



● Green Bullet

26th November 2015

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](http://www.vsnw.org.uk) website.

CPRE North West have kindly agreed to continue their support to enable the Green Bullet to be produced throughout 2015 – very many thanks!

CONTENTS

- Campaigns – Climate change, Big Pathwatch, soil, Giving Tuesday
- Information update – Planning, energy, Autumn Statement
- Publications – 5th carbon budget, Set Up to Fail, coastal change, green bridges
- Resources – Decoupling growth and carbon, health & the natural environment, natural capital critique
- Consultations – fracking in protected areas, climate change in Greater Manchester, National Infrastructure Commission
- Funding – Pocket parks, capacity building growth fund, urban shops, European funding

Campaigns

Climate change

If you don't already have tickets for Paris or London for the biggest ever mobilization on climate change this weekend in advance of the [December climate change summit](#), you're probably not going. But don't despair! There's still time to find a [climate change march, action or event near you](#) – there are dozens across the country and at least 13 in the North West. In fact as some of the [demonstrations in Paris have been banned](#) following the recent terrorist attacks, making your voice heard at home may be better!

- **GREEN BULLET**

Big Pathwatch

Join [The Ramblers most ambitious campaign ever](#) to protect and improve our glorious paths in England and Wales. Taking part is a walk in the park – or the hills, the countryside or the woods. And wherever you walk, use their handy new app to tell them what you find. It could be a wonky bridge or a locked gate, a flooded path or fallen tree. They'll then try to fix the problems that you find. They'll also celebrate the wonderful things you see - like beautiful views and amazing wildlife. And together we'll keep our paths open for everyone to enjoy.

World Soil Day

Soils have been neglected for too long. We fail to connect soil with our food, water, climate, biodiversity and life. Soil is the basis for food, feed, fuel and fibre production and for services to ecosystems and human well-being. It is the reservoir for at least a quarter of global biodiversity, and therefore requires the same attention as above-ground biodiversity. Soils play a key role in the supply of clean water and resilience to floods and droughts. The largest store of terrestrial carbon is in the soil, and its preservation will contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation. The maintenance or enhancement of global soil resources is essential if humanity's need for food, water, and energy security is to be met. The [World Soil Day campaign](#) aims to connect people with soils and raise awareness on their critical importance in our lives.

Get Involved!

Did you know it's #GivingTuesday on 1st December? #GivingTuesday is a great chance to highlight fundraising drives, appeal for volunteers, or launch an appeal and share in national (and international) coverage. [Get Involved!](#)

Information update

Planning

The government has [clarified its proposals](#) for an element of housing to be allowed in applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects: no more than 500 houses, either within a mile of the project or 'functionally linked' e.g. workers homes in a nearby town. The House of Commons Library has published a [briefing paper on the Housing and Planning Bill](#) to make some of that technical stuff slightly more understandable and provides lots of background information. After three years, the Neighbourhood Planning Knowledge Hub website closed on Wednesday 4th November, but many of the most useful bits have been transferred over to the [My Community website](#). The new Liverpool City Region [devolution deal](#) has secured [powers over strategic planning and transport](#) for the new Combined Authority and City Region mayor. However, these powers are, according to the document, intended to "accelerate economic growth and new housing development", with reference to the environment limited to generating tidal energy from the Mersey.

Energy

Greg Clark has [turned down another Cumbrian wind application](#) and [two more](#) for single turbines in Leicestershire for not meeting his new stringent standards, as well as [a solar farm in Surrey](#). After some public commotion about [government renewable energy targets and policies](#), Amber Rudd announced that all coal energy generation will (probably) be phased out by 2025, but this is largely intended to be replaced by gas. The government have [axed their £1 billion fund to develop carbon capture and storage](#) technology. CPRE Lancashire has produced a ['top tips' document](#) for responding to fracking applications based on their experience with the Cuadrilla applications.

Autumn Statement

George Osborne announced [further cuts to the DECC and DEFRA and CLG budgets](#) in the [Autumn Statement](#), and confirmed support for shale gas and nuclear energy whilst cutting support for renewables. He also announced plans to [relax restrictions on developing brownfield sites in the Green Belt](#). While [protecting funding for National Parks, AONBs and the forestry estate](#) and for flood defences may be welcomed, it does suggest that cuts will fall disproportionately on Natural England and the (non-flood defence bits of the) Environment Agency, with consequences for the vital work they do. [Transport funding](#) continues to be focused on big capital (mostly road) projects.

Publications

5th carbon budget for the UK

The Committee on Climate Change has published its [recommendations for the UK's 5th carbon budget](#), suggesting an emissions reduction target of 57% by 2028-2032. However, campaigners and [commentators have criticised](#) the recommendation for not being sufficiently ambitious, and pointed out conflicts between the recommendations and the Autumn Statement and other recent government policy decisions and announcements.

Set up to fail!

A new report from CPRE, [Set up to fail](#), calls for an overhaul of the way local authorities set housing targets in order to stop countryside being lost unnecessarily. Based on extensive new research by [Housing Vision and Tibbalds](#) planning consultants, they find that the methodologies used to decide housing targets vastly overstate 'need' and result in ever higher housing targets and the consequent, unnecessary release of countryside for development – without resulting in an increase in overall housebuilding. Among a large number of problems with how the targets are calculated, the research found a lack of clear guidance in the process, a lack of objectivity in the calculations, and a lack of concern for land availability and environmental impacts. The research demonstrates that the unrealistic targets are putting undue pressure on the countryside. Setting targets far higher than what can be realistically built just means that developers have more sites to choose from: as static building rates show, higher targets do not mean faster delivery. The disastrous consequence is that when these unrealistic targets are not met, councils have to identify even more sites for housing, and ever more countryside is released for more lucrative development while brownfield sites go unused.

Coastal change

A repeat of [one of the biggest mapping projects](#) of the 20th century has revealed that the built-up areas of the English, Welsh and Northern Irish coasts has increased by 42 per cent over the last 50 years. Over 17,500 hectares more of the coast is “urbanised”, equivalent to the area of Manchester. That is one of the key findings of an initiative undertaken by the National Trust which has updated an original survey carried out in 1965 as part of its Neptune Campaign. That was the first time the impact of development on the coastline was assessed methodically. The new mapping report, which compares the two surveys, showed that nearly three quarters of the coast of England, Wales and Northern Ireland remains undeveloped, providing an important resource for people and nature. They are also calling for the government and agencies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to [act now to ensure the coast is ready](#) for the enormous challenges presented by severe storms and rising sea levels based on the evidence in their new [Shifting Shores](#) report.

Green bridges: safer travel for wildlife

A report by Natural England finds that bridges built across roads and railways to allow wildlife movement can stop species from becoming isolated and reduce the number of traffic

• GREEN BULLET

accidents. Known as [green bridges](#), landscape bridges or wildlife overpasses, they are usually planted with a variety of local trees or shrubs and other vegetation. They allow birds, mammals and insects to keep moving despite a road or railway blocking their path.

Resources

Decoupling growth and carbon emissions

A clear, simple and thoughtful analysis of the debate and recent evidence for and against the scope for [decoupling economic growth from carbon emissions](#), plus local implications, focused on Manchester but transferable elsewhere, from Steady State Manchester. George Monbiot also addresses the subject in [The Guardian](#), relying on a new paper from the proceedings from the (USA) [National Academy of Sciences](#).

Health and the natural environment

The Chief Medical Officers of Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland have highlighted the link between physical activity and health. Natural outdoor spaces provide unique and cost-effective ways of dealing with the declining levels of physical activity throughout the UK, as well as the UK's mental health challenge. Action to make more of the connection between improved access to the natural outdoors and health is an important aspect of the [ecosystem approach](#) that is being advocated by government throughout the UK. The Ecosystem Knowledge Network has gathered [a wide range of resources](#) – information, guidance, evidence, good practice, examples of partnerships and collaborations

Natural capital critique

After two items on natural capital initiatives last month, it seemed only fair to draw attention to these [two blogs](#) by Miles King that raise some of the criticisms of the approach as well as reports of [protests at the World Natural Capital Forum](#) in Edinburgh.

Consultations

Fracking in protected areas

The government is consulting on regulations around [fracking in, under and around protected areas](#) such as SSSIs and National Parks. They are currently 'minded' to allow fracking underneath such areas but not to allow drilling rigs on their surfaces. However, their minds have already changed twice on this issue, so best let them know what you think! Closing date: 16th December.

Climate change in Greater Manchester

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is consulting on a [climate change plan to 2020](#). The wide-ranging plan covers buildings, energy, the natural environment, transport and our everyday patterns of consumption and production of goods, and is open until December 11th. Steady State Manchester have prepared a [briefing](#) on the consultation: they claim that despite its ambitious headline target, it uses a lot of print to celebrate the minimal action to date, is very short on the kind of detail you might expect from a strategy worthy of the name, and makes some rather optimistic assumptions about some of its proposed interventions.

National Infrastructure Commission

The new National Infrastructure Commission has launched a [call for evidence](#) on its three priorities, which include Northern connectivity and energy. If we don't get sustainability embedded as a central tenet at this stage, it won't happen. Respond by 8th January 2016.

Funding

Pocket parks – act now!

On 7th November the government [launched](#) a £1.5 million programme of support for communities to establish pocket parks in urban areas. The [prospectus](#) invites communities, with the support of their local authority, to make an application for up to £10,000 capital and up to £5,000 resource funding per project. The application form and frequently asked questions can be [found here](#). The deadline for applications is 5pm on Thursday 10th December. Any questions please contact pocketparks@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Access - Growth Fund

Access, The Foundation for Social Investment, will fund a [10 year grant based programme of capacity building and support](#) to charities and social enterprises looking to engage in social investment. The Growth Fund is now open for expressions of interest. It is designed to provide the finance that charities and social enterprises need when they are at early stages of growth or diversifying their business models. The fund is aimed at organisations which will probably not have taken on social investment before. The finance will be small, flexible, and affordable and will be available in simple products. The finance will enable organisations to create more social impact.

Our Urban Shop

[Our Urban Shop](#) is a unique pilot project that aims to help urban communities in the UK overcome the issues of buying good food locally and enable them to access the support and resources available for rural communities to set up community-owned shops. The application process for Our Urban Shop grant funding is now open. The grant is worth between £20,000 and £30,000 and is open to all urban communities in the UK.

European funding

For those of you with a labyrinthine turn of mind and almost infinite patience in the never-ending quest for funding, all information on the 2014 to 2020 ESIF Programme - including funding opportunities, application and management information and guidance - is now available via [one site](#).

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