

## Case Study

# Exploring Access Land

### Background

Following the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), certain areas of land were designated as access land where the public have the right to roam freely.\*

Many of the open access areas established in the South Downs are small, fragmented, and sometimes completely cut off from adjacent rights of way. Opportunities for self-guided walks are not always obvious from the Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps which, although showing all areas where open access is permitted, give no indication of access points either into or within the parcels of access land.

The South Downs Society (SDS) considered that greater publicity needed to be given to access areas which were particularly worthwhile visiting and decided to produce more detailed maps showing relevant fences, gates and stiles in the larger areas of access land within the South Downs National Park.

It was agreed that the more detailed maps were to be presented as online leaflets, including a recommended self-guided walk and descriptive notes regarding points of interest, local wildlife and public transport links.

\*[gov.uk/guidance/open-access-land-management-rights-and-responsibilities](http://gov.uk/guidance/open-access-land-management-rights-and-responsibilities)



*The Society's Access Map launch at Wilmington. Left to right: Robert Cheesman, Society Chairman; Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive SDNPA; Charles Peck, ex-Member of the SDNPA.*

### The project

The SDS approved 10 sites to be covered, these were; Harting Down, Butser Hill, Castle Hill with Kingston Ridge, Deep Dean, Lewes Downs with The Caburn, Beeding Hill, Firlie Beacon, Shortheath Common with Binswood, Selborne and Malling Hill.

Volunteers from the SDS, in conjunction with the South Downs Local Access Forum and the South Downs Joint Committee, were recruited to survey each area, noting the access points as well as any fences, gates or stiles that might be encountered.

This information was transferred, with permission, to the relevant parts of 1:25,000 scale Ordnance Survey maps and the online leaflets were created in 2014. The leaflets were promoted through various SDS channels, as well as nationally in 'Country Walking' magazine. A promotional launch event was also held including the stake holders in the project and an example stroll.

The project, costing £3246, was grant-aided by the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and the Ramblers; not including the in-kind contribution of £1,900 for the voluntary surveying work. The leaflets can be found here:

[southdownssociety.org.uk/who-we-are/how-we-do-it/access/making-the-most-of-crow-open-access-in-the-south-downs/](http://southdownssociety.org.uk/who-we-are/how-we-do-it/access/making-the-most-of-crow-open-access-in-the-south-downs/)

"Congratulations on this initiative. There is always confusion about where one is free to walk or where not. These maps make all clear and should add to the pleasure of walkers on these fine Downs".

David Dimbleby, Journalist and Presenter

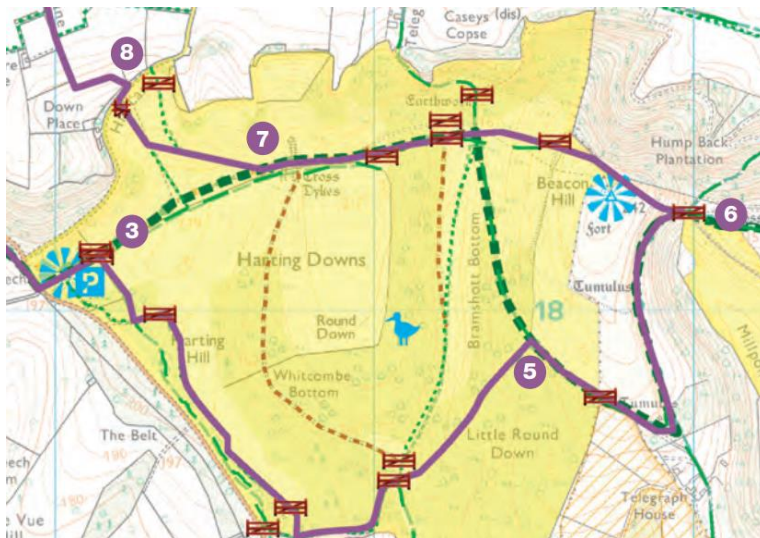
### The outcome

10 online leaflets were produced and made available on the South Downs Society website. The leaflets consist of a general overview of the natural history of the site, the map and key, instructions for a self-guided walk, and the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of using access land.

Although there is little evidence as to the extent to which the maps have been used, anecdotally, those who have used the maps have found them very helpful.

Several users have indicated that they are willing to update the SDS on both the condition of the access land and any changes in accessibility. Any significant observations can be discussed at the annual SDS/SDNPA Access & Rights of Way liaison meeting.

An extract from the Harting Down leaflet



### The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan

The CROW mapping project was consistent with the following outcomes in the South Downs Partnership Management Plan:

5. Outstanding visitor experiences are underpinned by a high-quality access and sustainable transport network supporting improved health and wellbeing

### The future

Going forward it is inevitable that changes may be made to fences, gates and stiles, or to public transport provision, which could render the access maps out of date.

Consequently, it would be valuable to survey these sites periodically to ensure the information is up to date. This would be done with the help of existing and new volunteers.

Additionally, in order to restrain project costs, it was decided that the leaflets would only be accessed by the public online and no printed leaflets were made available. Although the public are becoming more accustomed to obtaining mapping information online, the outreach of this project would have been enhanced with the addition of printed leaflets.

This could be an option in future if funds are made available.

For more information, please contact:

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or telephone:

01798 875073

Monday to Thursday 9:00 to 13:00

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