy and health consequences. Deadline 25th September
- Deforestation & supply chains: Whether the UK Government should introduce a new law designed to [prevent forests and other rich habitats in supply chains abroad from being converted into agricultural land](#). Deadline: 5th October.
- Suburban taskforce: identifying potential policy solutions to support the [long-term sustainability of suburban areas](#). Deadline: 2nd October.
- [How e-bikes fit into the recovery of sustainable tourism in the Lake District](#).
- Greater Manchester Parks: how you use [public parks and greenspaces in GM](#) and why they are important to you.

Crowdfunder

sPark It Liverpool

Transition Liverpool are currently raising money for a project called [sPark It Liverpool](#), which will give 30 independent businesses, community organisations and creatives the opportunity to take over on-street parking bays in a city centre location in order to create installations including pop-up parks, galleries, art exhibitions and more. It gives people a platform for their work, while also providing a boost to the local economy. They are aiming to increase volunteering opportunities, give creatives the chance to bid for their own funding to add on to the event, and to encourage people to think about use of space in an urban environment. Crowdfunder ends on 30th September.

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