



# SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

## WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- Can you **impress our judges and win £250** in the South Downs photo competition?
- **Tourism: Why is it important** and what should we be doing to reduce its impact.
- **Quiz:** How well do you know the South Downs' rivers?
- Competition – win a TBC
- Summer may be over but there's still **lots to do in the National Park** this month

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk)

## PROMOTING BETTER TOURISM

*The answer to the pressures of tourism is not regulation or artificial limitations but improved information and better promotion argues Trevor Beattie, South Downs National Park Authority Chief Executive.*



The recent heatwave has generated much news coverage about the need to restrict tourists in the most popular destinations. Indeed we all experience the hypocrisy of wishing that there were fewer tourists spoiling our enjoyment of a busy attraction, whilst ignoring that we are tourists ourselves. It is human nature to follow leads from places such as TripAdvisor and Instagram and it should not become public policy to seek the 'right sort of tourists'. The answer to the pressures of tourism is not regulation or artificial limitations but improved information and better promotion.

The South Downs National Park is the most visited of England's ten National Parks with almost 19 million visits each year. Visitor 'hotspots' like Devil's Dyke and the white cliffs of Seven Sisters can leave would-be-tranquil villages such as Alfriston choked with traffic they are not equipped to handle.



*It is*

*quite common in other parts of the South Downs not to meet anyone during a walk of two or three hours. These places ... deserve to be better known and enjoyed.*

We can resolve this tension between the economic benefits of tourism against the increasing costs on over-stretched rural infrastructure. These 'overcrowded' sites are not typical. When the National Park was first designated a huge public survey identified 'tranquil, unspoilt places' as one of seven special qualities.

It is quite common in other parts of the South Downs not to meet anyone during a walk of two or three hours. One of my great joys is standing alone on high, windswept hills surveying the teeming coastal towns spread out below. These places are not under pressure from tourism. Quite the opposite – they deserve to be better known and enjoyed.



*Graeme Kittle farms at Sullington Manor near Storrington*

## WATCH: FARMERS WHO CARE FOR THE NATIONAL PARK

*"We want to introduce ourselves to the people who enjoy spending time here and end the perception that farmers are old-fashioned or unapproachable." Dominic Gardner is part of a network of National Park farmers starring in short films about their work.*

"Being a farmer makes you very aware that we're only here for a short time but what we do can have a massive impact," says Dominic Gardner, who runs Lee Farm, north of Worthing. "I want to run a business producing great, healthy food and helping wildlife to thrive but we can only do this if people support us."

In our June issue we mentioned that Dominic is one of six local farmers featured in a series of short films giving a unique insight into their work between the Arun and Adur rivers in the South Downs National Park. Nature doesn't recognise farm boundaries so together the farmers are supporting endangered birds such as the lapwing, grey partridge and skylark. The area is also a focus for bringing the very rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly back from the brink of extinction.

Look out for each farmer telling their story on their land through an innovative trail of 'watching & listening posts' linked to short films about their work out in the South Downs. The films, supported by the National Park Authority, are the brainchild of 24 local farmers working together as the Arundale to Adur Farmers Group. They're also now available to watch on our website – see link at the end of this article.

Dispersed tourism can also mean better tourism, with more people experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits of exploration and tranquillity. Better because a wider range of local businesses will benefit from the money they spend. Better because a wider spread of visitors make it easier to sustain the public transport networks on which many rural communities depend.

It is our role, as a National Park Authority, to spread the news of these rich experiences and to explain how they can be reached by public transport. This will reduce pressure on the hotspots and enhance the economic value of tourism.

It is, however, impossible to avoid some damage to the most popular routes. The South Downs Way, welcomes approximately 20,000 walkers, cyclists or riders every year and millions more exploring sections of it – generating major problems of wear and erosion. We are at an early stage of developing a visitor-giving scheme as a step towards raising awareness of the issues and the funds for repairs. Some local accommodation providers such as Dean's Place in Alfriston are already asking visitors to make a voluntary contribution of £2 in return for a map and information on local walks. So far 90 per cent of their customers have been happy to contribute and said that it deepened their appreciation of the local landscape.

We need to welcome tourists, not demonise them. By providing more support and information we hope they will be prepared to travel further, use their cars less and pay a little more – reducing pressure on hotspots, providing resources to repair them and, best of all, introducing more people to their own wonderful South Downs National Park.

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Assistant Ranger Bekah tests the new panels

*“More than ever we need people to appreciate the value of the work farmers do in the National Park,”*

Twelve posts have now been placed on public rights of way between the Arun and Adur rivers. Simply holding a phone (with NFC function switched on) over a picture on the post, or reading the QR code will reveal the film introducing the person responsible for caring for and working on that stretch of land.

British farmers face a huge challenge in the months ahead. They need to convince politicians and tax-payers alike that they deserve support when they're no longer funded by the European Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). They may not continue to be subsidised to grow food but what about the environmental goods they produce as custodians of our land – which we all benefit from?

“More than ever we need people to appreciate the value of the work farmers do in the National Park,” says Bruce Fowkes, Farming Officer for the South Downs National Park Authority. “The mosaic of fields and hedgerows you see in the South Downs’ landscapes draw in millions of people every year – but how many think about the work that goes into caring for them and the wildlife that lives here.

“It’s great to see our farmers working together and coming up with innovative ideas to tell the story of their work.”

Watch the films now at: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/watch-meet-farmers-care-national-park/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/watch-meet-farmers-care-national-park/)



## LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

The first hearings for the South Downs Local Plan examination are expected to start on Tuesday 13 November in the South Downs Centre, Midhurst.

If you responded to the submission consultation last autumn you should now have received a letter from the Programme Officer with more information about the process. Further examination sessions will follow in December.

Keep an eye on the Local Plan Examination page on our website for all the news and updates [www.southdowns.gov.uk/local-plan-examination/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/local-plan-examination/)



## WIN £250 IN OUR PHOTO COMPETITION

The South Downs National Park photo competition is now open, with a first prize of £250 on offer to the amateur or professional photographer who best captures this year’s theme of ‘Perfectly Seasoned’.

Steve Watkins, editor of Outdoor Photography magazine; and award-winning photographers Rachael Talibart and Finn Hopson are returning to judge the 2018 competition.

A second prize of £150 and a third prize of £50 are also on offer. For the past three years the standard has been so high that the judges have opened up the shortlist for a 'people's choice' vote – won by Tom Hard in 2017.

Steve Watkins, competition judge and editor of Outdoor Photography magazine, said:

"The South Downs National Park has a distinctly different feel in each of the four seasons, so I will be on the lookout for images that manage to capture those unique characteristics in a way that connects instantly with the emotions those changing scenes generate in me as I wander, ride and travel through the park."

*"Given the extremes of temperatures we've seen over the last 12 months in particular it will be interesting to see what has captured the imagination of photographers this year."*

Finn Hopson, competition judge, photographer, and owner of the Brighton Photography Gallery, said:

"I'm hoping to see photographs that reflect the amazing diversity of weather, wildlife and work that goes on throughout the National Park during the year. Given the extremes of temperatures we've seen over the last 12 months in particular it will be interesting to see what has captured the imagination of photographers this year."

Rachael Talibart, competition judge and winner of awards including Black and White Photographer of the Year 2018, said:

"I'll be looking for imaginative and creative interpretations of the theme that highlight the many aspects of our beautiful National Park."

Entries close on Friday 19 October. Find out more and download the entry form at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/enter-the-south-downs-photo-competition/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enter-the-south-downs-photo-competition/)

Need inspiration? See the gallery of last year's winners at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/photo-competition-1718-winning-shortlisted-pictures/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/photo-competition-1718-winning-shortlisted-pictures/)



## SEASONS CHANGE AND SO DO RANGERS

*On his final week working before leaving the South Downs for warmer climates ranger Matt led a lunchtime walk through Midhurst Common.*

*Volunteer Development Officer, Daniel Greenwood, reflects on their adventure, taken as part of the John Muir Award in the South Downs.*

From the point of leaving Midhurst town centre to our return, the feeling of two seasons changing hands was keen – our warm weather walk was littered with fungi. We headed up onto Midhurst Common through shady pine forest tracks to reach a lunch spot that looked out over the South Downs. On his penultimate day in post, Central Downs Ranger Matt Dowse was there to talk us through his patch.

Pointing to woods and folds in the chalk ridge, Matt picked out many points of interest: slopes too steep for most contractors to happily work on; a single beech tree; downland Sites of Special Scientific Interest and political hotspots. It is the kind of knowledge you only gain from working outside with people and the land, the details that that local people pass on through generations. There is so much valuable landscape knowledge held by individuals like Matt and his fellow rangers across the National Park.

In the pine woods mushrooms were plentiful, with several members of the fearsome Amanita family pushing through the soil. Other finds included slug-munched boletes such as the prized Boletus edulis, otherwise known as penny bun, cep or porcini, and a milkcap that, true to its Latin name, was lactating when inspected.

Returning down the slope we passed solitary wasps entering nest holes in the track, a black adder slipping off into the heather and a beetle that buzzed to warn us away. The heather was still flushed pink and the bracken showing the first signs of yellowing, all against a blue sky. Passing through the old sand quarry, birch woods spread to the point of a large pond where dogs cooled off. This time the mushrooms in the grass under the birches included brittlegills in varying states of decay underfoot.





The woods changed again to oak, beech and hazel, with more bright red brittlegills protruding at the path edge as the first signs of civilisation appeared between the leaves. The group split and returned to our respective offices, saying goodbye to Matt. The thought was unshakable after two hours on a late-August heathland: autumn is coming.

The John Muir Award is a national environmental award that encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places through a structured yet adaptable scheme. The Award isn't competitive but should challenge each participant and encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment, in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration.

Find out more at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/john-muir-award-in-the-south-downs-national-park/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/john-muir-award-in-the-south-downs-national-park/)



## COMMUNITY HEROES

The Adhurst Estate Allotments Association was born when the Adhurst Estate heard that 95 people were waiting for allotments in Petersfield and offered the use of some fields on a fifteen-year lease.

It's not been easy work turning uncultivated fields into growing spaces and the allotment holders have done it all – starting with putting up 400m of rabbit proof fencing. They run working groups to carry out tasks every six weeks, hold an annual vegetable show and have even created an orchard with 90 fruit trees and bee hives (£5 per year will get you 4m<sup>2</sup> to plant your own tree).

Allotments need water and the group began by taking buckets out of the local stream – at the bottom of the hill!

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

A £4,000 grant from the South Downs National Park's Sustainable Communities Fund meant they could get this enormous water tank which the group rolled onto the site using fence posts. True to form they then dug the irrigation channels to 13 taps across the site themselves.

*Photo shows:* David Petche (left) and Steve Amos from Adhurst Estate Allotments Association

Find out more about the allotments by contacting David Petche [dpetche@btinternet.com](mailto:dpetche@btinternet.com)

Find out more about the Sustainable Communities Fund at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-fund/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/sustainable-communities-fund/)



## DO YOU KNOW YOUR SOUTH DOWNS RIVERS?

*How much do you know about the National Park's rivers? For World Rivers Day on 23 September we've put together a little quiz to test you.*

1. There are seven main rivers that carve their way through the South Downs National Park – can you name them?
2. The river Itchen is 45km from its source to Southampton and the chalk it runs through helps to keep it 'gin clear' making it a hit for anglers and otters alike. How much of the river runs through the National Park?
  - a) 9.7km
  - b) 23.2km
  - c) 58.5km
3. Which is the only river to lie entirely in the South Downs National Park from source to where it, ahem, Stophams.
 

Clue: It shares its name with two others UK rivers, one runs through East Sussex and Kent and the other in South Yorkshire.

4. Which South Downs river where water vole were locally extinct in 2012 now has a thriving population thanks to a local reintroduction programme?
5. Rivers migrate and move over time. Which two South Downs rivers, which today run very different courses, once shared an estuary in Lancing?
6. Which river's name's literal translation means 'water river'.
7. Which river's mouth sits at the heart of England's first Heritage Coastline, an area which receives more than a million visitors every year?

Find the answers at the end of this newsletter.



## WIN

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## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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Links

## 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/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



8 & 9 September – FREE – **Wildlife, historic characters, birds of prey and battles** are among the secrets being revealed on Petersfield Heath

16 September – **Forage for wild food** at Queen Elizabeth Country Park

20 September – **Take an evening bat walk** at WWT Arundel Wetland Centre

27, 28 & 29 September – FREE – Join South Downs rangers on walks as part of the **Eastbourne & Lewes Walk Fest** (from 22-30 September)

### ON THE GROUND

From meeting with farmers, offering training and support to local communities, leading walks, organising and training volunteers, controlling invasive species and supporting key species, South Downs National Park rangers are out in the National Park every weekday and many weekends over the year.

Don't forget to say hello if you spot them out working. Here's a taste of what they achieved with our volunteers in August 2018:

- Managed invasive nettles and completed field sign surveys of water voles along the River Meon, confirming their dispersal and continued breeding success
- Harvested seed at a local wildflower meadow near Selbourne with the Winchester Downs Farm Cluster.
- Undertook two barbastelle bat surveys with Sussex Wildlife Trust at Ebernoe Common. Other work on the site included clearing bracken and gorse and pothole repairs.
- Led a guided walks: round Lord's Piece, Chapel Common and Ambersham Common as part of the Walk the Heath Week walking festival and at Pulborough and Cissbury Ring for National Parks Week and led a Heartsmart walk for 15 people on the Slindon Estate.
- Helped with a charcoal burn at Lodge Copse, an educational coppice run by volunteers.

- Installed steps on a couple of steep sections at Botany Bay to make walking safer in an area developed for educational groups.
- Carried out invasive species surveys on the Hammer Stream catchment.
- Continued work at Truleigh Hill – the pond dipping platform is complete and a new accessible trail is almost finished. We were joined by a group of Duke of Edinburgh students who helped with pond dipping and strimming, raking and planting the butterfly bank with chalk grassland plug plants.
- Cutting & raking regrowth at Halcombe Farm Local Wildlife Site and Anchor Bottom Site of Special Scientific Interest to improve chalk grassland habitat.
- Helped Natural England to carry out a comprehensive condition survey of Castle Hill National Nature Reserve
- Improved a permissive path at Southease and cut the meadow at the local Youth Hostel.
- Carried out a wartbiter cricket translocation to Deep Dean in East Sussex, completing a four year reintroduction project.
- Helped to run a bat survey evening at Kingley Vale.
- Carried out regular butterfly transects at Washington Chalk Pit.

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

### MOST ASKED...





Answers to questions about a particular area of work in the National Park – some sent in by you and others that we get asked all the time.

Answering this month is: **Jo Williams, Sustainable Tourism Lead for the South Downs National Park**

## HOW IMPORTANT IS TOURISM FOR THE NATIONAL PARK?

Tourism generates more than ten percent of the world's jobs. The visitor economy in the National Park generates more than £350 million for our local economy and around 5,000 jobs. Our research from 2016 highlights that the National Park attracts around 19 million visits each year, not including local people using it for recreation.

## WHERE CAN I GET ADVICE AND HELP FOR MY TOURISM BUSINESS?

We have a host of information on our website to start you off, including links to research reports, planning policies, business advice, partner organisations and information on potential funding and planning. Support can range from

free online listing opportunities to free cycle rack schemes (available on application and whilst stocks are available). If you want to put the National Park at the heart of your tourism offer, then we offer a free resource that includes high quality images, logos and graphics that you can use to affiliate your business with the National Park. We're also piloting a new visitor-giving scheme to offer your customers an even greater connection to the National Park. For more details on visitor giving contact [visitorgiving@southdownstrust.org.uk](mailto:visitorgiving@southdownstrust.org.uk) There are many other organisations that can help too from your local Destination Management Offices and local Councils to Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Read more of Jo's answers

at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/asked-jo-williams-sustainable-tourism-lead/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/asked-jo-williams-sustainable-tourism-lead/)

## NEXT MONTH: Farming in the National Park

Bruce Fowkes, South Downs National Park Farming Officer, answers your questions.

Send them to [newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto: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](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.



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

## NEWS FROM OUR HEATHS

Heathlands Reunited is a partnership of eleven organisations, led by the South Downs National Park Authority, who have joined forces to expand and connect rare heathland in the National Park, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Heathland



is home to some of Britain's rarest wildlife including all twelve of our native reptiles and amphibians. Over the five years of the project they are creating wildlife corridors forming an area of heathland greater than 1,200 football pitches.



## THANK YOU FOR STICKING TO THE PATHS!

Ground nesting bird season ends on 15 September and we want to thank everyone for sticking to the paths on our heathlands! This is one of four pledges that owners and dogs are taking through our new 'I take the lead' campaign.

Owners and dogs 'sign' a pawspport and pledge to follow these behaviours when out walking on our heaths:

- Going on the lead when walking near or approaching livestock
- Always bagging and binning poo (and encouraging other dog walkers to do the same)
- Sticking to the paths during birds' ground-nesting season
- Staying out of ministry of defence danger areas when the red flags are up.

Everyone who takes the pledge receives a free dog poo bone bag holder and an 'I Take the lead' badge to wear with pride on walks.

Look out for the team at local events including Secrets of the Heath on 8 & 9 September in Petersfield.



## VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Practical management season has arrived! This can only take place between September and March each year to avoid disturbing wildlife.

As we enter our third winter works season our partners need your help. During a practical management task on the heath you will probably be asked to 'scrub bash'

which involves pulling up species such as silver birch and Scots pine, which out-compete the heather on heathlands, or helping eradicate non-native invasive species such as rhododendron.

It may also involve stopping for a cup of tea and some well-deserved cake too.

Interested? Take a look at the timetable on our website and sign up to help. You can also look out for new 'Practical Management' boards which explain more about what conservation tasks may have taken place in that area.



## BIOBLITZ – LYNCHMERE COMMON

More than 100 people, young and old, joined us at Lynchmere Common on 31 July to discover more about their local heathland.

The day of discovery saw SDNPA Rangers, National Trust Rangers and local volunteers coming together to lead a series of exciting and informative wildlife walks for local families, the majority of whom had no previous experience on heathlands.

The themed walks included a reptiles and amphibian, bird, butterfly, mini beast, and tree walk. Partners from the Heathlands Reunited project hosted a variety of expert-led experiences including meeting a grass snake, butterfly identification and drawing, a moth trap inspection and a bug hunt.

Our face painter, Amy Jones from Creative Capers, was a big hit as everyone got to choose their favourite heathland species to have painted onto their arms and faces.

It was fantastic to see so many families discovering their local heathland for the first time and learning all about the rare wildlife and creatures that live on the common.

We are looking forward to next year's Bioblitz and hope that it will be just as successful.



## WALK THE HEATH WEEK

In August we ran our first guided walk programme 'Walk the Heath Week', with seven entertaining and educational walks.

Each walk was led by South Downs National Park Rangers or heathland site managers who took the opportunity to highlight the benefits that having actively managed heathlands can bring to local communities and individuals.

Every walk had a different theme, including navigation, health, local heritage, dogs and wildlife, conservation, the serpent trail and heathland management techniques.

Look out for our next programme of free Heathland guided walks in the coming months and, if you're interested in becoming a health walk leader, we are running training in Midhurst on the 11 of September. For more information please email

**[heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk)**

Find out more about the Heathlands Reunited project at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/heathlands-reunited/) and follow all the partners' work on social media using **#HelptheHeaths**

## QUIZ ANSWERS

- *West to east they are the Itchen, Meon, Rother, Arun, Adur, Ouse and Cuckmere.*
- *You might be surprised to learn that 58.5km of the river Itchen runs through the South Downs National Park – given that the river itself is only 45km long. But that's because of the number of channels it splits into on its journey.*
- *The Rother is the only river whose full length (56.3km) lies entirely in the National Park.*
- *Water voles are now breeding on the River Meon all the way from source at Meon Springs to the wetlands at Titchfield Haven.*
- *Today the rivers Adur and Arun run very different courses, with the Arun's mouth at Littlehampton and the Adur's at Shoreham but before the fifteenth century they shared one estuary at Lancing.*

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

- *The name Ouse probably comes from the Celtic name Ūsa and was derived from udso meaning water\*  
(\*See Ouse River. (n.d.) American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. (2011) from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Ouse+River>)*
- *The Cuckmere – possibly the most photographed river in the South Downs.*

## SIGN UP TO THIS NEWSLETTER

Sign up to receive this newsletter by email every month. With the latest South Downs news, stories, ideas for days out, competitions, to hear about our ranger and volunteers' work and much more...

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/)