



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

We are now in the formal pre-election period (PURDAH) leading up the general election on 8 June.

This means that South Downs News will not be able to cover as wide a range of issues as usual and our "You Ask" and "You Say" sections have been temporarily suspended. Our fuller newsletter will resume in July.

NATURE IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH

From royal princes to sporting legends and celebrities, it's been hard to miss recent coverage on the importance of facing up to our mental health. With Mental Health Awareness Week running from 8 to 14 May we spoke to Dr William Bird from Intelligent Health about the role the National Park could play in tackling health and wellbeing.

In the early 1990s, as a new GP, Dr William Bird realised that not only were his patients not getting enough physical activity, but also that mental, physical and social barriers made it pointless to recommend they go running or join a gym. He understood that encouraging and supporting moderate physical activity to fit into his patient's lives would improve their health far more than recommending vigorous exercise in an alien environment where they felt uncomfortable or unwelcome.



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"Most people feel that they're already doing enough activity. But even those who recognise that they aren't think that exercise has to be a 'special occasion' like going for a run or making a trip to the gym and that's enough to put them off. Or they see it as something 'designed for other people', the slim, already fit people you'd expect to see in a gym."

On 6 April 1996 he led his first 20 patients on a Health Walk. A 20-minute brisk walk around their local area. They returned smiling having experienced their community in an entirely different way. Now 35,000 people take part in Health Walks every week. Soon after he developed the idea of the Green Gym – where people come together to get fit through conservation work.

These simple ideas work. Oxford University carried out a two-year evaluation and found the benefits were being sustained. People who joined the Health Walks were also choosing to walk more in other parts of their lives. They also found that joining groups to walk, talk, and having a coffee together afterwards improved mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. The University of Herts have shown that the Green Gyms in particular make a huge improvement to mental health because being out in nature both reduces, and improves people's ability to cope with, stress.

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So what does William think this means for the National Park?

“There's a real disconnect. People who aren't being active where they live aren't going to visit the National Park to be active either. They don't know how they're supposed to use the countryside and find it genuinely scary. You'll find the people who don't have these issues out in the countryside but we won't get those who really need it unless they go with people who can show them a way that they can make their own connections with nature.

“The first thing is to get insight into exactly why they don't feel comfortable and like they don't belong in a National Park. Sport England's 'This Girl Can' campaign spent an entire year just trying to understand why women aren't doing as much sport as men and it turns out it's because they feel body conscious and embarrassed.

With this knowledge Sport England have been able to create a phenomenally successful campaign that tackles these concerns head on.

“I'm afraid it's going to make some of the National Park's current visitors squirm because to get all these people to value nature we need to make it relevant to

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them and this might be through a fete or a festival or it might be encouraging BMX trails or hosting barbeques.

“It will take a big cultural change because you have to genuinely make these people, from deprived areas, who aren't interested in wildlife or landscapes, feel welcome and like the National Park is a place for them before you can get them excited or involved.

“The action itself doesn't necessarily have to be big. I know of one case where someone opened up a wood and wanted to encourage more people to visit and play there. They bought 20 pairs of wellies for kids to borrow to wade in the stream. Soon there were queues of excited kids waiting to borrow the wellies and break the taboo of not getting dirty and muddy.”

Recently Dr Bird's organisation Intelligent Health has launched an even more ambitious plan to get entire cities more active and keep them active by playing a game called 'Beat the Street' which removes the psychological barriers to exercise completely.

“We don't talk about health and we don't mention exercise. Players – almost an equal numbers of adults and young people – collect points by visiting places in their town or city. We have created a game that is fun to play and promotes happiness which just happens to require people to walk and visit green spaces. 300,000 people took part in 2016.”

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And how does Dr Bird see success?

“Firstly I would like being connected to nature to be seen as a fundamental right for all children. Secondly I would like to see healthcare change from being something we do to people to something that people do for themselves by recognising their own value and responsibility. I believe the way to achieve this is through outdoor activity which connects people with each other, with the place they live and with nature – and this should be a fundamental pillar of health care.”

In the meantime the biggest ever game of Beat the Street will be coming to East Sussex for seven weeks from 7 June 2016.

Find out more about the project at beatthestreet.me/eastsussex and for more information www.intelligenthealth.co.uk



CELEBRATE ENGLISH WINE WEEK ACROSS THE SOUTH DOWNS

From east to west across the South Downs National Park, nestling into the sun-soaked slopes and stunning landscapes, thriving vineyards produce some of England's finest award-winning sparkling and white wines. It's the perfect place to celebrate English Wine Week – Saturday 27 May and Sunday 4 June.

Hambledon Vineyard



England's oldest commercial vineyard, on the western edges of the South Downs National Park, is Hambledon Vineyard near Hambledon village, which is also the cradle of cricket. The original home of Hambledon Cricket Club at Broad-Halfpenny Down can be seen across the valley from the vineyard.

Did you know?

- Hambledon Vineyard is the only all gravity fed winery in the UK.
- Their head winemaker was the 'Chef de Caves' at a top ten Champagne house for 23 years.

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- Their chalk is the same Upper Cretaceous chalk band that goes under the English channel and pops up in Picardy's Champagne region.
- The first wine ever made here beat 11 other sparkling wines in a blind tasting organised by cool wine mag "Noble Rot". Jancis Robinson, Jamie Goode and Neal Martin were among the tasters. Hambledon came 1st and Nyetimber, another South Downs wine, came 2nd, while Pol Roger came 3rd, Taittinger came 4th and Veuve Clicquot came 11th.

*Hambledon Vineyard, Hambledon, Hampshire, PO7 4RY
02392 632358; hambledonvineyard.co.uk*

Rathfinney Wine Estate



The biggest South Downs vineyard and one of the youngest is Rathfinney Wine Estate, on the eastern fringes of the South Downs National Park. Rathfinny is the original farm name, where the Finny element is taken from the owners name dating back to 1820's and 'Rath' is Celtic in origin, meaning a mound or ditch around a settlement.

Did you know?

- So far they've planted 180 acres or 450,000 vines – this is about half of what they have planned!
- Chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier are planted for their sparkling wine.
- Their still wine is under the label Cradle Valley.
- Last year's vintage was named Hobbs Hawth which is a field where the original farmhouse stood. Hobb is an old English word for the Devil.
- They've planted around 20,000 trees.
- The Flint Barns on site accommodates around 30 people and all the rooms are named after local fields or locations on the Estate.
- The vineyard was heavily used for practice for the DDay beach landings, the gentle south facing slopes were ideal replicas of the French beaches.

They are now ideal for grapes to gain maximum sunlight.

- All of the vines are hand pruned and hand harvested.
- There are four bridleways running across the Estate and they've opened up a permissive footpath as well called the Rathfinny Trail.
- At full capacity they will be producing 100,000 cases of Sussex sparkling wine.
- The shop, the Gun Room, does not sell guns! It was reported to house a large canon many years ago and since then has been many things including a tannery – hence the replication of the oak boarding on the top floor. You can also visit the Alfriston Heritage Centre here.
- This year Rathfinney released a gin made from their grapes called Seven Sisters after the cliffs which are formed from chalk and flint. Geology is vital to the grapes as it gives them their uniqueness.
- A PhD study is being undertaken in their vineyard to assess which variety and mix of flowers are best to sow in between the vines to attract wildlife, which will reduce pests, letting nature do the work rather than using sprays. For example the aim is to attract parasitic wasps which will feed off caterpillars. The project is being overseen by Prof Dave Goulson.
- Their vineyard manager has been awarded a Nuffield Scholarship to research viticulture for the UK.

Rathfinny Wine Estate, Alfriston, East Sussex BN26 5TU
+44 (0)1323 871 031 rathfinneyestate.com

Vineyards and wineries across the South Downs will be celebrating English Wine Week 2017 by hosting tours, tastings and masterclasses, as well as opening their cellar doors to celebrate the best of English wine.

Enjoy sampling the fantastic range of award-winning South Downs sparkling and white wines at events such as an English Wine Tour and Diner with Jilly Goulden at Bluebell Vineyard, Free Wine Tastings at Bolney Wine Estate, Around the World in Wines Masterclass at Bolney Wine Estate, Ridgeview Wine Garden Launch Party, Hambledon Vineyard Bottling the Bubbles Tour, and Vineyard Tours at Ridgeview Wine Estate. Many restaurants and pubs across the National Park serve locally produced wine so take the opportunity to try something new wherever you are – a very pleasant surprise awaits you.

Details of these and other English Wine Week events across the South Downs can be found at englishwineproducers.co.uk/news/eww



JANE AUSTEN 200; A LIFE IN HAMPSHIRE

Jane Austen, is arguably one of England's most famous authors, spent most of her life in the historic and beautiful county of Hampshire, in the South Downs National Park.

Its houses, countryside and people provided the inspiration for many of her novels and this year marks the 200th anniversary of Austen's death.

From 1809 until 1817 Jane lived in the beautiful village of Chawton near Alton, where her brother James owned nearby Chawton House. Her home is now known as Jane Austen's House Museum and is open to the public. It is in this house that Jane produced *Pride and Prejudice*, arguably her greatest work as well as revising manuscripts for *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*.

In 1817 Jane became ill and, to be closer to her doctor, moved with her sister to a house in College Street, Winchester. Sadly, after a couple of weeks, at the age of 41, she passed away on the 18 July 1817. A few days later she was laid to rest in Winchester Cathedral.

You can visit **Jane Austen's House Museum** (pictured) and stroll through the rooms where she lived with her mother and sister, spending her time writing. *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and Jane's final novel *Persuasion* were all also written here.

Hampshire Cultural Trust is working with Jane Austen's House Museum and many other partners across the county to celebrate Jane's creativity and talent. The year is packed with exhibitions, talks, walks, writing competitions and performances.

Visit jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk for opening times and details of upcoming events. For details of Hampshire Cultural Trust's events visit janeausten200.co.uk



GET INVOLVED IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

Would you like to learn more about your local wildlife and visualise your local habitats in a whole new way? Then come and join us as we produce a map for Graffham Common.

Community Habitat Mapping - FREE EVENT

Where: The Empire Hall, The Street, Graffham, West Sussex, GU28 0QB

When: May 27th 2017

To reserve a place contact

heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk call 01730 819320,

or visit our events calendar at

southdowns.gov.uk/events

A habitat map plots the distribution and extent of habitats within a given geographical area. A habitat is an ecological or environmental area that is inhabited by a particular species of animal, plant, or other type of organism; a place where a living thing lives is its habitat. The data collected will form a baseline that will show over time changes in the levels of biodiversity (variety of different types of life) in the area and will help to inform future decisions about helping to protect a particular species and or preserving an area of natural beauty. A community habitat mapping project is a great opportunity for local residents to

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become involved and learn more about the wildlife on their doorstep, how to record it and how to protect it!

Petra Billings a chartered Ecologist who has worked in conservation management in Sussex for more than 20 years will be teaching us how to tell the difference between habitat types and how we can accurately record them. After an initial session indoors you will head out to Graffham Common. The data you record on the day will contribute to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre data, which will be combined with species lists produced at the BioBlitz later this year creating a brand new data set for this area.

BioBlitz on the Heath – FREE EVENT

Where: Graffham Common GU28 0PT

When: July 30th 2017 – see the website for timetable (10.00-16.00)

JUST TURN UP

Local experts will be gathering at Graffham Common to see how many species they can discover in a day and they would love it if you'd join them! Be prepared to see the world through a completely different set of eyes as the experts lead you around the common whilst together, you note down everything you discover.

This new data will be added to the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre database and will play an important part in providing conservationists with valuable monitoring data.

These events have been made possible thanks to heritage lottery funding through the Heathlands Reunited project.

southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands/



LOTTERY FUNDED

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/



- Find out more about sustainable living at the South Downs Green Fair, East Meon.
- Get in touch with your creative side at Petworth Park with the Fine Arts and Antiques Fair.
- Find out what's on offer at Plumpton and Midhurst & Rother College at their Open Days.
- Dig out your sandals and enrol in a Roman Cookery Workshop at Butser Ancient Farm.
- Go wild at the Nature Festival & BioBlitz at Selborne.

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 April 2017.



- **Work to maintain the South Downs Way** National Trail included replacing way markers and, installing gates along the route, as well as repairing a water tap at Amberley.
- Tested a **new route for walkers, horse riders and cyclists to publish on ViewRanger** by completing a 7 mile stretch from Fittleworth, taking in heath woodland farmland and ponds.
- Worked to **improve access for visitors** by installing hunt gates at Beddingham and the Long Man of Wilmington and replacing a stile at Kingston.
- Rangers led volunteers to carry out **fence repairs on Welches and Chapel Commons** including new gate posts and rehangng gates.
- **Constructed nine Barn Owl boxes and six Little Owl boxes constructed** for a new project and for replacement and refurbishment in Selborne area.
- **Restored chalk grassland on a SSSI/SINC** with the VRS on a valley adjoining Butser Hill.

- **Recorded otter activity** on our wildlife cameras on the River Rother near where they had previously installed an otterholt.
- Other sightings include- **2 Ring Ouzels** seen at Stephen Castle Downs while on a task with the volunteers.
- Attended celebration for **new Hants & IOW Wildlife Trust reserve**, Hockley Meadow
- Rangers **met landowners on the River Meon** to discuss recommendations from the completed habitat suitability survey, so they can enhance and improve their section of river.
- **Cut back invasive scrub and rhododendron** at Ambersham Common.
- **25 people** attended a **Ranger led Heart Smart walk**
- A **pearl bordered fritillary caterpillar was discovered at Rewel Wood** in West Sussex proving that recent coppicing to support the butterfly in this area is working.
- Neil Hulme from Butterfly Conservation took volunteers on a **guided walk around Tottington Wood** to see the effects from the coppicing they have completed over the last couple of years.
- Joined a **successful 'Cash In Trash Out' event** at Cuckmere Haven

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



FILM STAR BARN OWLS NOW HAVE FIVE EGGS

Our barn owl pair now have five eggs, which is great news. The next few days will be interesting to see if any more are laid. They can usually have 5 or 6 eggs but have been known on rare occasions to lay up to 7 or 8. This cold spell could well halt any more eggs being laid as it may affect the food supply. Keep watching to find out!

The male will continue to feed the female while she incubates the eggs and as they get nearer to hatching you may see him bringing in more food than usual ready for the new arrivals. However we have got a couple of weeks before the first one is due (15th May).

The incubating female will lose weight during this time and could possibly begin moulting as well. If this does happen you may see some wing feathers in the nest.

Watch the South Downs barn owl cam at southdowns.gov.uk/barn-owls-live-2017



NEW FOODIE TOURISM SERVICE FOR HOTELS, GUESTHOUSES AND B&BS

Sign up your business now at southdownsfood.org if you'd like to be one of the first hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs to use the free Local Food Detective, helping you stay ahead in attracting foodie guests to stay with you!

Locals and visitors can find out where to eat, buy and enjoy local food at southdownsfood.org



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