

HELP US TO #RENATURE
SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

South Downs News

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Sowing the seeds** More than £600,000 has been invested in a range of new nature-friendly farming projects to help wildlife recovery now and in the future.
- **Heavenly heathlands** Be inspired by our amazing heath habitats by joining in the fun of “Secrets of the Heath” – an action-packed weekend event for the whole family.
- **Coastline discoveries** Learn more about a fascinating archaeology project on chalk cliffs.
- **WIN a free day-out!** We've got two family tickets to give away for a farming adventure.

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

Farming scheme paves way for nature recovery

A new nature-friendly farming initiative in the National Park is sowing the seeds for significant wildlife recovery in the coming years.

In its first year of operation, the Farming In Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme has gone from strength to strength, working with nearly 180 farmers across the South East region to help create wildlife habitat such as woodland, hedgerows and dew ponds.

The National Park Authority has supported 71 separate projects to help kickstart nature recovery, climate action and sustainability, as well as improving landscape, heritage and access.

The success comes after FiPL was announced by Defra last year to help support farmers in England's 44 protected landscapes. The National Park Authority's farming team have been delivering the programme locally and last year they invited farmers to apply for funding.

Now, at the end of its first year of operation, more than £600,000 has gone into supporting a variety of innovative projects. Highlights include:

- Over 3,600 metres of new hedgerows have been created.
- Almost 10 hectares of woodland is being enhanced to make it more attractive to wildlife.
- A total of 38 projects are helping to store carbon to reduce the greenhouse effect.
- Four ponds have been restored and two new ponds have been created.



- Some 228 metres of flint walling has been restored.
- Six projects will improve soil quality, while a further six will help to reduce flood risk.
- Management will be improved at 2,300 hectares of land at Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), while a further 600 hectares of land outside SSSIs will be enhanced to support biodiversity.
- Over 4,300 hectares of land is now being managed with regenerative farming techniques, which focus on rejuvenating depleted topsoil to improve its biodiversity and carbon-capturing powers, while also producing high-quality food.
- Over 40 projects will help the general public have a better understanding of farming and landscape.

Nigel James, Countryside and Policy Manager and who leads the farming team at the National Park, said: “The first year of this initiative has been a resounding success and we couldn't have achieved any of it without the support, ambition and skills of local farmers.

Fun for all the family!



The popular Secrets of the Heath event returns next month, celebrating our local heathland's vibrant history and wildlife with a packed programme of events.

The free event takes place at Hogmoor Inclosure, Whitehill & Bordon, over the weekend of 10 and 11 September from 11am to 4pm.

From Saxon re-enactments, a Bronze Age camp, have-a-go archery, mini-Viking workshops to close encounters with reptiles, there will be activities to keep the whole family entertained.

This year on the Saturday, there will be the opportunity to meet grazing livestock, such as goats and sheep, that would have once grazed our heathland. Dr Bike will be on hand providing tips and free bike servicing so what better excuse to leave the car at home and bring your bike! On Saturday night, there is also the chance to join in an expert-led bat walk around the inclosure. On Sunday morning before the event starts, have a go at our countryside dog challenge and to be entered into a prize draw to win a hamper of goodies for your four legged friend. Food and drink will be aplenty on site for visitors on both days.

Olivia French, Activities and Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: "We hope the weekend of exciting events will encourage visitors of all ages in the area to take an interest in their local heathland habitat. These heathland sites are so rare and special and we want to inspire the community to look after them for future generations to enjoy."

The festival is organised by the Heathlands Reunited: Wealden Heath SAMM project – a partnership of 10 like-minded organisations funded by East Hampshire District Council and Whitehill Town Council. The festival partners are: Deadwater Valley Trust, The Land Trust, Whitehill and Bordon Community Trust, Whitehill and Bordon Regeneration Company.

Heaths are home to a wide variety of fascinating and endangered wildlife species, including the sand lizard, natterjack toad and nightjar. Without active management, they would disappear and those species would be lost.

Secrets of the Heath is a chance for people to find out how people have lived and worked the heath over thousands of years and how they can play your part today to save their heaths through the Heathlands Reunited project. #HelpYourHeaths

"Around three quarters of this amazing landscape is farmland, so farmers really are the lifeblood of the South Downs National Park. The South Downs continues to be a major food-producing region of the UK and this programme shows that high-quality food production can sit alongside wildlife recovery and climate action. Moreover, they can work in harmony with one another, making farms more resilient in the long-term to the effects of climate change.

"FiPL is a key strand of our ambitious ReNature campaign to create new spaces for nature in the South Downs. This is just the start and it's exciting to think about the milestones that the farming community could achieve in the future through their continued commitment and hard work for improving biodiversity in the South Downs."

A further £150,000 of funding has already been allocated as the programme enters its second year.

A Local Assessment Panel, predominantly made up of farmers, has helped to allocate the funding. The panel includes representatives from the Arun to Adur Farmers Group, Eastern South Downs Farmers Group, Rother Valley Farmers Group, Selborne Landscape Partnership, South Downs Farmers Group, Winchester Downs Cluster, as well as representatives from Natural England.

Feed the birds!



Over 300 bird feeders have been installed at farms on the South Downs between the Rivers Arun and Adur in Sussex to help threatened species.

The feeding project is being led by the 40-strong Arun and Adur Farmers Group, which submitted an application to the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme.

A specially-designed seed mixture – an eye-watering total of 10 tonnes a year – is fed through hundreds of feeders placed in prime positions to attract hungry beaks.

The food will help red-listed farmland birds, such as corn bunting, yellowhammer and linnet, whose population numbers have dwindled nationally over the past century, but are still in good numbers in parts of the South Downs.

Another major strand of the project is large-scale mapping of the 11,000 hectares that the Arun and Adur Farmers Group looks after.

The detailed mapping, which will be completed next year, will help the farmers work together to look at opportunities for habitat creation and restoration at a landscape scale.

Watch this space!

Watch our **Farmers Instagram takeover** from last month, featuring the life and work of farmer Caroline Harriott and how she is helping nature flourish at her family's farm.

New moth is discovered



A new rare and beautiful species of moth appears to have colonised the South Downs.

The day-flying Lace Border moth is thought to have flown across the Channel from the continent and found suitable locations for breeding and feeding at a site near Eastbourne.

After first spotting the elegant moth in 2020, butterfly expert Bob Eade has confirmed the moth has survived another winter and is back at the site. Bob said: "While out taking photographs I spotted a small white moth land nearby. Straight away I could see it was a moth I had never seen before, but at the time I didn't know what it was. I only managed one quick photograph before it flew and landed in the middle of some very dense scrub.

"When I got home, I checked the books against the photo, and it was clear it was a Lace Border. The next day I returned and saw three. This year I have seen more than 30 in this same area."

Since 1976 only four Lace Border moths had been seen in Sussex, so Bob's discovery and subsequent counts suggest it has successfully established a colony and become established on the South Downs.

The site where the moth was discovered, Frog Firl Farm, is owned and managed by The National Trust.

It is thought that climate change might be a factor in this recent colonisation. The moth's foodplants, marjoram and thyme, have been common and widespread across the Downs for many years but the moth has never previously become established.



Tim Squire, a Ranger for the Eastern Downs of the National Park, said: "The South Downs has always been a national haven for butterflies and moths and this discovery adds another species to a very long list.

"The Lace Border moth is a real beauty and it's amazing to see it in the south of England.

"Climate change may well be one of the factors here, so it's also a sober reminder that research and regular wildlife monitoring are absolutely vital to help manage our fragile habitats."

Hidden secrets revealed



Fascinating evidence of people living in an Iron Age hill fort and the construction of a Bronze Age barrow have been revealed following a pioneering archaeology project.

The pilot study has involved researchers from Archaeology South-East (ASE), part of UCL Institute of Archaeology, and investigated how an archaeological site at risk of coastal erosion can be rapidly recorded before it's lost. The study came after a section of cliff collapsed in March 2021, revealing possible archaeology.

The project has been funded by Historic England, with contributions from the South Downs National Park Authority.

Seaford Head has seen significant cliff collapses in recent years and erosion is expected to increase with climate change intensifying weather events.

The team identified several "anomalies" in the area, which researchers say could be archaeological features related to human habitation within the Iron Age hill fort, as well as the remains of a Bronze Age barrow. The site was excavated in the 19th century by the pioneering archaeologist Augustus Lane Fox (later known as Augustus Pitt-Rivers).

To establish their findings, researchers used a number of techniques, including a geophysical survey and a drone survey. The drones enabled the researchers to photograph and record otherwise inaccessible places, allowing the team to identify the potential archaeological features in the roughly 80m high cliff section. The drone images were also used to create a 3D topographic model of the site, which will help with future monitoring as the coastline changes.

Anooshka Rawden, who leads cultural heritage for the National Park, said: "This project has trialled what a rapid response to loss of coastal heritage might look like. We know that the area of the site excavated by Augustus Pitt-Rivers in 1876 has since been lost to the sea, and the trenches explored by Owen Bedwin in the 1980s now sit at the cliff edge. Most people know Seaford Head for the coastal path or the golf course, but the archaeological traces have faded into the landscape. It's a site that has always been in a tussle with the sea, but what we felt needed to be done now is remind people of this site and its stories before more is lost."

Artist and writer Alinah Azadeh created an enchanting spoken-word performance called 'If You Can Imagine', reflecting on the archaeological findings and the wider issue of landscape change and heritage loss.

Children's artwork carries powerful message



A litter scarecrow, owls imagined from plastic bottles and powerful posters about not polluting our oceans were the artistic creations from scores of children across Sussex.

Young people went wild with their imaginations for the "Art In The Park" competition, which aimed to raise awareness of the South Downs National Park and the impact of waste.

Fourteen schools took part in the contest, producing all kinds of weird and wonderful artwork from recyclable materials.

The eco-art competition is part of Clean Up and Create, which is run by Sussex Green Living and the South Downs National Park Trust, with funding from The Boltini Trust.

Sussex Green Living delivered assemblies, lesson plans and action-planning to over 20 schools and their eco-councils.



Miriam Swan, Grants Officer for the South Downs National Park Trust, said: "The creativity of young people across the National Park is amazing and it's been wonderful to admire their colourful and thought-provoking artwork."

Carrie Cort, from Sussex Green Living, said: "We were absolutely blown away by all the art which was entered into the competition and the litter collection work the children carried out. As always they give us hope for the future."

The joint winners in the group category, five to seven year olds, were Petworth and Storrington Primary Schools, with All Saints Primary School in Horsham as runner-up, and Billingshurst Primary in third place.

The winner in the group category, 8 to 11 year olds, was Dorset House School, Pulborough, with Midhurst Primary as the runner-up and Petworth Primary in third place. Students from Midhurst Rother College came top in the 12 to 13 years old category.

Click [here](#) to see all the winners' artwork.

Spectacular Stanmer picks up top green award



A key gateway to the South Downs has been officially recognised as one of the UK's best parks.

Stanmer Park, on the outskirts of Brighton, has been awarded a prestigious Green Flag.

The park was entered for the national award for the first time since a major £5.1m restoration project was completed last year.

The project was funded from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the City Council, Plumpton College and the National Park Authority.

Stanmer's restored walled garden has been given a new lease of life thanks to the renovations. Formerly the kitchen garden for the park's iconic Stanmer House, and until recently the city council's nursery, it is now leased to Plumpton College, which has transformed the area into an exciting new public attraction, One Garden Brighton.

Visitors can wander among themed garden areas designed by landscape architect Dominic Cole, who worked on the Eden Project, and browse in the farm shop and glasshouses. Interpretation boards exploring some of the historic themes that have shaped Stanmer life for more than 5,000 years are being installed, along with wind-up "listening posts" where visitors will be able to listen volunteers recount their park memories.



New pathways and trails, plus an off-road route alongside the central driveway, give visitors a fresh perspective on the park's sweeping 18th Century designed landscape.

Paul Todd, Keep Britain Tidy's Accreditation Manager, added: "This award is testament to all the hard work of staff and volunteers, who do so much to ensure that it maintains the high standards demanded by the Green Flag Award."

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Petersfield, also won a Green Flag. With over 1,400 acres of woodland and downland, it includes the picturesque Butser Hill, the highest point in the South Downs chalk ridge.

Estate unveils new experiences for visitors



A huge refurbishment at one of the National Park's largest wine-producing estates has been completed with the launch of new visitor facilities.

Wiston Estate, in West Sussex, is now open to the public with the launch of Chalk Restaurant and a new winery.

The renovation project was recently given a "Highly Commended" Award from the Sussex Heritage Trust for its design excellence in a National Park setting.

The refurbishments were given the go-ahead over three years ago by the National Park's Planning Committee following the production of the **Wiston Whole Estate Plan**, which enabled members and the local community to see how this significant development related to the management of the estate and wider landscape.

Tori Eeles, from the estate, said: "Chalk Restaurant occupies a beautifully-renovated 18th Century threshing barn which has been expertly restored and transformed to create a warm and welcoming space.

"The aim is to create dishes that express the nature, heritage and changing seasons of the land we share."

New tours have also been launched at the winery, as well as "landscape and nature tours", exploring themes like ancient woodlands, butterflies, Downland farming and birds.

The estate comprises 14 farms, 2,000 acres of pasture, over 100 homes, 1,200 acres of woodland and is criss-crossed with 58km of footpaths and bridleways.

Tori added: "All this development is part of the estate's long term plan to make Wiston a place where people, nature and enterprise can co-exist and flourish."

Find out more at www.wistonestate.com



Explore the National Park in huge walking festival



"The Downs...too much for one pair of eyes, enough to float a whole population in happiness."

Poignant words from the great Virginia Woolf, who took lots of opportunities to express admiration for open downland and its many streams and heaths.

There's the perfect chance to explore the picturesque countryside around one of the National Park's main hubs as Petersfield Walking Festival kicks into action from 20 to 27 August.

Nestled at the foot of the South Downs, where dramatic chalk scarp meets patchwork weald, heavily wooded sandstone ridges and purple and pink open heath, Petersfield is a striking location for this exciting new walking festival.

There will be 47 walks to choose from, all led by knowledgeable volunteers and some of them led by National Park Rangers.

The festival received the support from the National Park's Sustainable Communities Fund earlier this year to help get the event off the ground.

Festival organiser Malinka van der Gaauw said: "I spent most of lockdown walking the length and breadth of the local area, finding countless natural and historical treasures.

"Discovering that Alton hosted two successful walking festivals each year, then became the catalyst to investigate setting up a similar event in Petersfield.

Thanks to support from my festival colleagues, Sarah and Patrick, South Downs National Park, the town council, local councillor Russell Oppenheimer, Walk Alton, Petersfield Society and the many local walking enthusiasts I have found, this idea has now blossomed into a new event for the town's tourism calendar."

Malinka added: "We have Nordic and mindfulness walking, foraging, historical and literary walks as well as an interesting range of short, medium and long walks promoting many of our wonderful local pubs along the way."

Walks are booking up fast! Find out more and see the programme at <https://petersfieldwalkingfestival.co.uk>

Calls for national ban on disposable barbecues



Damage from a barbecue at Devil's Dyke

The Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority has called for a national ban on the sale of disposable barbecues.

Trevor Beattie welcomed the move by major retailers to withdraw disposable barbecues from sale, but said more measures were needed to help protect landscape, wildlife and people.

He said: "We need a national ban on the sale of the wasteful, fire-risking, mobile pollution trays we call disposable BBQs. They pose too much of a threat to the National Park and our other precious landscapes – and not just at times of drought."

Trevor was this week interviewed by Sky News, reiterating his message, including protecting the livelihoods of our farmers and the property of the 117,000 people who live in the National Park.

The National Park has already had some small fires that have been put out by the fire and rescue service and luckily did not turn into major incidents.

Trevor's calls come as Southern Co-operative has removed disposable BBQs from sale in all its 199 stores in the region to protect the environment.

Mark Smith, Chief Executive, said: "We have had a longstanding commitment to reduce our impact on the environment. We've taken this additional step, to permanently remove disposable BBQs from sale in all our 199 managed stores, to play our part in addressing the impacts of the extraordinarily dry conditions across the south. We hope our members and customers will support this important move to protect our local wildlife and ecosystems."

The Authority does not have direct powers to ban disposable barbecues in the National Park but we continue to strongly communicate our message that barbecues or open fires should never be lit in the countryside under any circumstances.

Disposable barbecues will continue to be prohibited at Seven Sisters Country Park, which is owned by the National Park Authority.

A sight for sore eyes – World Photography Day

Have you captured a stunning image of the South Downs recently?

This month sees a worldwide celebration of wonderful photography.

To mark the special day we look back at a few of our previous photo competition winners.



Autumn Gold by Lorraine Heaysman



Chanctonbury Ring by Tim Kahane



Through the grass by Otilie Hartley (youth competition)

Why not enter this year's competition and be in with the chance of winning £250?

The theme is "near and far" and judges are looking for breathtaking images of expansive scenery, as well as macrophotography of landscape, heritage and wildlife.

[Find out more here!](#)

New meadow explores impact of climate change



A drought-tolerant experimental meadow has been introduced at one of the National Park's horticultural attractions to learn more about the impact of climate change.

As the UK records its highest temperatures on record and officially declared a drought, it seems timely that West Dean Gardens, near Chichester, has created a meadow that is covered in recycled stone mulch.

Tom Brown, Head Gardener, explained: "Over recent summers, we're becoming increasingly aware of how much water we use in our gardens, and the need to explore a new range of plants that require less resources to grow and most importantly look beautiful and attract pollinators.

"With this in mind; we have grown a number of deep-rooted and drought tolerant perennials to make up a new meadow which can be used to teach people at our College about gardening with less water".

And Tom added: "Normally people think of drought tolerant plants being cactus and agave, however these flowers and plants are colourful and have benefits to wildlife, so we are planning to collect all the seeds later in the year, building their numbers and growing plants to be sold in the shop next year."

Nestled at the foot of the South Downs, West Dean Gardens is one of the finest restored gardens open to the public today. The venue includes an impressive collection of working Victorian Glasshouses, a 300 foot pergola, and a spring garden with flint bridges.

For those interested in learning more about how to work with climate change in their gardens, landscape designer Mark Laurence will discuss 'Designing gardens for climate adaptation' in a garden lecture on Sunday, 4 September.

Groundwater from the South Downs supplies drinking water to well over 1m people on the south coast. For more information about water conservation visit



www.southdowns.gov.uk/5-simple-steps-protect-water/

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Competition time! Win tickets to farm experience



Do you fancy learning more about a real working deer farm?

The National Park has teamed up with **Sky Park Farm**, near Petersfield, to offer two family day tickets (admitting two adults and up to four children) to winners of the newsletter prize draw.

Ryan Grant, from the farm, said: "Spend the day at Sky Park Farm and explore our farm trail or why not take a riverside stroll along the banks of the River Rother?"

"You will be able to see and feed our deer and can you spot the stags with their spectacular antlers? We also have an adventure playground, offering hours of fun and you'll be able to fill your basket to feed hungry tummies at the farm shop, butcher and deli.

"For a culinary treat, head to The Grazing Rooms for a seasonally inspired modern British lunch. Or perhaps you'd like to come back and experience culinary excellence at Tasting Dinners with paired wines?"

The new visitor attraction opened last year following a major renovation and is set in some of the most scenic countryside in the South Downs.



These family tickets will allow the winners to visit the Farm Experience within the next twelve months - giving visitors the chance to tailor their day out. Each season the farm hosts a series of fun events which can be booked in addition to the Farm Experience.

People who sign up to the newsletter during August will automatically be entered into the draw. Or, email "sikadeer" to

sikadeer@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 31 August.

Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&C's [here](#).

Things to do in the South Downs this August

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/



- Look forward to live jazz, pop, indie and folk music from Fate The Juggler, Olivia Stevens & Co and The Rec at **[Live at Langhams](#)** near Petworth on 20 August. The event will also be raising money for the National Park's #ReNature campaign. Entry is free.
- There's fun for young people of all ages on **[Medieval Mondays](#)** at Lewes Castle, with the next event on 22 August.
- Join the Goodwood Education Trust for Forest School fun on 25 August at **[Seeley Copse](#)**. Children can play, explore and enjoy an exciting day filled with woodland activities such as tracking and trailing, den building, and crafts.
- **[Partridge Fest](#)** returns to Singleton with live music, pizza, and kids entertainment over the weekend of 27 to 29 August.
- Travel back through 12,000 years of local history with **[Arundel History Festival](#)**. Characters from the past will be demonstrating combat, cookery and crafts in the large encampment of tents at Arundel Castle over the weekend of 27 to 29 August.

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

Pic credits

P1 Anne Purkiss; P2 left Sara Humphrey; P2 right Anne Purkiss; P3 left Patrick Clement; P3 Right Chip Creative; P5 Right Stewart Garside; P7 left Trevor Sims.