



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

Welcome to the newsletter for the South Downs.

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

FINAL CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR SAY ON LOCAL PLAN FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

Next spring we will submit the first ever Local Plan for the South Downs National Park to the Government – setting out planning policies across the whole of the National Park, how land is used and what can be built where. But first we need to have one final full public consultation.

If you're not familiar with planning you may never have heard of local plans, but they have the power to make a big difference to the world around you. This is particularly the case for the South Downs where development needs to be properly managed in order to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage for which the National Park was designated seven years ago.

During those seven years our planners – both within the National Park Authority and working under delegated authority in other local authorities – have been using more than a thousand policies from the 12 local planning authorities responsible for managing development before 2011. The draft Local Plan will replace these with just 96 policies, consistent across the whole National Park from the edge of Eastbourne to Winchester.



It has taken some years to get to this point. Firstly because work on the Local Plan needed to be informed by evidence gathered for the State of the Park Report (published in November 2012), the policies developed for the Partnership Management Plan (published in January 2014) and Joint Core Strategies prepared in partnership with Lewes, East Hants and Winchester.

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Then, as with any local plan, our Local Plan for the National Park had to go through a number of drafts, each being tested along the way by more research, evidence and public consultation. In September 2015 we asked people to let us know what they thought of our preferred options for the plan – 400 individuals and organisations responded – and more than 2,600 individual comments were fed back into the plan we have today. We have also ensured neighbourhood plans, plans led by local communities, have guided our thoughts and the plans proposals.

This is the first Local Plan to cover the entire South Downs National Park and we have said from the start that it must put these nationally important landscapes first – they are the reason the South Downs became a National Park and they must sit at the heart of every planning decision we make. In developing the plan we have also set out the high standards that all proposed development must meet to protect and value nature – both for its own sake and also for the vital 'eco-system' services it gives us such as clean water, food, wood and space to breathe.

The National Park's landscapes have always depended on people and development – in our farms, market towns and villages – and today is no different. 112,000 people live in the National Park and these communities need access to affordable homes and places to work. Development will happen, our Local Plan must follow the national planning policy framework (NPPF), but we can make sure that it is appropriate. For us putting the landscapes first means making sure we get the right growth in the right places. In support of our Local Plan, 50 Neighbourhood Plans are being or have been developed by South Downs communities, each providing local development management policies and most allocating land for development.

We are very close to the final draft but nothing is set in stone until we submit it to the Government's Planning Inspectorate. The Inspector's role is to test the 'soundness' of our draft plan, whether the duty to co-operate has been met and whether it is legally compliant. Soundness, set out in full in paragraph 182 of the NPPF (link at end of article), looks at whether the plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

This autumn we are asking you to give final comments on the Local Plan. Every comment will be passed to the Government's Planning Inspector who will respond to them as part of their examination into the Local Plan.

We hope to submit our final draft South Downs Local Plan to the Planning Inspector in spring 2018.

The final consultation for the South Downs Local Plan starts on 26 September 2017. Find out more and submit your comments here

bit.ly/SouthDownsLocalPlanConsultation

Read the National Planning Policy Framework

<http://bit.ly/NPPFramework>

Responses to the Local Plan: Preferred Options consultation in September 2015

www.southdowns.gov.uk/responses-to-local-plan-consultation/



Firle Scarp by Finn Hopson

PHOTOGRAPHING THE SOUTH DOWNS

Autumn is a great time to take pictures in the National Park, which is why we run our annual photo competition in September and October. We asked Finn Hopson, talented photographer, gallery owner and Competition Judge about why the South Downs inspire him.

The South Downs probably doesn't top many people's bucket lists of photography locations. As far as UK landscapes go, it's all too easily dismissed in favour of a tranquil lakeland dawn or a snow dusted Scottish peak. But right there on our doorstep, within a few miles of bustling cities, towns and villages, is one of the most exciting, varied and surprising places you can visit with a camera.

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There are the layers upon layers of rolling fields, tumbling all the way to the coast, where some of the country's tallest chalk cliffs plunge into a turquoise sea. Impossible folds of escarpment shimmy their way from east to west, with views across the weald that have inspired artists from Constable to Ravilious. Dropping into the weald leads to another world of heathland, heathers and hangers. Waterways punctuate a warren of ancient pathways, trodden by countless feet over thousands of years. Within the wider views there are the details, from the macro marvels of a wildflower meadow to the fleeting glimpses of the birds and beasts that make this place their home.

Multiplying the value of each of these visual treats is the full smorgasbord of British seasons and weather, from hot and humid summer days, to frozen starlit nights in winter.

Hoar frosts, sea frets, tree bending winds and the occasional dusting of snow, or perfect crisp mornings without a hint of a breeze to disturb a blanket of fog tucked into the weald. And perhaps best of all, this place, the views, the weather, the sounds and the silence, is all completely accessible, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. You can walk there, cycle there, or find a horse and ride it there. You can spend the entire day wandering undisturbed through this photographic wonderland and yet never be more than a few minutes away from an excellent tea room or a brilliant pub.

There is a lifetime of photographic inspiration out there, and it's never been easier to find it, enjoy it, and share it with anyone you find who hasn't realised what an amazing place this really is.

WIN £250 in the South Downs Photo Competition

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

Finn Hopson's Brighton Photography gallery can be found right next to the i360 on Brighton Seafront. Undersong, his current exhibition of South Downs photographs is on until 10 September 2017 www.brightonphotography.com/undersong/



A WORD ABOUT WATER

The famous white chalk of the South Downs hills acts like a giant sponge, soaking up and storing water for 1.2 million people in the south east. The Brighton ChaMP project aims to protect this precious resource. Words by Aimee Felus

The chalk aquifer of the South Downs gives us the water we drink and wash in, and feeds winterbourne streams and local rivers. But, like many aquifers and rivers across the world, it is polluted with nitrates – from fertilisers, manure heaps and road run-off. If nitrate levels rise above 50mg per litre then water no longer meets the

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Drinking Water Standard and can't be supplied to our homes.

The project I work on is called Brighton ChaMP (Chalk Management Partnership) for Water. The South Downs National Park Authority is working together with other organisations to protect the aquifer. Winter is a particularly vulnerable time as bare fields and higher rainfall allow the nitrates in the soil to leach through into the aquifer. We can detect these nitrate spikes at the boreholes which supply our fresh water.

This autumn we'll be trialling a new method for helping to protect our drinking water from pollution, working with two farmers on the Brighton chalk block to see whether cover crops can reduce nitrate leaching through soils and into the aquifer.

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SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY *ambitions set out by the Wiston Estate in their new Whole Estate Plan.*

It's a simple idea. Plant cover crops on otherwise bare winter fields which will take up excess nitrates and use them to grow. These plants will hopefully also provide cover for birds, small mammals and invertebrates, reduce erosion and improve the health of the soil. We're working with a local crop sampling company and a volunteer from the University of Brighton to monitor the success of this approach. Other organisations have seen a reduction in nitrate leaching of up to 59% so we hope ours will perform just as well. In some European member states cover crops are now compulsory in areas where drinking water is particularly vulnerable.

There have been some indications that cover crops can increase slug numbers which would be bad news for water too – more slugs may mean that farmers need to use more pesticides – but there are some reports which suggest that cover crops help to increase numbers of natural slug predators. The jury is out so we hope that our trial will help to provide this much needed evidence. We don't want to see a situation where one type of pollution is swapped for another so we will also be monitoring slug and snail numbers in the trial plots.

The Brighton ChaMP partnership is made up of the South Downs National Park Authority, the Environment Agency, Southern Water, Natural England, University of Brighton, Brighton and Hove City Council and the Living Coast; all striving together to protect the aquifer.

Visit brightonchamp.org.uk for more news about the project



WISTON SETS OUT COMMITMENT TO FUTURE AS PART OF NATIONAL PARK

Plans to create 'tranquility' zones; regenerate a quarry into a sustainable base for tourism; do more to raise people's awareness of their impact on each other and wildlife; create a monastic retreat and travellers' rest; and provide services and space for local businesses are just some of the

The Wiston Estate covers an area of 2,522ha of which 70% is farmland and 20% woodland and is home to 106 households, 11 farms and 22 businesses. Well over half of the estate lies within the South Downs National Park. This is the first time that a large estate in the South Downs National Park has set out a Whole Estate Plan – not just looking at planning but also at farming, woodland management, conservation and access.

The plan, now endorsed by the South Downs National Park Authority, doesn't guarantee planning permission but will be a material consideration in determining planning applications.

"Wiston's Whole Estate Plan sets a high bar which we will encourage other estates, farms and landowners across the National Park to meet."

"We've been impressed by how the Wiston Estate and their consultants Rural Solutions have seized the opportunity to work with us on this progressive approach; their aspirations across the Estate and how they connect; and their commitment to the future of the South Downs National Park," says Tim Slaney, Director of Planning for the South Downs National Park Authority. "Wiston's Whole Estate Plan sets a high bar which we will encourage other estates, farms and landowners across the National Park to meet."

The Wiston Estate is home to the world's longest-running project to monitor how arable farming practices impact flora and fauna – which began on the estate in 1968. More recently they have hosted a successful community project to bring the Duke of Burgundy butterfly back to their hills and the award-winning winery at North Farm provided the wine used by Her Majesty the Queen to launch the ship Britannia.

Wiston Estate managers have been working with Rural Solutions, who provide planning and development support and advice to landowners to help them adapt and develop their estates, on the Whole Estate Plan.

"When the National Park invited landowners to produce a Whole Estate Plan we could see the value that it would bring to the Wiston Estate, particularly given that we are in a period of succession between generations," says Richard Goring, Manager of Wiston Estate. "It was a daunting prospect to put together a plan which worked for both the family, the estate, the community and the National Park Authority. Rural Solutions helped us form a clear strategy and the process has helped us address other issues across the estate. I'm delighted with plan and excited to start delivering against its vision and objectives."

The plan considers major challenges that the estate will have to face in the future including: climate change, rural business adaptation, pressure of development, changes to subsidies following Brexit, pressure from visitors and planning for succession. It is designed to help guide and support funding bids, future neighbourhood plan

production, agri-environment, forestry and clean-water schemes amongst other things.

“We have worked with many clients over the years to produce estate-scale plans but this is the first time that the process has been promoted by a planning authority,” says Rob Hindle, Director at Rural Solutions. “The plan is grounded in sustainability and stewardship and will play a key part in enabling the estate’s plans for projects to enhance environmental quality, improve access and

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY deliver significant social and economic benefits. It really is a notable example and I hope that other authorities will take notice of this approach.”

Read the full version of the plan at www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Wiston-Estate-WEP-2017.pdf

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/



- Take a walk around the Woolbeding Estate
- Join a writing ‘walkshop’ at Saddlescombe Farm
- Go bat hunting with RSPB Pulborough Brooks
- Get to grips with permaculture at the Sustainability Centre
- See how South Downs landscapes have inspired artists at St Hubert’s Church, Idsworth

MOST ASKED...

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

Answering this month is: **Tanya Hibberd, Performance and Research Lead for the South Downs National Park Authority**



WHAT IS A CITIZENS PANEL?

A citizens panel is a group of people recruited and surveyed to gain more understanding about peoples' perceptions. In our case we want to develop a panel of two thousand people living in, or close to, the South Downs to find out how and why they engage with the National Park and whether our work is having an impact on, or benefit to, them.

They may be people who aren't even aware that the South Downs National Park exists. Our plan is to carry out surveys with the panel twice a year but also to invite them to sit on smaller groups to test specific work or projects. We're using a company called ICM Direct to recruit our members and hope to have them all in place by 2 October 2017.

WHY DO YOU NEED ONE?

As the UK's newest National Park (seven years old last March), we want to know how we can best influence

attitudes to, and behaviour towards, the National Park and how these change over time. There are still many people who don't know the National Park exists, don't get out and benefit from it, or may not treat the landscapes with respect – e.g. not picking up dog mess or following the countryside code.

Our citizens panel will help us carry out a rolling research programme to test before and after campaigns and improve the way we do things and should be more robust and cost effective than just carrying out surveys.

WHY NO APOSTROPHE?

I know I'm going to get asked this a lot! It's not a mistake. This is a panel made up of citizens, not a panel belonging to citizens. But spell check is going to hate that.

Read more of Tanya's answers

www.southdowns.gov.uk/most-asked-tanya-hibberd-performance-research-lead/

NEXT MONTH:

Send your questions for Margaret Paren, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk



YOU SAY:

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

To submit a comment for our newsletter please email newsletter@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.

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 August 2017.

- Released **253 water voles into the upper reaches of the River Meon working with five landowners over six sites** – completing their reintroduction from source to sea along the river. Local children joined us to help feed and check the water voles before release. Field sign surveys continue along the river.
- Completed **vegetation management on the Brookwood Tumuli and Circle of Stones** to conserve and increase the biodiversity on these local cultural heritage sites.
- Checked Geocaches as part of the **upkeep of the South Downs Geo Tour**.
- Carried out **final butterfly surveys of the year at two sites near Winchester** – notable spots included brown argus and chalk hill blue. Also at Ringmer.
- Continued **open access land surveys for sites across the National Park** to record condition and location of gates, signs etc. including Long Lythe near Selbourne, a historically important access site due to its association with the pioneering naturalist and ornithologist Gilbert White.
- Assessed Scheduled Monuments At Risk.** Improvements to some mean they were able to change status to 'vulnerable' rather than 'at risk'. Work to restore Devil's Dyke Hillfort Scheduled Monument means that it is now in a good condition with vegetation cleared and raked off.



- Cut bracken from heathland site and **cleared more than ten acres of Himalayan balsam at Hammer Wood** over several visits to tackle regrowth and reduce chance of it returning next year.
- Surveyed Church Copse as part of National Dormouse Monitoring Scheme** to inform management of the woodland and contribute to nationwide survey.
- Set up events van on Brighton, Eastbourne and Seaford seafronts **to talk to people (locals and visitors) about getting out into the National Park and responsible dog walking**.
- Continued to **survey for wartbiter crickets**.
- Carried out **farmland bird surveys** on the downs at Brighton.
- Repaired fencing at local wildlife site** and cut & collected weed species at Truleigh Hill Butterfly Bank

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



PICK OF THE POOCHES

Place your votes now! Our #TakeTheLeadTo winner's gallery is now live and open for votes. Pick your favourite photo of dogs taking the lead in the South Downs National Park.

Over the past five months we've had entries on FaceBook, Twitter and Instagram, from sausage dogs and whippets to Jack Russells and labs – dogs of all shapes and sizes have been taking their owners for walks right across the South Downs.

The top 10 photos are now ready for the public vote so visit our website and pick your favourite! The winner and four runners up will be announced on Friday 15 September – each will receive some yummy Arden Grange dog goodies.

See all the entries and vote now at www.southdowns.gov.uk/vote-for-your-favourite-taketheleadto-photo



PLANNING FOR THE NATIONAL PARK

Want to find out more about what's happening with planning applications and policy in the South Downs National Park? Sign up to receive our planning newsletter three times a year.

Sign up at MailChimp <http://eepurl.com/c1RAR1>



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