



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month we are:

- looking into our crystal ball as we welcome delegates to the UK National Parks conference and ask speakers **what challenges lie ahead for our country's National Parks.**
- asking **what do a wooden bridge at an outdoor learning site, a Hilaire Belloc book, an attempt to make authentic Roman shoes and a community shop have in common?** Hint – read this if you have a community project in need of funding.
- getting spooked for Halloween as **author of 'How to train your dragons' Cressida Cowell tells how the South Downs inspired her** new book.

Send your comments and ideas to us at newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

WHAT FUTURE FOR NATIONAL PARKS?

This October representatives from all 15 of the UK's national parks, delegates from other countryside organisations and a wide range of national and international experts will meet in the South Downs for the biennial UK National Parks conference. As they consider how best to secure these precious landscapes for future generations, we asked our speakers what they think are the biggest challenges ahead for our national parks and what UK national parks need to be doing now.

The farmer

William Wolmer

William is the fifth generation of his family to manage Blackmoor Estate in Hampshire; a fruit and arable farm and diversified estate. Before this he worked for ten years as an academic researching smallholder agriculture and conservation in the developing world.



William also chairs the South Downs Land Managers Group and the Selborne Landscape Partnership, a cluster of farmers and land managers who are co-ordinating their agri-environmental management over a 4000 ha area enabling them to deliver conservation on a landscape scale.



The challenge for the future:

"Devising and securing new countryside stewardship arrangements or ecosystem services systems for national parks that will sustain the vitality of the types of land management that are themselves vital to the landscapes of national parks."

Name one thing that national parks need to do:

"Put boots on the ground. National parks need a well-funded ranger service with a visible presence on the ground and the ability for the rangers themselves to provide small grants and match-funding for land managers, and organise volunteers, to enable projects that might otherwise never get off the ground."

The international view

Frank Dean, President & CEO of Yosemite Conservancy

Frank's passion for the outdoors and conservation was inspired by a college trip to Yosemite. After four decades working with the US National Park Service he came full circle, becoming president and CEO for Yosemite Conservancy an organisation which fundraises to provide grants and support for the National Park.

**The challenge for the future:**

"It is important that local communities and visitors continue to value the parks, but they also need to value park values. While the natural landscape is the inspiration for the national parks, it is the people that provide both the greatest strength and challenge for the parks future."

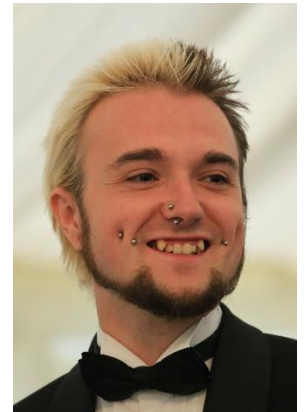
Name one thing that national parks need to do:

"Preserving the appeal of the parks and communities and the quality of the visitor experience is key. Continue to embrace opportunities to remain relevant with your communities and new audiences to ensure long term support."

The champion for youth engagement

Adam Philip-Phillips

Our youngest speaker Adam left school at 18 and at 19 got involved with Mosaic – a scheme to empower young people aged 16-25 to become champions for national parks. Having discovered a talent for leadership through Mosaic he went on to study at the University of Cumbria, researching youth engagement and social enterprise.

**The challenge for the future:**

"I believe the biggest challenge facing National Parks in the next two decades is proactively engaging young people and new volunteers, because volunteers are a major part of the national parks – without new volunteers coming in operations might not run normally."

Name one thing that national parks need to do:

"Is there space to collaborate with other organisations who are more tech savvy? The pace that technology is advancing can be scary, and if the national parks don't invest and embrace new technology then they could potentially be left behind other volunteer-based organisations."

The economist

Ian J. Bateman OBE, FRSA, FRSB

Ian is Professor of Environmental Economics and Director of the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy Institute (LEEP) at the University of Exeter; he is a Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit award winner; and is a Member of the H.M. Treasury and UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Natural Capital Committee. His main research interest is ensuring sustainable wellbeing through the integration of natural and social science knowledge regarding the natural environment and related economic activity and his skills include the valuation of non-market benefits and costs.





DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?

Memories of holidays visiting her grandmother in the South Downs have helped to shape Cressida Cowell's new book 'The Wizards of Once'. With Halloween around the corner it seemed like a good time to ask the 'How to train your dragon' author about the magic of our landscapes.

Words by Cressida Cowell

It is easy to forget how recently people truly believed in magic. For thousands of years, witches and fairies and giants and sprites were as real to people as the laws of physics are to us now. And although we have grown up in an age of science, the stories are still all around us, hardwired into our psyche by tales told to our grandparents and great-grandparents, and in the landscape we played in as children.

The earthworks and hill forts around where I spent my holidays are so extraordinary you could see why previous generations may have felt that the land was moved by giants, that the barrows were their graves, and the chalk horses were illustrations drawn by gigantic hands.

There was a hill I used to play on called Levin Down, which means 'Leave it Alone Hill'. For centuries this land had been un-cultivated, probably because it was too steep to be ploughed, and it had given the hill an extraordinary feeling. Juniper grew there, unusually for the south of England. The trees had blown there, by chance, rather than human hand, and many were yew, a dark presence we were warned not to touch because it was deadly poisonous.

I thought I knew the real reason the hill was called 'Leave it Alone'

It was because of the Magic.

It was easy to believe that this hill had an enchantment about it. Intriguing, eerie, exciting, and beautiful all at the same time.

The hill was covered with these strange grassy mounds, about the size of molehills. The adults had no idea what they were, and that is always exciting to a

The challenge for the future:

"Allowing National Parks to become thought of as an elitist pursuit for the few threatens them with the same uncertain fate as arts funding. Demonstrating both the existing and future benefits they can provide throughout society will secure their future. The Parks need to connect with people across the country so that they appreciate the value for money which national parks provide and the benefits of not just maintaining but of extending their operations and remit."

Name one thing that national parks need to do:

"National Park leaders need to understand the diversity of values, benefits and potential costs which alternative investment and management options can provide to those within and beyond national park boundaries. This will allow the Parks to lead the way on delivering social wellbeing. Advances in data availability, research and new ways of connecting with people are creating opportunities to improving decision making. National Parks need to take advantage of these opportunities to demonstrate these many benefits such as: supporting wellbeing, provision of open access, conservation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, high quality water supplies, flood risk reduction, sustainable food production and supporting sustainable business and employment.

We're looking forward to an inspiring time.

Thank you to the sponsors of the National Park UK Conference 2017: **Goodwood Estate, Natural Resource Wales, Northern Power Grid, Elite Telecom, Tarmac**



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child. So I filled in the blanks for myself, and decided they must be burial mounds for fairies.

Peoples of the past would have agreed with me. It is no wonder that there are so many legends of giants, Gill and Bevis, and the Wilmington giant who had a fight with another giant, and lost. For the sheer gargantuan size of the hill forts and earthworks of the South Downs must have struck our ancestors as requiring such an extraordinary endeavour that the land must have been moved by beings of supernatural size and strength.

Similarly, fairies were said to dance on Torberry Hill, formed out of a spoon flung by the Devil. This was the landscape which inspired my new book, 'The Wizards of Once', set in an Iron Age where giants really did stride through the wildwoods of Albion, and where my girl and boy heroes from opposing Wizard and Warrior Tribes ride on enormous snowcats and have their own gigantic philosopher-giant, and a band of sprites and hairy fairies that follow them everywhere.

Watch Cressida Cowell speak to the BBC about the magic of the South Downs
www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/entertainment-arts-41292488/dragon-s-cressida-cowell-reveals-a-new-world-of-magic

Magic & Myth: Five places to get scared in the South Downs this Halloween

- With the remains of Bronze and Iron Age forts, a Roman temple and its distinctive ring of beech trees, **Chanctonbury Ring** is said to be the most haunted site in the South Downs. Stories vary but walking seven times around the ring might summon up the devil, a druid, a lady on a white horse or Julius Caesar and his army.
- Who lies beneath **Kingley Vale**? Tales of hauntings in the dark and silent grove of ancient yews will come as no surprise to those who know this spot. But are the ghosts marauding Viking warriors, left to rot until the trees grew over their bodies, or do the gnarled trees take human form by moonlight?
- Stories suggest that the South Downs hills are filled with magical riches. The Golden Calf on the **Trundle** was claimed to have been made by Aaron whilst Moses was on Mount Sinai. The Devil guards



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this prize jealously, keeping it well hidden from any treasure hunters.

- One local legend claims that the Long Man is a memorial outlining the figure of a giant from Windover Hill who fell and broke his neck. Another talks of a fight between the **Long Man of Wilmington** and another giant from Firle Beacon, which ended in the death of the tallest man to have ever lived in England.
- The story tells that the Devil was enraged by the Christian conversion of pagan Sussex and swore to split the Downs in one night and let the sea in to drown the Christian folk and their churches. His furious digging created **Devil's Dyke** and sent clods of earth flying in all directions to form Chanctonbury, Cissbury, Rackham Hill and Mount Caburn. But he was foiled by an old woman who lit a lamp at her window – tricking him into thinking that the Sun was rising.



FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS

What do a wooden bridge over a chalk stream, an attempt to make authentic Roman shoes, a Hilaire Belloc novel, and a community shop have in common? They're all part of projects supported by the South Downs National Park Authority's Sustainable Community Fund (SCF).

If you have a project in the National Park. If you need funding. If your project will bring social, environmental, economic or cultural benefits to your community. You should definitely call the SCF team.

Here are just four that we've supported this year:



A shop for Fittleworth

There are lots of benefits of village life but not having a local store can be a pain – and is particularly difficult if you don't have access to your own transport. In 2016 the people of Fittleworth responded enthusiastically to a parish survey asking whether the village needed a shop which could also act as a social hub. With planning permission in place, formal approval from the Charity Commission, £41,500 raised through the sale of community shares, £10,000 of support from the Sustainable Communities Fund and more fundraising events planned they hope to have the store up and open by summer 2018.



Botany Bay: a tiny chalk valley with huge potential for wildlife and education

A new bridge for Botany Bay

Botany Bay is a tiny chalk valley near Duncton in West Sussex owned by four sisters. In 2014 they decided to restore the site, once home to a trout farm, setting up a Community Interest Group to manage it as a nature reserve and help open it up for local schools.

It took five skips to remove the pipes, corrugated iron and other rubbish from the 10-acre site, followed by clearing invasive bamboo and cherry laurel. But after a lot of hard work – including support from National Park rangers and the trusty South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service – the chalk stream is running clear, ancient woodland is recovering, local school children are able to come pond-dipping and thriving river-fly populations reflect improving water quality. The native brown trout population is growing and the site has

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recently been shortlisted for a Wild Trout Trust conservation award.

This winter, thanks to £10,000 from the SDNPA's Sustainable Community Fund, they will be replacing an old, unsafe bridge and building a new outdoor learning shelter to help open the site up to local primary schools and, in the longer-term, adult courses.



Quite a production

"A fascinating piece of entertainment... a hymn of praise to Sussex and its countryside," is how the Argus newspaper reviewed Conn Artist Theatre Company's production of 'The Four Men'.

Adapted from Hilaire Belloc's book by Sussex Writer Ann Felay the play is currently on tour visiting Worthing, Midhurst, Hastings, Spalding, Bordon, Reading, Lyme Regis, Havant, Eastbourne, Horsham and Bungay. £2,000 support from the Sustainable Communities Fund was given on condition that a schools resource pack be created and available for teachers on the South Downs Learning Zone.

The National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund issues grants from £250 to £10,000 and up to 50% of project costs. Find out more and how to apply at www.southdowns.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-fund/

Find out more about the Fittleworth shop fittleworth-pc.org.uk/fittleworth-community-shop/ and follow them on Facebook [@fittleworthstores](https://www.facebook.com/fittleworthstores)

Follow Conn Artists Theatre Company on Facebook at [@connartists theatrecompany](https://www.facebook.com/connartists theatrecompany)

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Words by Russell Cleaver

Top of the list, unsurprisingly, is scrub bashing, a long-time favourite for volunteers which covers a variety of jobs from weeding to felling trees. We carry out a lot of path works, improving access for the many walkers, cyclists and horse riders – this could be installing easy-access gates or clearing overgrown paths. Right across the National Park we are also involved in a broad range of surveys including butterfly, bird or flower counts and access surveys.

Of the more occasional tasks undertaken we help maintain flint walls, repair dew ponds, make owl boxes, lay hedges, plant cowslips or split stakes. Although some, no doubt, have been cursing over more unpleasant jobs, like pulling out invasive balsam and ragwort, or even picking up litter. But who said volunteering was easy?

Although we can select which tasks to work, most volunteers turn up regularly to pursue whatever task is provided. So, our quick answer to “what do volunteers actually do?” is – we have fun.

Find volunteering opportunities in the South Downs National Park www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/volunteering/



WHAT DO VOLUNTEER RANGERS DO?

Russell Cleaver, who gives his time as a South Downs Volunteer Ranger in the western end of the National Park, answers a question often asked by friends or even strangers.

FIVE THINGS TO DO IN THE SOUTH DOWNS THIS MONTH

Find these & more events across the National Park and submit your own events at southdowns.gov.uk/events/



- Watch Conn Artists Theatre Company perform The Four Men By Hilaire Belloc
- See the stars at RSPB Pulborough Brooks
- Learn to decorate a cake like Cressida Bell
- Celebrate Samhain like the pagans at Butser Ancient Farm
- Get spooked at West Dean for Halloween

MOST ASKED...

Send us your questions about a particular area of work in the National Park.

Answering this month is: **Margaret Paren, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority**



WHAT'S INVOLVED IN BEING CHAIR OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK?

The role broadly divides into two parts. First, I am an ambassador for the Authority and the National Park and that involves me in meeting with a whole range of interesting and influential people and organisations. Secondly, as Chair of the Board I lead the 27 Members in setting the Authorities policies, budgets and strategic direction as well as supporting and challenging the Authority's executive officers to ensure that we reach robust, evidence-based decisions that positively enhance the National Park. It is a busy life!

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE PROGRESS THAT THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY HAS MADE?

I spent 10 years campaigning for the National Park and we have greatly exceeded all the expectations we had at that time. The list is too long to cover here but designation as an international Dark Night Skies Reserve, our ground-breaking work on Neighbourhood Planning, the innovative approach of our draft Local Plan, the launch of Heathlands Reunited, the rapid

expansion of the shared identity and the runaway success of southdownsfood.org are all landmark achievements. And we can promise many more to come!

DO YOU, PERSONALLY, THINK THAT THERE SHOULD BE ELECTIONS TO CHOOSE ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY?

No. Three quarters of our Members are elected county, district, borough, unitary or parish councillors. The remaining seven are appointed by the Secretary of State to represent the national interest after a rigorous, national selection process.

The last Labour government and the Coalition both reviewed the process for appointments to NPAs and considered in depth the issue of direct elections but the Coalition's pilot proved unworkable. I think they were wise not to pursue the idea though I appreciate others may feel differently!

Read more of Margaret's answers

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/most-asked-margaret-paren-chair-of-the-sdnpa/>

NEXT MONTH:

What is a Local Plan? Why does the National Park need one? Send your questions for Matthew Bates, Local Plan Lead to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk



YOU SAY: FOOTPATHS

Do you have a story you want to tell about the National Park? A burning issue that you think needs to be addressed? Please let us know.



Maria Funnel from Amberley says:

I am writing to you regarding my concerns with visibility on part of the South Downs Way. It is extremely dangerous trying to cross the B2139 at Amberley due to poor visibility by overgrown vegetation. This is a popular route for cyclists and walkers along with numerous Charity run events. The traffic cannot see if someone is trying to cross and you have to peer into their line of vision to see if it is safe to cross. With traffic often going faster than the 40mph speed limit and large lorries using this road it is an accident waiting to happen. Surely the South Downs National Park should provide a safe environment for people using the South Downs Way where it crosses roads?

There are other footpaths within the National Park which are also so overgrown they are impassable during the summer months. Are we not meant to promote the Park as a well kept, pleasant place for tourists and locals to enjoy?

Please can something be done, I appreciate budgets are tight.

To submit a comment for our newsletter please email newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk. For a fast and direct response to your questions please email info@southdowns.gov.uk

Please note that only contributors who submit their full name and address can be considered for publication though we will not publish your full address. Please make it clear whether you are speaking on your own behalf or that of an organisation you represent. We reserve the right to shorten comments and edit where necessary.

Andy Gattiker leads on the South Downs Way National Trail and Rights of Way for the South Downs National Park Authority

We're responsible for maintaining the South Downs Way – which we do to a very high standard – but when the National Park was created our local Highways Authorities chose to take back responsibility for maintaining all other footpaths and we would like to see these paths maintained to higher standards. We speak to the Highways Authorities regularly and our volunteers do give some time and support where possible. It may be that we can find a more proactive role for the SDNPA in the future. In the meantime we are developing our long-term plan to develop a strategic network of shared-use paths along disused railway lines across the National Park.

With regards to the SDW crossing of the B2139 at Amberley, we are currently in discussions with West Sussex County Council highways department about potential improvements to that very crossing. The details are still being discussed but this could include additional road markings and cutting back some of the hedges to increase the visibility.

ON THE GROUND

Don't forget to say hello if you spot our rangers and volunteers out working in the National Park. Here's a taste of what they achieved in September 2017.

- **Talked to 250 year 6-7 pupils** at Avington and Bereleigh Estate about how farmers make room for rough grass strips and associated wildlife.
- Continued **open access land surveys for sites** across the western downs and at Bevendean near Brighton.
- Carried out **seed harvesting at a local chalk grassland site then spread the cowslip, yellow rattle and scabious seed** at a nearby site which we are managing with the landowner.
- Completed the **cut and collect at Kithurst Meadow** and road banks in partnership with Butterfly Conservation and WSCC.
- **Attended Alresford agricultural show, West Grinstead Ploughing Match, Laughton Ploughing Match, Findon Sheep Fair and spent a day on Littlehampton and Brighton seafronts** talking to people about the National Park, our work here, what makes it special, responsible dog walking and how they can get out and enjoy it.
- Led **guided walks for Arundel festival and Steyning food festival**.
- **Led 40 people on two Heart Smart walks** and attended a **disabled ramble event at Kingley Vale**.
- Supported St Roach's day service at the Trundle.
- Carried out a **dormouse box survey at Graffham Down**.
- **Discovered a new population of rare triangle-web spiders** at Kingley Vale.
- **Installed 100m of stock fencing** to facilitate grazing at Steyning Downland.



- Carried out **annual maintenance work at Peppering dew pond SSSI**
- **Replaced two stiles with kissing gates** to improve access at Graffham Down Nature Reserve
- Carried out **scrub clearance at Tower Hill SSSI**.
- **Built 4 metres of flint wall and repaired a further 5 square metres at Stanmer Estate** on a wall originally constructed by Napoleonic prisoners of war.
- **Prepared the ground at Tide Mills** ready for the interpretation panels to be installed as part of a partnership project to interpret the remaining buildings at this important historic site.
- Carried out **two days of hedgerow management** at Folkington Estate.
- **Installed all-weather leaflet dispensers** for the Roedean Residents Association - to promote responsible dog walking through our Take the Lead campaign and promote Rights of Way ambassadors for Brighton & Hove City Council.
- Completed assessment and **provided data to Historic England for all 28 'At Risk' and 'Vulnerable' Scheduled Monuments** in the eastern downs.
- **Coppiced blackthorn for the brown hairstreak butterfly** at Pheasant's Field Local Wildlife Site.

southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground



SOUTH DOWNS GETS 8TH DARK SKY DISCOVERY SITE

As one of the UK's four International Dark Sky Reserves we're proud to welcome our latest Dark Sky Discover Site.

Dark Sky Discovery Sites (DSDs) are areas with good quality dark skies, accessible and open to the public and provide excellent opportunities for people to star gaze. The National Trust's Bignor Hill car park, just next to the South Downs Way, has recently been approved as the 8th DSD site in the National Park. Bignor Hill has been classified as an "Orion class" because you are able to see seven of Orion's main stars with the naked eye.

For more information about where to find other DSD sites, visit darkskydiscovery.org.uk



LAST CHANCE TO WIN £250 IN OUR PHOTO COMPETITION

Can you impress our judges – including Steve Watkins, editor of Outdoor Photography Magazine; and professional photographers Finn Hopson and Rachael Talibart – to take **first prize of £250**?

The South Downs photo competition closes on 20 October.

Find the entry form and terms and conditions at www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/have-your-say/enter-our-photo-competition-2017-18/



LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION CONTINUES

People have until 21 November to submit their comments on the first Local Plan for the South Downs National Park. The plan will replace more than 1000 policies from 12 different local authorities with just 96 new policies covering the whole of the National Park from Winchester to Eastbourne.

Find out more and submit your comments southdowns.gov.uk/localplan



GET OUR NEWS BY EMAIL TO WIN PRIZES

Get this newsletter delivered directly to your phone or tablet. Every month between now until February we'll be drawing one name from our main list of subscribers to win a prize to help you enjoy the National Park even more.

Find out more and sign up at southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/