



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month we are:

- Wishing our partners **Butterfly Conservation a very happy 50th birthday** with a look at our work with them.
- Meeting some of the top architects who give up their time to improve design in the National Park.
- Discovering how a group of **local residents are transforming a fen on their doorsteps**.
- Wishing you sweet dreams in the South Downs and **giving away a night at Deans Place Hotel**.

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

STAY OVER, SEE MORE

The days are getting longer, the clocks are about to change and we're starting to daydream about sunny spring days on the South Downs. Staying the night opens up a whole new world of opportunities – whether you're sleeping out in the wild, stargazing or learning a new skill.

With English Tourism Week starting on 17 March and whether you have one night, a long weekend or a full week away we have a few ideas for your South Downs holiday.

- Sleep in a barn. Gumber Bothy is a converted barn on the National Trust's Slindon Estate with basic facilities in the middle of nowhere! The site has a car free policy so you'll need to arrive on foot, horse or bicycle to enjoy this unique spot.
- Book a bespoke stargazing experience for you and your friends
- Take a night safari with RSPB Pulborough Brooks – 'Brilliant bats and moths' night safari runs on 18 August 2018.



- Night at the Museum: Join a night tour of the Weald and Downland Living Museum
- Brush up your bushcraft with an overnight course at the Sustainability Centre in East Meon

If you're already booked in for an event in or near the National Park why not stay an extra night, make a long weekend of it, and see more.

- If you're coming to an event at Goodwood: Book an extra night in Midhurst, visit the Weald and Downland Living Museum and go for a stroll around the Trundle to enjoy views across Chichester and out to the Isle of Wight.
- Recovering from Pride in Brighton? Restore yourself in the glorious Cuckmere Valley,

with great walks, good food and stunning views. See our competition to win a stay at Deans Place Hotel, or take advantage of their Sunday extended day offer.

- Resting after Velo South

We imagine that there are going to be some tired legs after the South of England's first ever closed-road 100 mile bike ride this September. Perhaps a little glamping might be required for you and your support crew.

Find out more:

Book Gumber Bothy

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/slindon-estate/features/slindon-estate-has-a-converted-barn-and-campsite

South Downs stargazing experience

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/slindon-estate/features/slindon-estate-has-a-converted-barn-and-campsite

RSPB Pulborough Brooks

www.rspb.org.uk/pulboroughbrooks

Weald and Downland Museum by night

museumsatnight.org.uk/events-page/?id=EVENT581288#.Wpaj2rtLFjp

Sustainability Centre Courses

www.sustainability-centre.org/bushcraft-course.html

Madehurst Glamping

www.madehurstglamping.co.uk/



CRITICAL FRIENDS

"It's a privilege to be allowed to build in a National Park. People should see it as such and design buildings that both respond to and make a real contribution to the South Downs' landscapes."
Graham Morrison is part of an independent panel of expert architects and designers giving up their time to push for better design in the National Park.

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Mark Penfold and Graham Morrison at Depot cinema

"We are the South Downs National Park Authority's critical friends. Here to help applicants and the National Park Authority bring forward the kind of schemes the National Park deserves."

From changes to farm buildings, to much-needed new homes and business space, development is inevitable – even in a National Park. Graham Morrison is Vice Chair of the South Downs National Park's Design Review Panel and his list of achievements include a 2016 OBE for services to architecture. "People often see planning authorities as there to prevent the bad. That's not enough, we want to promote the good."

"We are the South Downs National Park Authority's (SDNPA) critical friends," continues panel chair Mark Penfold. "Here to help applicants and the National Park Authority bring forward the kind of schemes the National Park deserves."

The Design Review Panel was set up five years ago to support the SDNPA's commitment to encourage high quality, contextually sensitive and sustainable landscape and building design in the National Park. While panel's role is purely advisory, their comments carry a lot of weight. Panel reports are addressed in planning committee reports and may be used at public enquiry.

Because of the timescales involved in bringing development forward, we are just starting to see the results of their work come to fruition. Mark and Graham are taking a break from the panel's AGM at Depot Cinema in Lewes, a welcome opportunity for the panel members to appreciate this particular success story. "We saw the designs for the Depot come through three times," says Mark. "Progress was slow at first and we could see that the initial scheme wasn't responding to the site's challenges. But new architects came in who listened to and worked with us and the results speak for themselves." Depot recently won two regional awards from the Royal Town and Planning Institute and is currently shortlisted for a national award.



Members of the Design Review Panel visit Tide Mills

"It's a privilege to be allowed to build in a National Park. People should see it as such and design buildings that both respond to and make a real contribution to the South Downs' landscapes."

"Not every scheme can be an exemplar like Depot," Mark continues, "but we expect people to produce the best possible schemes that they can. The National Park deserves better than 'safe' or mediocre design." They are both excited by a forthcoming planning application for a new railway bridge at Tide Mills.

There is a huge breadth of expertise held by the different panel members, who meet once a month to look at three or four schemes, and they all give their time to the National Park for free. Mark puts this down to the support they receive from SDNPA officers, Members and each other: "There's a definite sense that we can draw on much higher expectations than in a normal Local Authority. I really enjoy our meetings, building a collective response to applications – even when we're at opposite ends of architectural thinking. I come away from them feeling invigorated and think the other panel members would say the same."

"There's a sense that we're not just dealing with the individual schemes in front of us," continues Graham. "We're part of a bigger picture and showing the contribution that design can make to place making. It's really remarkable that members of the SDNPA Planning Committee regularly give up their time to sit in on our meetings – listening and observing to our discussions. I sit on other Design Review Panels but this is the only one I've heard of where that happens."

Is it ever frustrating? "When you see poor schemes come through from people who should be able to do better," says Mark. "We run workshop sessions which applicants can request or we might suggest. That's an amazing resource. There are some really exciting sites coming through from the Local Plan. The former Syngenta site near Fernhurst is very unusual. There will be a huge challenge to build a community there."

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"Buildings like Depot are still the exception," says Graham. "Housing development is the biggest construction activity and the biggest challenge. We want to encourage developers to avoid sameness and suburbanisation. I'd say that about housing anywhere but it's even more important in the National Park. The frustration energises you to work harder to get it right."

Find out more about the Design Review Panel
www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/design-review-panel/



FEN DEFENDERS

In December 2016 residents on the edge of Winchester had a grumble about the state of the waste-ground in front of their homes. But what began as a casual chat became a huge community effort to restore the local fen for wildlife.

It's fair to say that Clausentum Fen, a fragment of the Itchen Valley 'lowland fen' ecosystem, has not always been looked after. The brooks and channels of the river Itchen south of Winchester have been relocated and managed since Roman times for drainage and irrigation, for energy in the form of water mills and to create meadows for grazing. For much of the medieval period this soggy patch of ground belonged to the church and by the 18th century expensive drains had been installed to turn it into a water meadow – producing rich grass for lambing.

The name Clausentum was chosen by Edwardian developers – it means 'enclosed' and is taken from a Roman settlement which once sat in a river bend further downstream. But though houses were built opposite the fen the site itself was considered too wet for housing.

"When we moved here 30 years ago it was still quite an interesting spot," says Marcus Swalwell, one of the neighbours who joined that first conversation. "But we've gradually seen it disappear, invaded by bamboo, overgrown and fly-tipped upon."

In 2003 another neighbour, Mike Gibbons, applied to have the area designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation where snipe, linnets, reed bunting, bullfinches and spotted flycatchers could be seen. That year Hampshire County Council obtained a 999-year lease from the developers who own it to hold the land as 'a nature conservation area, general woodland and meadowland.'

Today the site is about as far west as you can go and still be in the South Downs National Park. A green finger reaching into the city and, it turns out, a spot beloved by the community.

Today the site is about as far west as you can go and still be in the South Downs National Park. A green finger reaching into the city and, it turns out, a spot beloved by the community. "We decided to begin with a work party to clear the bamboo, with permission from Hampshire County Council, and were expecting six people to turn up so were surprised when 25 volunteers came out to work together. We cut down about five thousand stems of bamboo covering the size of a tennis court." The Clausentum Fen Conservation Group was born.

Then Rob Nicholls, the South Downs National Park's local ranger, got involved. "Rob was great," says Marcus, "he gave us lots of advice and information about all the different people we could turn to for help and advice." From conservation to monitoring and hydrology more than thirty different experts have helped the group put together a management plan and begin work.

The National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund contributed £2,000 for contractors to remove trees that were shading the streams and drying out the Fen. This has also helped to open up views across to St Catherine's Hill. The group have also been experimenting with scraping and baffles to increase the water flow across the site. As a result, they've already seen an increase in river fly – a good indicator of water health and a food source for fish and birds. "It's going to be a perfect habitat for water voles," enthuses Marcus.



Students from Winchester College helped with clearing the main incoming water channel and there are two other local schools just around the corner. Detectorists who surveyed the excavated channels discovered Roman and medieval coins and a horseshoe from the time of the Black Death in the 14th century. The group hopes to be able to host educational visits for local children's groups.

Managing access is one of the challenges the group faces. The northern half of the site boasts one of the most beautiful beech trees and brook side clearings that you will ever see, and the plan is to keep this part of the site accessible to the public. The southern half of the site will always be visible but may need to be protected for wildlife. Over winter the reworked fen has looked quite sad and bare in parts, although flag iris and snowdrops have started to show through and the area has been reseeded so will become greener as the weather warms up. Goat willow, hawthorn, blackthorn, guelder rose, native dog wood and bramble should also grow quickly and restore shrub habitat across the site.

There's still a lot of work to be done but for now it's time to appreciate their achievements. "This time last year I knew nothing about conservation," says Marcus. "Now I want to stop and appreciate all the things I've learned and help nature take its course."

Marcus handed over the chair of the Clausentum Fen Conservation Group to Marian Hollingsworth & Jonathan Sleath in February 2018.

For more information about the project visit www.clausentumfen.co.uk



BUTTERFLY BIRTHDAY

From water voles to skylarks and wart-biter crickets to sand lizards, many creatures capture the spirit of the National Park. But there's something special about the South Downs' butterflies and we're working closely with Butterfly Conservation to keep it that way.

Words by Chris Lickley and Jo Glyde

The Duke of Burgundy, chalk hill blue and dingy skipper are all butterfly species synonymous with the rolling landscape of chalk and limestone downland but records from 1976-2014 have shown these species, along with many others, in serious decline.

David Attenborough says: "50 years later the need for people who care about our butterflies and moths is greater than ever before."

This March marks half a century since charity Butterfly Conservation was founded and as their chair David Attenborough says: "50 years later the need for people who care about our butterflies and moths is greater than ever before."

The decline in UK butterflies is most likely caused by the loss and fragmentation of their habitats and the resulting drop in wildflower species such as horseshoe vetch, kidney vetch and cowslips, used by the butterflies as both larval food plants and nectar sources. However it's not all doom and gloom, since the National Park Authority came into existence eight years ago – and before that as the South Downs Joint Committee – our rangers and volunteers have been working in partnership with Butterfly Conservation to support their work in the South Downs and we're starting to see the results.

The tiny Duke of Burgundy butterfly may not be as spectacular as some other species but it holds a very special place in our hearts. It became one of the first

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species to benefit from the South Downs' new National Park status. In 2012, working in partnership with 27 other organisations and local authorities, the National Park Authority was able to secure government funding to improve and join up chalk grassland at key points along the South Downs.

"In 2012 there were fewer than 100 colonies of Duke of Burgundy butterflies left in the UK, most of which were very small and vulnerable," says Tom Parry, Lead Ranger for the Central Downs part of the National Park. "On peak days of the flight season no more than 5,000 butterflies would be on the wing, and in most years far less. There was little doubt that it would take focussed and determined efforts to save its future." But the Duke is notoriously picky, preferring cowslips and primroses growing among tussocky vegetation, slightly shaded by scrub on sheltered North or West facing slopes.

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Duke of Burgundy by Butterfly Conservation's Neil Hulme

Last spring South Downs News covered the work that the people of Steyning, led by the Steyning Downland scheme and supported by Butterfly Conservation's Neil Hulme, have undertaken to get the Dukes to return to the downland above their town. Not least harvesting 40,000 seeds from primroses & cowslips on the site and then planting out the resulting 3,000 plants in September 2016. We're waiting with bated breath for the first reported sighting of a Duke of Burgundy here...

Meanwhile at the western end of the National Park the South Downs Volunteer Rangers have spent the past winter working hard at Magdalen Hill Down, Hazel Down, Morn Down and Deacon Hill near Winchester and a big hill named 'The Mountain', in West Meon. Here the focus has been on encouraging cowslips to support the Duke of Burgundy. With guidance from local Butterfly Conservation staff Jayne Chapman and

Dan Hoare they selectively removed invasive scrub such as bramble, dogwood and blackthorn to create patches of bare ground on areas of sloping grassland. These patches, now exposed to the sun should be colonised by wildflower species critical for butterfly and moth breeding success.

The initial removal of scrub will now be followed up by sheep or cattle grazing to stop scrub regrowing. The volunteer rangers will also help with transect surveys during flight season over the spring and summer.

Meanwhile back in 2015 a project to boost numbers of butterflies and chalk grassland in the South Downs National Park near Brighton unexpectedly saw the return of the silver-spotted skipper butterfly, once close to extinction across the county. The 'Brighton Blues' project was set up to improve and increase areas of rare chalk grassland which several species of butterfly such as the Adonis blue and chalkhill blue depend on. But happily reintroducing grazing and clearing encroaching scrub also led to the surprise return of the silver-spotted skipper.



1 Pearl bordered fritillary by Butterfly Conservation's Neil Hulme

And it's not just downland butterflies that are benefitting. Work by the South Downs Volunteer Rangers and Butterfly Conservation 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.

As David Attenborough says of the past 50 years: "The fortunes of the UK's butterflies have ebbed and flowed over this period. Sadly many species have struggled as their habitats have shrunk and climate change and

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pesticide use have taken their toll. Thanks to Butterfly Conservation a huge number of us now care about butterflies and are aware of their plight and what's more, we now know how to protect many species and reverse their declines, providing them with a home for the future in the countryside as well as our back gardens."

We are proud to work with Butterfly Conservation and wish them a bright and fluttery future.

Butterfly Conservation are running events across the country on Saturday 10 March. Find details at <https://butterfly-conservation.org/244/events.html>

More about the Steyning Downland Duke of Burgundy project

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/will-2017-see-the-duke-return-to-steyning/>

More about the Brighton Blues project

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/rare-butterfly-is-surprise-success-for-south-downs-project/>

More about the Fritillaries for the Future project

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-volunteers-help-save-endangered-butterfly/>



WIN A NIGHT AT DEANS PLACE HOTEL

Set on the banks of the Cuckmere River in the South Downs National Park, Deans Place became a private hotel at the beginning of the 20th century.

With its award-winning restaurant, the hotel is a delightful spot to while away the hours and the perfect base to explore local sights like the famous white cliffs of Seven Sisters, Charleston House Museum and the pretty village of Alfriston home to St Andrew's Church, known locally as the 'Cathedral of the Downs'.

To celebrate English Tourism Week we have one night's stay for two people, plus breakfast, to give away thanks to the lovely people at Deans Place. Anyone who signs up as a new member of this newsletter during March will automatically be entered but to make sure our existing readers don't miss out you can also enter by emailing us at the address below before 31 March 2018.

To enter the draw email us with the subject 'A night at Deans Place Hotel' to

newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

Terms and conditions apply, please read them here

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/South-Downs-News-sign-up-Deans-Place-Hotel-draw-Terms-Conditions.pdf)

[content/uploads/2018/03/South-Downs-News-sign-up-Deans-Place-Hotel-draw-Terms-Conditions.pdf](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/South-Downs-News-sign-up-Deans-Place-Hotel-draw-Terms-Conditions.pdf)

Visit Deans Place Hotel website

www.deansplacehotel.co.uk/

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 2018.

- Started **building barn owl boxes** ahead of the nesting season and trained on how to check barn owl boxes with an ecologist from the Hawk Conservancy.
- Stayed up late to support stargazing events as part of our South Downs Dark Night Skies Festival and got up early to attend our annual Farmers' Breakfast events.
- Worked with Natural England rangers at Old Winchester Hill to **cut back encroaching scrub on the chalk grassland**. The site is grazed by herdwick sheep but brushcutters and the VRS lend a helping hand!
- With the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust **gave training on hedgerow management to farmers** from the Winchester Downs Farm Cluster and the Selborne Landscape Partnership. Began work on the Preshaw Estate as part of our partnership with the farmers of the Winchester Downs Cluster Group, work includes thinning trees around Lomer pond to allow in more light and open up the view from the South Downs Way.
- **Taught teachers and students at Easebourne school how to prune their orchard trees** – they'll be doing it themselves in future.



- Worked with volunteers from the charity MIND to **replace dormice survey boxes** at Graffham Down and supported a 'Cache In Trash Out' litter-picking event with geocachers there.
- Created a deer hedge to protect coppice regrowth at Graffham Down, took Witley Scouts hedgelaying at Stedham Campsite; laid hedge at Binsted and spent two weeks **laying 184m of hedge up a particularly steep slope at Saddlescombe Farm**.
- Cleared scrub on Millpond Bottom, Bepton Down SSSI, Tower Hill SSSI, Kingley Vale NNR, Chanctonbury Ring SSSI; Beeding Hill SSSI; Anchor Bottom SSSI, The Long Man SSSI and Beddingham Hill SSSI.
- Carried out coppicing at Church Copse, felled non-native trees at Bignor Hill SSSI and felled trees at Steyning Combe with Butterfly Conservation and continued management of a **traditional coppice rotation at a piece of ancient woodland** near Marwell Zoo..

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

THINGS TO DO IN THE SOUTH DOWNS

Find these & more events across the National Park and submit your own events at southdowns.gov.uk/events/



Join in special Mothers' Day events at Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre

See stars at Pulborough Brooks Watch the documentary England's Mountains Green and join in a Q&A with the director

Master your birdsong recognition skills

Good grief, is it Easter already!

MEET OUR APPRENTICE PLANNER

Sergio Chapman-Salas, the National Park Authority's first ever Apprentice Planner, started work with us in September 2017. Ahead of Apprentice Week we asked him to tell us about why he decided to become a planner and whether reality is living up to expectation.



"I enjoyed geography at school and the idea of living more sustainably. Planning fits both of these so seemed like a good career choice. I was looking at university courses when I found out I could also get into planning through an apprenticeship. I liked the idea of learning on the job, getting first-hand experience and getting paid – it seems so much better than just learning from books!

"I found two available and was lucky enough to become the National Park Authority's first Apprentice Planner. I spend one day every week earning my town planning support qualification at Chichester University.

"My first day was with the Planning Policy team. It was the same day they launched the final consultation on the South Downs Local Plan which meant that there

was lots to learn but also lots to get involved with. I enjoy being part of a team sharing ideas and working together on a big goal.

"I'm still getting to grips with all the different work that planners do. I'm currently with the Validation Team, then I'll be working with Development Management and finally the Major Projects Team so at the end of my two-year apprenticeship I should have a good insight across all the different areas. I definitely want to stay in planning so after that I might go to university to study for a full RTPI qualification or I might continue to learn on the job.

"My first experience in planning has led me to believe that the best approach to take as a planner is to be open minded and willing to learn!"

MOST ASKED RETURNS NEXT MONTH:

What is the National Park Authority doing to engage and reach out to people who wouldn't normally visit?

Send your questions for Amanda Elmes, SDNPA Outreach and Engagement Officer to 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? Please let us know.



To submit a comment for our newsletter please email newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk.
For a fast and direct response to your questions please email 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.



GET OUR NEWS BY EMAIL TO WIN PRIZES

Get this newsletter delivered directly to your phone or tablet. Every month between now until February we'll be drawing one name from our main list of subscribers to win a prize to help you enjoy the National Park even more.

Find out more and sign up at
southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/