

# SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

## SOUTH DOWNS NEWS



### WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Restoring treasured trees** Find out how a massive community effort is ensuring that thousands of trees lost in the landscape can be replaced.
- **Funding boost** Discover how planning in the National Park has generated £1.8m to invest in community infrastructure and helping people access the countryside.
- **The lost village** Learn more about a fascinating community project that will bring history to life.
- **Christmas walks** Get inspiration for your festival strolls in a winter wonderland!

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

## Treemendous! New trees to be planted across National Park

**More than 8,000 trees are being planted across the South Downs this winter after the Trees for the Downs campaign smashed its fundraising target.**

And now, thanks to a grant of £75,000 from South East Water, Trees for the Downs will be able to continue for the next five years with the aim of planting tens of thousands more trees.

The inspiring campaign launched during National Tree Week a year ago and has so far raised over £65,000 from generous donations from the public and donors. The initiative was launched by the South Downs National Park Trust to restore trees that have been lost over the past few decades, including those to Ash Dieback and Dutch Elm Disease.

Trees for the Downs was only set to run for one year, but the additional funding and support of South East Water, on top of the £65,000, means the campaign can continue for the next five years.

Significant tree planting will now take place over subsequent winters at sites across the region, bringing new habitat for wildlife, helping to restore soils and giving amenity value to local communities.

The very first tree of the campaign, a field maple, was planted by TV presenter Nicki Chapman at Hamilton



TV presenter Nicki Chapman plants the first tree alongside Woodlands Officer Bob Epsom

Farm, near Beauworth in Hampshire, during recent filming for *Escape to the Country*.

Nick Heasman, Countryside and Policy Manager who heads the National Park's woodlands team, which is helping to deliver the project, said: "We've been very encouraged by the support for Trees for the Downs and the campaign has just snowballed."

"This additional funding from South East Water is a great boost and means we can plant even more new life-giving trees."

"Trees are part of the rich tapestry of features that make the South Downs landscape so special to people. They're also cornerstones of any ecosystem and that means by planting more trees in the right place, we're helping

nature recovery, improving the quality of the soil and helping to mitigate against climate change.

South East Water will be giving £15,000 every year until 2025 for new tree planting.

Richard Dyer, Biodiversity Manager from South East Water, said: "We know that planting these trees will have numerous benefits for the natural landscape, including an increase in biodiversity, improvement in water quality and by creating more resilience against drought and flooding."

During last summer an applications process opened, where landowners and community groups could apply for tree planting this coming winter. The successful projects across Hampshire and Sussex all provide benefits to people, wildlife and the landscape of the National Park. Priority was also given to those sites where the trees would be visible from a public place, such as the footpath or highway.

Julie Fawcett, Chair of the South Downs National Park Trust, which is the official independent charity of the National Park, added: "We want to thank everyone who donated over the past year. The support of South East Water is a huge boost and, as well as securing enough funding for at least another 8,500 trees on top of those we're already planting, it also means that the fundraising drive for Trees for the Downs can continue in earnest and we can potentially top up this amount.

"With the public's help and South East Water, it's our hope to be able to plant tens of thousands of trees, so watch this space!"

Future rounds of tree planting will be subject to a similar applications process and expressions of interest will be encouraged from landowners, farmers and community-interest organisations with suitable land for tree planting.

Trees for the Downs is planting iconic species including black poplar, oak, field maple and disease-resistant elms pioneered by Hillier.

To donate to the campaign and find out where the trees will be planted visit

[www.southdownstrust.org.uk/trees-for-the-downs/](http://www.southdownstrust.org.uk/trees-for-the-downs/)



## "Green revolution plan is a great start"



**The Authority is welcoming a Government pledge to drive forward a "green revolution" through nature recovery, job creation, climate change action and more walking and cycling routes.**

A 10-point plan was unveiled last month that included a number of key measures towards a green recovery that will help both people and nature.

This was followed by significant announcements in the Chancellor's Spending Review that have the potential to help all National Parks deliver on their purposes and duty.

Among the announcements were:

- An additional £40m investment in nature recovery through an extended Green Recovery Challenge Fund.
- Additional funding for National Nature Reserves.
- A £0.4bn cash increase in core funding for Defra from 2020/21 to 2021/22.
- An increase in the funding for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to more than £75m.
- To encourage more active travel, the government is committing £257m for cycling and walking in 2021-22.

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the the Authority, said: "The Prime Minister's announcement is significant for the cultural change it signals. Gone are the old attempts at 'greenwash', now the environment is central to job creation and economic recovery, with the creation of a quarter of a million jobs linked to the 10 points.



"I welcome the Government's ambition and direction of travel, but this must be just the start. We need more details and ongoing investment to ensure that the new initiatives do not proceed at the expense of existing Protected Landscapes. The announcement should mark just the start of a longer term system change in the financing of nature recovery across the whole of England."



## Boost of almost £1.8m for community infrastructure projects and help for people to access countryside



**New cycling and walking routes, safe pedestrian crossings and an inspiring initiative to help young people are among the community projects to benefit from a funding boost from Authority.**

A raft of initiatives across Hampshire and Sussex are set to benefit from a fund set up and administered by the SDNPA called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is paid by developers to support new local infrastructure.

Eight individual projects are set to receive a share of just over £900,000, while just over £600,000 has been earmarked to support community infrastructure projects for Hampshire County Council, West Sussex County Council and East Sussex County Council.

In addition, a further £280,000 has been given to 33 parishes for their own projects. Community infrastructure covers a wide range of purposes, including transport, access, education, community buildings, climate change mitigation, green infrastructure such as tree planting, and recreation.

Among the projects will be an extension of the popular Centurion Way, following the former Chichester to Midhurst railway line. The works will create a new 5.3km multi-user path from West Dean to the South Downs Way at Cocking – giving cyclists and walkers disabled-friendly year-round access into the heart of stunning countryside.

Another beneficiary will be Petersfield's Kings Arms Youth Project, helping towards the purchase of, and improvement works to, a new permanent home for the project in Petersfield town centre. The project supports local young people affected by challenging home circumstances, as well as stress and anxiety-related conditions.

The fresh CIL funding comes after a previous tranche of funding, announced last January, benefited 20 projects across Sussex and Hampshire that took a share of £550,000.

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Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, said: "We began a new decade for the National Park by announcing some significant CIL funding and we're pleased to be finishing 2020 with this good news.

"Good infrastructure, particularly around access, recreation and wellbeing, can make a real difference to the quality of people's lives. A number of these projects will significantly improve access to the countryside, helping more people to connect with nature and reap the health and well-being benefits.

"After such a difficult year for so many people, I hope we can all agree that access to this beautiful landscape has provided great comfort and will continue to do so in the years ahead.

"The Community Infrastructure Levy is one of the cornerstones of our role as a planning authority, ensuring benefits flow from any acceptable development. It's wonderful to be able to help so many communities with such a varied range of projects."

All the CIL funding has been drawn from developers' contributions taken from the 2019/2020 financial year.

Projects set to benefit, with approximate funding:

**Centurion Way Phase 2** – construction of part of a new 5.3km multi-user path from West Dean to South Downs Way at Cocking (following the former Chichester to Midhurst Railway Line) £500,000.



**Washington Link Footpath** – to provide an 'offroad' route for walkers, horse-riders and cyclist between Washington Village and the South Downs Way at Washington Bostal Car Park. £166,700.

**Seven Sisters Country Park** – for a number of infrastructure projects associated with enhancing the facilities and making it more accessible for all. £100,000.

**Ditchling – Keymer Road Car Park** – to provide additional car parking spaces (including disabled bays and cycle racks) for the village and visitors to the National Park. £70,000.

**Stroud Village Improvement Scheme** – towards highway improvement works and improved pedestrian footways, crossing points and village signs. £20,000.

**Iping Common** – to upgrade the three entry points and paths to improve access to the Common, including drainage improvement works and re-surfacing the entrance points using Fittleworth Stone. £19,000.

**Kings Arms Youth Project** – towards the purchase of, and improvement works to, a new permanent home for the Youth Project in Petersfield Town Centre. £15,000.

**Farringdon Village Improvement Scheme** – towards highway improvement works to improve highway safety issues and village signs. £11,327.27.

## Plants in the Park: Ivy

## Supporting our volunteers



**As we mark International Volunteer Day this month, Daniel Greenwood, Volunteer Development Officer, reflects on 2020 and looks forward to greener pastures next year.**



The impact of the pandemic on volunteers and the environmental sector has been immense, with many volunteer programmes halted by emergency measures to protect people from the spread of Covid-19.

In the South Downs National Park, our volunteers have been unable to complete tasks that protect and enhance the landscapes of the South Downs due to social distancing and restrictions on travel. Volunteering is a big part of people's lives, and losing that social and physical outlet is difficult.

However, across the UK over 500,000 people signed up for the NHS volunteering project to support their communities during the early moments of the pandemic. It was heartening to see that when the going gets tough, people look to volunteer and help other people. In terms of supporting volunteers, the huge demand for volunteering also showed us that volunteers want a good experience when they take on a role. It's not enough to expect someone to give their time selflessly, there must be a mutual benefit, of no monetary value. A volunteer who takes on a role deserves to be supported and respected, just as they do by showing up and donating their time, expertise and energy.

The South Downs National Park gives strong support to its volunteers and it's something I'm very proud of. Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who give so much to the National Park and keep it a special place

On International Volunteer Day, it's important to remember that volunteers deserve recognition in their roles and by those they serve, not just in the general appreciation of their status.

Let's look forward to next year when hopefully our volunteers can get back out into the landscape in the way they normally do.



**The humble and often much maligned ivy is one of the most important plants for biodiversity, helping to maintain 50 or more other species of wildlife, particularly invertebrates.**

Only the juvenile growth of ivy has the familiar adhesive roots which allow it to grow up trees and walls.

The mature or 'tree' ivy loses its clinging habit and develops simple elliptic leaves rather than the triangular lobed leaves it starts life with.

It develops dense, bushy growth and, in late summer, produces wonderful umbels of scented green and gold flowers which are followed by globular matt-black berries.

The dense foliage provides hiding places for small insects and spiders which are sought after by small birds such as tits, goldcrests and chiffchaffs.

The dense cover also provides safe nesting sites for birds.

The flowers are a rich source of nectar for a huge range of bees, hoverflies, wasps, moths, flies and other invertebrates, and you cannot fail to notice how attractive they are to red Admiral butterflies.

Come the autumn, the fat-rich black berries are a welcome feast for blackcaps, blackbirds and other thrushes.

The beautiful holly blue butterfly also lays eggs on the developing berries of ivy.

Later on, the dense foliage is a safe winter haven away from predators for those butterflies which hibernate as adults over winter including the small tortoiseshell, peacock, red admiral and brimstone.

The lack of grass in the drought this spring and summer has seen the local sheep on the Seven Sisters stripping all the ivy they can reach as alternative forage, so the old saying is true 'little lambs eat ivy'.

It's hard to think of a common plant that has more uses in the world.

**Kate Frankland, Volunteer for the Eastern Downs**





# Leading-edge farm trials show early promise for protecting aquifer



## **New and innovative farming methods that build resilience to climate change and protect a precious aquifer are being trialed on the South Downs.**

The Aquifer Partnership (TAP) is working with farmers on a series of trials led by catchment specialists at Southern Water that look to prevent nitrates leaching into the groundwater beneath and strengthen the ecological profile of the land by improving soil quality. It comes as TAP, which launched earlier this year, is working to protect groundwater underneath the South Downs around Brighton that provides drinking water to 1.2m people.

Like many aquifers across the world, the groundwater is under increasing threat from rising nitrate levels from fertilisers, manure heaps and run-off from busy roads. The impact of climate change is compounding that threat as more heavy rainfall and droughts make the aquifer much more vulnerable to nitrate pollution.

One of the trials sees the farmer apply nitrogen fertiliser directly to the leaf of the crop – rather than the traditional granular fertiliser that is spread across the soil. Research has shown that around half of all artificial nitrogen applied to crops in traditional techniques escapes into the chalk rock beneath or is lost to the atmosphere. But, by applying to the leaf directly, the hope is that less nitrogen will be lost to leaching, reducing this 50 per cent significantly.

Meanwhile, another farm is trialing “regenerative grazing”, where livestock are allowed to graze more intensively for shorter periods. While the pasture is rested for longer periods, it’s allowing grasses and herbs to recover and building up the quality of the soil. Healthy soils, full of plant roots, invertebrates and microscopic life, are vital to reducing nitrate leaching and are also a major carbon capturer – one of the key ways to reduce global warming by taking carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.



TAP is funding a number of farms as part of three-year trials and will then be evaluating the impact.

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Aimee Felus, TAP Programme Delivery Manager, said: “It’s very exciting to be trialing these agricultural practices in the South Downs and we’ve had a positive response from the farmers we’ve worked with so far.

“There’s no doubt that farming is at a turning point in history and traditional land management practices that have been driven by policy and subsidies are being adapted to be more nature-friendly. We’re right at the start of that journey in the Brighton Chalk Block, but we’ve had some really encouraging results so far.

“Ultimately, it’s about farmers understanding more about soils and learning what’s happening beneath the surface of their arable or grazing land. These techniques to reduce nitrates can have multiple benefits – protecting the aquifer, creating more nutrient-rich soil, helping wildlife flourish and potentially more cost-effective food production.”

And Aimee added: “We know climate change is increasing pressure on the aquifer. Droughts can concentrate pollution levels in the groundwater, while heavy downpours can strip away soils and significantly increase the amount of nitrates leaching into the chalk. However, working together with farmers we can increase our resilience. So much of the South Downs is farmland and farmers are our first line of defence in protecting the groundwater.

“The clean drinking water of the South Downs has been a vital resource for decades and it’s our aim to make sure this continues for many years to come.”

Farm Manager David Ellin, who looks after Paythorne Farm, near Henfield, which is trialing the application of nitrogen to crop leaves, said: “No farmer wants to be putting on more fertiliser than they need to.

“Working with TAP has been an opportunity to involve more science in the process, using enhanced monitoring like tissue analysis to really understand what’s happening over the growing season and identify potential improvements.”

Saddlescombe Farm, near Brighton, is trialing the regenerative grazing and farmer Roly Puzey said: “We are already seeing the benefits. If we hadn’t started to implement the system this year we would be struggling to find enough food for our animals due to the lack of rain we have had this summer.”



TAP is a partnership between the South Downs National Park Authority, Brighton & Hove City Council, Southern Water, and the Environment Agency. The wide-reaching programme is working with residents, farmers, landowners, and schools across the Brighton, Hove and Lewes area to safeguard our drinking water. The five-year £500,000 project was launched on World Water Day in March 2020.

For more information visit [www.wearetap.org.uk](http://www.wearetap.org.uk)

## Uncovering the story of the lost village of Sussex

## A boost for small business



**Twenty seven projects that support the small business, tourism and visitor economy have received additional support from the National Park Authority in the wake of the pandemic.**

The Authority has been able to make a number of modest contributions towards business recovery through a series of initiatives. One such initiative was a small grants scheme, introduced in August, as part of the wider South Downs COVID-19 Recovery Fund. Businesses were able to apply for financial support of between £500 and £2,000 over two rounds.

A total of £40,000 was made available and, following a rigorous and impartial selection process, 27 schemes have received funding.

Kat Beer, Sustainable Tourism Lead, said: "Small businesses, pubs, food and drink producers, and hospitality venues are the lifeblood of the rural economy. We are saddened to see so many of our fantastic local businesses in this situation, but we hope our contribution aids their survival at this difficult time."

One example of a business benefitting from the scheme is Gnarly Tree, an ethical and sustainable clothing company based in Chichester. From humble beginnings, printing T-shirts from an Alpine ski chalet in Le Fornet, Val d'Isere, to the countryside of the Downs, the business is now operating from a newly-refurbished store in East Dean. Our scheme enabled the Gnarly tree team two photographic shoots for their website and marketing material, in turn, helping them pivot to an online dominant service during periods of lockdown.

On being located in the beautiful South Downs, business owner Jonathan Schofield said: "It certainly provides a very beautiful commute! The 15-minute journey from Fishbourne to East Dean is definitely a highlight of my day and there's not many people who can say that about a commute. Being nestled into the South Downs also makes it a stunning and fairly unique place to come and shop."



Any business looking to keep up-to-date on news and useful updates can email [enterprise@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:enterprise@southdowns.gov.uk)



**Rachel Cunningham is part of a dedicated team working to bring the fascinating history of a deserted village of life and gives an update here on the project.**

The remains of Tide Mills, the deserted village, are to be found between Newhaven and Seaford on a stretch of Designated Local Wildlife Site, within the South Downs National Park.

Although the area is now a quiet wildlife sanctuary, Tide Mills itself was once a hive of industry. Ruins of the old village, mill and hospital are still visible and one can imagine past lives, before it was abandoned. Stables for retired racehorses were once on the site, as was an early radio station and a seaplane station.

The site is home to many rare birds, including the Black Kite, European Bee-Eater and Short Eared Owl, as well as butterflies. Its shingle habitat supports species not found in busier locations: grasshoppers, the common lizard, slow worm and grass-snake can all be found. Typical plants include Sea-Kale and the Yellow Horned Poppy.

Tide Mills is a very special place. LYT Productions, directed by Phil Rose, are currently working on a major creative heritage enterprise to bring its past back to life, through imaginative installations, digital arts, animations, constructions, soundscapes, performances, workshops for all ages and guided tours.

They are collaborating with highly regarded professional artists, designers, sculptors, poets, musicians and writers – and there are many opportunities for schools, colleges, young people, families and retirees in the community to get involved, learn from the professionals and share their talents.

The project will culminate in a celebratory week which will run from 20 to 25 September next year. The event will be free and accessible to all.

The Tide Mills Project, devised and delivered by LYT Productions, is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and the South Downs National Park.

Visit our website [www.tidemillsproject.uk](http://www.tidemillsproject.uk) to find out more, join our mailing list and get involved!



## Moving reflections on 2020



**Poignant poems have been penned about the South Downs following a project that sees small groups gain inspiration from their walks.**

Kate Drake, Health and Wellbeing Officer, has been working with Worthing-based Creative Waves this autumn and winter on a project called "Exploring the South Downs: wellbeing and the arts".

Kate explained: "The premise of the project is to take small groups of six up on to the Downs and do a three to four mile walk in various spots. The destination is defined by using the App What3Words and sometimes these words inspire the creativity.

"The group walk and talk and support each other for about two hours and use this time to reflect on the landscape to then come back and be creative. The end product will be an exhibition on the panels on Worthing Pier in spring 2021."

Kate added: "I have been on one and it really was so humbling hearing people's stories. One woman I spoke to had not been out since March and this was her first visit outside. These participants have had some real struggles and this project has been a sprinkling of hope for them."

Here are two of the poems from the participants:

### **"Up, down and across the South Downs"**

My feet are on the ground, but my head is not in the clouds

My feet are on the ground, distanced from others as we journey as through this weird and challenging time and space of Covid and lockdown

We uphold the rules of: hands.face.space as we don't greet each other with a hug, we don't have more than six together in a group as we walked up down and across the South Downs

We have experienced the season changes, encountered: sunshine, rain, warmth or winds chilly or fresh

Our feet have trod on paths, grass, climbed hills, crossed green pastures, as we walk the South Downs

Our eyes have seen trees with leaves, without them, with acorns, conkers, fur cones and more, as we have walked the South Downs

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Our noses and ears have smelt the surrounding nature, heard natures chatter and the chatter of others as we walk the South Downs

As we walk we share, we listen to each other's stories, our ups our downs, our lower than downs, as we walk the South Downs

We share how Covid and lockdown has negatively impacted on friends, family on us and what we do, how we feel, how we think about now and the future, as we walk the South Downs

We share how Covid and lockdown may have given us time and space to do things we otherwise might not have got round to, as we walk the South Downs

As I have travel I feel nurtured by the kindness of my fellow walkers and being out in nature on the South Downs

We have paused on occasion to listen, look and share a laugh or watch the dogs enjoy the South Downs

We have paused on occasion to catch our breath, take in the view, have a drink, take a picture of the South Downs

I thank you my fellow walkers, I thank you nature for your nurture and I thank you the South Downs for being there, so I can go up and down and across the South Downs.

### **My Escape Room (by Victoria Aspin)**

Your majestic beauty, your sweeping land our Sussex treasure that's been my best friend

Your stunning beauty and elegant lines, forever standing the test of time. Every ray of sun and shadow of cloud you keep us guessing what's next in line, you amaze and intrigue yet I know you're not just mine

The carefree moment to drink in the calm, I feel like I'm in nature's palm. To pause from the COVID you make me slow down, take a breath, make a smile uplifting my frown

The peace you allow is good for the soul. I chatter to angels and pray for those ill. Your medicine is potent, a good pill to swallow, it's life's natural detox, one we should all follow

I'm thankful to you for sharing your beauty, for letting us forget, for a moment, our COVID duty

Don't change, don't alter, don't disappear, when this bug is busted you'll still be here, so we'll stand by you and remember back, to the year 2020, the year of the bug, the year that felt like we'd pulled the plug!



## Ten inspiring ideas for a festive amble in the South Downs



Picture by Frances Valdes

**Christmas has always been a wonderful time to recharge the batteries and enjoy some serene strolls with loved ones after one too many mince pies.**

After a very challenging year for so many, winter wellness, fresh air and sun-induced Vitamin D have never been more important. With over 3,300km of public rights of way, the South Downs National Park really is a walkers' paradise, with ambles for all ages and fitness levels that are guaranteed to put a spring in your step and lift your mood.

So here, the National Park's access expert looks at 10 ways to enjoy walking this festive season, while keeping yourself and others safe.

Allison Thorpe, Access and Recreation Lead for the National Park, says: "With its misty mornings, amazing sunsets, and frost-covered hills, the South Downs really does turn into a picture-perfect winter wonderland at this time of the year."



"We've seen so many people reconnect with nature during this difficult year and really appreciate the wondrous beauty of the South Downs. As always Christmas will be a time when people seek to get outdoors for fresh air – either to work up an appetite or work off the festive excesses!

"Our advice is to enjoy the National Park and soak up all its tranquillity – it's certainly good for the soul. If you can, do try to walk or even cycle to the part of the National Park near where you live as car parks at visitor hotspots can get very busy over the festive season.

"Key is planning ahead – so that if you arrive somewhere and find the car park is already full, you can travel to your alternative, and why not try and explore some of the quieter spots? Farmers and land-managers have been working hard throughout this year to continue food production in the South Downs, so do give them a festive thank you by sticking to the Countryside Code, keeping your dogs on a lead and avoid parking on grass verges.

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"Wherever you go, we hope all visitors have a restful Christmas and New Year and feel uplifted by the South Downs National Park."

Allison's 10 Christmas walk inspirations:

### Leave the car at home and help the environment

The South Downs National Park has a network of hundreds of picturesque nature reserves and beauty spots, all within walking or cycling distances of many large towns and cities such as Brighton, Worthing, Chichester, Haslemere, Waterlooville, Fareham and Farnham.

Instead of piling into the car after your festive meal and trying to find a parking space, why not explore some of the walking trails in the National Park close to where you live? The South Downs **Discovery Map** is a great place to start and you may enjoy a new, unexpected adventure!

### Gaze at stunning views

Who doesn't get to the top of a hill and feel a sense of achievement? The South Downs has dozens of amazing viewing points for enjoying awesome views of the Downs and English Channel. Butser Hill, Blackdown, Cissbury Ring, Devil's Dyke, Mount Caburn, Firl Beacon, Ditchling Beacon...there's many to choose from. Just make sure you have the camera ready for when you get to the top!

### Step back in time

With over 5,200 listed buildings and 570 scheduled monuments, the South Downs oozes historical charm. Petworth Park, Gilbert White's House and Gardens, the Weald and Downland Living Museum and Stanmer Park are great places to enjoy a walk and be surrounded by beautiful architecture (please check venue website on opening times and remember pre-booking may be required)

### Feel part of nature

With over 1,000 designated nature conservation sites, the South Downs is a beacon of biodiversity for British fauna and flora. While many animals may be tucked away during the colder months, there are still some lovely nature moments to enjoy. Look out for redwing, green woodpecker, fieldfare, soaring birds of prey like red kite and if you're lucky, a glimpse of a roe or fallow deer. Don't forget the plant life too – winter holly, ivy and berries and gnarled tree branches can make for some eye-catching photography! The expansive Slindon Estate or Queen Elizabeth Country Park are good choices for nature-lovers, but there's certainly lots to choose from.

### Forest bathe

Walking in the woods can be such a calming, mindful experience and the treescape of the South Downs is certainly impressive – covering almost one quarter of the National Park. There's plenty of large woodlands to explore, such as Stansted Forest, Alice Holt Forest and Friston Forest.



### Search for a sculpture

Can you find the cricket, sand lizard, "sheep pig" and the quote from the celebrated poet Tennyson? Many people have enjoyed ticking off visits to each of the seven stone carvings that make up the Heathlands Sculpture Trail since its launch in September. The intricate pieces of art tell the story of the history, wildlife and people of heathlands, linking up Wiggonholt, Stedham Common, Lavington Plantation, Shortheath Common, Graffham Common, Black Down and Woolbeding. Download this [\*\*walk leaflet\*\*](#) for more information.



### South Downs Way

We're not suggesting you walk the whole 100 miles from Winchester to Eastbourne, but many do! This National Trail runs along the top of the chalk escarpment and commands some of the best views in the south of England. Many walkers like to do a section at a time, completing the whole trail over weeks, months or even years. You'll also be walking in the footsteps of ancestors who have been treading this [\*\*trail\*\*](#) for 5,000 years.

### A riverside ramble

Did you know the National Park has seven rivers running through it – the Cuckmere, Ouse, Arun, Adur, Rother, Meon, and Itchen? Each has its own unique charm and biodiversity and the sounds of flowing water certainly add to the peacefulness of a festive stroll. One of the most accessible rivers is the Ouse in East Sussex, with the Egrets Way shared use path. With a distance of around 7 miles, the route for cyclists and walkers takes you on a journey through landscapes that are as archaeologically fascinating as they are naturally captivating. More info here: [\*\*www.egretsway.org.uk\*\*](http://www.egretsway.org.uk)



### Miles Without Stiles

The beauty of the South Downs National Park is its accessibility – you don't need expensive hiking boots to explore! Funded by Gatwick Airport, there are new accessible routes which have had stiles removed, gates replaced and brand-new surfacing to make your walk as easy as leftover turkey pie! These walks are perfect for families with buggies and people using mobility scooters.

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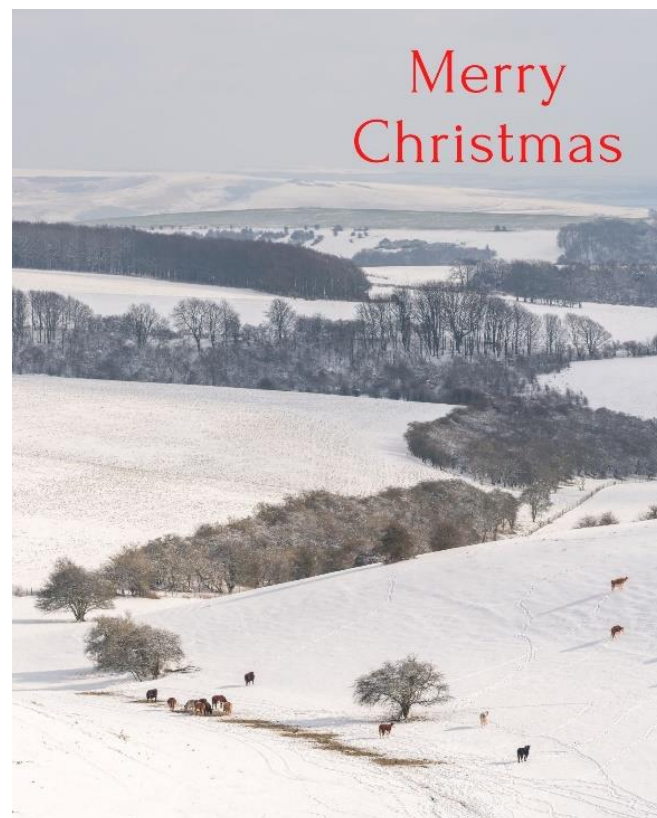
New for winter 2020 is West Walk in the Forest of Bere, near Wickham, in Hampshire. You can discover the beauty and tranquillity of a former Royal forest. Today it's a peaceful spot where you're more likely to spot a shy roe deer or hear a drumming woodpecker. Download the [\*\*walk leaflet\*\*](#) and find other Miles Without Stiles routes here: [\*\*www.southdowns.gov.uk/all-abilities/miles-without-stiles/\*\*](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/all-abilities/miles-without-stiles/)

### Virtual walk

For many reasons, some people may not be able to access the National Park this festive season. Why not try a guided virtual walk? It can be quite an immersive experience, with stunning views to enjoy and you'll also get learn a bit more from a National Park ranger. There's a few to choose from on the National Park's Facebook account so why not enjoy a brandy coffee, leftover Christmas cake and join one of our rangers for half an hour? Here's a [\*\*virtual walk of Midhurst Common\*\*](#) to try out.

For more walks visit [\*\*www.southdowns.gov.uk/get-active/on-foot/\*\*](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/get-active/on-foot/)

## And finally...



Pic credits

P2 – Right column – Sam Moore/SDNPA

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P4 – Right column – Marco Antonio Victorino

P7 – Left column – Stewart Garside