

HELP US TO #RENATURE
SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

South Downs News

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **ReNature** Find out about an exciting new initiative to create a huge new area of wildlife-rich habitat and help turn the tide on the UK's biodiversity loss.
- **Wild Chalk returns!** Find out how to get a free nature pack that could help turn your garden into a haven for pollinators!
- **Summer adventure** Learn more about free guided walks at our magical heathlands.
- **Cheers!** This month we celebrate the glorious wine of the South Downs and have two special prizes.

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

Help ReNature and give wildlife a helping hand!

An inspiring campaign has launched to "renature" the South Downs National Park and create new havens for wildlife to flourish.

In the biggest initiative ever launched by the National Park, the **Help Nature to ReNature** campaign is looking to raise £100m over the next 10 years to create an extra 13,000 hectares – or around 21,000 football pitches – of habitat where plants and animals can thrive.

These ambitious plans would mean an area over three times the size of Portsmouth City (40km²), almost double the size of Southampton City (72.8km²), over a third again bigger than Brighton and Hove (87.5km²), managed for nature.

A beautiful and emotive film, "**The Night We ReNatured**", has been launched to kickstart the initiative, telling the story of a young girl who dreams of nature rekindling in our countryside, villages, towns and cities as people work together to create a home for wildlife. The film is set to be shown this month on cinema screens across the region.



The South Downs currently has 25 per cent of the land managed for nature, such as nature reserves, woods, heaths, ponds and flower-rich road verges. The additional 13,000 hectares would bring this to 33 per cent of land managed for nature – going beyond current



UN-backed conservation targets of "30 per cent by 2030" (30 for 30).

But the National Park also wants to go one step further – ensuring that the remaining 67 per cent is nature-friendly by 2030.

#ReNature is being spearheaded by the South Downs National Park Authority and the South Downs National Park Trust, the official independent charity of the National Park, working with a range of partners.

It comes as national statistics show nature is in crisis everywhere. The latest national State of Nature report showed revealed that 41 per cent of UK species studied have declined, and some 133 species assessed have already been lost from British shores since 1500. Around a quarter of the UK's mammals could also be at risk of disappearing altogether. Climate change, pollution and habitat loss are among the causing factors.

Ecologist Andrew Lee, who heads Countryside Policy and Management for the National Park, said: "The biodiversity crisis is real and it's happening before our eyes, but the good news is it's not too late to turn the tide of wildlife

Free nature packs giveaway!



How special is the National Park to have the globally-rare habitat of chalk grassland running right along its length from Winchester to Eastbourne?

Wild Chalk returns for 2021 with a four-day festival celebrating the unique plants and animals that live in chalk grassland.

This year we've put together a programme of short films and live action – as well as a very special offer that puts nature recovery into action! Rangers from the South Downs National Park and Brighton and Hove City Council will be out and about with other ecologists and volunteers bringing you inspiring footage straight from the South Downs.

We're also giving away 250 free **Wild Chalk Nature Packs**, offering tips and tools on what you can do at home to encourage nature in your garden and support the #ReNature initiative.

Each pack contains: an illustrated Field Guide to chalk grassland; a host of colouring sheets and posters; a folklore guide to the South Downs; a pack of Super Species Cards to play Top Trumps with chalk grassland insects, birds and plants; a "ReNature" leaflet and a packet of 26 different species of wildflower seeds that is sufficient for you to create a square metre of native flowers to attract pollinators.

To receive a pack [click here](#) and fill in the application form.

Laura Warren, Events and Engagement Officer, said: "There are 250 packs available and they'll be distributed in the week commencing 19 July, but it's first come first served! This year is all about inspiring people about the wonders of chalk grassland and simple things we can do to help nature. We have some lovely short films on dew ponds and dragonflies and we're looking forward to a live butterfly walk at Malling Down. We also want people to connect with, explore and care for these very sensitive habitats that are often called 'Europe's rainforest in miniature'."

A full festival programme will be available on our website shortly and we'll be broadcasting all the action on our Facebook pages starting on Thursday 22 July running through till Sunday 25 July.

loss. Nature can thrive anywhere given the right support and we can all work together to make a real difference.

"Located in the busiest part of the UK in the South East, the South Downs National Park has a crucial role to play to lead nature recovery and be the hub of an interconnected 'nature network' for the entire region.

"Nature needs us now and we also need nature, perhaps now more than ever before in this post-pandemic world where green spaces have taken on a new level of importance.

"Apart from being incredibly beautiful and part of our shared appreciation for Planet Earth, nature gives us everything – whether it be clean water, fresh air or food to eat. We're launching this campaign without a moment to lose because it's time for all of us to help nature to renature."

The National Park already has some amazing biodiversity – including over 20 species of butterfly being found in just one square metre of chalk grassland and some heaths having all 12 native reptile and amphibian species. But, even here in the South Downs, nature is struggling and needs our help.

Andrew explained: "The crux of this initiative is that we want nature everywhere for everyone.

"Our goal will be achieved by working with our farmers, land managers, communities and local authorities, as well as other partners and environmental charities. It will include everything from hedgerow restoration, to planting thousands of trees, to the restoration of individual village ponds, to planting new wildflower corridors."

Individuals, communities, businesses and funders are now being encouraged to help with the fundraising.



Julie Fawcett, Chair of the South Downs National Park Trust, said: "We know we're aiming big with our fundraising target, but nature desperately needs our help. As a charity, we hope to raise the funds over the next decade in a variety of ways, including donations, grants, public funds and private finance."

"Whether it be making a donation, putting up a bird box in your garden or planting a tree at your school, everyone can help nature."

To donate to the South Downs National Park Trust's appeal visit www.southdownstrust.org.uk/help-nature-renature.

For more information about the initiative visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/ReNature

NEXT MONTH: Details about our exciting ReNature competition with some fantastic prizes!

Nature trails are given a new lease of life



Nature trails with spectacular views of the Arun Valley are once again open to the public following a major revamp.

Amberley Museum's re-imagined nature trails were opened last month to mark World Environment Day.

Tim Burr, Deputy Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee of the National Park Authority, officially opened the trails, which have been restored thanks to funding from our Covid Recovery Fund.

There are two nature trails at the museum: the Hillside Trail had been closed for some time due to fences falling into disrepair and many ash trees along the path suffering from ash dieback and needing to be removed. Thanks to the funding, the Hillside Trail is open once again and visitors can climb to the top of the White Pit and see spectacular views of the valley.

The Lower Nature trail is a more leisurely stroll that now includes a new outdoor meeting space for groups, such as guides and scouts, and where adult classes can take place.

Both trails have new information boards with children's activities introduced by Bella the Bat, who was designed and drawn by a pupil from Amberley School.



Amanda Elmes, who leads learning and outreach for the Authority, said: "It's great to see these wonderful trails given a new lease of life thanks to our Recovery Fund and I hope people enjoy exploring them this summer and autumn."

Amberley Museum is a 36-acre site in the heart of the National Park. Often referred to as multiple museums in one, the Museum has over 20 exhibition areas covering everything from vintage vehicles to communications, to electrical goods to crafts and nature trails to rides on a narrow-gauge railway and historic buses.

Find out more and pre-book tickets at www.amberleymuseum.co.uk

A summer of exciting adventures on our heaths



Heathlands are known for their radiant purple heathers that shimmer in the late summer sun, but there's also an abundance of animals that make their home in this incredible habitat.

Now a series of free guided walks are being put on this summer for people to discover the mysterious wildlife of lowland heaths in the South Downs.

The bookable walks are being led by the Heathlands Reunited engagement rangers.

Elinor Newman, an Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: "This time of year our lowland heath is buzzing with life, but it's not always that obvious to spot to the untrained eye.

"From evening walks listening out for the iconic churring sound of the nightjar, to finding out more about bats, or discovering more about medicinal plants that grow on our heaths, there's something for everyone!



"This is a lovely opportunity to get out in the fresh air and experience the beauty of our heaths and learn lots along the way. Well-behaved dogs on leads are very welcome of course!"

A highlight of the summer will be **Heath Week**, from 26 July to 31 July, when the Heathlands Reunited team and partners are joining the nationwide celebration of heathland with a range of fun activities.

Elinor added: "Each day we're focusing on a different heathland in our area, and a different theme, from exploring the weird and wonderful heathland wildlife, to the incredible history of the heathlands, to engaging with this unique landscape through crafts, storytelling, and mindfulness. Everyone is welcome, but do make sure to pre-book your spot!"

For full details of all the walks and activities and to pre-book visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/help-your-heaths/heathlands-reunited/walks-talks/

Revamped museum opens



Petersfield Museum is back open for visitors following a major £4m redevelopment.

Visitors will find stunning collections and galleries as its buildings have been transformed and an exciting new outdoor space created in the courtyard.

The museum tells a cohesive story of Petersfield and its neighbouring villages over the last 10,000 years.

Visitors will be able to learn more through:

- A wonderful film featuring Museum Patron Daniel Day Lewis reading the poetry of Edward Thomas creates a sense of history and place about Petersfield's location in the South Downs National Park
- New galleries charting life in rural England from the Palaeolithic era to the modern day, and everything in between
- A glimpse into the harshness of Victorian justice and how things have changed today through the original courtroom and police cells that form part of the site of the Museum
- Learn about how geography, people and place all shape how and where we live
- Fine examples of period dress from the Museum's own Bedales Historic Costume Collection



The work was supported by a £1.7m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Dan McWilliam, Museum Director said: "What started as a small collection of objects in a single room just over 22 years ago, is now a

great example of a modern museum that reflects the history and stories of its local communities.

"It also tells the story of the place and how it has developed over time through the work of the talented and creative people that lived here.

"Petersfield Museum is a great family day out."

To book a ticket visit www.petersfieldmuseum.co.uk

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY New enchanting composition



A captivating classical musical score set to breathtaking scenery has been created to mark the 10th anniversary of the South Downs National Park.

The **original composition** has been produced by Sussex composer Ed Hughes, alongside some of the finest musicians in the UK.

Stunning high-resolution visuals of the South Downs filmed by Sam Moore – including bluebell woods, sweeping vistas, sunflower fields and star-studded night skies – provide a thrilling backdrop to the music.

Ed Hughes, Professor of Composition at the University of Sussex, specially recorded the score with the New Music Players in a socially distanced recording session in London in March 2021. The melodies and rhythms of his music directly reflect his experience of walking the South Downs Way.

Explaining his influences for the music, Ed, who is based in Lewes, said: "The sense of scale and the vistas in the South Downs landscape are very special to me. It's a wonderful place which offers walkers a sense of home through repetition and familiarity but with endless variations of light, shape and colours – which feels musical to me.

"In addition, a couple of years ago, I studied some Sussex folksongs transcribed by Butterworth in 1912, while working on a piece for a fine Sussex ensemble 'The Corelli Ensemble'. Something of the lyrical sensibility in these 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."

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the Authority, added: "It has been a real privilege for us to work with Ed on this spectacular score. His uplifting, inspiring music perfectly captures the rolling landscape of the South Downs and the busy variety of its flora and fauna. It is a fitting celebration of both the landscape and the first ten years of the nation's newest National Park.

"During all the difficulties and pressures of the past year so many people have discovered that the South Downs National Park is a place to connect with nature and restore ourselves. Ed's music encapsulates this spirit of discovery and wellbeing. Listen, enjoy and explore."

Celebrating the glorious grapes of the South Downs



The huge potential of the South Downs National Park to become a winemaking hub for the UK has been revealed in a leading new report.

With its sun-soaked slopes and chalky soils reminiscent of northern France, the South Downs has already made a name for itself for producing some of the best English sparkling wines.

Now a new study has shown that the potential for more viticulture may be significant, bringing hundreds of new jobs and millions of pounds-worth of investment to local rural economies in the National Park.

The publication of the study is accompanied by key new planning guidance for current and potential winemakers – recognising that any increase in vineyards must protect and enhance the treasured landscape of the South Downs and help biodiversity.

The report concluded that up to a third of agricultural land in the National Park may be suitable for winemaking.

Key findings of the report, carried out independently by Vinescapes, revealed:

- There has been a **90 per cent increase** in vineyard coverage in the South Downs National Park since 2016, with around five new vineyards planted every year.
- There are now **51 vineyards** and **11 wineries** in the National Park, employing 358 people, attracting approximately **33,000 visitors a year** and contributing directly around **£24.5 million** to the local economy and **£54m** to the wider economy
- Currently around **0.4 per cent of farmland** is used for viticulture – but **34 per cent** could be suitable for vineyards.
- The study identifies **39,700 hectares** of land in the South Downs National as being suitable for viticulture. If just one-tenth of this land (3,970 ha) were to be converted for growing grapes, this would represent an area larger than the current UK viticulture sector (3,500 ha in 2019) and more than **22 million bottles of wine**

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could be produced annually. (2.5m are currently produced annually)

- The average spend per visitor in the National Park is currently around **£62**.
- If vineyard area and wine production in the National Park doubles, to almost 1,000 ha, the study estimates **800 people** (full-time equivalent jobs) could be employed, an annual contribution to the wider economy of **£127 million** could be provided, and 75,000 tourists could visit each year.

Nick Heasman, a Countryside and Policy Manager for the Authority, which commissioned the study, said:

“Commercial vineyards have existed in the National Park area since the 1950s, and there are references to vineyards in the region going back to Roman times.

“Then, as now, the special nature of the South Downs National Park provides a working landscape that helps produce world-class wines.

“This study is really important – in terms of improving our understanding of the current viticulture sector in the National Park and also the potential for wine-making to grow sustainably. Climate change is undoubtedly having an impact and, with warmer summers predicted in the future, we know farmers and land managers may be looking at grape-growing opportunities on their land.

“More viticulture undoubtedly has the potential to help our local communities thrive and prosper, but at the heart of our thinking is that any growth must be environmentally sustainable.”

A summary of the study, called the South Downs National Park Viticulture Growth Impact Assessment, can be read [here](#).

Following on from this study is the planning guidance, called a Technical Advice Note, which will help shape any future viticulture. The guidance recommends any future proposals are landscape-led and must deliver multiple benefits for the National Park, including creating space for nature (such as planting trees and wildflowers) and helping to protect soils and watercourses (by reducing pesticide use, for instance).

Lucy Howard, Planning Policy Manager for the National Park Authority, explained: “This useful planning guidance is aimed at current and prospective winemakers. It forms a framework for how viticulture could expand in the National Park over the coming years, while also delivering benefits for landscape and biodiversity.”

Read the viticulture planning guidance [here](#).

Anyone considering a viticulture development can get in touch with the Authority for advice and to find out if they need planning permission. Visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-applications/advice/



South Downs wine bottle helps to plant 1,000 trees



A beautiful limited edition sparkling wine has been produced as part of the “Trees for the Downs” initiative.

Leading English Sparkling Winemaker Nyetimber has pledged support for the campaign and created a stunning limited-edition National Park bottle of its Classic Cuvee MV.

Each of the 1,000 limited-edition bottles represents a tree that will be planted by Nyetimber as part of the campaign.

Trees for the Downs launched in April and is the biggest-ever charitable tree-planting drive for the South Downs. The South Downs National Park Trust, the official independent charity for the National Park, has set its sights on raising a total of £260,000 to be able to plant 100,000 trees across Sussex and Hampshire over the next four years.

The bottles feature beautiful bespoke neck and back labels, decorated with exquisite elm tree artwork.

Nyetimber has also produced a **wonderful short film**, introducing the winemaking history of the South Downs, and featuring Bob Epsom, Woodlands Officer for the National Park.

Eric Heerema, Owner and CEO of Nyetimber, said: “The South Downs play an essential role in the vitality and quality of our vineyards, as well as, providing land for wildlife, a national park for people to enjoy and an area for local communities to thrive. It is important to us that we preserve and enhance this environment for generations to come.”

To purchase a limited edition bottle please visit <https://nyetimber.com/product/south-downs-classic-cuvee-mv/>

WIN A LIMITED EDITION BOTTLE!

We have a bottle of this sumptuous wine to give away to two lucky winners! Simply email “Pinot Noir” to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk by 31 July.

New subscribers to the newsletter will be automatically entered into the draw. Good luck!

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY New funding to support nature-friendly farming



Farmers and land managers in the National Park will be able to apply for funding as part of a new initiative to support nature-friendly farming and sustainability.

The **Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL)** programme was announced recently by Defra to help support farmers in England’s 44 protected landscapes.

The National Park’s farming team will be delivering the programme locally in the South Downs and are now encouraging farmers and land managers to apply for funding.

The programme will run between July 2021 and March 2024, with applications open from 1 July.

Farmers and land managers can apply for funding to carry out projects that:

- support nature recovery
- mitigate the impacts of climate change
- provide opportunities for people to discover, enjoy and understand landscape and cultural heritage
- support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses.

Nigel James, Countryside and Policy Manager and who leads the farming team at the National Park, said: “Farmers are the lifeblood of the South Downs National Park as around three quarters of this amazing landscape is farmland. We have a range of small family-run farms and large farming estates and each one plays their part in making this a living, working landscape that produces incredible food and drink, as well as supporting wildlife and being enjoyed by millions of people every year.

“We’re looking forward to working with farmers and land managers to help deliver this important programme and bring benefits to all.”

FiPL is open to all farmers and land managers, including those from the private, public and charity sectors.

For more information and to apply for funding visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/FarmingInProtectedLandscapes

Podcasts celebrate magical rivers of the South Downs



A series of thought-provoking podcasts are being launched inspired by the beautiful and mysterious rivers of Sussex and Hampshire.

Seven acclaimed writers and poets have teamed up for Full Harvest – a series of audio stories and poems inspired by the South Downs National Park's landscape and available as free podcasts from 12 July 2021 via all major listening platforms.

It comes after the wordsmiths have spent the past few months exploring the scenic river valleys and engaging with the community on local stories, anecdotes and reflections about the landscape.

The result is an eclectic mix of writing styles featuring short stories, poetry and monologues.

The inspiring initiative has been led by arts charity Applause in partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority.

Sara Clifford, lead writer and hailing from Lewes, said: "This is both a beautiful National Park and a living landscape that supports people and work. I am interested in how the river has shaped the local community and its stories, from industry and jobs, to the environment and leisure, and how local people view it today.

"I am particularly interested in people who might feel that the National Park is inaccessible for them, for whatever reasons, and finding ways of connecting groups with their local landscape, history and culture of the National Park."

Anooshka Rawden, who leads cultural heritage for the National Park, said: "Each story approaches the theme of 'rivers' very differently, from the darkness of horror to conversational monologues. The common thread throughout is that natural landscapes can provide hope and new perspectives, and the connection between nature and the journey to recovery.

"Our mental health and wellbeing is so centred on our sense of place and belonging, I hope people enjoy these stories for their entertainment, whether listening from home on a wet afternoon or walking the downland."

[Listen to the podcasts here.](#)

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY Have you tried the Serpent Trail yet?



Free booklets giving people a step-by-step guide to the Serpent Trail are now available from the South Downs Centre in Midhurst.

The 65-mile long Serpent Trail – so-called because of its resemblance to a snake on a map – has recently been upgraded and given a new lease of life.

The trail snakes its way from Haslemere in Surrey (the head and tongue), climbing up to its highest point in the National Park at Black Down, then weaving through West Sussex on its way onward to Petersfield in Hampshire.

Angela Tysoe, who works at the South Downs Centre and helps to greet and give information to visitors, said:

"Walking sections of the Serpent Trail is a lovely way of exploring the National Park this summer and this free guide is a must for every walker!"

"The South Downs Centre is open from 9am to 4pm on weekdays and we're currently open from 9am to 2.30pm on Saturdays during the summer months. There are also lots of other information to help plan your summer."

Heathlands focus group

Do you love your local heathland and want to help improve it further?

The five-year Heathlands Reunited project will be coming to a close this autumn.



An online focus group has been organised to determine the impact this project has had on people and communities. The informal group session will encourage you to share your experiences with others and discuss your thoughts on the future of our heathlands.

The online focus group will be held using Zoom on Tuesday 27 July between 6pm and 8pm.

If you would like to register to attend the focus group, please answer **[these short set of questions](#)** by Sunday 18 July. If happy to receive it, all attendees will be sent a Heathlands Explorer pack.

Things to do in the South Downs this July

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/



- **[The Petersfield Shakespeare Festival](#)** is all set to transform the lockdown nightmare to a midsummer dream with a perfect play in a magical woodland setting at Wylds Christmas Tree Farm, in Liss, from 20 to 25 July.
- This year's **[Stopham Flower Festival](#)** on 23 and 24 July will celebrate the "Beauty of the Earth".
- **[The South Down's Annual International Music Festival](#)** takes place in the picturesque village of Alfriston from 20 to 25 of July.
- Enjoy some family nature therapy forest bathing at **[Petworth Park](#)**. The summer sessions start on 31 July.
- Combine sport and socialising at the **[Goodwood Festival](#)**, which runs from July 27 to 31.
- Explore and soak up the beautiful summer views! Check out our range of **[downloadable walk leaflets](#)** on our website, covering Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex.

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? Or would you like to pen your own article about why you love the South Downs? 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

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Sign up to the National Park's Planning Newsletter, issued three times a year, by visiting

www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-newsletter/

Pic credits

P1 – Dick Hawkes; P2 Right – Daniel Greenwood; P3 Left – Sam Moore; P3 (Nightjar) – Jordan Sharp; P3 Right – Amberley Museum; P4 (vines) Rathfinny; P4 (wine glasses) – Alexandr Podvalny; P5 left – Guy Edwardes; P6 Left – Petersfield Museum; P6 Left – Vicky Lamburn; P7 Left – Anne-Katrin Purkiss