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SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

South Downs News

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Picture perfect** Find out the winners of our popular photo competition “Nature Makes Me Happy” and have your own say on which photograph should be crowned the People’s Choice winner.
- **Comforting contentment** Beat the January blues and find out how the South Downs National Park can give you a much-needed boost during the cold months.
- **Community** Find out about the £1.5m of funding to improve access and infrastructure.
- **Reminiscing summer days** Listen to a new podcast by Writer in Residence Alinah Azadeh.

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

Awe-inspiring photos shine bright in contest

Dramatic scenes of a winter wonderland, a bird of prey in full flight and a singing Robin Red Breast are among the winners of the South Downs National Park’s annual photography competition.

“Fire and Ice”, by Jamie Fielding, took the top spot in this year’s contest, impressing judges with a captivating photograph of a frosty, crystalline treescape shrouded in a pink morning mist.

The theme for 2021/2022 was “Nature Makes Me Happy”, celebrating the wonders of the natural world and its ability to fill us with joy and inspiration. This year’s competition tied in with the National Park’s ambitious nature recovery programme, called “ReNature”, and had well over 360 entries.

The runner-up was “A Sparkling Hunt”, by Richard Murray, who was able to capture a rare moment of a mother barn owl flying majestically back to her nest with her prey.

Third place was awarded to “Taking It In”, by Andy Flowerday, who photographed a walker gazing at the spectacle of a mist-filled valley at Devil’s Dyke, near Brighton.

Coming fourth place was “Sing a Song”, by Corinne Kozok, who submitted a gleeful image of a singing robin.

The competition judges were award-winning photographers Finn Hopson, Carlotta Luke and Rachael Talibart, as well as Doug Jones, SDNPA Member.

About the winning image, Carlotta said: “I love the light and the feeling of the fog and all the layers in the



photograph. I would be really happy standing there looking at this amazing scene in the South Downs.”

Finn said: “A lot of thought has gone into this photo. I absolutely love these kind of misty mornings in the South Downs when the sun is coming up and they make me very happy. I can just imagine being there.”

Rachael said: “I love the contrast of warmth and cold, the elegant and thoughtful composition and the subtle processing. A very classy photo.”

Jamie Fielding, from Angmering, West Sussex, picks up a £250 prize. He said: “Sometimes nature just makes you sit back and say ‘wow’. This was one such morning. There was a beautiful mist shrouding Chanctonbury Ring and, given the sub-zero temperatures, a stunning hoar frost was forming on the trees as well as the ground. As the sun started to rise, the mist began to glow, giving an ethereal, otherworldly feel to the scene. When conditions play out like this, and nature is one your side, it’s hard not to come back from a shoot without a smile on your face.”

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Judges adored the runner-up image of the barn owl, with Rachael commenting: "This photo really makes me happy because I'm a sucker for a barn owl! I just love them and they're one of the most incredible birds. Catching a barn owl with its prey is just great."



Finn said: "It's a conversation starter, that's for sure, and you're going to have an emotional reaction either way. I've only seen a barn owl once in the Downs and it was incredible. To capture it in this kind of photograph in full flight with its prey is truly impressive."

Richard Murray, from Waterlooville, in Hampshire, who picks up a £150 prize, said: "Barn owls are one of the most majestic birds to watch and photograph. I'd been observing this owl for several months in a field close to Petworth. I was lucky enough to be able to set up a hide within the field which allowed me to watch this magnificent and highly-efficient predator effortlessly catch prey time and time again to take back to feed her chicks. This photo captures the owl returning to her young after another successful hunt, flying through the insects which glistened in the evening light."

Commenting on the stunning image of Devil's Dyke, which earns Andy Flowerday a £100 prize, Doug said: "This shows a different aspect of nature. You can imagine yourself sitting there, but it wouldn't stay like this for long. It's a really special moment."



Rachael said: "This captures such an incredible moment in the South Downs, with a walker gazing at a mist-filled valley and really appreciating the natural world. It fits the brief perfectly."

Carlotta added: "This is quintessentially the South Downs. It makes me happy."

Andy Flowerday, who lives in Patcham, said: "I went up to the Dyke before sunrise on this early November morning and the cloud inversion was already filling the Dyke and was spread across the Weald as well. The mist was swirling around, stirred up by the rising sun. I was just about to leave and decided to take a couple more photos as the light looked great – and the bonus was this person resting and taking it all in, giving the scene a sense of scale."



The delightful image of a robin was taken near Winchester, and earns Corinne Kozok, of Avington, a £50 prize.

Doug said: "This image really makes me smile. It's yet another illustration of how nature can help us – and why we should help the natural world."

The judges also highly-commended two images: "Cheesefoot Head In Winter" by Ron De'Ath (*below*) and "South Downs Summer" by Thomas Moore.

All the winning and commended images, as well as 16 other shortlisted images, will now be put forward to the People's Choice.

People will be able to vote online from Monday, 10 January for their favourite photograph and the winning photographer will receive £100. The online poll closes at midnight on 31 January.

Visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-photo-competition-2021-22-peoples-choice-vote/ to cast your vote.



£1.5m boost for community



New walking routes for families and people with disabilities, cycle hubs, play facilities, and a refurbished pavilion are among the projects to benefit from a major funding boost from the National Park Authority.

More than £1.37m will benefit almost 30 community schemes across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex.

The investment comes from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is administered by the Authority and paid by developers to support new local infrastructure.

As well as the £1.37m, 22 parish or town councils across the National Park will be taking a share of just over £256,000 to support grassroots projects in their area.

Among the inspiring projects will be a mix of initiatives to help better connect urban areas to the countryside, including new Miles Without Stiles routes in Hampshire. Over 130 miles of stile-free routes will be created around Winchester and from Hambledon to Rowlands Castle.

In West Sussex, funding will help to create the first phase of a shared-use traffic-free path connecting the south of Midhurst to the town centre.

In East Sussex, a cash injection will help pay for Phase 6 of Egrets Way, connecting Rise Farm to Rodmell in the beautiful Ouse Valley.

Tim Slaney, Director of Planning, said: "Having access to green spaces has never been more important and a large proportion of this funding will help people walk or cycle right into the heart of some of the South East's most beautiful countryside. This substantial funding underlines the tremendous value of good planning and showcases the benefits that flow from high-quality development in a protected landscape such as the South Downs."

East Sussex

Wallands Primary School SuDs Project in Lewes – to provide an exemplar sustainable drainage scheme providing reduced flood risk, learning opportunities, improved outdoor space, and more spaces for nature. £150,000

Egrets Way Phase 6 – to develop a shared-use path from Rise Farm to Rodmell (3.1km). £131,250

Beachy Head Chaplaincy – improvements to existing facilities for chaplains, coastguard and police. £42,500

Seven Sisters Country Park – to improve facilities and services. £80,000.

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Buzz Active – improving access for paddle sport users in the Cuckmere Valley. £30,000.

Beacon Parishes Traffic Group – extension of Jubilee Pathway at Spatham Lane. £15,000

West Sussex

Pavilion 2022, Fernhurst – to modernise and expand the sports pavilion to serve Fernhurst. £200,000.

Midhurst – to help West Sussex County Council fund the first section of the Midhurst Greenway initiative, creating a new crossing on the A286 and a shared-use, widened route for cyclists and walkers along Jubilee Path, part of a long-term vision for a traffic-free route from south Midhurst connecting with the town centre and Easebourne.

Midhurst Common – access improvement and nature recovery works to create new walking and cycling routes along the old Petersfield to Midhurst railway line. £61,000

Lavant – replace or refurbish equipment at children's playground. £50,000

Amberley – creation of a new community car park at School Road. £35,000.

Funtington – refurbishing village hall. £30,000.

Petworth – improvements to Leconfield Hall. £20,000.

Levin Down, near Singleton – access improvement works and new walking routes. £16,400.

Bury School – refurbishing toilets. £15,000.

Stedham and Iping Recreation Ground – replacing or refurbishing play equipment. £12,525.

Fittleworth – heathland restoration at Hesworth Common. £9,000. Also tree planting at Birchwalk Woods. £1,500.

Hampshire

Sustainability Centre, near Clanfield – expand facilities and services related to sustainable education, eco-tourism and residential courses. £100,000.

New Miles Without Stiles routes, led by Hampshire County Council – creating a stile-free route covering the parishes Twyford, Itchen Valley, Chilcomb and Itchen Stoke and Ovington, as well as a "southern gateway" to the National Park covering the parishes of Soberton, Hambledon, Horndean, and Rowlands Castle. Routes are ideal for families, mobility scooters and walkers with limited mobility. £53,008

West Liss Recreation Ground, Liss – to expand and renew the play area, MUGA and fitness area. £50,000.00

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Bike Base – Cycle hubs, new trails for children and adults, bike repair facilities, battery charging, and bike washing facilities. £50,000

Petersfield School – funding for Drama Break Out Area and outdoor facilities. £40,000.

Droxford Junior School – new play and outdoor education facilities. £37,563.85.

Selborne – funding towards Village Highway Improvement Scheme. £15,000.

Steep – funding towards Village Highway Improvement Scheme £10,000.

Froxfield and Privett – funding towards Village Highway Improvement Scheme £10,000

Greatham – funding towards Village Highway Improvement Scheme £10,000

Embrace the dark skies!



Exploring the starry night sky of the South Downs and discovering its wonders for yourself will be the theme of this year's Dark Skies Festival.

A bumper line-up of virtual and hopefully, in-person, events are being planned for the festival, which takes place across school half-term holidays from 11 February to 27 February.

Highlights this year will include a detailed look at each of the 10 Dark Sky Discovery Sites across the National Park, with useful tips on how to get the best stargazing experience at each location.

There will also be a fascinating mix of online videos and Facebook lives, covering everything from nocturnal wildlife, to astrophotography tips, to moongazing and much more.

Astronomers from the South Downs Planetarium will be staging an online tour of the winter night sky, together with a round-up of the latest developments in astronomy and space exploration.

On social media, we'll also be sharing mesmerising astrophotography images from across the South Downs and beyond and announcing the winners of the competition.

Weather-permitting, and Covid-permitting, we also hope to run some small-scale outdoor stargazing and moongazing events, giving people the chance to chat with astronomy experts and use large telescopes.

The festival celebrates the National Park's status as one of the best, and most accessible, places in the world to capture immense views of the stars. The South Downs, called "The Moore's Reserve" after the late Sir Patrick Moore, is one of 18 International Dark Skies Reserves, having been awarded the prestigious accolade in 2016.

Physicist Dan Oakley, Lead Ranger and who heads the Dark Skies status in the National Park, said: "We're really excited for our 2022 Dark Skies Festival and hope it inspires and informs people about how special a dark sky is and how you can get out and discover the universe for yourself."

"We hope the festival will really give people the know-how to make the most of the stargazing opportunities on their doorstep."

The full programme will be announced at the end of January/early February.

New podcast is released



The uplifting power of the coastal South Downs amid uncertain times is explored in an illuminating new podcast.

"On The Same Edge" is the second podcast from Alinah Azadeh, the Writer In Residence for Seven Sisters Country Park and the Sussex Heritage Coast.

On a clear, warm summer's day in 2021, Alinah takes a walk from Birling Gap with writer and artist Josephine Hall up on to the Seven Sisters cliffs to ask about her creative work, her relationship to the sea and to edges, ancestors and migration.

They speak of writing, walking, activism and the restorative power of the coastal Downs through these intense times of change.

Brighton-based Josephine also shares her poetry and book recommendations



Alinah, who lives in Lewes, said: "It was a real joy spending time with this young, multi-talented and playfully reflective writer and artist up on the Seven Sister cliffs between Birling Gap and Cuckmere in the height of summer. Editing this warmed me up on these colder, winter days! Although from different

generations, we are both of second generation mixed race heritage and share many concerns and also passion for the coastal landscape, which was the perfect place to unravel and reflect together, in the company of the waves and birds around us."

Alinah is the creative lead of an inspiring project supported by Arts Council England called "We See You Now". **Josephine** is one of a number of artists from ethnically-diverse backgrounds collaborating on the project and helping with a series of podcasts called "The Colour of Chalk". As well as the National Park Authority, the project is supported by Writing our Legacy, New Writing South, ONCA and Enthum Foundation

Listen to the podcast [here](#) or on Spotify or Apple Podcasts. Alinah's first podcast, "A Landscape for All", can be listened to [here](#).

For more information on the project visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/we-see-you-now

Deadline approaches on Call for Nature Sites



The clock is counting down to the deadline on our call-out for new nature sites.

The appeal launched during the autumn and invites farmers, land managers, communities and conservation groups across the National Park to put forward possible sites where new wildlife habitat could be created.

Almost 20 expressions of interest have so far been received and there's still time to apply before the deadline of midnight on Monday (17 January).

Claire Kerr, Countryside and Policy Manager and who is leading nature recovery, said: "We've received a range of expressions of interest from landowners and managers who are interested in looking at the opportunities for new wildlife habitat on their land.

"This is a pilot approach which is about identifying possible new space for nature. Proposals do not need to be worked up in detail at this stage, so we encourage anyone interested to have a look at the criteria and start a dialogue with us!"

"The Call for Nature Sites" is part of the Authority's ambitious 10-year campaign to ReNature the South Downs.



Proposals of any size or scale will be considered and could include, for example, creating wildflower meadows, new hedgerows, more natural rivers, planting trees, creating heathland or installing dew ponds.

Village greens, road verges and allotments may also have potential.

#ReNature is a campaign that aims to raise £100m over the next 10 years to create an extra 13,000 hectares of habitat where plants and animals can thrive.

The National Park 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).

So can you help? Landowners and land managers can find out more about the Call for Nature Sites and download a form to make an expression of interest by visiting www.southdowns.gov.uk/CallForNatureSites

Taking the lead to help conservation grazers!

Olivia French, Heathlands Engagement Officer, takes a look at the simple things dog walkers can do to help wildlife flourish this year.



It's National Walk Your Dog month and with so many great places to explore with your four-legged friends in and around the National Park, we've got some top tips to keep you, your dog and the wildlife in the National Park happy and healthy.

With a network of 3,300km of rights of way there will be occasions where everyone using the National Park will come across livestock and it's important to understand the key role these animals have in protecting and enhancing the landscape.

Across the various habitats in and around the National Park, you will see livestock grazing of all different shapes, sizes and breeds. These animals are fundamental to maintaining a variety of key habitats. Conservation grazing plays a crucial role in maintaining rare habitats like chalk grassland and heathland by controlling species which would otherwise dominate areas through scrub encroachment. In the past, the countryside would have been grazed by wild animals or through traditional farming and common land grazing practices.



Many landowners now seek to replicate these kinds of grazing systems to maintain and increase biodiversity.

So to protect these grazers, we're encouraging dog owners to follow a few simple steps:

Keep dogs on leads around livestock

Look out for signs and keep your dog on a lead around livestock. This prevents livestock worrying, which refers to when a dog attacks or chases livestock in such a way as may reasonably cause injury or suffering, which includes females aborting lambs and calves.

Pick up your dog's waste

Dog fouling is not only unpleasant; it's also extremely dangerous to wildlife and detrimental to delicate habitats. Dog poo can contain parasites such as Neospora, which if ingested by livestock can cause serious illness and even death. Dog waste also changes the nutrient levels in the soil, encouraging the growth of dominant species that can lower the biodiversity of that spot.

Follow the countryside code

The Countryside Code provides a guide on how to enjoy and share our natural spaces both with other users and wildlife.

So as you enjoy the countryside and head out for a walk with your pets this winter, take a moment to consider our amazing grazers and the small steps you can take to help protect them and our beautiful landscape!

For more information visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/take-the-lead/

Beating the January blues



With the merriment of the festive season fading into the memory bank, January can feel like a long, taxing and sometimes depressing month.

Cold weather, dark mornings, poor sunlight, and the tightening of purse strings can lead to low mood, lack of motivation and low energy – and that’s without the added stress of the pandemic.

But, while acknowledging these feelings are totally normal, there are some tangible, low-cost ways to beat the January blues that can put a welcome spring in your step (that don’t require expensive gym memberships or exotic holidays, nice though they may be!).

The great outdoors of the National Park, with its wondrous landscape and winter wildlife, can provide such an uplifting boost – and you may not even realise the power of good it’s done for you until the end of your ramble, heart pumping and lungs full of fresh air!

Kate Drake, Health and Wellbeing Officer, said: “January can be a tough month for everyone following the excitement of the festive period.

“But there is this amazing wellness resource on our doorstep – and it’s called the South Downs National Park!

“It’s really important to acknowledge that it’s okay to feel down, talk to others and take positive steps to give yourself that boost you need physically and mentally.

“I’m sharing five simple ideas on beating the blues and I hope they provide some inspiration to help you feel good over the next few weeks.”



Outdoor fitness

Whether you’re a runner, jogger, rambler, cyclist, power-walker, stroller or mobility scooter-rider, the South Downs National Park has over 3,300km of pathways in some of the most serene countryside you’re ever likely to see. Some of the journeys are well-trodden, others are not. That’s part of the beauty of the National Park’s extensive rights of way network – there’s always a new adventure to be had.

Why not check out our [Discovery Map](#) and start planning where you’d like to go? There’s also an extensive selection of downloadable [walk leaflets](#) on our website for all fitness levels. For a taster of South Downs cycling

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try one of our [circular ride leaflets](#). Set a day, make a plan and then go for it!

For those looking to hone the physique, why not check out Olympian [Sally Gunnell’s outdoor workout](#) filmed in the South Downs last year?

Set yourself a new challenge

New Year’s resolutions can be hard to stick to, but it’s much easier to set yourself some challenges that aren’t overly time-sensitive.

Have you ever walked the South Downs Way before? Why not walk a section of the 100-mile route and then try another section, and maybe another? It’s your challenge after all!

Have you ever climbed to the top of the highest point in the National Park before? At 279.7 metres (918 ft) Blackdown offers a view that is well worth the climb!

Have you ever visited all seven of the beautiful river valleys in the National Park?

Have you visited all seven of our weird and wonderful creations on our [Heathland Sculpture Trail](#)?

Have you visited all the castles and stately homes in the National Park? Or try a hobby you’ve never done before – stargazing, canoeing, writing poems, sketching, or perhaps paragliding? Whatever the challenge, make it your own!

Practise mindfulness

Breathe deeply and notice.

That’s mindfulness in a nutshell and it’s incredible how something so very simple can reap such benefits. Why not take a look at [Smiling Minds YouTube mindfulness videos](#)?

Walk and talk

There’s nothing quite the laughter and enjoyment you get when out with a friend on a country amble.

Whether it’s the squelch as you unwittingly step into a huge muddy puddle, or the collective “wow” as you spot an amazing sunset, going for a walk with a friend or loved one can be such an uplifting shared experience.

January can also be a lonely month for many, so why not go on a walk and talk in the fresh air with someone dear to your heart?

You can put the world to rights, share ideas for 2022 and enjoy a few light-hearted laughs.

The tranquillity of the forest is always a good place to enjoy a natter, or you could even try [forest bathing](#)?



Create your own seasonal photo book

Why not create your own photo calendar and document the changing of the seasons at your favourite place in the South Downs? Capture a winter wonderland this January and notice the changes as the warmth of spring and summer transforms the landscape. For more ideas visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/get-active/

Things to do in the South Downs this January

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 an **illustrated talk** about the local composer Ailsa Dixon at All Saints Church in East Meon on 15 January.
- Visit the Weald and Downland Living Museum on 16 January and watch traditional activities with a **Wassailing** theme between 11.30am and 3pm. Come along and join a procession, with music, songs and short performances, from the market square to orchard for the wassail to ensure a good harvest
- Start your week with a burst of fresh air ... weekly breathing sessions at **Petersfield Community Garden** for health and wellbeing, starting on 17 January.
- Laugh out loud during a **night of comedy in Petworth** as Fiona Allen, Nabil Abdulrashid and Andy Askins take to the stage on 20 January.
- Join local author and professional storyteller Dawn Nelson to walk in the footsteps of Gilbert White for a **nature journaling workshop** on 22 January.
- Listen to fascinating and eye-opening talks at **Lewes Speakers' Festival** on 22 and 23 January.

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

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P3 left – Charlie Hellewell; P4 left – Verity Stannard; P5 left – Sam Moore; P5 (butterfly) – Neil Hulme; P5 (sheep) – Alex Bamford; P6 left – Anne Purkiss; P7 top – Nick Heasman.