

SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Beavers about!** The charming mammal is released back into the South Downs and it's hoped the reintroduction will help other wildlife flourish.
- **Welcome back** Attractions across the National Park will be re-opening their doors to visitors. Find out which venues are opening and when!
- **Black Trail Runners** Learn more about the group who are inspiring people from black and ethnically-diverse communities to enjoy the chalky trails of the South Downs.
- **Echoes of enchantment** Find out about new audio sound walks by acclaimed composer Ed Hughes.

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

"Ecosystem engineers" are reintroduced to the National Park

Beavers have been re-introduced to the South Downs National Park to help bring about a resurgence of wetland wildlife.

The National Trust has released two beavers at an undisclosed location and it's hoped the male and female will become a breeding pair.

The species, known as "nature's water engineers" as their dams help to create wildlife-rich wetlands, has been released under licence into a 15-hectare area.

Having once been an important part of the ecosystem, beavers became extinct in Britain in the 16th century because of hunting for their fur, meat and scent glands.

This is the first release by the National Trust in south east England, following the successful pilot at Holnicote on Exmoor early last year where the beavers have thrived.

The release is part of the charity's ambitions to create priority habitats for nature and to increase the diversity of species and wildlife on the land in its care. It is also another step forward in the National Park Authority's nature recovery drive, which is outlined in detail in our **Partnership Management Plan**.

David Elliott, National Trust Lead Ranger for the South Downs West, said: "We've reintroduced a species which has been absent from this landscape for the last 400



years. Beavers are nature's water engineers – they can help bring back the natural processes that have been missing from our environment.

"By creating their dams, the beavers will create new and wildlife-rich wetlands; ponds, rivulets and boggy areas that will, over the next few years, benefit a range of wildlife including amphibians such as frogs and toads, many dragonflies and damselflies and wildflowers such as Devil's-bit scabious that love damp meadows.

"They'll help us create a pyramid of life based on wetlands – including bird and bat species as their prey increases in abundance."

Jeremy Burgess, Biodiversity Lead for water habitats in the South Downs National Park, said: "I'm delighted to see this keystone species back in the South Downs and

look forward to seeing the changes over the next few years as they restore natural river systems, benefit wider ecology and help to reduce flood risk.

"Hopefully these will be the first of many to return to our countryside."

The beavers were relocated from wild populations in Scotland, under licence from NatureScot, by consultant ecologist Dr Roisin Campbell-Palmer.

A growing number of sites in the British Isles have reintroduced beavers. The National Trust's South Downs programme will be carefully monitored for its benefits: from water quality and floodwater management to ecology and vegetation changes, by research partners at Imperial College London, the University of Birmingham and the University of Exeter.

The project has been funded in part by the Black Down and Hindhead Supporters of the National Trust, which fundraised some £62,000, thanks to the generosity of local supporters, and a grant of £68,866 from Viridor Credits Environmental Company.



Bob Daniels, chair of the Black Down and Hindhead supporters, said: "The project is a great example of the things we can do locally to positively influence species decline, in a world where the opposite is an alarmingly prominent feature of global headlines."

The valley where the beavers have been released was gifted to the National Trust in the 1990s through public subscription, when local residents fundraised to buy it for the nation. It is close to the 19th century home of Sir Robert Hunter, one of the three original founders of the National Trust.

The beavers will continue the work started by the Trust in July 2018 to turn the valley into a haven for wildlife. To date, interventions have included changing the pattern of grazing – to a lower intensity over a wider area – with a small herd of Long Horn cattle.

The results are already starting to show, with a complex mosaic of habitats developing in the grasslands.

Jane Cecil, National Trust general manager for the South Downs, said: "We're delighted that such a ground-breaking moment has been reached after a lot of hard work and preparation.

"These precious places in the South Downs have been entrusted to us, to share them with people and to do the very best for nature and wildlife."

Handy new walking guide is launched



Rangers from across the South Downs National Park have helped to put together a new colourful booklet featuring some of their favourite walks.

Published by Harper Collins, *South Downs Park Rangers Favourite Walks* features a range of easy to more challenging walks from 2km to 10km.

The guide has a detailed description for each walk with highlights clearly marked on an accompanying map, as well as gorgeous photographs.

General information about the National Park plus basic advice on walking are also included in the handy guide.



Philippa Morrison-Price, a Lead Ranger for the South Downs National Park, said: "Being a ranger for a National Park is a huge privilege and it goes without saying that we all love walking and getting outside in the beautiful landscape.

"We've been really pleased to help with this new walking guide, sharing our local knowledge of the countryside. We hope people enjoy the walks and feel inspired by the stunning views and wildlife."

In addition to the ranger walks, Harper Collins has produced a new pocket map of the South Downs National Park, crammed with information about the region and its attractions.

South Downs Park Rangers Favourite Walks is on sale from 15 April priced at £6.99 and the pocket guide is **on sale** priced at £3.99. It will also be available on Amazon.

Here are our rangers' three top tips for getting the most out of your walk in the National Park:

- Leave no trace – enjoy the South Downs, but please take all litter home, do not light fires and close gates behind you.
- Stick to the paths, particularly during ground-nesting bird season (this is March to September).
- Keep your dog on a lead around livestock.

Attractions ready to welcome back visitors



Get ready to get back to enjoying some culture, history, good food and family fun!

As we emerge from lockdown, a range of visitor attractions across the National Park and in nearby towns and cities will be welcoming people back with open arms.

Many have spent the past few weeks and months painstakingly incorporating Covid-secure "Good to go" safety measures to ensure everyone can have a fun and safe experience.

Kat Beer, Sustainable Tourism Lead for the South Downs National Park, encourages people to find out more about the vast range of visitor experiences across the South Downs region.

"These visitor attractions are the lifeblood of our rural economy and part of the socio-economic fabric that makes the South Downs such a special place to live, visit and work in," said Kat.

"After a long and incredibly difficult year, many venues have worked really hard to be in a position to re-open this spring.

"It's really important to support these local venues as they do need visitors to survive. We also need to recognise that many are operating at reduced capacity and it may take a while before they're back to normal.

"So it's worth planning ahead, going on their websites and checking opening times, finding out whether you need to book tickets and what parking facilities are available.

"There's such a wide range of venues for all ages and interests, so it's worth just spending some time on the internet, rediscovering what's out there! Above all we want people to have a great day out and take home some happy memories."

Here's a snapshot of some of the venues that are re-opening and more information is available on their websites (please be aware opening dates may change)

Hampshire

Gilbert White's House and Museum – Lawn Café open from 13 April and House to re-open on 18 May.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
Hinton Ampner – Visits are bookable in advance.

Butser Ancient Farm – Opens from 12 April with bookable tickets.

Chawton House – Gardens open and garden tearoom open from 14 April.

Winchester Science Centre and Planetarium – working towards re-opening on 22 May

Bird World – Re-opening planned for 12 April with pre-booked tickets.



Marwell Zoo – Re-opens from 12 April with pre-booked tickets.

Hollycombe Steam in the Country – Hopes to open beginning of July for its 50th anniversary.

West Sussex

Arundel Castle and Gardens – gardens are open with pre-booked tickets. The castle's interior will open on 18 May at the earliest.

Arundel Wetland Centre – open from 12 April with pre-booked tickets.

Petworth House – gardens open for pre-booked visits.

Weald and Downland Museum – opens to general public from 12 April with pre-booked tickets.

Amberley Museum – planning to re-open 19 May.

Parham House and Gardens – gardens open to visitors from 25 April.

West Dean Gardens – open for pre-booked visits.

Fishbourne Roman Palace and Gardens – due to re-open from 17 May.

Sky Park Farm – opening for visitors on 21 May

RSPB Pulborough Brooks – car park, trails, toilets and take away refreshments are open

East Sussex

Charleston House – gardens now open, shop and outside food from April 12, with house and exhibitions set to open 19 May.

Ditchling Museum of Art and Craft – re-opening 20 May with the John Vernon Lord exhibition.

Lewes Depot Cinema – kitchen and bar re-opening 12 April, with cinema from 17 May.

Glynebourne – tickets go on sale to general public from 18 April.

Lewes Castle and Museum – plans to re-open from 17 May.

Middle Farm – Open Farm re-opening on the 12 April with pre-booked tickets

Firle Place – House re-opening 30 May with pre-booked tickets

Drusillas – Re-opening on the 12 April – recommending pre-booking tickets

Moving film tells the story of black runners



It's a chilly springtime morning in Seven Sisters Country Park and two figures in the distance are negotiating the chalk trails leading up the commanding cliffs.

They are Simbarashe Mugomba and Rachel Dench – two key members of the Black Trail Runners and a force of inspiration for a growing number of people in black and ethnically-diverse communities who want to connect with the outdoors.

The duo have now been featured in a moving short film made in conjunction with Adidas which recounts their personal journey to becoming trail runners.

Led by keen runner Phil Young and five other active founding members, the Black Trail Runners is a new thriving community who seek to increase the inclusion, participation and representation of black people in trail running.

The film shoot was led by Phil and included beautiful locations in Friston Forest, the Cuckmere Valley and the cliffs at Seven Sisters (from a safe distance of course).



Phil explains why he helped to form the group last year, partly in response to the Black Lives Matter movement.

"It started with half a dozen people across the UK who share a love of the outdoors and share a love of running," says Phil, who lives in south London.

"First of all it was to see if there were other people out there like us – of which there were, and also to promote it, so that people who maybe wanted to try trail running, but perhaps felt nervous about being in the outdoors or didn't have the knowledge, could access information in a voice that they can identify with. One of the issues we face as people of colour in the UK that the world is not

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

always portrayed in a way that makes everyone feel they belong."

The film aims to provoke thought, look at some of the perceived barriers and ultimately inspire, explains Phil.

"What we want to get from the film is that the outdoors is for everybody," says Phil.

"If you look at it historically for people of colour in the UK, we live in urban environments. A lot of accessing the outdoors is handed down generationally – how to behave in the outdoors, maybe your parents took you camping. We don't necessarily have that. If you look back to the 40s and 50s, our grandparents were too busy finding somewhere to live and work – they didn't have that leisure time to go out and explore.

"Because our communities didn't have that connection, it's very difficult to hand that down to the next generation. So we find that young people especially, perhaps brought up in Hackney, are asking how do they access the outdoors? It's very difficult for them to just say "Let's go for a hike in the countryside". For lots of people who don't know the countryside, it could be seen as a barrier.

"What we're doing with the Black Trail Runners is showing that there are other people who are going out and enjoying the outdoors. We are saying 'Why don't you come with us and we can introduce you to the outdoors in a way you feel comfortable?' Hopefully people can learn a bit about the Countryside Code, about navigation, about areas they can go and the equipment you need."

Simbarashe, 38, is a big fan of the National Park and its trails since moving to Brighton two years ago.

He says: "I love the trail running on the South Downs – you kind of feel like you're in the wilderness when you're on top of the Downs. You also feel that connection with nature. On a windy day with the wind blowing your side at the top of Ditchling Beacon, it's an experience!

"I really enjoy the trails around Devil's Dyke – I can get a lot of work done in terms of running in quite a confined space. And when the pub's open, you can get a cup of coffee and a cake afterwards. Good times!"

Phil is really keen to share the knowledge of how to experience, enjoy and care for protected landscapes.

He adds: "One of the main beauties of the South Downs is its proximity to London – you can have a day out and be in a space where you have acres and acres of fresh air, sea views and biodiversity that you don't see in the city.

"Especially after the last year we've had with lockdown, I think it's more important than ever for people to get outside and enjoy the natural landscape and learn more about the world we live in.

"We want this environment to last. If people in the city aren't aware of the natural environment, how can they be expected to care for it? So I think it's so important that all communities come outside and learn and explore so they can take care of the planet and have an emotional investment in saving our landscapes."

For more information on the Black Trail Runners visit www.blacktrailrunners.run

Grants scheme launches to support outdoor learning



Working in partnership with our South Downs Education Network, the National Park Authority is helping young people enjoy more learning experiences outside the classroom this summer.

Schools can apply for grants to help young people enjoy activities and trips that connect them with the special qualities of the National Park. Schools with over 10% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals will be able to access the greatest level of support, which could exceed £1,000 for an individual school.

In total, around 1,500 pupils are set to benefit from the initiative, with approximately half of those being from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Members of our South Downs Education Network, who specialise in outdoor, nature-based and real-world learning experiences, will be delivering all the learning activities.

A **new myth-busting guide** will also help teachers who might be unsure about stepping outside the classroom. Produced in collaboration with The Outdoor Teacher, it highlights the perceived barriers to using the outdoor environment and the simple realities.

There are three grant categories. All state-funded schools and colleges are eligible to apply for up to £75 towards the cost of booking a virtual session, or up to £250 towards the cost of an in-school visit with an education provider. All state-funded schools and colleges with 10% or more pupils eligible for Free School Meals, are eligible to apply for up to £750 (£250 provider and £500 transport) towards the costs of booking a school trip with an education provider, or for a self-led visit (£500 transport only).

Applications are currently being accepted for visits and trips planned up to 1 September 2021. The fund is limited and grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Jonathan Dean, Education Officer for the National Park, said: "All children need access to nature, more than ever after the past 12 months. There is a wealth of evidence that outdoor learning improves attainment for pupils and benefits the health and wellbeing of pupils and staff."

For more information visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/learning

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Enjoy a unique adventure at new farm attraction



A new visitor destination opens in the National Park next month, giving people the chance to experience life on a working farm.

Located in West Harting near the Hampshire and Sussex border, Sky Park Farm is a working deer farm that has evolved to offer a cafe, farmshop, butcher, adventure playground and farm trail.

Visitors will be able to learn more about livestock farming and access the spectacular grounds for walking and picnicking. The new adventure playground offers a specifically-designed woodland wonderland for children.

Pierce and Victoria Noonan, owners of Sky Park Farm, said: "We're so excited to be opening our doors and sharing what we have created here at Sky Park Farm. We are passionate about preserving and enhancing the natural environment, nurturing the land for future enjoyment. We are a family-run business and have worked hard to offer something for all generations. Our mission is to ensure all visitors leave with a smile".

The renovation plans and new visitors' centre at Sky Park Farm were approved by the National Park Authority in 2019. The landscape-led application was commended for being a great example of rural diversification that benefits communities and the local economy.

Kat Beer, Sustainable Tourism Lead for the National Park, said: "It's exciting to welcome a new visitor attraction to the South Downs National Park that will provide jobs and support other local businesses through its high-quality local food offer. It promises to give people a wonderful opportunity to learn more about landscape, nature and farming at a truly beautiful location."

Education is at the heart of Sky Park Farm's mission and a dedicated centre will be available to extend understanding of deer farming and farmland management.

Sky Park Farm was awarded a grant by The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in 2019 to support the development of the farm shop and café building.

The farm is set to open its doors on 21 May. For more details see **www.skyparkfarm.com**

Echoing the enchanting sound of the South Downs



A new audio walking experience is being launched that weaves together beautiful music by Sussex composer Ed Hughes and fascinating insights into the collection at Ditchling Museum of Art + Crafts.

Launched as part of the Brighton Festival, people will be able to explore Ditchling and Ditchling Beacon accompanied by sonorous music inspired by the South Downs landscape.

The immersive experience will include linked images from the museum's collection which you can then discover after the museum reopens later in May.

The Brighton Festival Ditchling Museum Music Trail will be available for download on your phone from 1 May via the ECHOES interactive sound walk App (search for Brighton Festival in the App itself).

When you enter an Echo, Ed Hughes's orchestral music, inspired by the surrounding landscape, will be triggered automatically using GPS. Headphones are recommended! There are two trail options and fourteen Echoes to discover.

We caught up with Ed Hughes and Steph Fuller, Director at the museum, to find out more....

Tell us about this musical composition Ed – what were the influences for it?

I have lived in Lewes for the last 17 years and have grown to love walking the South Downs and exploring the footpaths and trails with my family. My wife Liz is a brilliant map reader and I must credit her with planning this walk. The sense of scale and the vistas offered by walks in this landscape are very special. It is a special place which offers walkers a sense of home through repetition and familiarity but with endless variations of light, shape and colours – which feels musical. In addition a couple of years ago I studied some Sussex folksongs transcribed by Butterworth in 1912, while working on a piece (Flint) for a fine Sussex ensemble 'The Corelli Ensemble'. Something of the lyrical sensibility in these



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

songs have shaped the tunes, melodies and harmonies in my recent music. So this new composition is shaped by my personal experience of the South Downs and perhaps some of the songs and music associated with it.

What went into the making of this composition? Can you tell us about some of the musicians who were involved?

Since I first left university I have worked with my ensemble, the New Music Players. This band is my main "instrument" I think – the musicians are some of the most outstanding classical musicians working in the UK today. The final three 'echoes' on the walk comprise music commissioned by the South Downs National Park for its 10th anniversary and are included with their kind permission. To record this music, we brought the band together in a special socially distanced recording a few weeks ago, for the first time since lockdown. It was very exciting to hear the music jumping off the page and being interpreted and shaped by these great players.

What do you think of the composition and what story would you like it to tell? How would you like people to feel as they listen to it?

The composition ranges from very clear and transparent harmonious music through passages which are more dense and complex. I personally like to compare these musical effects to changes in light and weather as you walk through changing landscape, with changing perspectives around you. So although music is its own medium, because it is time-based, I think it can convey something of the feeling of being on a journey or a 'trail'.

How does this sound walk compare to the Cuckmere sound walk you produced?

The Cuckmere sound walk reflected changing seasons and so, although nothing like Vivaldi, contained some musical effects that reflected winter as well as summer! In this walk we are aiming for more of a narrative or through line, and also the sense of discovering objects in the Ditchling museum's collection which, like the music, are complementary but don't duplicate the landscape which you're seeing directly while out on the trail.

What's the benefit of walking in the National Park while listening to classical music?

I hope the app will be seen as enjoyable and fun, both as a trail to 'discover' some new music and artistic objects from the museum's collections, and also perhaps to suggest a novel way of experiencing the Downs and thinking about how the landscape is reflected in art.

This is a great way to generate interest in the museum as it plans to re-open from 20 May. What do you think about it, Steph?

We're always looking for ways to encourage visitors to explore the village and surrounding area alongside visiting the museum, so a new audio walk with Ed's music is a wonderful addition to those opportunities. The arts and nature have been a great solace to many people in recent times and this is a wonderful way to combine them in a fresh new way as we emerge from lockdown.

For more information see

<https://brightonfestival.org/whats-on/>

Inspirational art exhibition launches at town's pier



A new colourful and emotive exhibition celebrates the nourishing nature of the South Downs National Park during the pandemic.

The poignant display at Worthing Pier explores people's varied relationships with the South Downs and the landscape's ability to help boost both physical and mental health.

The free exhibition, called "The nourishing nature of the South Downs", has been spearheaded by Creative Waves – a community arts organisation based in Worthing and Adur – which received a grant from the National Park Authority's Covid Recovery Fund.

Creative Waves invited people to participate in a series of well-being walks during the autumn, exploring the South Downs within 10km of Worthing. Many of the participants took inspiration from their walks and created paintings, drawings, sculptures, photography and poetry for the exhibition.

Artwork was also submitted from the wider Worthing and Adur community following a call-out for people to share their experiences of how the South Downs has helped them during the pandemic.

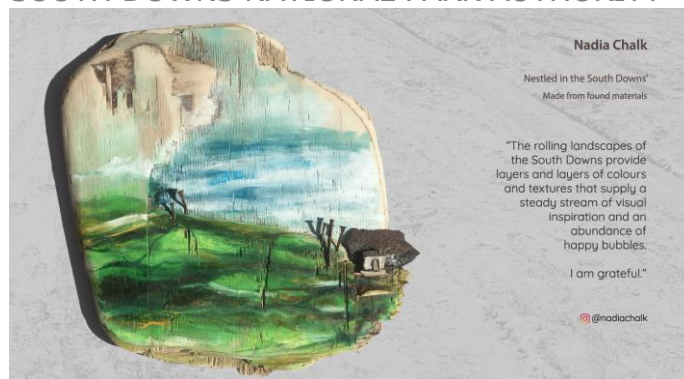


As well as the outdoor gallery, Creative Waves are also including the artwork in commemorative books for Worthing Museum and West Sussex County Council Library for future generations to be able to see.

Nadia Chalk, a Director at Creative Waves, said: "The first walk was enlightening – we realised that we all just needed to walk, talk and listen. That's it!"

"Being outside and sharing the spectacularly simple things on the South Downs: fabulous views, colours, smells, trees, mud, animals, birdsong, wind, rain, sun, silence, chatter. Connecting to nature and to each other, listening and sharing our stories.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY



"We found it to be the most moving project that we have ever done, making us take a breath and think about how we help each other to recover from the disruption."

Vanessa Breen, also a Director at Creative Waves, added: "It's been an extremely challenging time for everyone and this project has been so rewarding on many levels, enabling us to widen our outreach, participation and create more opportunities for people to experience the South Downs through the walks and now the exhibition on Worthing Pier. We are very grateful to the South Downs National Park Authority for awarding us funding,"

The exhibition will be in place at Worthing Pier throughout the spring and summer.

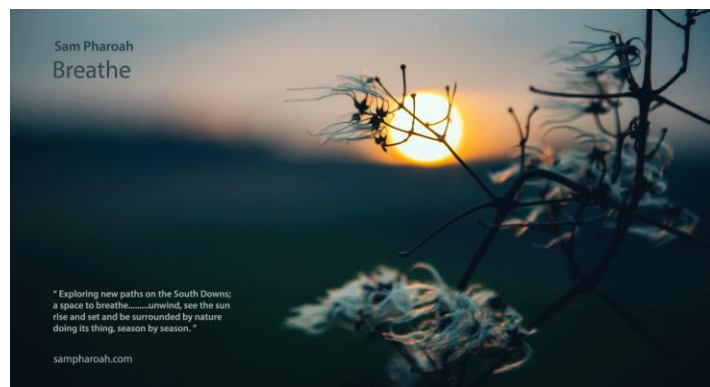
One of the participants said: "Public art and outdoor exhibitions will definitely be the safest, most accessible and most prominent way for artists to show their work for quite some time to come. I'm thrilled to bits to be included in a big real-life art show, and the legacy book too!"

Kate Drake, Health and Wellbeing Officer for the National Park, said: "The artwork is amazing and I was overwhelmed by the sheer variety of work – showing that everyone has a different interpretation of the South Downs.

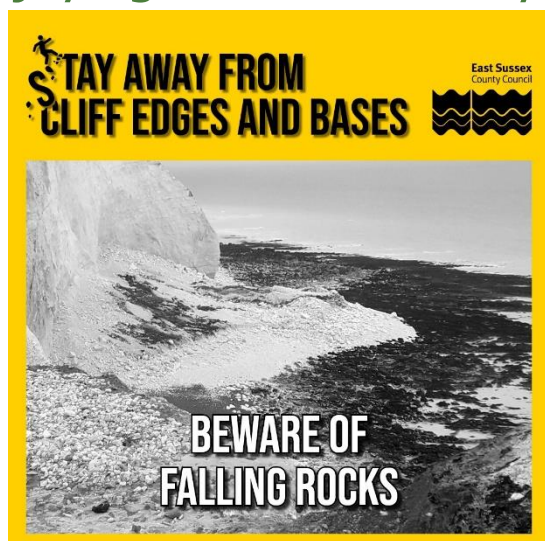
"I know the South Downs has been a real tonic for me during the pandemic and has for so many others too. I think it's just lovely leaving all the 'luggage' behind and being in such an open and tranquil space where you can reset your brain and feel calmer.

"It's certainly been a good stress reliever and this is especially relevant as we have Stress Awareness Month in April."

For more information about the work of Creative Waves see www.creativewaves.co.uk



Enjoying the coast safely



People visiting East Sussex's spectacular coastline – which includes the Seven Sisters and Birling Gap in the National Park – are being urged to stay safe this spring and summer.

Visitors are being reminded of the serious risks the unstable cliffs pose to those getting too close to the edge or walking at the base of the cliffs, and the dangers to beach walkers who risk getting cut off by the tide.

Large numbers of people have been visiting the coast for clifftop and beachside walks during the pandemic. As lockdown restrictions ease over the coming months and the weather improves, visitor numbers are expected to increase.

The joint campaign is being promoted by East Sussex County Council, The National Trust, South Downs National Park Authority, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Seaford Town Council, Wealden District Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Rother District Council.

Visitors are reminded that the chalk cliffs are unstable, with many unseen overhangs and cracks, and despite monitoring the vast majority of chalk falls happen with no warning. Over the last year there have been nearly 50 cliff falls in East Sussex.

People visiting for beach walks are also urged to be aware of the tide times as it is possible get cut off by the incoming tide or be forced to walk too close to the base of the cliffs.

In the past 12 months there have been 13 incidents of people being stranded on the beach after being cut off by the tide. Visitors can check the tide times at www.tidetimes.org.uk

In the event of an emergency dial 999.

Wealden District Council will shortly be carrying out work to redeck the top section of the staircase access to Birling Gap beach. To fit between the Easter school holidays and the early May Bank Holiday, it will be closed from Monday 19 April with a view to reopening on Friday 30 April.

New engagement rangers are launched for heaths



The countryside surrounding Whitehill & Bordon contains some of the world's rarest heathlands habitats, supporting amazing wildlife including the beautiful sand lizard, the silver-studded blue butterfly and several rare birds. These heaths are, in fact, so special that they have protected status.

Now a new initiative has launched to encourage people to care for these local heaths and ensure the town's regeneration protects the biodiversity of these special sites.

East Hampshire District Council, Whitehill Town Council and the South Downs National Park's Heathlands Reunited Team are working in collaboration and using developers' contributions to introduce new engagement rangers on the heaths.

To coincide with the start of ground nesting bird season, a team of seasonal rangers will be onsite from March to September and will have two key roles. Firstly, they will be monitoring the sites' protected species. Secondly, their engagement role will include offering talks and site visits to local community groups and schools, as well as running a series of wildlife identification pop-up events, guided walks and dog walking activities in the Whitehill & Bordon area.

The rangers will be working across the Wealden Heath Phase II Special Protection Area (SPA) that surrounds Whitehill & Bordon. The SPA includes Bramshott & Ludshott Commons, Broxhead Common, Kingsley Common, Longmoor Inclosure and Woolmer Forest. The rangers will also be working at the Shortheath Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC).



Olivia French, Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: "These new engagement rangers will be a team of friendly faces on the commons, bringing people together to care for the heaths and hopefully reaching new audiences who might not be aware of how fragile these protected habitats are."

If you are interested in linking up with the team, please email heathlandranger@southdowns.gov.uk to register your interest.

New podcasts will be inspired by our rivers



Seven writers have been commissioned to pen 10 audio stories and poems, with each author focusing on one of the magical rivers that weave across the South Downs landscape.

The writers will be spending time engaging with the communities that live and work in the landscape to explore the untold stories of everyday people.

Listeners will be able to access these stories through listening apps like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Overcast and Pockets Casts. Audiences can plug in and listen while they walk and explore the landscape, or enjoy at their leisure.

The initiative, called Full Harvest, builds on the success of Writer in Residence project that was delivered in partnership with the National Park Authority in 2019. The outcome was a one-person play called *Cherry Soup* that toured to nine venues.

While developing *Cherry Soup*, writer and director Sara Clifford gathered many stories from people in the community. Full Harvest looks to tell more of these community stories, encompassing a diverse range of voices to discover what the landscape means to people from many walks of life.

Sara Clifford returns to this project focussing on The River Ouse, which runs to Newhaven and the Adur in West Sussex. Sara said: "Each one of us is focusing on one of the seven rivers that run across the National Park from East to West – its history, geography and stories, and particularly the people that live and work there – to tell new and untold stories of those people and our own responses as artists. These will be recorded as podcasts that can be listened to on site."

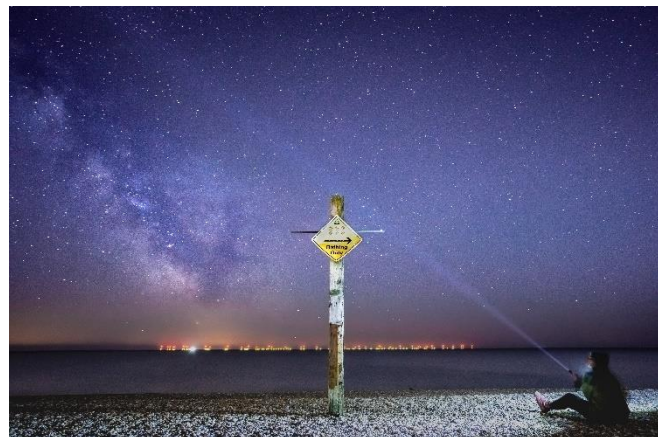
Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the National Park, added: "The rivers of the South Downs are its lifeblood, reflecting both its chalk geology and the complex ecosystems of habitat, animal and plant life that make this place so special. The Full Harvest is a chance to celebrate those rivers through the eyes of contemporary writers, who will draw on history, geography and place to weave new stories."

The downloadable podcasts will be launched this summer.

For more information see www.applause.org.uk

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Stunning nightscape is the people's favourite



Carpenter and amateur photographer Connor Lamb has spoken of his joy after winning The People's Choice in the National Park's first astrophotography competition.

Connor's awe-inspiring shot of the night's sky and the Rampion Offshore Wind Farm took the top spot in the public vote that ran throughout March.

The astrophotography contest was one of the highlights of the National Park's Dark Skies Festival, which ran in February.

Shoreham-based Connor, 26, who wins £100, said: "It's the first time I've received recognition for my work and I feel very proud.

"I'm a carpenter and just passionate about photography as something I do for fun and a reason for me to spend time outdoors and in the wild.

"I love the South Downs and have lived here all my life. I've been doing astrophotography since the first time I made a long exposure photo on a trip to Australia two or three years ago. This photo was taken in May 2020 during the first wave of the pandemic. I spent some time speaking to people who have more knowledge than I do about astronomy and gathered my notes about lining the Milky Way in my exposure while the moon was set over the far horizon to capture a truly dark sky."



Comet Neowise and Hainaker Windmill, by Ricky Chalmers, was runner-up in the People's Choice

Our glorious groundwater!

Simple steps to help care for our precious aquifer



Become a “groundwater guardian” and help care for the precious aquifer that gives us all clean water to drink and enjoy.

That’s the message from The Aquifer Partnership (TAP), which is offering simple ways for residents, gardeners, community organisations and businesses to help safeguard the chalk aquifer of the South Downs that supplies water to over 1.2m people and is under increasing threat from climate change.

The advice comes World Water Day was recognised last month.

Previously known as the Chalk Management Partnership, or ChaMP, TAP was relaunched a year ago as a five-year £500,000 project to protect groundwater in the Brighton Chalk Block from pollution, and to increase resilience to climate change. Led by a partnership between the South Downs National Park Authority, Brighton & Hove City Council, Southern Water, and the Environment Agency, the programme is working with residents, farmers, landowners, and schools across the Brighton, Hove and Lewes area to safeguard our drinking water.

In the past year, the TAP team has had a big focus on engaging young people about the importance of the aquifer, and have produced a series of eye-catching illustrations and films to bring the topic to life – including making an “edible aquifer” out of marshmallows and chocolate.

Susie Howells, TAP’s Partnership Development Manager, said: “When people think of World Water Day, they normally think of our seas, lakes and rivers, rather than groundwater. But here in Brighton we are unusual in that we do not



have any significant rivers or streams within the immediate area. So groundwater really is one of our most precious water resources – a constant supply of clean, filtered drinking water that has been sustaining people

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY and wildlife for centuries. However, our groundwater is at risk in the town and on the downs from pollution, getting into the aquifer from roads and vehicles; and from chemicals used on crops, in gardens and other open spaces.

“High levels of nitrate have been recorded in Brighton & Hove’s water supply, and so we’re working with farmers and gardeners to reverse the trend by using more sympathetic practices.

“The truth is we can all play our part in being guardians of this wonderful groundwater and it doesn’t have to be difficult – it could be as simple as extra planting in your garden or using fewer chemicals.”

TAP’s top tips for caring for the aquifer are:

1. Create a rain garden

Rain gardens are designed to mimic the natural processes that break down pollution and reduce flood risk by slowing



water down. They use the power of plants to filter and cleanse polluted water. Easy to incorporate into a garden or allotment, it can be as simple a planted area with gravel and sand layers below to cleanse water before it filters into the ground. For more advice see

<https://raingardens.info>

2. Drain your driveway

To avoid excessive surface water run-off, it’s a good idea to choose permeable paving and have it properly installed. Take a look at the Royal Horticultural Society’s [guide](#) to permeable driveways.

3. Healthy plants – help your herbaceous perennials

You can prevent chemicals leaching into the groundwater by avoiding chemical fertilisers and pesticides. Well-rotted manure can be spread and dug into the soil in spring, rather than in the autumn.

4. Don’t leave your beds bare!

Don’t leave your beds bare over winter – sow “green manure” seeds such as phacelia or crimson clover in the autumn and they will help improve soil health and prevent nitrate leaching. The flowers also attract beneficial insects like hoverflies. Phacelia makes an excellent companion for kale, broccoli and tomatoes – and it’s very fast-growing!

5. Only rain down the drain

Most road drains and surface drains are designed to carry only rainwater. Pouring pollutants down these drains is like pouring them straight into the groundwater via a soakaway. Just one litre of oil can pollute one million litres of drinking water.

For more information about the work of TAP, visit

www.wearetap.org.uk



Things to do in the South Downs this April

Please follow the links as booking may be necessary. Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at southdowns.gov.uk/events/



- Enjoy Easter family activities, including making a wooden Easter mask, at [the Weald and Downland Museum](#) from 12 April to 18 April. Don't forget to also visit their heavy horses (come and say 'hello' to Leon, the newest member in the Stables), as well as the museum's Southdown lambs, sheep and other traditional farm animals.
- Join the [clay and pottery weekend](#) at the Weald and Downland Museum on 17 and 18 April. Potters will share their skills, how pots are formed and thrown on a wheel, and talk about the development of different objects over time. You can also find out more from the brick drying shed on the preparation of the clay and the brickmaking industry.
- Enjoy an al-fresco bingo and pizza night at [the Greatham Inn](#) in Greatham on 17 April.
- Feast your eyes on a treasure trove of local South Downs produce at [Petworth Farmers' Market](#) on 24 April in the town's main car park from 9am to 1pm.
- Visit the [Arundel Castle Plant Fair](#) on 25 April. With two dozen specialist growers and nurseries, there's plenty to choose from!

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

SIGN UP TO THIS NEWSLETTER

Sign up to receive this newsletter by email every month!

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

Sign up to the National Park's Planning Newsletter, issued three times a year, by visiting www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-newsletter/

Picture Credits

Beaver images – Nick Upton/National Trust: P4 Phil Young @ The Outsiders Project; P6 Ed Hughes; P7 Anne Purkiss; P8 Right Sam Moore.