

# SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

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SOUTH DOWNS  
NATIONAL PARK

## WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Helping our planet** Find out about the extraordinary wave of community action in the National Park as people of all ages get involved in climate action.
- **Foodie heaven** The South Downs is known for its amazing food and drink – now you can enjoy it all in one place as a festival comes to a beautiful forest site in the National Park!
- **Royal summer wedding** Learn about the history of a Queen who was married 'neath the Downs.
- **Competition!** Win tickets to see Annes of Cleves' House and explore Tudor living.

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

## Celebrating incredible climate action!

**A wave of inspiring climate action has been kickstarted thanks to a groundbreaking lottery-backed initiative in the Ouse Valley.**

From scores of children learning to ride bikes, to new community vegetable gardens, climate hubs, river tours, volunteer training and energy-saving workshops, people across the Lewes, Seaford, Peacehaven and Newhaven areas have been busy doing their bit to help their local environment.

It comes as Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA) is celebrating the half-way mark of a three-year project after being awarded £2m from The National Lottery Community Fund in the autumn of 2022.

The East Sussex partnership, which covers 10 organisations, including the South Downs National Park Authority and Lewes District Council and over 50 local community-led projects, has an ambitious goal of

empowering local people to help create one of the first communities in England to fully embrace climate action.



The Ouse Valley is a fragile landscape that has already felt the effects of climate change this millennium, including flooding, storm damage, coastal erosion and biodiversity loss.

Since OVCA swung into gear, there been a number of significant achievements as the community-led partnership goes from strength to strength:

- The Community Energy England Conference was hosted for the first time in Newhaven in collaboration with OVCA Partner Community Energy South.
- Abandoned wasteland has become the new Peverals Community Garden in Seaford, nestled in the



heart of a housing estate. The area has been transformed into a garden oasis by dedicated volunteers, now boasting an impressive array of planters and polytunnels.

- Work to engage with schools and community centres about the amazing, but fragile, coastline is under way. KP Projects' Living Coast Undersea Experience is bringing Seaford Bay and its wildlife into schools and community centres to teach people about this hidden underwater world, climate change and threats from issues such as marine plastic pollution.



- More than 1,000 people in the community have enjoyed the River People Tour, a roving celebration of the river, devised

and delivered by community group Love Our Ouse. The tour, which culminated with a festival in Newhaven, has built a stronger network of people to help champion and care for the river.

- There have been a series of afterschool "Wilder Spaces" sessions for children and families. Participants have learned about pollinators and the importance of insects, birds and small mammals especially hedgehogs and bats.
- The OVCA Energy Team, based with OVESCO at the Lewes Climate Hub has provided energy efficiency advice to over 1,800 residents, achieved through community engagement events and one to one advice via foodbanks, community outreach initiatives and targeted group talks and drop-ins.
- OVCA Community Ranger Jessie Rodriguez has drawn up a broad menu of nearly 40 training options that volunteers can sign up for. The aim is to upskill key volunteers and help community groups gain knowledge and learn about a range of topics such as carbon literacy, wildlife identification, community engagement, fundraising, first aid and health and wellbeing.
- Newhaven Green Centre has set up a popular monthly repair café, allowing people to fix household items ranging from jeans to a kettle to a lawnmower with the help of very experienced volunteers. This saves money, reduces carbon footprint and things going to landfill unnecessarily.



- More than 100 children have learned to ride a bicycle thanks to OVCA's Learn to Ride sessions.
- The Railway Land Wildlife Trust (RWLT)

developed targeted youth work alongside OVCA in Seaford, including training and supporting local people to run activities based on RLWT's vibrant NatureLinks project, which provides opportunities for young people to connect with nature.

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Steph Mills, Project Manager for OVCA, said: "It's incredible what we've achieved in our first 18 months and all of it is down to the drive, determination, interconnectedness and goodwill in the Ouse Valley community. Climate change is one of the biggest threats facing this country and people have shown what can be



done at a local level to address some of the issues in a really positive and creative way. Our response to climate change will be led by the upcoming generations and that's why there's been such a keen focus on engagement with

children and young people, as well as embedding behaviour change across all ages. This project shows how everyone can play their part in climate action – no matter how big or small. It's been an awe-inspiring journey so far and we can't wait to see what the final half of the project brings!"

Among the focuses for the next year will be the expansion of climate action work among young people, a range of active travel initiatives, "citizen science" air and water quality monitoring and ensuring the legacy continues beyond the end of the OVCA project.

The project partners are: South Downs National Park Authority; South Downs National Park Trust, Lewes District Council, OVESCO, Community Energy South, Sussex Community Development Association, 3VA, Railway Land Wildlife Trust, Transition Town Lewes and Seaford Community Partnership, working with a range of locally-led community groups.

Follow the project at [www.southdowns.gov.uk/climate-action-hub/ouse-valley-climate-action-ovca/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/climate-action-hub/ouse-valley-climate-action-ovca/)

A video about the success of the project can be watched [here](#).



## For everything climate...

**Have you checked out the National Park's climate action hub?**

**You can find out** what the South Downs National Park Authority is doing to reach net zero and find links to resources and guides on how you can join us in taking action on climate change – whether you're a landowner, business, community group or just want to do your bit as an individual!

## Communities at heart of net zero



### Communities want to see climate action and be part of the change to help both nature and people.

That's the message today from the South Downs National Park Authority as the UK's National Parks become the first in the world to join the UN-backed 'Race to Zero' initiative.

The UK's National Parks have announced today (25 July) that they will work with partners to transform an area of land almost four times the size of London (610,000 hectares) into a haven for nature through nature-friendly management across the 15 National Parks, as well as drive significant increases in the use of sustainable travel, renewable energy and sustainably-produced food.

It comes as a wave of proactive climate work is already well under way in the South Downs, with climate action being led by dozens of local communities, such as in Petersfield, Winchester, Midhurst and the Ouse Valley in East Sussex.

Petersfield Climate Action Network (PeCAN) is one of a number of community groups working hard to support nature and reduce carbon emissions, including helping to make changes to buildings, transport, the natural environment and behaviour. Last winter they distributed over 1,000 fruit trees and nearly 3km of hedging plants across East Hampshire, while earlier this month 1,500 people gathered for Petersfield's second Eco Fair (*above*).

Greg Ford, Chair of PeCAN, said: "For kids as much as adults, being located in a National Park makes it natural to talk about the environment and climate change. Joining the Race the Zero initiative is great news. There's so much that people in the South Downs National Park can do – and around here want to do – to help with climate mitigation."

Tim Slaney, Chief Executive (Interim) of the National Park Authority, said: "We welcome this major announcement from National Parks UK and look forward to making a significant contribution to the 'Race to Zero' initiative. Here in the South Downs we have two key strengths: community action and our ReNature programme. There's a real concern among our local communities, including young people, farmers, and businesses, about a changing, more unpredictable climate and there's a genuine desire to do something positive."

## SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY Calling all you foodies out there!



### Did you know over 70 per cent of the National Park is farmland and there are more than 50 vineyards?

With so many local producers, it's no wonder that a festival has been organised to celebrate all the amazing food and drink on our doorstep!

The South Downs Food Festival will take place over the weekend of 14 and 15 September within the stunning grounds of Stansted Park (*pictured above*), near Rowlands Castle.

The event will be celebrating the revival of British food culture and giving people the chance to try some of the finest foods and drinks from the South Downs and nearby coast.



A stellar line-up of speakers will be giving talks, including Dame Prue Leith, who will be examining Elizabeth David's long-term influence on British food.

Diane Purkiss, historian and author of *English Food (2022)*, will speak about Elizabeth David's historical significance alongside the writer Rachel Cooke.

On day two of the festival, there will be an exploration of food, farming, health and the environment. Philosopher Julian Baggini will discuss the ideas in his forthcoming book *How the World Eats* and James Baird, farmer and founder of Weald to Waves, will share his experience creating a network of wildlife corridors while also producing food.

Visitors can browse the South Downs Market, which will feature artisan producers from across the region, and there will be an opportunity to try out local wines, beers, and gins.

Activities will include a chef's table, apple pressing, ice cream making and how to build an outdoor oven.

Find out more and book tickets at [www.southdownsfoodfestival.com](http://www.southdownsfoodfestival.com)

## Summer show comes to iconic site



**One of the National Park's most famous beauty spots will be hosting a fun summer show this month.**

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, at the foot of Butser Hill, the highest point on the South Downs chalk ridge, will be hosting The South Downs Show over the weekend of 10 and 11 August.

There will be a range of attractions, arena acts, birds of prey, dog shows, circus acts, children's rides, country life stalls and a beer tent, including Langham Brewery.



One of the highlights for the children will be an amazing helter skelter, the only complete wooden example still on tour in the UK. The helter skelter recently appeared on ITV's Downton Abbey.

Meanwhile, there will be plenty of high-octane excitement as visitors can enjoy action from the original British Medieval Jousting Display team, who will be putting on a show of sword swinging, gut-punching thrills and comedic audience participation for all ages.

People will also be able to explore the country park and try out one of the many trails by booking one of the electric mountain bikes. The ever-popular birds of prey demonstrations will include owls, falcons, hawks and eagles.

Tim Speller, who manages the country park, said: "The South Downs Show has become a key event in the Country Park's calendar. Run by local company Hometown Events, the show is packed with arena events, family fun, animals displays, and, of course, excellent food and drink."

Please note this is a private event and not run by the National Park. The event is ticketed and you can [book tickets here](#).

If you're not able to make that weekend, why not explore Queen Elizabeth Country Park and the surrounding countryside this summer? Enjoy a morning coffee at the Country Park Café, stunning views from the top of Butser Hill and end with dinner or a drink in one of East Meon's cosy pubs. Find out more about the walk [here](#).



**Find out what makes a National Park, why we're an International Dark Sky Reserve and discover the wonders of a ruined castle that was once visited by Elizabeth I.**

The South Downs Centre will be opening on Saturdays throughout the summer holidays in August from 9am to 2.30pm.

Our visitor area is crammed with interesting displays and maps about the South Downs.

Try out one of our Virtual Reality head-sets that take you on an adventure into the solar system and learn more about the people who make the South Downs so special.

Our centre is also a great launch-pad for discovering the wider South Downs as it's filled with walk leaflets and ideas for fun days-out.

If you're not looking to venture too far, there are some amazing walks in the Midhurst area, including the famous Cowdray Ruins that had many a royal visitor during Tudor times.



If you're looking for nature, take a walk along the River Rother and you might even be lucky enough to spot a kingfisher.

The shop is filled with interesting merchandise and produce – all with a South Downs theme of course!



Zara Kelleway, who manages the visitor area and shop, said: "Do come and find out more about the National Park and discover some of the amazing places you can go.

"We look forward to welcoming you!"

The centre will also be open on the August Bank Holiday Monday.

## History special: a Royal summer wedding



**By Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead**

The South Downs landscape has witnessed many historical events. One of which was the procession of a queen to a controversial wedding...

After a life that had involved triumph, tragedy and loss, including being barred from seeing her mother, repeated periods of ill health and a declaration of illegitimacy, Mary I became queen of England in 1553 after the triumphant defeat of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who had attempted to establish Lady Jane Grey as successor to Edward VI.

Mary, aged 37, was to ride into London in August 1553 officially as Queen, and more so, as queen regnant, or queen in her own right. She had been backed by Catholics and Protestants, people whose loyalty was to the settlement outlined in her father's will. However, her immediate actions on becoming queen indicated a strong mission to reverse the Protestant policies of her half-brother, and despite a proclamation to calm fears and religious tensions by stating that people would not be compelled to follow Catholicism, her actions focused on the reinstatement of Catholic churchmen and the enforcement of Catholicism. Although history has not been kind to her, Mary was pioneering – at her coronation in October 1553 she wore the full regalia of a male monarch, and in April 1554 her parliament passed the Act for Regal Power, which ensured the authority of the crown could be held equally by men and women, enshrining in law the equal status of royal power, regardless of gender.

By Tudor standards, Mary in her late 30s sat in a risky position. Unmarried and without a child to act as her heir risked her both her security and her legacy. In looking for a potential husband, Charles V (who himself had been 'engaged' to Mary when he was 22 and she was six) suggested his son, Philip, the Spanish prince who was to become Philip II of Spain (the nemesis of Elizabeth I, against whom he launched an Armada). Mary was enthusiastic about the match – her mother had been a princess of the Spanish royal family, and Spain was a strong, Catholic power. Although not a popular proposal, the marriage contract was negotiated so as to ensure favourable status to England, preserving Mary's status as queen regnant, and ensuring Spanish influence in England was held in check. However, a number of her councillors objected, and a rebellion broke out in response.

The wedding was to be held on St James' Day (25 July) in 1554. The date was significant, as St James was revered in



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Spain. Winchester Cathedral was to be the venue, and both monarchs had a journey to make to get there – Philip arriving by boat at Southampton, and Mary journeying from London. Both the Spanish Prince and the English Queen processed towards their wedding day along routes that included parts of what is now the South Downs National Park. Mary's route from London brought her down through Farnham and into the Park, as she followed a route from Alton down to Bishop's Waltham, cutting through what is now the A272 connecting Winchester and Petersfield. Philip's route took him from Southampton up to Winchester. The weather was sadly not the best, with reports of heavy rain, at one point necessitating the Spanish prince to borrow "a cloak and cap" from a knight, having come unprepared for the English weather. It's notable that in the Spanish accounts of the wedding, the rain is mentioned throughout. Mary and Philip met for the first time only two days before their wedding. He did not speak English, so they spoke in Spanish, French and Latin.

Despite the weather, the processions to Winchester and the wedding itself would have been spectacular to witness, especially as Mary's nuptials were the first publicly visible royal wedding in some time. Mary is said to have travelled with her officials, clergy, council and "a good number of well-dressed ladies venerable and young, although not especially beautiful". The clothing, ceremony and grandeur of the wedding were described in detail by Adres Munoz, part of the Spanish entourage, who witnessed the wedding itself:

*"Then the Bishop of Winchester said Mass with all solemnity; and the happy Queen kept her eyes all the while on a consecrated crucifix which was on the Altar, and thus they were married."*

After the wedding, the couple along with the wedding party moved from Winchester via a route now marked by the M3 towards Basing House, near Basingstoke.

The marriage was clearly a joy to Mary, who soon believed she had become pregnant. But it was to become a source of sorrow. Philip became King of Spain in 1556, after which he spent most of his time outside England, returning briefly between March and July 1557 (mainly to persuade Mary to support a Spanish War against



France). Twice Mary experienced the symptoms of pregnancy that resulted in no birth, and by November 1558 she was ill, weak and facing the prospect of her protestant half-sister, Elizabeth – daughter of the woman who had ousted her mother – succeeding her. History has often derided Mary, but her accession was against the odds, and she twice defeated rebellions against her rule; she equalised royal power regardless of gender and allied with a powerful state in an attempt to bolster England on the global stage. History has not been kind to Mary but her journey to Winchester was probably among the greatest personal joys of her reign.

## Sea-struck...that old longing



**Archaeologist and writer Annalie Seaman has been writing a series of blogs focusing on Beachy Head and ocean awareness. Here is one of her latest seaside musings:**

A white-winged gull swoops to land on a wall by me, he watches side-eyed to assess me, what kind of human I am. The morning sun shines clear-through his beak-nostrils and I am transported to the sea where I picture him diving for a fish and upsurging, water streaming from his nares (nostrils).

A coastal town is like this, even in-land, it brings salt-tangs and gull-cries and the presence of the sea like a sixth sense. You find yourself heading seawards, on foot, on bike, by car, whichever way you can, travelling until you arrive at the sea's limit. There you stop and look around, and see the shape of this island as it is carved by the sea.

But mostly what you see is the sea. I follow the lure of the ocean and find myself on the beach at Birling Gap, white cliffs and warm sun behind me, blue, blue sea and sky before me.

The morning brings other lured-ones to the pebbles and the sand. Early morning swimmers splash with dogs and wellies. Some come seeking solitude and sea, some come seeking towel space. A little girl wades through rock pools with a long net, as her mum takes photos, memories for another year.

I wade out into the soft sand and sink through sediment, a lingering moon hangs overhead. The waves roll on and on. The beach goes roll in and in, the lure is real.

A few days of warm weather and we're a changed people, soaking up rays and blues and memories; families and their pets sweep in like the tide, crunching pebbles, sliding over rocks. Whatever the call is, it's strong, whatever the reward is, it is calm and tranquil, like old cliffs softly standing.

This is the headland in its summer guise, shimmering and sparkling in the early hours, the cafe above bakes its pastries, the warm scents wash over the sands

As human tide meets ocean tide, the day begins. I reluctantly leave when I leave. Taking something of the sea with me.

## Win a trip to a Queen's house!



**As this newsletter has a distinctly regal tone, how would you like to learn more about how people lived in the South Downs during Tudor times?**

**Anne of Cleves House** is a beautiful 16th-century timber-framed Wealden hall house in Lewes.

It formed part of Queen Anne's annulment settlement from King Henry VIII in 1541 following their short-lived marriage.

Anne of Cleves, originally a German princess, was Queen of England from 6 January to 12 July 1540 and was the fourth wife of Henry VIII.

At the time of their marriage, Anne was just half Henry's age – she was just 24 years old and he was 48.

Despite an infamously sour marriage, Anne wanted to remarry Henry VIII. After the king's fifth wife, Catherine Howard, was divorced and then executed for adultery, Anne wanted to be queen again. Her brother asked his ambassador to pursue her reinstatement, but Henry said no.

Anne died in 1557 and is the longest surviving of Henry's wives and the only one of Henry's wives to be buried in Westminster Abbey.

Although she never lived at the house in Lewes, it remains an amazing example of a Tudor home with a wide-ranging collection of furniture and artefacts from Sussex.

These include one of the best exhibitions on wealden iron making including large machinery such as a hammer from Etchingam Forge and cannon boring apparatus together with a collection of iron fire backs.

The bedroom and kitchen are furnished to resemble their appearance at the time of Anne's ownership.

We've teamed up with Sussex Past, which runs the museum, to offer three pairs of adult tickets to the museum.

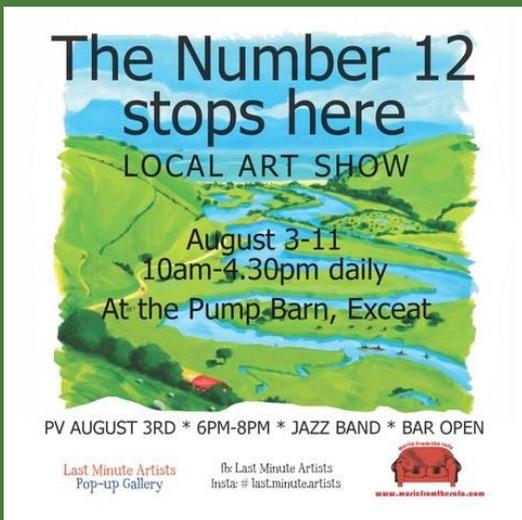
People signing up to the newsletter during August will be automatically entered into the draw. Those who are already signed up can answer the question "What number wife was Anne Cleves for Henry VIII?" to

**newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk** before midnight on 31 August. Sign up to the newsletter **here** and see competition T&Cs **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/](https://southdowns.gov.uk/events/)



- Enjoy browsing **an art show** at the historic Pump Barn, at Exceat, next to Seven Sisters Visitor Centre. More than 20 local artists will be displaying their work from 3 to 11 August.
- Join a **guided walk** to explore rolling downland on 11 August. The walk will be a short circumnavigation of the 2,500 acre Bereleigh Estate, outside the picturesque village of East Meon. The estate has been described as “one of the prettiest and most attractive small sporting, residential and agricultural estates in the South of England”. The start and end point of this walk is The Dell – a renovated double decker bus come café!
- Calling all beer-lovers! **Live At Langhams** returns on 17 August and you can expect their usual relaxed style, a fabulous atmosphere, wonderful live music, a well-stocked, award-winning bar and delicious, fresh food, courtesy of local producers Taco Look At Me Now. This is a free event, but the brewery will be collecting for the Friends Of The South Downs and the South Downs National Park’s ReNature initiative and other similar projects which safeguard this wonderful landscape.
- Enjoy **a bus ride** through one of the most scenic stretches of the National Park and visit attractions along the way. The South Downs Rambler bus returns for the summer holidays with a new route for this year that takes in Butser Hill. The bus travels from Winchester to Petersfield and back again via the Winchester Science Centre and Planetarium, the views at Cheesefoot Head, the gardens of Hinton Ampner, the Iron Age fort at Old Winchester Hill and many traditional village pubs. The South Downs Rambler runs only on Sundays between 21 July and 15 September and will run three trips per day. It will also run on Bank Holiday Monday 26 August.
- Embark on a 12,000-year journey from the Stone Age to the 20th century at Arundel Castle's **Festival of History**. A three-day extravaganza over August bank holiday weekend the event will include medieval knights, Roman gladiators, and falconry.

## Pic credits

P1 and 2 Sam Moore; P3 left Tina Knowles; P3 Right South Downs Food Festival; P4 left Hometown Events; P5 (Queen Mary) RockingStock I stock images; P6 left Sam Moore; PR Right Sussex Past.