

Case Study

Heathlands Reunited: Interactive Mapping and Site Interpretation

Background

Heathlands Reunited is a five year project running from 2016 until 2021, made possible thanks to a generous National Lottery Heritage Fund grant. It is a partnership of 11 like-minded organisations working across 41 heathland sites led by the South Downs National Park Authority.

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/care-for/heathland/heathlands-reunited/>

Heathland covers just one per cent of the South Downs National Park, mostly separated into 'islands' where isolated plants and animals are more vulnerable to local extinction.

As well as expanding, improving and creating new heathland, the project aims to reengage and inspire communities to visit their local heathlands, learn more about them and work together to look after them so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

The project has been able to identify people and communities who want to engage with their local heathland but the lack of information available to them has been a barrier to action.

One of the project's aims was to install nine welcome boards at nine heathland sites, as well as producing an online interactive map to help people understand where heathlands are located within the South Downs National Park. This will also help to 'join heathlands up' in peoples' minds at a landscape scale, improving awareness of their connectivity. In total 32 project sites are included on the interactive map.



The project

Each heathland site is managed and owned by a different organisation in the partnership. Six partners took up the offer of installing site specific educational welcome boards, paid for by the project:

1. RSPB at Pulborough Brooks
2. Sussex Wildlife Trust at Iping and Stedham Common
3. Ministry of Defence at Kingsley Common
4. Hampshire County Council at both Broxhead and Shortheath Commons
5. Lynchmere Society at Lynchmere Common
6. SDNPA at Chapel Common

Two boards were also installed at Ambersham and Heyshott Commons by permission of the Cowdray Estate.

Each welcome board was designed to clearly reflect the ownership, or managing partner of the site reducing any confusion regarding site responsibility. Each board, therefore, accommodated the organisations' brand guidelines including colour palette and partner logo.

However, it was also important to ensure design consistency across the boards, helping people to recognise the connection between the heathland sites.

Information about the project can also be found online, supporting the messages of the site information boards. The project has launched an online interactive map which allows members of the public to find their local heathland sites within the South Downs National Park. The online map also provides information on how to get to each site and the opportunity to download a map of each site.

www.southdowns.gov.uk/find-your-local-heath

“The smart new noticeboards at Shortheath and Broxhead have given us the opportunity to provide information about our important heathland habitats and the species that live there, which we were unable to provide before.

The space for posters has meant we can change up the information we display, helping us to deliver key, time critical message and aid volunteer recruitment. The South Downs National Park Authority and Heathlands Reunited branding and project maps also demonstrate the position of the sites within the wider context of the National Park”

Steven Ord, Hampshire County Council

The outcome

In total nine educational welcome boards were installed at eight project sites for six different partner organisations. Visiting members of the public can now learn more about their local heathland site and what the project hopes to achieve.

The boards also offer factual messaging around how to use the site responsibly and sustainably so we can continue to enjoy this resource for years to come.

The online interactive map allows the public to identify and learn about their local heathlands and plan their visit from the comfort of their own home. Stretching across a vast 31-mile area from Bordon in the west to Storrington in the east, the colourful online resource is crammed with information about the heaths within the South Downs National Park.

As a result of this more readily available and easy to access information, it is expected that people will have an increased interest in, and understanding of heathland biodiversity, landscapes and cultural heritage.

Costs

Design fee of boards and 32 maps: £10,000

Structure, carriage and install cost per board: £2,000 (x 9)

Interactive Map: Free using SDNPA resource

Total Spend: £28,000

The future

It was agreed that the welcome boards would be maintained by the SDNPA for the length of the Heathlands Reunited project.

At the end of the project, the maintenance of the welcome boards will become the responsibility of the relevant site organisation.

One of the easiest ways to learn about heathland is to pay a visit and go for a walk. So why not visit the interactive map to find your local heathland in the South Downs National Park.

[www.southdowns.gov.uk
/find-your-local-heath](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/find-your-local-heath)



For further details and information please contact Katy Sherman, Heathlands Reunited Activities and Engagement Officer at SDNPA:

katy.sherman@southdo
www.southdowns.gov.uk

The South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan (PMP)

2020–25 sets out a shared vision for how we all would like the National Park to be in the future. It includes 10 long-term outcomes, and provides a framework for communities, landowners, charities, businesses and public bodies to work together to make this vision and these outcomes a reality.

This project successfully achieved the following PMP outcomes:

Outcome 8: More responsibility and action is taken by visitors, residents and businesses to conserve and enhance the special qualities and use resources more wisely.

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/partnership-management-plan/>

June 2020