



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Pride of place** Learn more about the National Park's first entry signs.
- **We did it!** Read about the incredible community effort that has seen £120,000 raised to repair the South Downs Way.
- **Celebrating our ninth anniversary** Find out nine ways to become a National Park custodian.
- **Discover National Parks fortnight** Our rangers hit the road for free family events.

As always please send your comments and ideas to us at newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk

First entry signs are unveiled for the South Downs National Park

Bespoke signs that reflect the unique heritage of the South Downs and create a sense of arrival are being installed at 19 pilot sites at specially chosen locations at, or near, the National Park's borders across Sussex and Hampshire.

The signs will help people know that they are in a unique landscape that has been designated for the whole nation and deserves special care and attention.

Every location has been carefully selected at key entry points to the stunning landscape and each sign's size and design have been tailor-made to fit its surroundings.

The signs are made from metal or a mixture of wood and metal – reflecting the history of iron work in the South Downs during the 17th and 18th centuries and that the South Downs has the most woodland of any



English National Park. The sweet chestnut wood used in the signs has been locally sourced from the Stansted Estate by English Woodlands. The white lettering reflects the iconic chalk landscape of the South Downs.

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority said: "These beautifully-crafted signs pay homage to the heritage of the South Downs and welcome people to a precious landscape, reminding them that it should be enjoyed with care and respect.

"Throughout history boundary markers have used local materials to reflect a community's pride in its place. These bespoke signs are part of that tradition.

National Park marks its ninth birthday



Nine years ago, a vision became a reality.

After years of campaigning, England's newest National Park was born, designating 1600km² of special landscape with its breathtaking views, unique heritage and hidden gems for the benefit of the nation.

Almost a decade on, the South Downs National Park is a thriving community. From farmers, to residents, to walkers, to visitors, to volunteer groups – each one is playing their part as custodians of this amazing place.

Our ninth birthday also coincides with the 70th anniversary of the laws creating National Parks as the UK's breathing spaces. Fittingly, it's also the Year of Green Action, a Government-backed initiative aiming to encourage people to take action that is beneficial to the environment.

So, as we mark this special year, here are nine tips for caring for your National Park and becoming a custodian:

1. Experience it!

Get out and enjoy the beauty of the National Park – we promise it will inspire you!

2. Save water

The South Downs is home to a huge aquifer that provides clean water to 1.2m people around the south east. Simple tips include having a shower instead of a bath or turning off the tap when brushing your teeth.

3. Volunteer

There are dozens of local conservation groups with opportunities to help protect and enhance biodiversity.

“They add to the National Park’s value as a destination to visit in support of local businesses, including our top-quality food and drink producers and the many well-being and leisure opportunities that the South Downs offer.

“We will carefully assess the response to the first 19 sites before deciding whether to proceed with further locations.”

The signs draw upon the National Park’s Shared Identity, which is a place brand for the National Park and is used by local partners, stakeholders and businesses to show they are part of an amazing place.

Designer Peter Anderson, who led on the design of the signs, said: “The signs were designed to respect and pay homage to the heritage, beautiful natural form and materials of the National Park.

“The form of the signs echo the rolling landscape of the SDNP and allow a viewing point through the sign to the scenery beyond it. Cor-ten steel reflects SDNP’s ironworks heritage, this material rusts organically allowing it live and breathe alongside its habitat.”



Find out more here: www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/volunteering/conservation-groups/

4. Buy less plastic, and if you must buy it – recycle or bin it!

More disposable packaging means more plastic ends up in water courses. Many birds are badly affected by plastic waste as it can be mistaken for nest-building material or food. Litter can be broken down into tiny particles called microplastics, which cannot degrade and can remain in our food chain indefinitely.

5. Eat local

Enjoying the food and drink produced locally in the South Downs helps to support the network of businesses that are the lifeblood of the National Park's economy.

6. Reduce chemical use in your garden

Excess fertiliser and pesticides run through the soil and can end up in our groundwater, rivers, streams and wetlands. Consider organic methods for pest, weed and disease control.

7. Pick up litter

Wherever you are in the National Park, make sure you bin litter or take it home.

8. Travel sustainably

Walk, cycle, use public transport or car share where possible. The plus side of leaving the car at home is you'll get to experience more of the National Park and get closer to the natural environment!

9. Share it!

Be sure to capture the beauty of the South Downs and share those images on social media – it all helps to raise awareness of why this area is so special!



Authority approves two innovative projects for farm diversification

Two innovative farm diversification schemes have been given the green light by the South Downs National Park Authority.

The Planning Committee voted to approve plans for multi-million pound projects at the Wiston Estate, North Farm, Washington, and Sky Park Farm in West Harting.

Work has now started to create a rural business park anchored by the Wiston Estate Winery. The plans include demolishing, converting, and extending the current winery and offices, in addition to building five self-contained holiday units.

The work is being supported by a wide-ranging infrastructure package, including improved habitat connectivity, better routes and wayfinding for users and visitors to the site, and surface water drainage that will help improve water quality.

Meanwhile, at West Harting, an educational and visitor enterprise will diversify the existing agricultural operation of the site as a working Deer Farm.



Supported by a new farm shop, visitor café, and outdoor children's activity area, the project will promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park. The plans were also supported by The British Deer Farms and Parks Association, which noted it is a model for diversification and sustainable deer farming in the UK.

Both landscape-led schemes were approved following pre-application discussions, giving careful consideration to design and impact.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning at the South Down National Park Authority, said: "Both these schemes represent large-scale and well-thought-out rural diversification.

"They are perfect examples of a landscape-led planning approach to deliver high-quality schemes that deliver on multiple levels. These include supporting a sustainable rural economy through job creation and promoting people's enjoyment of the National Park."

“Thank you” as Mend Our Way appeal hits fundraising target



A campaign to fix the South Downs Way has hit its £120,000 target following an incredible community fundraising effort.

The public, community groups, local businesses and donors have all rallied round to raise the sum in just over a year to ensure that vital improvements are made to the 100-mile national trail, which runs between Winchester and Eastbourne.

Now the South Downs National Park Trust, the charity co-ordinating the Mend Our Way fundraising campaign, is extending a massive ‘thank you’ to all the people who have made it possible.

The Mend Our Way appeal is part of the national ‘Make a Million’ initiative, which is run by the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) and seeks to raise £1m for some of the UK’s most treasured trails.

Work is already under way to mend sections of the Trail that were in desperate need of refurbishment, with a section at Plumpton transformed from a muddy, water-logged track into a brand-new, weather-resistant path. Work to fix other broken sections will take place later this year.

“We want to say a huge thank you to each and every person who donated,” said Andy Gattiker, trail officer for the South Downs Way.

“When we launched the appeal at the end of 2017, we knew people loved the South Downs Way and so were expecting a good response.

“But the community’s goodwill has far exceeded anybody’s expectations – it’s been phenomenal.”

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Andy added: “Every single penny donated will go towards mending sections of the trail that had suffered the effects of erosion and mud over several decades.

“Fifteen thousand pairs of boots, 10,000 tyres and 800 hooves travelling the length of the trail each year certainly cause a lot of wear and tear!

“Our existing funding had allowed us to make most repairs but there were more remote sections of the path that were simply too expensive to tackle using existing funds.

“This additional funding, the benefits of which are already being seen, will make a huge difference to the long-term vitality of the trail and ensure it can be enjoyed for many generations to come.”

The £120,000 was raised from a mixture of public donations, crowdfunding and a number of donations, including from:

- ❖ **British Mountaineering Council**
- ❖ **Langham Brewery**
- ❖ **The Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust**
- ❖ **The Monument Trust**
- ❖ **The Chalk Cliff Trust**
- ❖ **Friends of the South Downs**
- ❖ **The Banister Charitable Trust**
- ❖ **Ian Askew Charitable Trust**
- ❖ **The Calleva Foundation**
- ❖ **HF Holidays**
- ❖ **Trail Riders Fellowship**
- ❖ **M J Camp Charitable Trust**
- ❖ **Players of the Peoples Postcode Lottery**

Carey Davies, Mend our Mountains Campaign Lead, said: “We’re thrilled that the Mend Our Way appeal has its target so quickly and it’s testament to how much people love the South Downs Way.”



The South Downs National Park Trust is the official charity of the South Downs National Park. To find out more about the Trust and the work they do visit <http://www.southdownstrust.org.uk>

Find out more about the Mend Our Mountains appeal at <https://mendmountains.thebmc.co.uk/>

New South Downs Experiences launched



The South Downs National Park has announced eight immersive South Downs experiences as part of a campaign to inspire international tourists to visit the area.

From kayaking across stunning river valleys, to enjoying world-class English wines, the South Downs National Park marked English Tourism Week (March 30 to April 7) with the launch of an award-winning guide that celebrates the area's history, food and drink, and adventure opportunities.

The printed and online brochure, called the English National Park Experience Collection, has been produced with the support of VisitEngland's Discover England Fund and alongside eight other National Parks in England.

The collection is now being marketed to travel trade operators as the South Downs and other National Parks seek to build awareness among an international audience.

Katharine Beer, who leads Sustainable Tourism in the South Downs National Park, said: "We're really excited to be launching this collection as we look to build the profile of the South Downs among independent and small group travel operators, both overseas and at home in the UK. Each bookable experience has been carefully chosen to harness the growing demand for experiential tourism where visitors want to live, breathe and feel part of the place they are staying. Each experience is supported by a local accommodation provider and it's very much aimed at supporting the National Park's diverse accommodation offer.

"Our ultimate aim is to open up new markets, help tourism to grow sustainably and to contribute to the vibrancy of our local communities."

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Margaret Paren, Chair of the South Downs National Park and also National Parks England, recently collected a prestigious accolade from VisitEngland, which awarded England's National Parks the 'Outstanding Contribution to Tourism Award' for the new tourism programme. Previous winners include Her Majesty the Queen, Sir Paul McCartney, and the 70,000 Games Makers from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.



Margaret added: "This coveted award is particularly special in our 70th anniversary year when the UK's National Parks celebrate the founding legislation that paved the way for these treasured landscapes."

The eight experiences available are:

Paddle the South Downs

Submerge yourself in the South Downs National Park by exploring it on water.

Sparkling South Downs – Grape and Grain

Set among the rolling hills of the South Downs are wineries producing world-class sparkling wines, classic English breweries and exciting craft gin distilleries.

Jane Austen – The Dancing Years

A cultural experience exploring the life of the world-famous author, Jane Austen. Visit her birthplace, the "cradle of her genius", and the church where her father was rector.

Sparkling South Downs – Hampshire Tours

A chauffeured tour of the sparkling wine vineyards and wineries of the South Downs National Park region.

Sparkling South Downs – Fizz on Foot

Take in stunning views on a guided walk over grassy slopes and along the river bank in the South Downs.

Hills, Heath, Hops and Hampers

With an experienced local guide leading the way, discover the fascinating history and geology of the area.

Charleston – Home of Art and Ideas

A guided tour of Charleston, an internationally renowned historic house, garden and art gallery preserved as a time capsule.

South Downs – People, Place and Produce

Meet the people and producers who live and work in the National Park and find out why the chalk land is so special.

The English National Park Experience Collection can be found at: www.nationalparkexperiences.co.uk

Discover your National Park at free family events



A fun roadshow will be touring towns and cities across the south east over the Easter holidays.

Coinciding with the UK-wide Discover National Parks fortnight from 6-21 April, the roadshow will be bringing the National Park to towns and cities around the South Downs.

It will be celebrating all that is special and unique about the South Downs with a series of fun-filled family activities, including a giant colouring wall, Virtual Reality experiences, and woodcrafts. Led by the rangers, the events will also give people the opportunity to find out more about wildlife conservation in the National Park.

The full line-up will be:

Tuesday, April 9 – **Newhaven**, Newhaven Fort, Fort Road, BN9 9DS.

Wednesday, April 10 – **Horsham**, Market area – Carfax, RH12 1AQ.

Thursday, April 11 – **Southsea**, Canoe Lake, Clarence Esplanade, PO4 9RG

Thursday, April 11 – **Brighton**, Jubilee Square, BN1 1EE.

Friday, April 12 – **Bordon**, Forest Community Centre, Pinehill Road, GU35 0BS.

Tuesday, April 16 – **Worthing**, Montague Street, BN11 3HG.

Wednesday, April 17 – **Crawley**, Queens Square, RH10 1HA.

Thursday, April 18 – **Guildford**, Rotunda, North Street, GU1 4YT.

All the events are 11am to 3pm and no prior booking is required.

South Downs Centre launches Saturday opening hours



The South Downs Centre is launching Saturday and Bank Holiday opening and is encouraging visitors to make the most of the array of activities and information on offer.

The interpretation area, located in the beautiful former Grammar School of Midhurst, is the ideal way for families, walkers and community groups to start their journey in the South Downs.

The centre features colourful educational displays, packed with information on the history, geology and produce of the South Downs. For the children, there is a fun activities room, with brass rubbing and fascinating visual displays on the flora and fauna of the National Park.

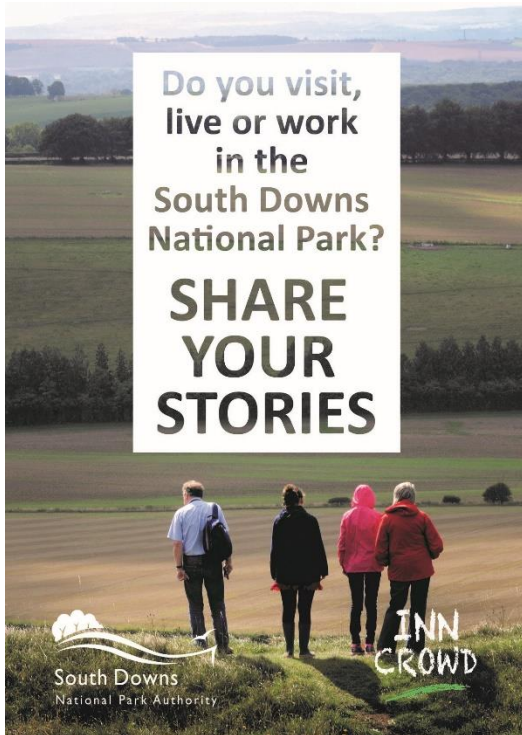
Visitors can also make the most of the local information room, packed with leaflets on days-out and walks in the National Park, and buy books, maps and souvenirs from the shop.

The new opening hours begin over Easter, with the centre in North Street open 9am to 1pm on Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Easter Monday. The centre will then be open on Saturdays and Bank Holidays from 9am to 1pm until October 26. Normal weekday opening hours from 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4.30pm on Fridays will continue.

Lottie Warren, one of the team at the South Downs Centre, said: "We're really excited to be launching our Saturday and Bank Holiday opening because it gives a lot of people who work during the week the chance to make the most of our facilities.

"Our friendly centre is the perfect way for people to start their journey into the South Downs and there's something for all ages."

Writer in Residence goes on tour of the South Downs



Playwright Sara Clifford will soon be starting a series of community workshops to gather the stories, thoughts and feelings of people who live and work in the South Downs.

It comes as Applause Rural Touring and the South Downs National Park have partnered together to support a creative Writer in Residence. The role of the Writer in Residence is to gather stories and to explore the rich cultural heritage of the region. The research will be used to create a new performance which will be staged in pubs located in towns and villages across the National Park as part of the Inn Crowd Scheme in September 2019.

Sara is a playwright and community arts practitioner based in Lewes. She will be spending time talking to a variety of people from different parts of the National Park, from the rural farmlands to the coastal areas to the busy towns, and will weave all the responses into a new one person show to be performed in pubs in the autumn.

Sara said: "I am so pleased to be working on this exciting project, and I want to hear your stories and memories: what do you know about the National Park or its history?"



"What do you know about the local myths and legends of your town or village? Are there local ogres or witches or ghost stories? Please tell us about them!"

"What about the present? How often do you visit the National Park, or do you live within it? What is your favourite place in the National Park and why? Do you prefer a large sweep of the chalky Downs, larks singing overhead? Or do you prefer a tiny ancient church, protected by an old yew tree and a quiet churchyard? Or perhaps a local pub, full of families relaxing?"

"And for the future? What would be your hopes for it? How can we continue to protect it for future generations?"

"I look forward to hearing from you – and seeing you in one of the seven pubs we will be performing in in September!"

How to get involved

What's On: You can take part in one of the many events Sara will be attending and arranging in the next few months. Keep checking here for details: <https://inncrowd.org.uk/writers-in-residence/>

Two free forthcoming events where people are invited to come and share their stories are:

April 9: Newhaven Fort - from 12.30pm to 3pm share your stories with Sara at the Discover National Parks event.

April 11: The Hope Inn Pub in Newhaven – from 5pm to 8pm take part in a drawing and writing creative workshop. Open to all abilities.

People can also share their thoughts, stories, reflections, creative responses and even songs online, using a form at the link above.

Play your part in creating Community Hub and Visitor Gateway



People are being urged to rally round to help save a village's only pub and transform it into a thriving Community Hub and Visitor Gateway for the South Downs National Park.

Villagers in Cocking, near Midhurst, are working together to save its last remaining pub, the Blue Bell, and turn it into a Community Hub for the benefit of the village and everyone enjoying the surrounding countryside.

The South Downs National Park is supporting the project, in principle and subject to planning permission, with funding for a Visitor Gateway in the Hub. The hub will be a place where ramblers, cyclists and all those visiting this beautiful area can discover more about the 1,627 km² of stunning National Park with its historic sites, walks, trails and wildlife, as well as benefiting from the Hub facilities. The project also benefits by being part of the National Park's Joint Identity programme.

But the clock is now ticking to raise the £120,000 needed to save the venue.

A Community Share Offer has been launched and is already attracting generous support from locals. Fundraisers are hoping more people will be able to pledge support before the current crowdfunding campaign, aiming to raise £20,000 of the £120,000 needed, hits its deadline on April 28.

Peter Gibbon, one of the villagers spearheading the fundraising campaign, said: "We are planning for this to be a relaxed, accessible venue where people of all ages can enjoy the pub, restaurant and café. We also

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want to offer other facilities, such as bike repair, overnight accommodation, information to visitors on the local area and eventually the Post Office when the postmaster retires.

"By working in partnership with the South Downs National Park, we are determined not to lose these key assets for the community and to welcome all those visiting the South Downs and key destinations in the area, such as the Weald and Downland Living Museum, West Dean College and Goodwood."

Peter added: "We are seeking a suitable tenant to run the venue, to live on site and share in the vision for the pub to become a true social hub, providing facilities and services that bring the community together and serve its visitors."



The Community Hub was launched after a possible housing scheme at the threatened pub was stopped and agreement reached to buy the building from the current owner. A packed village meeting demonstrated support and a Community Benefit Society was set up to raise funds.

Andrew Lee, Director of Countryside Policy for the South Downs National Park, said: "The SDNPA is keen to foster the social and economic well-being of the local communities in the National Park and to enable local communities living within it and on the fringes to be able to understand and enjoy this nationally designated landscape.

"With immediate access to the South Downs Way and many other local attractions the Community Hub's unique location offers itself to become an important Visitor Gateway attracting people to the area to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park and supporting local businesses in the process."

To get involved and support the project visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk/blue-bell-community-hub or go to www.bluebellhub.org

For further details on the project contact Frances Russell at frances.russell1@btinternet.com

My top five most accessible spots in the South Downs



Allison Thorpe, Access and Recreation Lead for the National Park Authority, gives her thoughts on the best locations for people with restricted mobility.

Did you know our ambition is to make the South Downs the UK's most accessible National Park?

Work has already begun in earnest to create new routes across this stunning landscape that offer easy access for people with limited mobility – and we're planning many more in the future!

So, as we recently mark Disabled Access Day, I wanted to recommend five places in the National Park that are really accessible – and the views aren't bad either! All of these trails and destinations are suitable for people with restricted mobility, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs.

Here are my top tips for a great morning or afternoon out in your National Park:

Bramber, West Sussex

One for the history lovers! The historic village of Bramber with its charming medieval castle is the starting point for this riverside route. Running alongside the River Adur this route is set against the backdrop of the South Downs and offers some picture-perfect views. Learn more

Seaford Head, East Sussex

If you like a breathtaking vista, this will not disappoint! Offering spectacular views over Cuckmere Haven and the Seven Sisters, we have two routes with hardstanding surfaced paths that are wide enough for two mobility vehicles to pass. There are also several benches at key viewpoints – the perfect spot for an

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Instagram shot or a flask of tea while you soak up those views. Learn more

Alice Holt Forest, Hampshire

Forming the most northerly gateway to the National Park, this former Royal forest is steeped in history as its famous oak trees were used to build Royal Navy warships in Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard. Today it is a beautiful example of English woodland, with a wonderful Easy Access Trail. The trail is suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs and has an optional shortcut. Look out for the majestic Scots Pine! Learn more

Mill Hill Access Trail, West Sussex

One for the nature lovers! Mill Hill is a 28-acre chalk grassland with an abundance of rare species, including Adonis blue and chalkhill blue butterflies, the yellow herb horseshoe vetch and the distinctive whitethroat. Mill Hill Access Trail is a 0.3 miles (0.5km) wheelchair friendly circular route with passing and resting places, including a wheel-chair friendly picnic table at the start of the trail. Don't forget to capture that picture of the River Adur and English Channel as you pass through! Learn more

South Downs Centre, Midhurst, West Sussex

Come and meet our friendly team and find out more about the National Park!

I hope everyone takes advantage of getting out and enjoying their National Park! (come rain or shine!)

Design a door contest

People are being invited to enter a competition to design a piece of artwork at Petersfield Station welcoming people to the wonderful town and countryside.

The competition, run by East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership, is seeking a design that includes people's vision of Petersfield's past, present or future, its countryside, attractions or indeed something else completely different!

Entries should be submitted by Thursday 18 April to Petersfield Post & Bordon Post, 33 High Street, Petersfield, Hampshire, UK, GU32 3JR

For further details visit

<https://www.facebook.com/easthampshirerail>

You can also request an entry form and competition details by emailing info@easthampshirerail.co.uk

My National Park...



As part of a new feature, we're finding out what the South Downs National Park means to people who live, work and visit here. Lesley Foulkes, of Langham Brewery in West Sussex, talks about her life and why the region is so special to her.

Can you tell us about yourself and what you do in the National Park?

I'm co-owner, together with James Berrow, of Langham Brewery. Langhams is a small independent steam-heated craft microbrewery, based in an 18th granary barn in the South Downs National Park, between Midhurst and Petworth.

Our passion lies in producing innovative, distinctive and flavoursome real ales using the finest quality ingredients, blending modern techniques and practices with traditional craft skills in an environmentally responsible fashion. Both James and I have day jobs, so everything the brewery makes is ploughed into equipment and R&D.

We offer a delicious range of award-winning artisan beers and have won over 45 awards in the last 10 years.

We pride ourselves on being a part of the South Downs National Park and local community, and contribute to a wide variety of local events, such as the Dog Fun Day at Woolbeding National Trust and Secrets of the Heath, Petersfield. Visitors are always welcome to the brewery as part of the South Downs Cyclist and Walkers Scheme and for brewery tours. A number of times a year we host live charity, music and comedy events in aid of local causes, including the South Downs Mend our Way Initiative as well as our infamous annual

"Bonkers for Conkers" Championship in aid of Chestnut Tree House and now in its 12th year!

What does the South Downs National Park mean to you?

We love our location at the heart of the South Downs National Park near Midhurst. The views from the brewery are stunning and it's a pleasure and privilege to work in such a wonderful environment. The beautiful scenery on our doorstep is also an attraction to visitors – we nestle in a dip, just south of Bexley Hill.

As we are close to the South Downs Way our location is also a big plus. We are a member of the South Downs Walkers and Cyclists scheme and a convenient refreshment stop for visitors to the South Downs.

The South Downs National Park offer fabulous opportunities for engagement with numerous activities and there is also a South Downs Food Portal to support small local businesses, such as ours, to put themselves on the map.

We were chuffed to bits to be the first corporate partner of the SDNPA Trust and love celebrating and contributing through our fundraising towards the conservation of the amenities and glorious countryside that surrounds us.

Where's your favourite place in the National Park and why?

Oooh! That's difficult! My most treasured experiences are on Butser Hill every Christmas Day with my family. Come rain, snow, fog we venture up for a pre Christmas lunch blustery walk. It is the highest point on the South Downs Chalk ridge and on a clear day there are fabulous views.

Is there anywhere you haven't been in the National Park that you'd like to go to and why?

I would love to explore Breaky Bottom. Although passionate about our brews, we have been told about a fabulous vineyard there!

What would you like to see in the National Park in the future?

That's a tough one. The south east is heavily populated with pressures and demands for improved infrastructure for business, transport and affordable housing. The challenge to the SDNPA is tremendous to enable all of the enterprises and communities within its perimeter to flourish and co-exist, while preserving the fabulous environment which we love and cherish. We look forward to collaborating with the SDNP Trust to help this to happen.

Things to do in the South Downs this April

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



- Enjoy fun-filled family activities, including a giant colouring wall, Virtual Reality experiences, and woodcrafts at towns and cities around the South East for **Discover National Parks fortnight**.
- Find the cheeky yellow ducks visiting their real life cousins around the wetlands during the Easter holidays! From 6 April to 22 April at **Arundel Wetland Centre**, enjoy pond dipping, boat safaris, and kids crafts.
- As the sun sets and the skies darken, the nightingale begins his evening concert. Join the team at **RSPB Pulborough Brooks** for a **night-time safari** on 18 April to learn more about this very special bird and other nocturnal wildlife.
- Visit the **Amberley Museum** on 28 April for the Spring Bus Show and enjoy your first opportunity of the season to ride some of our **historic buses**

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.

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www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/

NEWS FROM OUR HEATHS

Heathlands Reunited is a partnership of 11 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 12 of our native reptiles and amphibians. Over the five years of the project we are creating wildlife corridors forming an area of heathland greater than 1,200 football pitches.



Inspiring sculpture trail reflects heritage and rare wildlife at precious heaths

Intricate pieces of art that tell the story of the history, wildlife and people of heathlands have been designed for an exciting new educational trail in the South Downs National Park.

Inspired by stories from communities and drawing upon sources as diverse as the poet Tennyson and a 394-year-old local map, award-winning sculptor Graeme Mitcheson has created seven bespoke stone carvings for the South Downs Heathland Trail.

The trail will link seven heathland sites in the National Park to tell the story of why heaths are so important – as commonland enjoyed by local people throughout the centuries and as a rich haven for biodiversity, including rare insects and all 12 of Britain's native reptiles and amphibians.

The Heathlands Reunited team are working with the RSPB, National Trust, Hampshire County Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust to link up heaths at Wiggonholt, Stedham Common, Lavington Plantation, Shorth Heath Common, Graffham Common, Black Down and Woolbeding.

Graeme has spent the past six months working with trained volunteers who collected oral histories and carried out archive research with the local community, including groups and schoolchildren.

One of the carving designs, named the "Sheeppig", is inspired by a map of the Graffham area that was drawn in 1629, during the reign of Charles 1, showing the heath as commonland.

The beautiful map, introduced to Graeme by a Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve manager during a tour of the area, features tiny drawings of animals appearing to be standing on top of one another. A volunteer from the project then found the original archive copy of the map in the West Sussex Records office and Graeme will create a replica of the drawing in carved sandstone.

Graeme said: "The 'Sheeppig' is probably the most unusual of all the designs and will reflect the former

use of the heath as grazing land, while also paying homage to this amazing centuries-old local map.

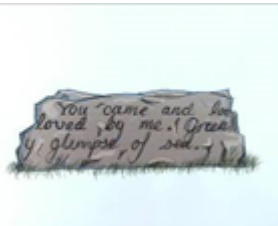
“Each and every piece has been inspired by the heritage of local communities and will aim to convey their unique stories for future generations to enjoy.

“We have chosen sandstone that will blend visually with other stone and sand on the heathlands. These tactile artworks will engage the viewer on a number of levels and take much inspiration from the natural world.”

The seven pieces of art are:

Black Down – Tennyson Quote

Probably the most famous admirer of the common and nearby former resident was poet Alfred Lord Tennyson. This carving is inspired by some of his words.



Graffham – Sheeppig

This sculpture will reflect the former use of the site as grazing land but also refers to the rare map of the vicinity. The piece will stand around 4ft high and be carved from sandstone.

Lavington – Lizard

Inspired by the oral histories detailing the abundance of snake and lizard species that thrive on the common. The low-lying carving will be quite subtle in the summer months with longer grass, but will become more apparent in the winter as grass die away. The sculpture can also function as a seat for people as they end their walk.



Stedham – Dragonflies Rest



Paying homage to the importance of insects to the commons at Stedham, the design is a sculptural seat inspired by insect wings. The simple but elegant carved stone

bench will rise and twist at either side in a manner similar to dragonfly wings.

Woolbeding – Resting Reptiles

Inspired by stories of grass snakes, adders and slow worms on the heathlands, as well as the many oak and

birch trees not found at other heathland sites. Located in a wooded area and adjacent to the Serpent Trail, two sculptures are planned, each containing a different type of snake curled up on a bed of oak or birch leaves.



Shortheath – Cranberry on the mire

Inspired by the diverse range of flora and fauna at the common, including the thriving wild cranberry and flowering water

crowfoot. This sculpture, carved out in such a way that the plants will hold water, will reflect the watery nature of the common and create a subtle work that will change over time.

Wiggonholt – Cricket

Works to reintroduce the field cricket and encourage the regeneration of heather inspired this piece. The field cricket is an extremely rare, declining and threatened insect in the UK which depends on heathland habitat. It is classified as Vulnerable and is given full protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and is a Section 41 Species of Principal Importance in England.



Katy Sherman, Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, added: “These seven pieces of art will tell the story of why heaths are so important – not just as individual commons but as part of a wider network of heathlands that support some of the rarest wildlife in Britain.

“We hope the carvings will inspire people to get to know their own heaths better and visit and explore other heaths. Most importantly, we hope these pieces will encourage people to get involved in caring for these incredibly rich havens for fauna and flora.”

Plans for the designs have now been submitted and will be decided upon in the coming months.

It is hoped the seven carvings will be in place by late Spring.