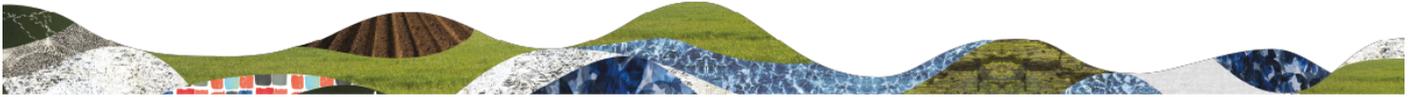


**SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK**  
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

## SOUTH DOWNS NEWS



### WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday** As we launch a year of celebrations, we look back at the humble beginnings of the campaign to create your National Park.
- **Picture perfect** Find out the winners of our annual photo competition and pick your favourite as we launch the People's Choice vote.
- **Embrace the darkness** Learn more about this year's Dark Skies Festival which promises to be bigger and better than ever!
- **Helping communities thrive** Find out more about a major funding boost for 20 projects.

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

## National Park celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**Happy New Year and welcome to our first newsletter of 2020. This year is very special for the South Downs National Park.**

It was 10 years ago that a vision became a reality.

After years of passionate campaigning, England's newest National Park was born, designating 1600km<sup>2</sup> of special landscape with its breathtaking views, unique heritage and hidden gems for the benefit of the nation.

The National Park's special qualities are as important today as they were a decade ago.

The world-class, inspirational landscape of chalk grassland, white cliffs, heathland and woodland.

A rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species.

Distinctive towns and villages, and communities with real pride in their area.



Great opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences.

Tranquil and unspoilt places.

An environment shaped by centuries of farming, embracing new enterprise and providing vital services such as clean water, food and space to breathe.

A Dark Night Sky with the best view of the stars you'll find anywhere in south-east England.

The list goes on!

We have an action-packed line-up of events, launches and activities to mark the anniversary, beginning with the Dark Skies Festival next month and followed by

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Discover National Parks fortnight for the Easter holidays. All details will be posted on our website and in the newsletter.

We want everyone who loves the National Park to be part of the celebrations, so why not come to one of our events or host one of your own.

As we begin our celebrations, we look back at the campaigners who strove to give the South Downs the recognition and protection it deserved since being identified as one of 12 potential National Parks all the way back in 1947.



***Robin Crane, Chairman of the South Downs Campaign, reflects on the inauspicious beginnings of the campaign, the struggles that followed and the eventual success.***

In December 1989 a review of our National Parks was launched under the chairmanship of Professor Ron Edwards.

This led to seven of us meeting at Woods Mill on 15th May 1990 to decide how the designation of the South Downs as a National Park could best be promoted. From this humble beginning the South Downs Campaign grew until by 2010 our membership comprised 160 national, regional and local organisations, including 28 town and parish councils.

From the very beginning we were faced with one obstacle after another. In 1990 the South Downs Forum was supposed to debate the future status of the Downs, but a fait accompli was delivered by the Countryside Commission when they established the Sussex Downs Conservation Board.

In 1997 the Commission launched its consultation on the future of all the AONBs and their 1998 publication "Protecting our countryside – Advice to Government" stated that the South Downs did not meet the criteria for designation as a National Park. Not one of their Commissioners who approved this document had first-hand knowledge of our two glorious AONBs.

There was obstruction in Whitehall as well. When we met the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher in

March 1999 we found that our three letters and two powerful documents rebutting the Countryside Commission's Advice had not been shown to him. Nor had he been made aware of the huge level of public support for a South Downs National Park. Michael Meacher turned to his assistant and said "How am I meant to undertake a thorough analysis of this case without the evidence?"

Fortunately we won the argument. The then Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, announced that he was asking the newly-formed Countryside Agency "to consider designating, in consultation with local authorities, a National Park for the South Downs." The fact that Prescott then said that this was "a hundredth birthday present from Labour to the nation" inevitably raised the political temperature to boiling point for the remaining years of our campaign.

The first South Downs paper to be put before the Countryside Agency's new Board was so flawed that a hastily written response by CNP was shoved under the Agency chairman's door at 11.30pm on the night before his meeting.

However, the Agency's Board took the trouble to visit our two AONBs before their second meeting. The next day they unanimously decided that the South Downs did meet the criteria for designation as a National Park and that the process of designation should proceed. The Countryside Agency then took two years to consult the public and the local authorities on the South Downs National Park. We were closely involved in their reviews on Administration and Planning. Meanwhile, our boundary group undertook nearly 90 visits and surveys of areas outside our two AONBs, to gather evidence for their inclusion in the National Park.

During the 13 months of the protracted Public Inquiry we were in constant attendance. We made 26 formal appearances, tabled 25 written representations and submitted 52 proofs of evidence.

Throughout our history we were extremely fortunate, not only in having so many supporting organisations, but in having a succession of exceptionally able and dedicated members in our team. The quality of all our work was of the highest standard and so the evidence presented by the Campaign was always very hard to refute. Had it not been so there would be no South Downs National Park today.

It was very fortunate that the Countryside Agency's consultants initially proposed to exclude Liss from the National Park because this enraged a certain local resident: Margaret Paren. She promptly joined our campaign in 2002 and became a leading member of our team. We were of course delighted when she became Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority.

# "Otherworldly" photo wins contest



**A breathtaking composition capturing a runner jogging into the mist-covered hills at sunrise is the winner of the South Downs National Park's Annual Photo Competition.**

"Into The Mystic", by Andrew Gambling, took first place in the popular photography contest, which attracted more than 170 entries capturing scenes from across the length and breadth of the National Park.

The theme for the competition was "Experiencing the Natural World" and judges agreed that Andrew's extraordinary photograph met the brief perfectly.

Meanwhile, the competition also included a separate category for best wildlife image – with first place going to an adorable picture of a hare munching on leaves in a colourful blanket of wildflowers.

The competition judges were award-winning photographers Rachael Talibart and Finn Hopson, Nick Heasman, Countryside Policy Manager for the South Downs National Park Authority, Doug Jones, SDNPA Member, and the late Steve Watkins, Editor of Outdoor Photography Magazine. Steve sadly passed away last month and this year's competition is dedicated to his memory and tireless work to promote photography of the natural world.

Nick Heasman added: "It's a natural experience, but the amazing thing about the photograph is the almost supernatural feel to it. When you consider it's so close to a busy urban area and yet it feels otherworldly. It offers a bit of escapism and I think that's what the South Downs National Park is all about."

Andrew Gambling, from Storrington, West Sussex, took the shot near Amberley Mount, capturing a misty scene in front of Houghton Hill. He said that the "sun had risen but was diffused by the mist, creating a 'jaw' around the sun for a few seconds, displaying the

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different levels of mist in the valley, just as a runner ran down the South Downs Way to disappear into it".

Andrew, who wins a £250 prize, said: "I am incredibly honoured, and slightly humbled to have won. I find there is nothing better, on so many levels, to be out in the South Downs National Park as it wakes from its slumber on a misty morning with the camera on a tripod, and a freshly boiled cuppa in hand, trying to capture the essence of this very special place. I hope this picture, and many others that I look forward to sharing in the future, make people feel the same."

The runner-up prize for the main category went to Mark Couper, who captured an exceptional image of the National Park's heathland at Stedham Common, in West Sussex.



Commenting on "Stedham Common Sunrise", Rachael Talibart said: "It's absolutely stunning and I would have that on my wall. It's a very accomplished composition."

Mark, who lives in Cosham, Portsmouth, and wins £100, said: "The South Downs National Park is such a large, beautiful and diverse place."

Third place was awarded to "Take Flight", a beautiful misty scene taken at first light at Steyning Bowl. Lloyd Lane, from Brighton, wins £50 for his composition.

In the wildlife category, the winner was "Hare in Wildflower Margin", taken by Adam Huttly, from Littlehampton. The picture was taken just north of Arundel.

Commenting on the image, Rachael Talibart said: "I like that you can see chalk in the photograph so you know it's the South Downs. But my favourite element is the hare's little mouth full of food – it's adorable! The lighting is also lovely. A very classy photograph."

Adam, who wins £100, said: "I really hope this image encourages people to get out and discover the wonders of nature that can be found on the magical South Downs and surrounding areas."

## It's time to embrace the darkness!

"It also highlights the great work the farmers do by leaving margins and wildflower borders. So many people work very hard to protect our green space and the precious wildlife that need this space to survive and flourish."



Runner-up in the wildlife category was Dick Hawkes with his delightful picture of a "Surprised Water Vole". Judges commended the patience of the photographer in capturing an "amazing wildlife shot" as a water vole appears from a burrow on the River Meon in the middle of East Meon, Hampshire.

Dick, who wins £50, said: "I'm not sure who was the most surprised when I peered over a low wall into the narrow channel!"



Paying tribute to Steve Watkins, SDNPA Member Doug Jones said: "We've worked with Steve since the early years of the competition and he's always been a tremendous asset to the judging panel. Although his work had taken him all over the world, the landscapes of the South Downs seemed to hold a particular passion for him and his ability to inspire others to enjoy the outdoors will be greatly missed."

The five winning images will now join five highly-commended photos for the People's Choice vote, which has a £100 prize. Those highly commended are: "Pony Heaven" by Joe James; "The Mindful Walker" by Gary Hider; "The Theory of Everything" by Ismail Mungul; "Female Chalkhill Blue Heading To Roost" by Thomas Moore; and "Startled Skylark" by Sara Humphrey.

**See all the images and vote for your favourite by January 31 at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/PeoplesChoice2020](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/PeoplesChoice2020)**



**The South Downs National Park's Dark Skies Festival returns bigger and better than ever next month with an action-packed line-up of cosmic fun for all the family.**

As the National Park marks its 10th anniversary in 2020, the SDNPA is pulling out all the stops to bring the wonders of the star-studded skies to people of all ages. The flagship free event, Stargazing South Downs, returns and is being extended this year to include a new roadshow in Steyning, joining Lewes, Midhurst and Petersfield.

The popular Brighton Seafront moongazing experience is also being expanded to include an awe-inspiring night-time trip in the i360 with the National Park's Dark Skies Ranger, Dan Oakley.

The festival runs from February 7 to 23 and includes events across the length and breadth of the National Park. Now in its fourth year, the festival celebrates the National Park's International Dark Sky Reserve status, which was awarded in 2016 and recognises it as one of the 16 best places in the world to view the stars.

Visitors to Stargazing South Downs will be able to enjoy indoor planetarium shows, an incredible VR experience exploring the Milky Way, nocturnal wildlife displays, talks by Dark Skies experts, a giant colouring wall of the solar system, science experiments and the ever-popular astronaut selfie booth. And, if the night's sky is clear, there will be moongazing and stargazing outside for people to see the universe in all its glory through large telescopes. The roadshows will include expert guidance on how to make the most of your telescope and one lucky person will receive a brand-new telescope as part of a quiz competition.

Other organisations are also joining in the cosmic fun, with events at the Herstmonceux Observatory Science

## National Park begins new decade with major funding boost for local communities

Centre in East Sussex, lectures at Gilbert White's House in Hampshire, a star party at RSPB Pulborough Brooks and a four-day weekender event 'Petworth Dark Skies' at the National Trust's Petworth House.

Dan Oakley, Dark Skies Ranger, said: "Seeing the immense views of the starry sky over the National Park is an incredible experience and we're hoping to share it with more people than ever.

"It's now four years since the South Downs was designated as an International Dark Sky Reserve and it stands as one of the many achievements in the first decade of the National Park. Aside from being unbelievably beautiful and awe-inspiring for us to look at, the dark star-studded skies are vital for all flora and fauna."



*Late night at Rottingdean by Piers Fearick*

Laura Warren, Events and Engagement Officer, added: "To tie in with the 10th anniversary theme we will be exploring whether there may be a total of 10 planets in the solar system if you count in the dwarf planet Pluto and the mysterious planet X which scientists believe exists, but has not yet been discovered. We'll also be suggesting 10 actions you can take to protect the night's sky."

The line-up of events for Stargazing South Downs is:

**Saturday 8 February – Midhurst Rother College, Midhurst, West Sussex, 4pm to 8pm.**

**Saturday 15 February – Steyning Grammar School, Steyning, West Sussex, 4pm to 8pm.**

**Tuesday 18 February – Festival Hall, Petersfield, Hampshire. 4pm to 8pm.**

**Thursday 20 February – The Town Hall, Lewes. 4pm to 8pm.**

Stargazing South Downs events are free to attend with no booking required.

The complete events schedule and all details for other events are available at:

[www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/events-calendar?event\\_type=dark-skies-festival](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/events-calendar?event_type=dark-skies-festival)



*Egrets Way*

**A new cycle path, study centre, play facilities, fitness trail and "green infrastructure" are among the community projects to benefit from a major funding boost from the South Downs National Park Authority.**

Twenty projects across Sussex and Hampshire are set to benefit from a share of £555,000. The funds have been raised through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is administered by the SDNPA and paid by developers as a means of supporting new community infrastructure.

A total of £113,000 of CIL funding has been allocated for the next phase of Egrets Way, giving cyclists and walkers year-round access to the heart of the National Park. When completed the Egrets Way will form a network of multi-user paths running from Lewes to Newhaven and connecting the villages in between. Nearly half of the planned network has been built and is in use, with sections of pathway running between Lewes and Kingston, Southease and Rodmell, and Southease and Piddinghoe. Lewes District Council is also allocating its own CIL funding of £250,000 to pay for the next phase of the project.

Meanwhile, £50,000 has been allocated to an education scheme for children and young people at Queen Elizabeth Country Park in Hampshire. A new outdoor shelter will be provided, along with improvements to ponds, allowing children to explore and learn about the natural environment. More than £40,000 has also been allocated for improvements to

# Father and son's passion for walking "in" the Downs



## Feeling part of the landscape is good for the soul.

That's the verdict of father and son Alan and Matthew Crook, whose passion for walking has seen them compile dozens of guided walks and maps across West Sussex.

Their adventures have seen them cover the length and breadth of the county and they continue to map out more routes.

Alan, from Chichester, said: "I very much believe 'walking in the Downs'.

"I like to feel that you are part of it all – experiencing the birds, the butterflies.

"I just want to help people experience what is on their doorstep.



"It has been very encouraging and a great deal of folk have enjoyed the maps and are now walking on a regular basis."

An example pub walk with maps around Stoughton can be found [here](#).

*\*None of the walking routes have been tested or endorsed by the SDNPA.*

the South Downs Way to enhance links between Winchester and the National Park.

Just over £80,000 has been allocated to a second phase of improvements at Easebourne Park in West Sussex – including new play equipment and a multi-use shelter. Further south in West Sussex, a new study centre will be constructed using £40,000 of CIL funding at Home Farm to support the Goodwood Trust's educational programme.

Just over £35,000 has been allocated to green infrastructure projects, including improvements to habitat water meadows and hedgerows at Lewes Railway Land Local Nature Reserve.

Some £31,500 has been allocated for new play and exercise equipment at Homewood, Findon and £2,500 has been allocated to help create a new fitness trail at Stedham with Iping in West Sussex.

In Petworth, £33,000 has been allocated to provide a new pedestrian crossing on A272 close to Sylvia Beaufoy car park.

In addition to the £555,000 funding boost, £115,000 has been distributed in accordance with CIL regulations to 25 parish councils for the benefit of local communities across the National Park.



Margaret Paren, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "As we begin a new decade for the National Park, we're very pleased to be announcing this CIL funding.

"All the projects

represent infrastructure improvements that enrich the quality of people's lives, whether that be recreation, health and well-being, transport or having a wildlife-rich environment.

"We know CIL funding can make a real difference to local communities, encouraging them to thrive and prosper and benefitting future generations. The Community Infrastructure Levy is an important element of our role as a planning authority and will continue to be so in the future.

"As we mark the National Park's 10th anniversary this year, it's wonderful to be able to help so many diverse and worthwhile projects."

To see the full list of projects allocated CIL funding visit [www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-begins-new-decade-major-funding-boost-local-communities/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-begins-new-decade-major-funding-boost-local-communities/)

## Community comes together to plant trees



**Jan Knowlson, Ranger for the Eastern Downs, gives her account of a tree planting day in East Sussex.**

Myself and volunteers from Seven Sisters were out in Newhaven helping the Friends of Riverside Park plant trees. The day was organised and supported by East Sussex CC Newhaven Town Council, Burley's Landscape Contractors, Greenhavens Network, Lewes District Council and the SDNPA. They plan to improve habitat for pollinators, by managing scrub, creating ponds and tree planting. The site is approximately 28ha and has a mix of open grassland, and scrub – mainly Elder and Blackthorn, so the idea is to keep a mix of habitat but also add in more variety of tree species to provide nectar sources at different times of year.

To mark the beginning of National Tree Week, they had obtained over 400 trees from the Woodland Trust, plus some from local tree wardens and other groups.

We agreed to help by supporting the public in planting trees. It was an open event so we had no idea how many people would come along, but the weather forecast was dry, so that would help.

We started planting at 10am and by 11.30am we had run out of trees, so many people came along! More trees arrived about midday, so we planted another 300 or so in the afternoon.

All the trees were native species, which flower and provide nuts or berries for wildlife. Species included, Rowan, Dog Rose, Goat Willow, Rowan and Hazel.

It was really inspiring to see so many people come out to plant trees and it was a great example of community working. People of all ages coming together for a good cause!

## Full train service will provide gateway

**Campaigners are celebrating after Sunday services are set to be introduced at Cooksbridge railway station, a gateway to the National Park.**

**Kevin Froude, from Cooksbridge Station Partnership, writes about the victory.**

Cooksbridge station, two miles north of Lewes, is situated right on the border of the National Park and enjoys beautiful views of the South Downs. Directly from the station there is a network of unbroken, off-road footpaths leading up to the South Downs Way.

In 2009 Hamsey parish council started a campaign for a full hourly service, seven days per week and in 2010 the Cooksbridge Station



Partnership was founded to carry this forward. Over the ensuing years there have been some incremental improvements, focussed on filling out weekday evening services. The major breakthrough came in last year when Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) agreed to provide an hourly service from Monday to Saturday. Furthermore, at an event to celebrate the first Saturday service for 35 years GTR announced that an hourly Sunday service would be added in May 2020.

At last Cooksbridge will become a fully viable gateway to the National Park for visitors travelling by train. The Station Partnership is working with the SDNPA to develop and promote two more walks starting from Cooksbridge station.

The first follows footpaths up to the Downs, then eastward along the ridge, returning to Cooksbridge via Offham Hill and the Ouse Valley. The second continues along the Downs to Landport Bottom and through Lewes to the station.

A leaflet will be launched detailing the walks in May to coincide with the introduction of Sunday services.

Having achieved its objective, the next task of the Partnership is to ensure services are well used and remain in place to be enjoyed by future generations – so the work goes on!

## Advent Calendar quiz winner is announced



**More than 1,200 people took part in our Christmas Advent Calendar quiz and we're proud to be announcing the winner.**

Ian Stringer, of Brighton, is our winner and receives a magnum of Nyetimber wine. Ian will also be enjoying a Ranger Experience where he will taken on a whistlestop guided tour of the National Park, learning about the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the area.

Jeff Travis, Media Officer who helped to organise the quiz, said: "We had a phenomenal response to the quiz and I'd like to thank everyone who took part.

"We've had some lovely comments from people about how much they enjoyed it and learned about the National Park. It's something we'd like to do again and we'll keep people posted!"

## Win an overnight stay at Seven Sisters!

**People are being offered the chance to win an overnight stay for two in a beautiful 16<sup>th</sup> century flint building.**

The prize is being offered as part of the South Downs National Park Trust's online community lottery, which launched last autumn to help further protect and enhance the National Park for future generations.

This year's first bolt-on prize is an overnight stay with breakfast for two people at Saltmarsh, Seven Sisters

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Country Park in the South Downs National Park. Saltmarsh is a beautiful 16th Century, Grade II listed, flint building with house and gardens set on the edge of the Friston Forest.

Numbers are drawn every week for the lottery, which has a top prize of £25,000.

For more details on the community lottery and to get tickets visit [www.southdownslottery.co.uk](http://www.southdownslottery.co.uk)



*CONGRATULATIONS! Cathy Marlow, of Chichester, won the bolt-on lottery prize last month*

## Applications for funding are sought

**The Volunteer Ranger Service and South Downs National Park Trust are pleased to announce the opening the Volunteer Conservation Fund for 2020.**

The Fund will allocate grants of up to £5,000 annually (£2,000 is the average grant) to projects that enhance the National Park and include practical support of the Volunteer Ranger Service.

Eligible applicants include charities, parish councils, community groups, not-for-profit organisations and landowners.

Full details can be found on [www.southdownstrust.org.uk/vcf](http://www.southdownstrust.org.uk/vcf) where a short application form can be downloaded.

The deadline for submissions is 31 March 2020.

**SOUTH DOWNS**  
NATIONAL PARK TRUST  
VISIT • GIVE • PROTECT

# Things to do in the South Downs this January

Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at [southdowns.gov.uk/events/](http://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



- Join the **Lord's Piece** Pootle! A gentle circular walk on 16 January led by a National Park ranger, stopping to observe wildlife and absorb the views of the open heaths and rolling down landscape.
- Visit **RSPB Pulborough Brooks** as it gets ready for the Big Garden Birdwatch (27-29 January). On 18 January you can make your own bird feeder to hang in your garden and take part in a mini garden birdwatch.
- If you're new to birdwatching join the session "Birding for absolute beginners – garden birds" at RSPB Pulborough Brooks. The **workshop** takes place on 26 January.
- Join broom-maker Chris Letchford to learn how to forage for materials and make your very own besom broom from start to finish. The **event** takes place at Chapel Common, near Liss, on 26 January.

## 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.

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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/)