



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

SENSING THE SOUTH DOWNS: HOW THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERCEIVE WILD PLACES.

How do people with impaired vision experience the South Downs? Karis Jade Petty has dedicated her PhD to finding out and this July she'll present her findings at the South Downs Research Conference 2017, sponsored by Coast to Capital.

The South Downs is an iconic landscape, an epic beauty draped in the greens of woodland, blues of ocean and whites of chalk. It is a place of panoramas, where you are invited to stand on the green shoulders of grassy giants and gaze upon a world made small.

I am an anthropologist at the University of Sussex fascinated by the different ways that people perceive and experience this landscape. Diversity is often approached in terms of accessibility, identifying attitudes of countryside service providers and visitors and then making environmental adaptations – removing stiles or improving surfaces. My research has investigated how people who have impaired vision

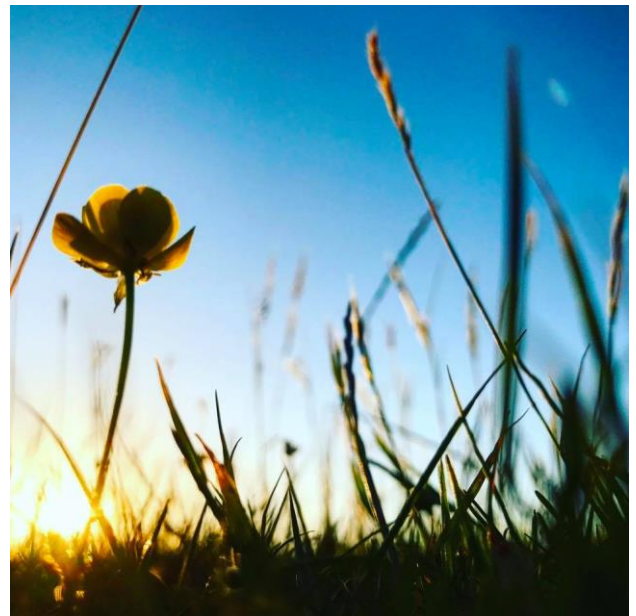


Photo by Huw Williams

perceive the South Downs; that is, how they feel, sense and engage with this landscape.

My findings are not only fundamental to finding better ways to make the National Park more accessible and inclusive, but also give a deeper insight and appreciation of the South Downs' unique qualities.

I became an apprentice – learning to listen to the contours of the humped hillside and the winding woodland.



Photo by Huw Williams

I trained as a sighted guide and spent two years regularly walking one-to-one with people who have impaired vision through changing weathers and seasons. On these walks through the South Downs I investigated how and what my companions perceived, and their sense of the landscape that emerged from this.

I became an apprentice – learning to listen to the contours of the humped hillside and the winding woodland. My companions taught me to look at the light as much as at what it revealed. They showed me how to reach out and touch the world with the whole body.

My companions described their sense of the landscapes we walked as “bitty”, “too detailed”, “sequential” and “partial”. Gaining a sense of the overall size, form and qualities of the routes and landscapes we walked was a challenge. Isolated and intimate sensory impressions were like patchworks that needed weaving together to create a sense of the wider landscape. I had been walking in Stanmer Park with one of my companions for several months when she declared “it’s just a load of space – if you can’t see it’s just a load of space with sounds and textures in it [...] I don’t know it”.

Landscapes are constantly changing. The landmark tree might be unrecognisable in the forthcoming season or cut down. The path might be indistinguishable from the ground either side of it as the earth becomes dry and worn with traipsing summer visitors.

My research demonstrates the breadth of experiences felt by people with impaired vision, but I also identified consistencies in their perceptions of the South Downs and discovered their techniques for engaging the senses. These sensory techniques included listening,

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

feeling and guiding, but also included visual perception.

Most people who have impaired vision still have a visual appreciation of the South Downs, which invited me to also look at this landscape in different ways. I hope that my findings will help to develop more inclusive recreational activities for people who have impaired vision in the National Park.

Karis Jade Petty will be describing the unique qualities of the South Downs National Park experienced by walkers with impaired vision at the South Downs National Park Research Conference on 6 July, sponsored by Coast to Capital.

www.southdowns.gov.uk/researchconference

www.coast2capital.org.uk/



Photo by Neil Hulme/ Butterfly Conservation

SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEERS HELP SAVE ENDANGERED BUTTERFLY

Work by the South Downs Volunteer Rangers is helping to save the regionally endangered pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly by creating special havens for this ‘very fussy’ species in woods near Arundel in West Sussex.

During the butterfly’s flight period from late April to late May 2017, the highest numbers were spotted flying in the relatively small area cut by the volunteers. On the season’s best day 51 per cent of the 49 butterflies counted across the entire wood were in this area.

“This work is catering for the specific needs of the highly fussy pearl-bordered fritillaries,”

The work is part of Fritillaries for the Future; a three-year project led by Butterfly Conservation with the South Downs National Park Authority and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

“The pearl-bordered fritillary declined by 95 per cent nationally between 1976 and 2014 but has been hit hardest in the south east,” says Neil Hulme, project officer for Fritillaries for the Future. “The butterfly is now extinct in Kent and Surrey and there are only four colonies left in Sussex, one the result of a successful re-introduction programme.”

Neil knows his butterflies. He’s not only co-author of *The Butterflies of Sussex: A Twenty-First Century Atlas* published to great acclaim this spring but was also awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) this June for his work to save the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly from extinction. The pearl-bordered fritillary is in good hands.

Over the past two winters the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service has hand-cut bays into the edges of sweet chestnut coppice, to create special breeding habitat for the butterfly along sunny track edges. The pearl-bordered fritillaries at Rewell Wood historically relied upon habitat created by commercial sweet chestnut harvesting, but in recent years butterfly numbers have decreased and the population had been at a low ebb since 2015.

“This work is catering for the specific needs of the highly fussy pearl-bordered fritillaries,” continues Neil. “The caterpillars eat violets and violets need bare, freshly-cut ground to grow in profusion.



*The very fussy pearl-bordered fritillary caterpillar.
Image by Neil Hulme/
Butterfly Conservation*

“The results clearly demonstrate the immense value of the volunteers’ work over the harsh winter months. It was a joy to see their efforts rewarded with much improved butterfly numbers this spring, and I’d like to thank every one of them for their help in conserving this iconic spring species. I’d also like to thank the Norfolk Estate, which owns the wood, for its support”.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

The volunteers’ work isn’t over yet as these areas only remain suitable for the butterfly for three years. A rolling management programme will be needed to support a healthy population which can then be used for captive-breeding to re-introduce the species more widely.

Find out more about the project at www.sussex-butterflies.org.uk/conservation/fritillaries-for-the-future

The Butterflies of Sussex; A Twenty-First Century Atlas by Michael Blencowe and Neil Hulme is available to order at www.naturebureau.co.uk/bookshop/the-butterflies-of-sussex-detail



Depot Lewes. Photo by Ming Cheng/ Burrell Foley Fischer LLP

LEWES GETS A CINEMA

A quick glance through Depot cinema’s new visitors’ book shows how well it’s been received in its first month. It’s a credit to the developers and architects but also to the unseen work of the National Park Authority planning team.

On Thursday 25 May 2017 Depot, a new community cinema opened in the town of Lewes, East Sussex, on the site of part of the old Harvey’s Brewery depot.

While not in itself of very high architectural value this building is an important part of the story of the town’s development.

“Welcoming, stylish venue next to railway station [...] set into this charismatic traditional, yet with a modern twist, warehouse setting that makes your visit a pleasure.”

In March 2014 the applicants put forward an entirely different scheme, designed by Burrell Foley Fischer, for pre-application advice. The new plans included proposals for a slightly smaller cinema which kept the old building, but also included new public space and made environmental improvements – such as a green roof and solar power. The National Park’s design offer at the time stated: ‘This is now a real exemplar of a design that’s risen to the challenge set by the National Park context.’

By the time the formal planning application was submitted in April 2014 officers were confident that there was a strong application to present to the National Park Authority planning committee. Concerns from the Highway Authority led to an amended Transport Statement with increased space for bike storage, real-time bus and train information and a community bus to neighbouring villages to encourage more film-goers to leave their cars behind.

The application was approved by the SDNPA planning committee in March 2015 and we’ve been very pleased to see happy comments about the design and use of the building appearing amongst those praising the comfort of the seating. We are so proud of this project that we have submitted it for the Royal Town and Planning Institution (RTPI) Excellence in Planning Awards. Fingers crossed!

‘Elegantly designed cinema complex, but at the same time functional. The space is so intelligently made and it is simply a super building.’

“The architecture and layout of the place shows the hard work and funding that has gone into it which I appreciate very much. Staff were friendly. Looking forward to more trips to the pics here!”

“The after-screening drink in an exterior seating area gave us a chance to appreciate how attractive the whole development is: contemporary, stylish and well laid out. Looking forward to this becoming a regular haunt!”

“Welcoming, stylish venue next to railway station... Screen studios have state-of-art technology and generous, comfortable seats and screen layout while set into this charismatic traditional, yet with a modern twist, warehouse setting that makes your visit a pleasure.”

Find out more about Depot cinema
lewesdepot.org/



Inside the Depot cinema. Photo by Ming Cheng/ Burrell Foley Fischer LLP

The cinema’s original building is a familiar landmark in a prominent location by Lewes railway station. Constructed as a utilitarian brick Post Office sorting office, it later became part of the Harvey’s Brewery and lies within Lewes Conservation Area – surrounded by listed buildings covering a variety of architectural styles across the ages. While not in itself of very high architectural value this building is an important part of the story of the town’s development.

With their first designs underway the new cinema’s owners decided to approach the National Park Authority for pre-application advice. This is something we encourage on all applications as there are so many benefits for both the applicants and the National Park. Our planners can help explain what issues might be taken into consideration when an application is determined; suggest ways that the application could be changed to add value to the local community and wider National Park; identify potential problems such as noise or traffic; and encourage higher quality applications that are faster to process and lead to better outcomes for the National Park.

Pre-application advice for the Lewes cinema plan was first sought in July 2013. These plans involved removing the old depot entirely and replacing it with a modern three-storey building. This was a chance for us to get our Design Review Panel and conservation and design officers involved. Our advice was that the original building needed to be retained and reused but with sympathetic modern additions and the introduction of greener and more sustainable infrastructure. In short we recommended that the applicant needed to go back to the drawing board.

Our planning team were also able to recommend the local and amenity groups that the applicants should be talking to and consulting with in advance to get the best development for the community.

SOUTH DOWNS RANGERS ON TOUR

National Parks Week – 25 to 28 July 2017

The South Downs National Park is coming to town for National Parks Week this summer. From 25 to 28 July South Downs rangers will be bringing family fun and a little bit of the National Park into towns around Sussex and Hampshire.

Learn how to make a bug hotel, test your animal knowledge on our giant jigsaws and get crafty making wildlife sashes. Our rangers will be on hand throughout to answer questions and share local tips on getting out into the National Park and spotting wildlife over the school holidays.

There will be two 45 minute sessions each day at 11.00 and 12.00, available for pre-booking, plus an additional session at 14.00 which can only be booked on the day



Where to find us

- Tues 25 July: Littlehampton foreshore (Pebbles Area at East Bank), West Sussex
- Weds 26 July: Wild Park, Moulsoombe, Brighton
- Thur 27 July: Bordon, Hants (location to be confirmed)
- Fri 28 July: Lion Green, Shottermill, Haslemere, Surrey

Book your free place on one of the 45 minute sessions via **EventBrite** at www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-downs-rangers-on-tour-national-parks-week-25-28-july-2017-tickets-35531837683

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/



- Track the South Pond bats in Midhurst
- Make every beat count on British Heart Foundations South Downs Way ride
- Discover pre-historic wildlife at Butser Ancient Farm
- Meet the South Downs Rangers on Tour
- Join a heathland Bioblitz and learn to see the world in a completely different way

MOST ASKED...

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

Answering this month is: **Adam Brown, Research and Evidence Officer for the SDNPA** who is currently busy organising the South Downs Research Conference, sponsored by Coast to Capital.



YOU ASK

What does a research and evidence officer do?

ADAM ANSWERS

It's my job to make sure that our work is informed by up-to-date evidence and research. If I can't find existing evidence I'll go out and do, organise or commission collection of the relevant data. I also develop and maintain relationships with local universities, alongside my colleague, and bring them all together once a year for our research conference – coming up on 6 July 2017.

I cover the provision of geographic mapping (GIS) for the National Park and, I'm not sure how, I've also gained a reputation for being a spreadsheet ninja so I get a lot of colleagues asking for tips.

YOU ASK

How can I do my dissertation/ research with the National Park?

ADAM ANSWERS

Every year we publish a list of research priorities on our website. This outlines the subjects where we know we're going to need evidence. We want prospective researchers to think about the best ways to approach that subject – they're the experts – and submit an application form. You can find the list and application form on our site at

www.southdowns.gov.uk/research

Read more of Adam's answers

www.southdowns.gov.uk/most-asked-adam-brown-research-and-evidence-officer-for-sdnpa/

NEXT MONTH: The South Downs National Park

Does the National Park give value for money? Why doesn't the SDNPA own any land in the National Park? Why does the SDNPA allow houses to be built in the National Park?

Send your questions for Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive for 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 June 2017.



- Surveyed for lapwing in partnership with the RSPB and **found 16 lapwing chicks in 4 families on one survey site.**
- Spotted **small blue butterflies on the kidney vetch for the first time** at a site restored through our Nature Improvement Area project.
- **Released 198 water voles to the upper reaches of the River Meon.** Four local schools came along to help – feeding the water voles in their release pens and adapting the pens so that the animals can self-release.
- **Cut and removed invasive stinging nettles from the banks of the River Meon** to encourage the growth of a variety of bankside vegetation and allow water voles and other wildlife to disperse throughout the valley.
- **Began access land surveys on four sites** to see how gates and signs can be used to encourage public access.
- **Started ringing first barn owl chicks of the year** and ringed two boxes of kestrel chicks.
- **Started the invasive Himalyan balsam pulling season** with work on the Rother walk in Midhurst, Stedham Mill and Hammer Stream at Chithurst.
- Completed Farmland Bird Surveys as part of the South Downs Farmland Bird Initiative; **good to see some key species like Yellowhammer and Skylark.**
- **Installed 50m of post and rail fencing** at a dew pond near Lancing.
- Spread the message our barn owl project, work across the National Park and **encouraged more people to get out and enjoy it** at the South of England Show.
- **Cleared regrowth to encourage return of chalk grassland** at Mill Hill Local Nature Reserve and Sites of Special Scientific Interest at Anchor Bottom and Beeding.
- **Carried out site visits to 4,000-year-old archaeology** with the County Archaeologist.

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



WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

Looking for dinner inspiration? Every month Southdownsfood.org feature a delicious recipe using local ingredients by a local chef. This month Matt Gillan from Pike and Pine in Brighton presents **rack of lamb with spiced quinoa, baby onions, strawberries and charcoal**.

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



SAD NEWS: BARN OWL CHICKS

We are very sad to report that the last two chicks on our barn owl webcam have died. We have now turned off the camera.

After a couple of days of wet weather, the adults might have been unable to hunt (barn owl feathers aren't waterproof). We are now concerned for the adult female, who would be doing most of the hunting, as we hadn't seen her return to the nest in several days before the chicks died.

If you were watching the webcam over the last few days of June and saw any activity please email us at BarnOwl@southdowns.gov.uk
southdowns.gov.uk/sad-news-for-our-barn-owl-chicks/



ARE YOU A PARK PROTECTOR?

Entries are now open for the Campaign for National Park's annual Park Protector awards.

Last year's winners were the Arun and Rother Connections project, based in the South Downs National Park. Working with local volunteers, this project worked to create a rich and thriving river system by tackling pollution, flooding and invasive species – the photo above shows them removing Himalayan balsam.

If you're involved in, or know of, a project that you think could be in with a chance of winning enter now! Nominations close 20 July.

www.cnp.org.uk/park-protectors



GET OUR NEWS BY EMAIL

Get this newsletter delivered directly to your phone or tablet.

Sign up at southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/