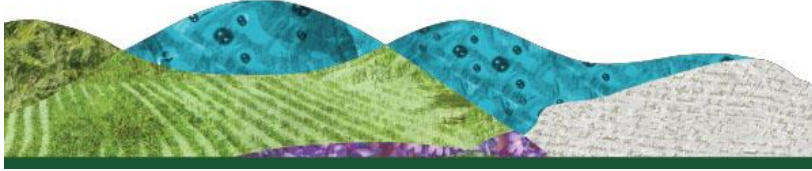


## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK CITIZENS PANEL NEWS



### March 2019

Welcome to our quarterly newsletter. This March we've got more detailed results from the survey last autumn and an update on how the National Park Authority is using this information.

We also flag up our exciting events during National Parks fortnight in April, and provide top tips to help you conserve and enhance water, information on the micro-volunteering day and a Heathlands Reunited project update.

If you want to know more about what's happening in the National Park please remember to sign up for the monthly newsletter <http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/>.

Happy Easter!

Tanya Hibberd

What would you like to read in this newsletter? I'd love to hear your ideas at [tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk)

### Meet the panel members

If you would like to answer a few short questions about why you joined the panel and what the National Park means to you, please email [tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk).

### Spring survey 2019

The spring survey is going out the week of 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Please look out for it in your Inbox. Your response to our surveys is always incredibly appreciated. We make sure we only ask questions where we are prepared or able to act on the survey results, so please do take the time to respond as your input really does count.

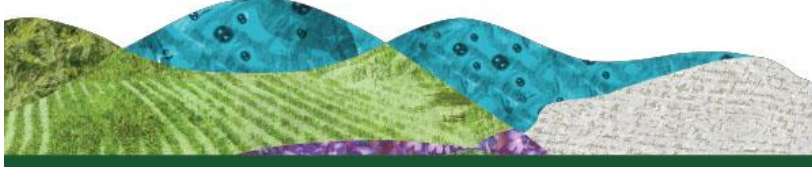
If you have any suggestions for future surveys, we would love to hear them. Please email me at [tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk).

### Autumn survey 2018 – what are we doing with the results?

Thank you to everyone who took part in our autumn survey, as always your responses are extremely useful.



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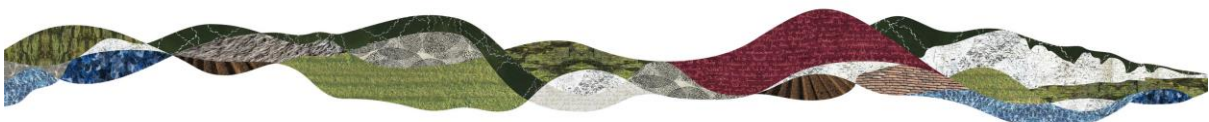
- Almost one in ten of you (9%) **had attended an event** where you saw our events van, team or stand. Seven in ten (67%) weren't aware of the events that were on; so there is an area of learning for us, thank you
- Almost three in ten of you (28%) had **signed up to the South Downs National Park e-newsletter** and remained signed up. The main reason for not signing up was that people had not got round to it (46%); just 1% of you stated you were not interested in the content. It is good to hear that you like the content of the e-newsletter and remain signed up once you have done so
- Two thirds of you thought that the Authority and our partners should do more to promote health and wellbeing in the National Park by **including links on our website to walks and activities in the National Park** (66%) and **working directly with local communities to promote opportunities that are available in the National Park** (66%)
- Around a third of you (35%) were **interested in participating in a focus group or online community** to help inform our strategy for health and wellbeing
- More than one in ten respondents (11%) were interested in **completing a John Muir Award** in the National Park.
  - We are in the process of recruiting a Health and Wellbeing Officer and a Families Outreach Officer who will take forward the work on health and wellbeing and John Muir. We will be providing more information on this once the individuals are in post.
- Over three quarters of you (76%) **recognised** one or more of the four **shared identity images**. This is an *increase* of 16% on the 2017 survey
  - We are currently installing **19 road signs** across the National Park which will help raise the profile of the South Downs and its boundary and the shared identity.

We have taken on board the fact that many of you found it frustrating that you had to type in your email address or telephone number multiple times in the autumn survey. We are working with Walnut to ensure it does not happen again. Instead, if you are asked if you want to participate in a focus group or other qualitative research project, we will ask whether you are happy for Walnut to pass on your contact details to Tanya Hibberd at the National Park Authority.

Feedback also suggests many of you would like to be asked more conservation/environmental questions so we have taken this on board and will have a bigger focus on issues the National Park faces post-Brexit in future surveys.

The full autumn survey report is now on our website

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/discover/research/citizens-panel/>.



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### Online community research – thank you

Thank you to the 24 panel members who kindly tested our website back in August 2018 as part of a four-day online community. You provided invaluable feedback on issues, such as the amount of content, the website structure, the tabs and titles and link descriptions, and the need to increase the prominence of the discovery map by moving it to the home page. We are in the process of updating our website and will take many of your recommendations on board. We are then planning to run some further tests on a sample of panel members so watch this space for more information.

### National Parks fortnight

A fun roadshow will be touring towns and cities across the south east over the Easter holidays to showcase our amazing National Park. Coinciding with the UK-wide Discover National Parks fortnight from **April 6 to 21**, 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 National Park Authority rangers, the events will also give people the opportunity to find out more about wildlife conservation in the National Park.

Laura Warren, Events and Engagement Officer for the South Downs National Park Authority, says: *“The South Downs is such a special landscape and we want to encourage people of all ages to get out and discover it for themselves. Our roadshow will have lots of activities for children and we’re hoping it will inspire them to want to find out more about this wonderful place.”*

The [free events](#) will be coming to locations across Hampshire, Sussex and Surrey. 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.

Laura continued: *“We’ve chosen urban locations on the fringes of the National Park because we’re keen to raise awareness of the opportunities the South Downs offers not only for those living within it, but also those*



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people who might not have been before. We're looking forward to welcoming visitors and showing people how easy it is to get out and discover their National Park."

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

For further details see [www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/discover-national-parks-2019](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/enjoy/events/discover-national-parks-2019)

### Help to protect our vital water resource with five simple steps

**World Water Day** took place on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March. Did you conserve water?

Statistics show that four fifths of the rivers and streams in the National Parks, as well as the aquifers which provide our drinking water, are currently considered in a "poor condition", owing to decades of run-off from surrounding land, both rural and urban.

The South Downs National Park Authority is working closely with landowners and farmers to reduce nitrate-rich run-off, but says the general public can also play their part to improve the health of the water courses.

Jeremy Burgess, the National Park Authority's expert on water, says: *"The water of the South Downs is an incredibly valuable natural asset for this region. Not only does the chalk provide filtered drinking water to over a million people across our towns and cities, but the rivers provide a home to important wildlife species and could support many more. It would be easy to take this kind of life-sustaining resource for granted – but the simple truth is that we can't. We can all play our part to help preserve and improve the water of the South Downs."*

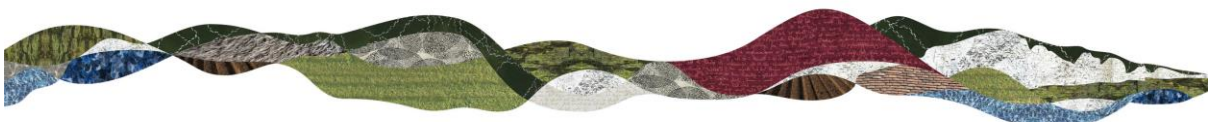
Jeremy shares his five tips to help protect and enhance the water of the South Downs below:

#### 1. **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 micro plastics, which cannot degrade and can remain in our food chain indefinitely.

#### 2. **Save water**

This is particularly important during the summer months as lower rainfall and hot weather place more pressure on the water reserves in the South Downs. Simple measures such as turning off the tap while brushing your teeth, using a bucket of water to wash your car and saving water in a water butt to water your garden will really help.



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### 3. Remember the toilet is not a bin!

Avoid putting sanitary products, wet wipes and dental floss down the toilet. The marine and river systems are closely connected, and water quality can improve by taking extra care.

### 4. Keep out oils, fat, or grease from the sink

Avoid pouring cooking oil, fat or grease down the kitchen sink. Instead, keep a jar that collects all the fats, grease or oil then discard with your general waste.

### 5. 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.

Jeremy added: “Water quality can take many, many years to improve, so we have to look at this as a long-term programme that everyone can get involved with. We are already seeing some encouraging signs that water quality may be improving, such as the return of otters to some parts of the National Park and rising numbers of key indicator species like eels.”

## Micro-volunteering Day Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April

How many times have you heard people say they can't volunteer because they don't have enough time, that they will only be able to volunteer when they retire or that volunteering is too physically demanding? We want to help challenge volunteering stereotyping by promoting all the little ways that people can make a big difference. Our youth ambassadors are organising an Instagram takeover that day from 9am from Kingley Vale to Cuckmere Haven. See our website - [www.southdowns.gov.uk](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk) – for more details.

## Heathlands Reunited project update

The Heathlands Reunited Project (<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/heathland/heathlands-reunited/>), launched in 2016 and runs for five years until 2021, and is made possible thanks to a generous National Lottery Heritage Fund grant. It is a partnership of 11 likeminded organisations working across 41 heathland sites led by the South Downs National Park Authority. Heathland covers just one per cent of the South Downs National Park, mostly separated into ‘islands’ where isolated plants and animals are far more vulnerable to local extinction. The heath is home to all 12 of our native reptiles and amphibians.

The project aims to expand, improve and create heathland to cover an area greater than 1,200 football pitches. It also aims to re-engage and inspire communities to visit their heathlands, learn more about them and work together to look after them so they can be enjoyed for generations to come. Watch our short heathlands documentary created by the partnership on project sites to learn



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more about why our heaths are so important:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgmbhY8Y2fY&feature=youtu.be>

There are a number of FREE events, walks and talks for everyone to get involved with. Take a look at our **spring walks programme**. It features a variety of themed walks, all aimed at different audiences, interests and walking levels. Some will be led by site managers, others by nature enthusiasts and dedicated volunteers. Themes will include wildlife dog walks, land management, heathland species and heritage..

More information and booking for events can be found here: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/heathland/heathlands-reunited/heathlands-events/>

### Joining the Citizens Panel

We are always looking to recruit more people to the panel, especially those under 54 years of age as these age groups are currently underrepresented. If someone you know would like to join the panel then please ask them to get in touch with [tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:tanya.hibberd@southdowns.gov.uk). Thank you.

