



# 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](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## HOUNDS IN THE DOWNS

It is a cold and murky January afternoon in the eastern end of the South Downs National Park and the famous white Seven Sisters cliffs are barely visible through the low cloud. Two young 'media types' from Brighton looking ever-so-slightly out of place are lingering in the car park above Seaford Head.

They spot a likely target and pounce – in a polite and friendly manner appropriate to someone acting on behalf of the South Downs National Park Authority: "Do you walk your dog here often..."

At least that's how we imagine the scenario. Perhaps it's better to ask Dan Evans (creative director at We Are Tilt), directly about the challenge of scouting for dogs, and their owners, to star in the National Park's new series of films encouraging people to be responsible dog owners and 'Take the Lead'.

"That's not exactly how it went," says Dan. "For a start I'm up on the South Downs with my family escaping the city most weekends so we know the area pretty well. Despite the weather, we spent a fantastic couple of days travelling around the South Downs meeting dog walkers.

"Walking your dog here must be pretty good for the soul because everyone we met was lovely, very open and happy to talk about their pets with us."



**"Walking your dog here must be pretty good for the soul because everyone we met was lovely, very open and happy to talk about their pets with us."**

We know that the vast majority of dog owners who use the South Downs are good people who love their animals and wouldn't dream of doing anything to harm the countryside where they enjoy walking together. They bag dog poo and put it in the bin; and keep their furry friends on a lead or under close control around livestock and when birds are nesting on the ground.

Sadly it's the exceptions that do the damage and make the headlines. Recently it has been the turn of Malling Down Nature Reserve in Lewes where a total of ten sheep have been killed in the past few months by dogs allowed to run wild.

In all likelihood the owners of the dogs involved believe their pets are soft and cuddly members of the family who wouldn't hurt a fly. They don't have to clear up

mauled carcasses, deal with traumatised ewes who may abort their unborn lambs through stress or face the financial impacts on their businesses. They may also not even be aware that a farmer has every right to shoot their pet if caught.

The South Downs is also home to many ground-nesting birds – particularly nightjars and any disturbance while the hen is sitting on eggs can end the chances of a successful brood.

It's clear that something needs to be done to persuade this minority to stop giving dogs, and their owners, a bad name. Step forward Take the Lead, the South Downs National Park's annual campaign, now in its fourth year, which promotes dogs and their owners who set a great example in the National Park.

"Research shows that people listen to people who are like them and are more likely to do something if that's what the majority of people do," Becka Saunders, Campaigns and Publications Officer at the South Downs National Park Authority.

"Take the Lead isn't about dictating rules but showing genuine advice from real dog walkers with entertaining but clear messages that make people want to opt in."

For 2017 the campaign will include a series of films entitled 'Canine Confessions'.

"We were inspired by a viral film of an excited dog wearing a GoPro camera running towards the sea," says Dan. "We loved the way its ears flap, and how you can see the world from a dog's point of view, and thought we could take this a step further by hearing what the dogs are actually thinking. We didn't want to portray the dogs too negatively, so we had the idea of making them lovable reformed criminals – giving them a humorous voice in the style of an AA meeting, where they confess their roguish behaviour."

Four canine characters have been developed and filmed, each looking at a real-life issue in different areas of the National Park. The first we'll meet when they launch on 6 March are Candice, a sheepdog who has an issue with ground nesting birds, and Frazzles, a woolly terrier who likes sheep 'just a little too much'. Separate short films will introduce the real dogs and share tips from their owners.

"I've only ever worked with CGI animals previously," continues Dan, "but the dogs all behaved impeccably."

"In real life though 'Frazzles' is actually terrified of sheep following an incident when she was a pup, so it was quite a struggle to make it look like she was gazing longingly at a field of sheep.

"In the end, we resorted to holding a biscuit above her head, and this seemed to do the trick.

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"Take the Lead isn't about dictating rules but showing genuine advice from real dog walkers with entertaining but clear messages that make people want to opt in."

"I've really enjoyed making the films, even though it's made me much more aware of the amount of dog poo still left lying around. But it really does feel like most people just want to do the right thing. I hope these films encourage the others to Take the Lead."

The first two new Take the Lead films will launch online on 6 March 2017.

In the meantime you can enjoy our updated animated Take the Lead film at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/takethelead](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/takethelead)



## THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

On 7 February the Government published their long-awaited White Paper, 'Fixing our Broken Housing Market'. Proposals to mend it include making sure that more land is allocated for homes in areas where people want to live and investing in the planning system to make it more open and accessible.

There are also plans to make it clearer how planning restrictions apply in special areas such as national parks and ancient woodland; an emphasis on the design of new homes; and an aim to diversify the housing market and increase provision of affordable homes.

All of these link directly to our own ambitions for the future of the South Downs National Park, both in terms of our developing Local Plan and our specific ambitions to support more affordable housing.

The South Downs National Park is a living, working landscape. We say this a lot because it's important. 112,000 people have their homes here, many others are employed here and the National Park Authority has

the job of making sure that necessary development – providing people with places to live and work – is appropriate and properly managed.

“The South Downs is the most wooded National Park in England and half of this is ancient woodland so proposals to increase protection for this important habitat could be very significant,” says Margaret Paren, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). “We also welcome the White Paper’s emphasis on brownfield sites, continued recognition of constraints to the amount of development that national parks can accommodate and the importance of making small sites count.”

There is a huge amount of detail to digest and the SDNPA will be making a response to the White Paper consultation in due course.

We are now in the final stages of producing the first Local Plan for the National Park to put good planning in place that puts landscapes first, cares for views and night skies; supports the local economy, promotes recreation; enables affordable local housing; and makes sure that our green spaces are properly valued and cared for.

“Affordability is a big issue in the National Park. Homes here are in high demand and our towns and villages regularly appear in property sections under headlines such as ‘most desirable’, ‘prettiest’, ‘happiest,’” says Tim Slaney, Director of Planning for the South Downs National Park Authority.

“Add in high-income urban households looking to move into the countryside and the need to conserve this wonderful landscape and it’s no surprise that the need for truly affordable housing is only increasing.”

Private developers do not normally build affordable homes off their own back. The large financial risks they take on with a development have to be balanced with their anticipated profits. It’s up to local housing authorities and planning authorities, like the South Downs National Park Authority, to find a way to meet the local community’s need for affordable places to live and the developer’s need to make a reasonable profit.

Low income families in the National Park face a difficult future, often having to move, leaving support and employment networks behind. This destabilises villages, forcing out low income households and starving local services of employees and customers. With many jobs in the National Park being relatively low paid, people can’t afford to live near their work will often have to drive, which is an added expense and increases traffic congestion.

“While the new White Paper proposes a minimum of 10% affordable homes on new housing sites of more than 10 units, we think we can go further,” continues Tim. “We would like our Local Plan to set out a

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requirement for 50% on all but the smallest housing developments in the National Park”

**“We would like our Local Plan to set out a requirement for 50% on all but the smallest housing developments...”**

Another area where the National Park Authority can make a big difference is on small scale rural exception sites. These are places where development could only be permitted on the provision that homes are both affordable and guaranteed to remain in the community for perpetuity. At a special conference at the start of February we brought together landowners, rural housing providers, planners and specialist legal and financial experts to look at ways for unused land and buildings to provide for affordable housing in the National Park.

“We’ve had a great response from many of the 121 people who came along and have already agreed to repeat the event in the future,” says Tim. “As with the White Paper’s proposals, design of homes will be important. We want to look at how local materials could be used to create high-quality standard designs that fit with what’s already there, are sustainable and reduce construction costs. We are also looking at how we might establish our own affordable housing enabling service to support landowners and providers interested in increasing the supply of affordable homes.”

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper)

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/local-plan](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/local-plan)

To find out more about SDNPA work on affordable housing contact

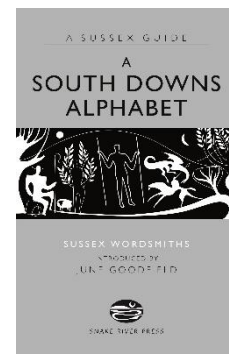
[affordablehomes@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:affordablehomes@southdowns.gov.uk)

## SOUTH DOWNS IN POETRY

*‘A heartfelt thank you, it was a really magical and inspiring project that has helped us to lift our heads up once again and see what’s out there!’*

It’s emails like this that continue our firm belief that every child should experience a National Park first hand.

Contact with nature improves children’s ability to concentrate and their self-discipline. And yet children in the UK have less contact with nature now than at any time in the past.







“Research shows that playing in a natural environment improves young people’s social, mental and physical development.”

With more than 846 schools within 5km of the National Park boundary the South Downs is on the doorstep for more than half a million children and young people.

“It’s our responsibility to inspire a lifelong commitment to enjoying, understanding and caring for the natural environment,” says Amanda Elmes, Learning and Engagement Manager for the South Downs National Park. “Not just in reaching the children living here but also to support urban and under-represented groups to benefit from all that the South Downs has to offer.”

“Research shows that playing in a natural environment improves young people’s social, mental and physical development.

“We believe that learning in the special landscapes of our National Park can add even more inspiration to an educational experience. ‘Our South Downs’ is our approach to getting schools involved in hands-on, real life, local learning here.”

Amanda and her team have been developing this approach since 2012, working with schools and outdoor learning providers, running an annual teachers conference and developing an online Learning Zone.

They have also developed the South Downs Curriculum which takes every subject that has to be taught through the National Curriculum and maps how it can be brought to life in and outside the classroom through resources, activities and learning opportunities in the National Park.



More than 1,600 teachers and 73,900 children have now been engaged with the National Park through this work.

Maxine Hunt is Outdoor Learning Coordinator for South Malling School in Lewes, who have been part of the Our South Downs network since 2013 and using it to teach geography, science and art. The school now makes regular use of Malling Down, the hill behind the school, and the surrounding area with the entire school joining in a butterfly watch day. Year 2 visit every year as part of their learning journey, to help them identify local landmarks and to sketch the trees and fallen branches in the woodland.

In 2016 Maxine got Year 4 involved in the South Downs Alphabet, as an opportunity to develop the schools outdoor curriculum with English as the focus.

“Being outside stimulates, energises and promotes self-esteem and a sense of well-being,” says Maxine. “We see the children grow in confidence as their interest in their local environment is stimulated. They love the freedom of being outside the classroom, learning about their own school environment and seeing it in a different way.

“The Alphabet project was an ideal opportunity to get the children to become more aware of their nearby environment – two thirds of the class had never been up on Malling Down independently – it gave us an authentic and interesting approach to teaching English.”

The South Downs Alphabet is a partnership venture between the South Downs National Park Authority and The Write House – an independent group of local historians and writers. It is generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Snake River Press. Conceived by Drs June Goodfield and Peter Robinson, the project is a celebration of Sussex heritage and the National Park, taking inspiration from writer Eleanor Farjeon who published a series of poems called A Sussex Alphabet in 1939.

“They loved it! They really enjoyed the whole experience and felt that there was a purpose to their learning, as well as an excitement about how they were learning.”

“Working in small groups the children visited Malling Down recording what they could see, hear and smell – with time to explore freely as well as more structured discussion,” continues Maxine. Back in the classroom over the next three weeks they shared their experiences and interpreted Eleanor Farjeon’s original Alphabet, looking at language, structure and how she might have used her own experiences to develop her ideas.

“After some experimentation with writing poems using different techniques they choose a letter of the alphabet and their subject. A lot of time was spent feeding back to each other, improving and sharing their writing until they were happy with what they had produced. Finally they worked on presentation and illustration to complement their poems.

“They loved it! They really enjoyed the whole experience and felt that there was a purpose to their learning, as well as an excitement about how they were learning.”

“Many of the children in that class continued to bring in poems they had written over the following weeks and now, as Year 5 students, we can see their confidence and a much more relaxed attitude to writing poetry.”

The children themselves said:

‘Interesting as well as fun, going outside gives us first-hand experience and makes it easier to write.’

‘Visiting the Downs really helped keep it in my head.’

‘We had time to think, it was peaceful.’

As well as a total of nine schools the South Downs Alphabet also got seven University of the Third Age groups involved in workshops and writing poems – making it truly intergenerational. Twenty six of these have now been selected and brought together into a new South Downs Alphabet published by Snake River Press this March, including a poem from a South Malling School student.

It’s fair to say that using the National Park’s resources is making a difference in the school: “I keep thinking of ways I can get more children outside and more often, we have so much on our doorstep!” says Maxine.

“One result of the success of the South Downs Alphabet project has been a desire to incorporate much more of our local environment into our school curriculum and learning journeys throughout the year. I’m undertaking Forest School training in June and have

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taken additional first aid training to allow more frequent access to the South Downs. We also hope to train and support other teachers to take their lessons outside. For science, humanities, outdoor learning, school picnic, art, English, maths – we want to make as much use of it as possible!”

The South Downs Alphabet and a reprint of a Sussex Alphabet, published by Snake River Press will be available to buy from 21 March 2017

[www.snakeriverpress.co.uk/](http://www.snakeriverpress.co.uk/)

Teachers can register for a free place at the Our South Downs 2017 conference at

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/event/south-downs-annual-teachers-conference/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/event/south-downs-annual-teachers-conference/)

## STATEMENT ON SALE OF COUNTRYSIDE SITES

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive for the SDNPA has been involved in a series of meetings about Eastbourne Borough Council’s proposal to sell some of its downland farms. He says:

*The preservation of the downland in its current open, grazed condition is an important economic asset, quite apart from the indisputable landscape, recreational and environmental benefits it provides to local residents and visitors to the area. These farms are not just local assets, they are national legacies, now in a National Park.*

*Countryside sites were secured for the people early last century by farsighted councils and campaigners who wanted to protect our landscapes and water supply in perpetuity. Eastbourne Borough Council’s original vision when they purchased the land in 1929 was that it would be ‘saved for ever from building or other exploitation.’\**

*The informal poll in the latest edition of the council’s Eastbourne Review poses a confusing choice for residents between a capital sale of the downland and revenue cuts to services.*

*We understand the financial pressures Local Authorities now face but the landscape is the main driver of the local economy that councils are trying to stimulate. Ownership by EBC safeguards this landscape.*

*It is short-term thinking to put this timeless asset, which helps to attract investment, at risk for a one-off capital injection.*

“It is short-term thinking to put this timeless asset, which helps to attract investment, at risk for a one-off capital injection.”

We have therefore made our concerns clear and called for a rethink about these countryside sales.

We continue to work behind the scenes to urge councils to consider their responsibilities. These include: safeguarding the landscape for future generations; maintaining public access in the face of predicted coastal erosion; the protection of historical features; the removal of permitted development rights on existing agricultural buildings; restrictions on certain types of agricultural use which

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would be inappropriate in this location; and a guarantee that any covenants and restrictions put in place to protect the land from damaging uses which might not be caught by the planning system can endure with the land if ownership changes.

The long-term protection of our rare and precious landscapes, such as chalk grassland, is the highest possible priority for the National Park.

\*The Times, 29 October 1929

## FIVE THINGS TO DO IN THE SOUTH DOWNS THIS MONTH

Find these & more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/)



- Join a bird song masterclass at RSPB Pulborough Brooks
- Make a milking stool at the Sustainability Centre
- Hand craft a stained glass window panel at Charleston
- Celebrate Mother's Day at Amberley Museum
- Teachers get their hands dirty at the Our South Downs Annual Conference

## 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 February 2017.

- Replaced a kissing gate and two stiles with **three kissing gates to improve access**, in partnership with Sussex Wildlife Trust and Glynde Estate.
- Cleared scrub and worked to **improve Sites of Special Scientific Interest** at Beeding Hill, Plumpton and Anchor Bottom.
- **Cleared invasive scrub from chalk grassland** above Storrington
- **Supported working parties with the charity MIND** at Grafham Down.
- **Laid a stretch of mixed hedgerow** at Lower Lodge Farm in Fernhurst to rejuvenate an ancient



hedge line and further hedges at Petworth (300m) Binsted (150m) and Folkington.

- Worked with Friends of Hesworth Common to plant a **conservation mix hedge to protect a bog area from disturbance**.
- **Led and joined in stargazing events** as part of the South Downs Dark Skies Festival
- Managed scrub on Winchester Downs sites to **improve conditions for future colonisation by Duke of Burgundy butterflies**.
- Completed **tree thinning and ride creation** at a woodland near Hambledon.
- **Completed woodland and meadow management** tasks by the River Rother with support from local conservation group.
- **Coppiced hawthorn by the river Meon** which will help to create dappled shade, increase bankside vegetation and therefore improve the habitat for watervoles.

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/on-the-ground)



## MOST ASKED...

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

Answering this month is:

**Jonathan Dean, Education Officer for the SDNPA**



## YOU ASK

I run an education centre, how can I encourage schools to visit our site in the park?

## JONATHAN ANSWERS

The South Downs is a fantastic resource on the doorstep of nearly 850 schools. The first things to do is list yourself on our learning map and subscribe to the termly providers' newsletter. You'll be invited to our annual providers' network meetings where we share ideas and best practice, connect you with local schools and provide training and CPD at no cost to you. You'll also be added to our Travel Grant Scheme, which means eligible schools can claim up to £300 towards the cost of transport when they visit you.

You can also share your resources on our Learning Zone, which gets over 4,000 hits each year. Send anything you'd like to share to [learning@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:learning@southdowns.gov.uk). And don't forget to use the resources already on the Learning Zone to support your own new ideas, initiatives and activities.

## YOU ASK

How do I find out more about what is going on for schools in the National Park?

## JONATHAN ANSWERS

You can subscribe to our termly teachers' newsletter to get all the latest goings on from across the National Park, including updates from learning outside the classroom providers, national park projects and details of the travel grant scheme.

Most importantly please come along to the free 'Our South Downs Annual Teachers' Conference' in Plumpton on 29 March. The event is designed to support teachers to use the South Downs as a resource and this year we've got inspirational talks lined up from Dr Sue Waite and Ian Blackwell at Natural Connections and Pam and Claire from Park Discoverers. Teachers can also get hands-on in a wide range of interactive workshops and take new ideas back to school to share with pupils and colleagues.

Read more of Jonathan's answers and find useful links [www.southdowns.gov.uk/most-asked-jonathan-dean-education-officer](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/most-asked-jonathan-dean-education-officer)

## NEXT MONTH: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

What is the Community Infrastructure Levy? What development will be liable for CIL? How will the money be spent?

Send your questions for Lilian Wakely, CIL Officer for the South Downs National Park [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)



## YOU SAY: DRONES

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.



Caroline Gorton from Brighton says:  
*I have recently been very disturbed by the use of drones whilst I have been out walking. One stunning sunset evening near Alfriston a drone hovered above me for some time and then dropped to the path – some distance – but very much watching/filming. With no other person in sight it left me feeling very disturbed. Near Woodingdean there is a regular group of flyers with very noisy machines.*

*Can we consider the option of making the South Downs a drone free area, can we limit the noise pollution? These are likely to become much more common and I would like to know if others share my views and if we could consider a consultation on this issue.*

Vicky Lawrence, Countryside and Policy Manager for the South Downs National Park Authority says:

*Drones are the latest in a number of activities which can cause disturbance. In recent years the use of drones has escalated dramatically – for leisure purposes as well as survey and monitoring uses.*

*At some locations within the South Downs National Park the noise and disturbance caused by drones is becoming a significant problem as it reduces the sense of tranquillity – one of the qualities that makes*

To submit a comment for our newsletter please email [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk). For a fast and direct response to your questions please email [info@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto: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.

*the South Downs special. Our main area of concern is the cumulative impact that drone use can have on tranquil areas and wildlife in the National Park. Drones can also however be enormously useful, for example for emergency services, to collecting evidence for research projects and to carry out surveys.*

*There are laws relating to privacy and safety around the use of drones and, if you feel that these are being broken, your best recourse is to seek legal advice, or contact 999 in an emergency. The use of drones generally is managed by the Civil Aviation Authority, who can provide further information ([www.caa.co.uk/Commercial-Industry/Aircraft/Unmanned-aircraft/Unmanned-Aircraft/](http://www.caa.co.uk/Commercial-Industry/Aircraft/Unmanned-aircraft/Unmanned-Aircraft/))*

*Our response to the current Government consultation will also include the issue of drone racing as we don't believe that current proposals take enough account of its impact.*

Vicky Lawrence recently chaired a meeting on the issue of drones in the National Park attended by representatives for the National Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Brighton & Hove City Council and Eastbourne Borough Council. She is leading on the SDNPA's response to the Department for Transport's consultation on the civil use of drones.





## SOUTH DOWNS: ENGLAND'S MOUNTAINS GREEN

*A poetic and stunning portrait of the South Downs National Park.* Sunday Times

Britain's newest National Park takes centre stage in this documentary presented by author and local parish priest Peter Owen-Jones. The programme is available to watch on BBC i-player for 28 days from 21 February.

And look out for a special **South Downs episode of BBC Countryfile**, featuring our dark night skies, the South Downs Way National Trail and much more - to be broadcast on Sunday 5 March at 7pm.

Watch now at [www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/south-downs-englands-mountains-green](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/south-downs-englands-mountains-green)



## TASTE THE LANDSCAPE

Congratulations to Michael Sutherland from The Star Inn, Alfriston and Cowdray Farm Shop, Midhurst, West Sussex both winners at the Sussex Food and Drink Awards 2017 – also to the many other South Downs food and drink businesses named as runners up across the ten categories.

Michael won Sussex Young Chef of the Year and Cowdray Farm Shop was named Sussex Food Shop of the Year. This is the 11th year of the awards which aim to support and boost local farmers, food and drink producers and the outlets which use and sell their fare.

Full list of winners and runners up at <http://www.sussexfoodawards.biz/>

Find more great South Downs food and drink at [www.southdownsfood.org/food-finder/](http://www.southdownsfood.org/food-finder/)

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