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# ● GREEN BULLET

26<sup>th</sup> November 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](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**

The Climate Coalition has launched its own ten-point plan (in counterpoint to the Government's), a programme of ambitious action to get the UK on track to net zero as soon as possible, calling on the government to invest in climate solutions that will improve all our lives. They are asking people to [email their MPs](#) to ask them to support it.

#### **Plastics**

The Government has indicated [support for an international treaty](#) on the lines of the Paris Agreement to tackle plastic pollution

### **Water pollution**

New analysis by Surfers Against Sewage shows that [raw sewage was discharged into bathing water beaches in England and Wales almost 3,000 times](#) in the last year.

### **Information update**

#### **Covid-19 and the recovery**

- The Government has launched a [Green Jobs Taskforce](#) to help unemployed people and those in transitioning industries into new, skilled jobs. The overarching aim of the Taskforce will be to ensure that the Government meets its 2030 commitment to have two-million adults in the UK employed in “green-collar” jobs. Pre-pandemic, [Government figures revealed](#) that turnover in the UK’s green economy accounted for just 1% of national non-financial turnover. [Similar investigations](#) into official jobs figures found that while domestic jobs in the renewable energy sector rose year-on-year in 2018 and 2019, they were ultimately down by around one-third on 2014 levels. However, commentators have questioned whether such taskforces are just a [distraction from real action](#)
- Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak has made a string of major announcements on [green finance](#), confirming that the UK will issue its first green gilts in 2021 as part of the Covid recovery stimulus, and will introduce new climate disclosure requirements.

#### **Brexit and beyond**

- The Environment Bill is being scrutinised by committee until it returns. Greener UK have produced a [host of briefings on various different aspects](#) of the Bill, to help you (and MPs!) work your way through the complexities and hopefully end up with a better piece of legislation than we had when it came in. Following the Bill’s completion of Committee Stage, it will be further scrutinised by the whole House of Commons at Report Stage and Third Reading, after which it will move to the House of Lords for further debate and scrutiny. 37 days and counting to agree and implement the most radical structural changes to UK environmental law for a generation, as EU law will cease to apply on January 1<sup>st</sup>.
- The [Agriculture Act](#) received Royal Assent on Wednesday 11 November, marking a landmark change in agricultural policy. The act moves away from the area-based direct farm payments of the Common Agricultural Policy that proved unfair in supporting farmers in need and ineffective in tackling the climate and biodiversity crises. It gives power to the government to encourage the production of environmentally sustainable food and the management of land for public access and enjoyment of the countryside, to restore and enhance natural and cultural heritage, and to mitigate and adapt to climate change. It locks in the concept of ‘public goods for public money’ as an underlying principle in the new [Environmental Land Management scheme](#). However, the Government repeatedly rejected attempts to enshrine high environmental and animal welfare standards in law, leaving scope for a progressive lowering of standards under the Government’s preferred deregulatory approaches. There are still [many challenges ahead](#) in developing a sustainable agricultural system.
- New measures designed to stop UK-based businesses from [importing products or materials linked to deforestation abroad](#) have been added to the Environment Bill - but some green groups argue that loopholes will remain.

#### **Climate change & energy**

- Despite an almost global lockdown, [CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere continue to rise](#) rapidly, breaking another milestone (410ppm)

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- New research shows that just [1% of people cause over half of total aviation emissions](#)
- CDP has this week published its “Cities A List” for 2020, revealing the 88 global [cities that are leading efforts to tackle climate challenges](#). 4 UK cities made the ‘A grade’ – [Newcastle, London, Bristol and Bournemouth](#).
- Almost two years on from when the first council in the UK declared a climate emergency and responded with ambitious decarbonisation plans, a new mapping tool has unveiled that [nearly three-quarters of local councils have made climate emergency declarations](#), with more than half of those committing to reach net-zero.
- A new report suggests that the UK's net-zero target is in jeopardy due to a lack of legislative requirements on key sectors and infrastructure. Green Alliance warns that there is currently an [£11.4bn investment gap in reaching net-zero](#) across transport, buildings, circular economy and natural infrastructure, coupled with a lack of “net-zero testing” applied to all government decisions that continues to promote carbon-heavy economic activity, such as the £27bn roads expansion programme and the Heathrow Airport expansion.
- The International Energy Agency (IEA) has published a major analysis on the [state of the global renewable energy sector](#), predicting that wind and solar capacity will double by 2025 and that renewables will overtake gas and coal globally by 2024.
- As [demand for carbon offsetting grows](#) to help companies meet their climate goals, Mark Carney is driving efforts to scale up the voluntary carbon market, while improving its environmental integrity to avoid claim that it amounts to a licence to pollute..
- The EU used the virtual G20 meetings this month to call on nations to learn [lessons from the coronavirus pandemic by stepping up preparedness](#) and resiliency to tackle the climate crisis.
- Public commitments to offshore wind and the performance of unsubsidized solar have seen the UK climb to fifth place in the index of [national attractiveness of renewable energy investment](#) and deployment opportunities.

### Planning

- Under heavy fire from all sides including its own backbenchers, the Government has been backpedaling on aspects of its radical planning reforms, suggesting that the revised [standard method for assessing housing need will be revised again](#) to drive more housing development to urban areas in the Midlands and North, and further consultation “into next year” on separate proposals to further adjust the method so it sets “[binding](#)” [local plan requirements](#). The furious reaction to the Planning White Paper mean that it’s estimated that it will take at least two years for much of the reforms to be legislated on, with substantial [opportunities to influence the reforms before then](#). However, the government insists that the broad (deregulatory) thrust of the reforms will be seen through, and some reforms will be put into place much sooner.
- A survey by CPRE suggests that [over half of Conservative MPs oppose the planning reforms](#)
- Several well-respected organisations have made their critical responses to the planning white paper publicly available, including [CPRE](#), [Friends of the Earth](#), the [National Trust](#), the [Woodland Trust](#), the [Royal Town Planning Institute](#), the [Town and Country Planning Association](#), the [National Association of Local Councils](#), the [Planning Officers Society](#), and the [Local Government Association](#)
- Defra has said that it will start the process of [designating new national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty \(AONBs\)](#) next year. Both national parks and AONBs are subject to some of the highest levels of protection from development in national planning policy. National park authorities also enjoy plan-making and development management powers.

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- Andy Burnham and the leader of Stockport Council are struggling to [keep the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework alive](#), after Stockport Conservative Group indicated that they would vote it down during [ongoing contestation](#). If approved by all ten authorities, it will go out for a final round of [public consultation](#).
- The [20-minute neighbourhood](#) is gaining traction internationally in the wake of the Covid crisis – a way of planning development to ensure that almost all everyday needs are within a 20-minute walk or cycle.

### Transport

- Transport for the North has set out its [preferred route for the £39bn Northern Powerhouse Rail project, including a line from Liverpool to Manchester via Warrington](#), and urged the Government to back the plans. Construction of the line could begin in 2024 subject to Whitehall approval
- The government has said that it will [divide up the northern phase of HS2](#) into smaller pieces when it seeks parliamentary approval for the line's final sections. This had led to fears that parts of the project – possibly the whole eastern leg – may be cancelled.
- 253 companies and public bodies have been revealed to have [signed 'gagging orders' in relation to HS2](#) after a lengthy Freedom of Information battle.
- North West councils have been awarded a total of [£30m from the Government's £250m active travel pot](#) in the second round of funding allocations, more than two thirds of which will go to Liverpool city region and Greater Manchester combined authorities.

### Biodiversity & nature

- The Government has updated its plans to deliver a [Nature Recovery Network](#) as part of the [ten-point plan](#), to restore wildlife sites and create new habitat, as part of an additional £40 million for the [Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#), which was oversubscribed by seven times in its first round.
- Natural England, the government's conservation watchdog has been "[cut to the bone](#)", with staff underpaid, undervalued and overworked and feeling unable to protect England's most valuable wildlife sites, according to [a new report](#) and testimony from workers. Tony Juniper, the organisations Chair, confirmed these claims in evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee, stating that the organisation was [not able to fulfil even its minimum statutory obligations](#) to a good standard.
- The world's largest investment banks provided more than \$2.6trillion (£1.9trillion) of [financing linked to the destruction of ecosystems](#) and wildlife last year, according to a new report.
- It's been 400 years since beavers roamed wild in the North West, and now [a pair have been released in Cumbria](#), in a 27-acre enclosure at Lowther Estate near Penrith, and [another pair in Hatchmere Nature Reserve in Cheshire](#). Experts will study the impact they'll have on their environment as part of a five-year scientific trial.

### **Publications**

#### **Green Industrial Revolution**

The Prime Minister launched his [ten-point plan for a Green Industrial Revolution](#) (and an [explanatory booklet](#)), committing to investment in sustainable transport, renewable and nuclear energy, green finance, green buildings, and nature recovery. Summary by Angus Walker [here](#). Responses have generally been [cautiously supportive](#), recognizing these as positive steps in the right direction, but very much [only the first steps](#) that are needed. For example, [analysis](#)

[from Carbon Brief suggests that this translates to around 50% of the required emissions cuts to deliver on the Fourth and Fifth carbon budgets](#) that cover emissions reductions up to 2032.

Think-tank IPPR estimates that the Government [need to commit £33 billion annually](#) to reverse the loss of nature and tackle climate change. Those existing carbon budgets are tracked against the old Climate Change Act of an 80% reduction in emissions, rather than the net-zero target, and are expected to be updated. The Climate Change Committee (CCC) is expected to [publish advice on future carbon budgets in December](#).

### Spending Review

Then hot on the heels of the ten-point plan, came the one-year [Spending Review](#), widely considered to have [undermined the ten-point plan](#). It understandably focused on the health emergency and the economic emergency, but [virtually ignored the climate emergency](#). [Commentators](#) drew particular comparison between the [£27 billion road-building programme and the £4 billion of new money in the 10-point plan](#) (out of £12 billion in total so far committed to climate-related investment). There was strong support for electric vehicles, but experts suggest that this is [part of the problem, not the solution](#), to decarbonising transport. Of the £100bn of infrastructure spend next year [just one per cent is earmarked for greener more efficient buildings](#). The [levelling-up fund](#) was welcomed by some, but is available for any areas to bid into, so those best able to mobilise resources (ie wealthier areas) are likely to benefit, further widening the gap. The [new UK Infrastructure Bank](#) may contribute to the green recovery – or may fund more roadbuilding. There is as yet no clarity on the extent to which the net-zero target, Environment Bill targets, or levelling-up agenda will inform its work. The addition of a mention of net-zero to the Green Book is welcome, but is described as “[wishy-washy](#)”, and far from a requirement on infrastructure promoters. There were some [small funding commitments for the natural environment](#).

### National Infrastructure Strategy,

Alongside the Spending Review, the Government also published its long-awaited [National Infrastructure Strategy](#), which largely restated existing plans. While renewing the government's commitment to its net zero strategy, it also confirmed that only 12% of its £100 billion infrastructure commitments were destined for low-carbon uses. It covered [renewables, nuclear, technology & innovation, industrial emissions, buildings, transport, finance, and adaptation and resiliency](#). It set out a timetable for the release of a host of new policy documents intended to accelerate investment in new green infrastructure, including the imminent Energy White Paper, Hydrogen Strategy, Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy. It also pledged to speed up the already fast-track Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Project route for securing consent for major development. Despite strong references to the net-zero transition, the disparate policies and spending commitments from across departments [fall short of the joined-up plan that is needed](#).

### Future forestry

The Welsh Government, supported by the Scottish and UK governments, has issued a new [science and innovation strategy for the long-term future of forestry](#) in Great Britain. The strategy acknowledges the role the sector has in reversing the decline in biodiversity, tackling the climate crisis and supporting a green recovery from Covid-19. It reflects existing national strategies (eg England Tree Strategy), and will support the industry and the creation of jobs as well as maximise the contribution woodlands and forestry can make to improve the natural environment. It also outlines how research will be monitored and communicated.

### **Design for a circular economy**

Poorly-made and hard-to-recycle electronics could flood the UK market after Brexit, resulting in an e-waste mountain, unless ministers act now to protect standards, according to a [new report from Green Alliance](#). It reveals that the UK generates the second-highest amount of e-waste per person annually in Europe, with only Norway faring worse. This presents a problem for the low-carbon transition and for the economy, as well as a resource challenge, with 800,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually attributable to the manufacture and disposal of the UK's e-waste. Green Alliance argues that the issue could be tackled with stricter standards on durability, repairability and upgradeability for manufacturers, and with measures to stimulate the recycling, repair and resale market. While the UK Government has promised to “match or where economically practicable exceed the ambition of the EU's Ecodesign standards”, specific, legally-binding provisions remain thin on the ground.

### **Events**

#### **No Going Back: In Conversation with the North West's Metro Mayors**

VSNW's final Festival of NW Thinking event, 4.15 to 5.15, Wednesday 9th December, is a [conversation with the two Metro Mayors in the North West](#), Andy Burnham in Greater Manchester and Steve Rotherham in the Liverpool City Region, asking them to expand on their vision for “Building Back Better” and detail the role they see the voluntary sector playing in this. The event will begin with presentations from both Steve and Andy, before opening the floor to questions and discussion from attendees. It is intended for colleagues at VCSE sector organisations from across the North West, not just the City Regions. The pandemic has shown that the influence of the Metro Mayors extends beyond their sub-regions, and what they say and do has both regional and national importance. If you have any queries, please email: [info@vsnw.org.uk](mailto:info@vsnw.org.uk)

### **Resources**

#### **Ecological Footprint**

The new national [ecological footprint and biocapacity accounts](#) are now available, allowing you to track a country's ecological footprint over time and compare between countries. You can also calculate your own footprint in a few minutes.

#### **Green targets**

In an era of ever-escalating targets, green and otherwise, BBC Reality Check analyses [whether the Government actually meets the environmental targets](#) that it sets.

#### **Charity Trustees' Guides**

The Charity Commission, the charity regulator for England and Wales, has launched a new set of simple, easy to understand guides, designed to help trustees run their charities in line with the law. The new guides cover five key aspects of charity management: financial oversight, achieving a charity's purposes, good decision making, addressing conflicts of interest, what to file with the Commission, and what support is available. This 'gateway' level guidance will make it easier and quicker for all trustees to check what is expected and to find more detailed information if needed.

### **Encouraging landowners to take green action**

Landowners have a critical role to play in the recovery of the environment. Poor take-up of incentives and schemes open to landowners to help them to deliver positive nature-based changes suggests that complexities around the incentives are a roadblock. Further, some landowners do not want to commit before the government provides clarity on the environment bill and the environmental land management scheme. [A Business Case for Cultivating Natural Capital](#) seeks to address these issues. It outlines the business and environmental case for natural assets and the opportunities available to landowners. It also includes advice on the steps they can take now to deliver lasting gains for the environment through their estate. Examples for where multiple schemes can be leveraged at the same time are identified to generate the greatest benefit for local wildlife and plants and the greatest financial reward for the landowner.

### **Mersey Green Map**

The [Mersey Green Map](#) is a new interactive resource that will show the description, location and contact details of green organisations and businesses in the Liverpool City Region. You can add your organisation to the map or see what's already out there.

### **Measuring what matters: Planning outcomes research**

The RTPI has published an innovative way to measure and demonstrate the value of planning and how it helps to create sustainable and successful places. [Measuring What Matters: Planning Outcomes Research](#), has been designed to look beyond simple measurements – such as the speed at which applications are processed or the number of houses built – and to introduce a more holistic approach. It comprises a report and a series of toolkits that can be adapted by local planning authorities, and seeks to enable planners and those who engage with them to monitor, evaluate and even repurpose planning in the public interest.

### **Consultations**

Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Strategy

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority are [consulting on its emerging Spatial Development Strategy](#). This second stage of the consultation will concentrate on people's specific ideas for the SDS across five key areas: climate change and the environment; health and wellbeing; inclusive economic growth; placemaking and communities; and social value. The consultation will also ask for suggestions in certain policy areas, including air quality, active travel and employment skills. After receiving responses, the combined authority will review the feedback and take them into consideration together with formal evidence as it compiles the strategy. A draft of the SDS will then be presented to the combined authority, followed by a 13-week consultation when the public will be able to comment on specific policies.

### **Aviation noise**

The Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise (ICCAN) is considering what aviation noise management might look post COVID-19 pandemic. ICCAN wants noise to be a priority in aviation, considered alongside the need to tackle climate change and reduce emissions. Access its emerging [view on the future of aviation noise management](#), for which it is inviting councils, residents and wider stakeholders for comments. The survey will close at 5pm on Friday 18 December 2020.

To subscribe or contribute

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