

HELP US TO #RENATURE
SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

South Downs News

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Dazzling dark nights** Find out about our astrophotography competition and how you could win up to £100 with a breathtaking image of the night sky.
- **Lottery win** Discover how over £2m of lottery funding will be used to empower local communities to take positive climate action.
- **A South Downs adventure!** Find out how connecting with the outdoors is benefitting young people.
- **COMPETITION!** WIN one of our beautiful National Park calendars.

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

Embrace the darkness and win up to £100!

Autumn and winter bring shorter days for exploring the South Downs, but the night-time offers its own dazzling display of the natural world.

Now the National Park is asking people to capture the awesome wonders of the night sky as our popular astrophotography competition returns for its third year.

As one of only 20 International Dark Sky Reserves, the National Park is one of the best places to stargaze in the world.

This year photographers have the chance of winning up to £100 for a breathtaking image in either of the two categories:

South Downs Dark Skyscapes – Can you capture a dramatic photograph of the landscape showing the cosmos above it?

Nature At Night – Can you capture an amazing shot of living things in the National Park? This could include wildlife, people, trees or plants!

The runner-up prize in each category will be £75 and all submitted images must be taken within the South Downs National Park.

A selection of photos submitted in the contest will be shared throughout the National Park's Dark Skies Festival next February. Details of the festival will be announced at a later date.

Judging the contest will be "Dark Skies" Dan Oakley, a Lead Ranger for the National Park, Steve Broadbent, Chairman of Hampshire Astronomical Group, and Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the National Park Authority.



Dan said: "We're into the season of longer nights and it's the perfect time to go out and stargaze in the South Downs National Park.

"The National Park is actually one of the best places to stargaze in the world and it's quite amazing when you consider how close we are to big cities such as London, Southampton, Portsmouth and Brighton.

"We have 10 Dark Sky Discovery sites in the National Park and they are the perfect spots for admiring some immense views of the universe. Just be sure to pack a hot drink, a blanket and some warm clothes!

"The standard of the competition has been terrific in the past and we're looking forward to seeing what this year brings, whether you're a seasoned astrophotographer or

embracing the darkness for the first time! Good luck to all participants in the contest.”

The deadline for entries to the competition is midnight on Wednesday, 11 January.

Details of the Dark Sky Discovery Sites can be found at www.southdowns.gov.uk/dark-night-skies/where-to-stargaze

For entry details and to download an application form visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/AstroPhotoComp

Here are some top tips to help you make the most of stargazing in the South Downs:

- Check the phase of the moon to plan your trip – stargazing is best before a full moon
- Take a blanket or mat to lie on, as well as snacks and a hot drink
- Take a compass or use the one on your smart phone
- Download a stargazing app to help you identify constellations and stars
- Allow time for your eyes to adjust – this takes around 20 minutes so turn off any lights, torches and preferably put your mobile phone away (at least when not taking pictures if you are using it to photograph)
- Leave no trace – remember to take any rubbish home with you!



Snow in springtime – by Neil Jones, a winning image last year



Towering Super Moon – by Richard Murray, a winning image last year

£2m for climate action



Communities in the Ouse Valley have been awarded more than £2m to help make the region a national pioneer in tackling the climate change emergency.

The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK, has awarded the significant sum to Ouse Valley Climate Action (OVCA), which successfully bid for the funding among over 600 applicants.

The East Sussex partnership, which covers 10 organisations, including the South Downs National Park Authority and Lewes District Council, has an ambitious goal of empowering local people to help create one of the first communities in England to fully embrace climate action.

The project area follows the River Ouse downstream from the village of Barcombe – which is aiming to be the UK’s first net-zero village – through to Lewes, the National Park’s largest town, and further south to the coastal towns of Seaford, Peacehaven, and Newhaven. The river 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.

Among the aims of the project are to:

- Capture more carbon with natural solutions, such as tree planting and creating new wildlife habitats.
- Make space for water in the Ouse catchment, such as creating water habitats, to reduce flood risk and increase resilience to drought
- Support more community green spaces and food-growing areas.
- Empower and educate residents about climate action and sustainable living through inspiring events, engagement and training sessions.
- Support new greener travel initiatives around walking, cycling and e-bikes.

Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: “This summer has shown that climate change is a real issue that all communities are having to deal with, rather than some ‘pie in the sky’ only affecting future generations.

“I’m delighted that the Ouse Valley has won this significant funding, which will help make it one of the national leaders in community climate action. This is all about people in the community coming together to tackle the climate emergency in a really positive, proactive way.”

Next round of funding scheme opens for farmers



Farmers and land managers in the South Downs National Park are being encouraged to apply for funding that could significantly improve business resilience and help the environment.

The National Park Authority is putting the call out for applications as new funding becomes available for farmers to implement nature recovery, climate action and sustainability, as well as initiatives that improve landscape, heritage and access.

It comes after a range of schemes in the South Downs have already benefitted from Defra's Farming In Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, which is helping to support farmers in England's 44 protected landscapes. Over the past 16 months, a total of 71 projects across the National Park have taken a share of £950,000.

The National Park's farming team is delivering the programme locally and is now keen for new applications.

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

- Promote enterprise and farm diversification
- 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, a Countryside and Policy Manager, said: "We'd be particularly interested to hear about potential projects around enterprise and diversification, as well as those delivering nature-friendly farming and climate action."

Farmer Madeleine Crawley, of Courthill Farm, near Slindon, West Sussex, was full of praise for the programme. She said: "The grant has helped us to futureproof the farm against the reducing Basic Payment Scheme income, while continuing to farm to high environmental standards. We've been able to start an additional farm-based enterprise which, without the grant, we would not have been able to achieve. The FiPL grant has offered us the opportunity to engage with more people, both by welcoming them on to the farm and providing additional education resources.

For more information visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/FarmingInProtectedLandscapes

Children celebrate South Downs Way's birthday



Schoolchildren turned "nature detectives" and took part in a special celebratory walk to mark the 50th anniversary of the South Downs Way.

More than 40 pupils from Buriton Primary School joined National Park Ranger Chris Lickley for a guided walk to learn more about the 100-mile trail and the amazing wildlife living near it.

The ramble came as a beautiful plaque was presented to the village of Buriton from the South Downs National Park Authority.

The engraving celebrates Buriton as the original starting point for the South Downs Way and will be given pride of place in the Hampshire village.

The South Downs Way became a National Trail and Britain's first long-distance bridleway in 1972, originally running from Buriton to Eastbourne. In 1987 the National Trail was extended to Winchester.

The children enjoyed learning more about the National Park as they searched for wildlife and objects in the woods, such as insects, trees and chalk geology.

Danielle Brown, Headteacher at Buriton Primary School, said: "The children were very excited to be going on guided walk by one of the rangers to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the South Downs Way. The children love going into the woods and being surrounded by nature and learning about the incredible wildlife that surrounds them."

Doug Jones, Chair of Buriton Parish Council, said: "The community really values its association with the South Downs Way. We meet visitors from all over the world who are enjoying this wonderful area – and they help to support our local pubs which are both happy to look after walkers and cyclists using the long-distance trail."



Celebrating landscape!

Victory as bridge infilling proposal is scrapped



The National Park Authority has welcomed the scrapping of proposals to infill a Victorian railway bridge that could one day become an active travel route for walkers, cyclists, wheelchair-users and horse riders.

National Highways has confirmed that it will no longer infill a Hampshire bridge with foamed concrete.

The bridge, on Stoke Road, near Itchen Abbas, was part of the old Watercress Line that closed in the 1960s and has since become part of a 27-mile waymarked circular route for walkers. Some sections are now accessible for cyclists, horse riders and wheelchair-users and it's hoped that more multi-user routes will open in the years ahead.

Such was the route's importance, the National Park Authority protected it in the South Downs Local Plan as a potential future travel corridor.

Following an initial proposal to use emergency powers to infill the bridge, officers from the National Park Authority met with officials from National Highways to stress the importance of the route for access opportunities.

A spokesperson for National Highways said it had listened to people's views and would only consider infilling "where no viable or reasonable alternative is available".

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "I'm pleased that we've been able to work successfully with National Highways and safeguard this bridge for the future, keeping open the possibility of extending the Watercress Way to run beneath it

"The former New Alresford to Winchester Line is part of our walking and cycling strategy in the Local Plan and there are tremendous opportunities to improve access for cyclists, walkers, horse-riders and those with mobility issues. This is a wonderful victory in terms of championing the right for people to access the countryside."

The Watercress Way charity is raising awareness about the use of the old tracks and the ambition remains, alongside rights of way authority Hampshire County Council, to create an active travel route at this location.

The old railways and droves are also important wildlife habitats, with beech, ash, wild garlic, and bluebells and regular sightings of buzzard, red kite and badgers.



Tess Viljoen, from Pallant House Gallery in Chichester, tells us about an art exhibition you won't want to miss.

We are looking forward to new exhibition that opens at **Pallant House Gallery** this November. *Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water* will celebrate Sussex as a source of inspiration for artists over the centuries.

Opening with Turner's misty and ethereal view of Chichester canal towards the Cathedral, the exhibition traces different artists' responses to the Sussex landscape – from its iconic chalk cliff coastline to the rolling expanse of the South Downs.

Artists were drawn to Sussex for different reasons. John Constable sought the fresh sea air at Brighton as treatment for his wife's tuberculosis, but was inspired to create dramatic paintings of the sea and a turbulent sky. There were those for whom Sussex provided a place to experiment with different ways of living. During the First World War, Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant created a life at Charleston near Lewes that pushed back against the strict social codes of the time. Then, they shocked many but have since become valued for their pioneering ideas and extraordinary creativity. Sussex provided both refuge and inspiration for abstract artist Ivon Hitchens, who moved to a small, traditional caravan just south of Petworth when his London studio was bombed in the Blitz. The landscape became his muse.



The exhibition takes as its themes the elements wood, water and chalk – captured in Eric Ravillious' Chalk Paths, which will resonate to anyone who has walked the South Downs Way. You can see Ravillious' woodcuts too, alongside

those of his inspiration, William Blake who lived at Felpham where he penned the first line of a poem that began 'and did those feet in ancient times, walk upon England's mountains green' and went on to become the lyrics to the well-known hymn Jerusalem.

In all over 50 artists are featured in the exhibition, which opens on 13 November and runs until 24 April.

Unravelling mystery of cemetery



DNA analysis of Saxon skeletons, including some found in the South Downs, has shone a light on medieval migrations to post-Roman Britain and how local culture was affected.

Researchers have been analysing over 400 individuals from ancient Britain and Europe, including bones found at a Saxon cemetery at Apple Down, near Up Marden, West Sussex.

The cemetery was discovered in the 1980s and the collection is currently held at The Novium, in Chichester. The different burial practices between graves at the same cemetery has posed questions for archaeologists ever since and this new DNA study has finally provided some answers.

The genetic results revealed that around 75 percent of the population in Eastern and Southern England was made up of families whose ancestors must have originated from continental regions bordering the North Sea, including the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. What is more, these families mixed with Britain's existing population, but importantly, this integration varied from community to community.

The study revealed that women from migrating populations were buried with artefacts more often than women of local origin, especially considering items such as brooches and beads.

Duncan Sayer, archaeologist from the University of Central Lancashire and a lead author of the study, said: "We see considerable variation in how this migration affected communities. In some places, we see clear signs of active integration between locals and immigrants, as in the case of Buckland near Dover, or Oakington in Cambridgeshire. Yet in other cases, like Apple Down in West Sussex, we see that people with immigrant and local ancestry were buried separately in the cemetery. Perhaps this is evidence of some degree of social separation at this site."

Amy Roberts, Collections Officer at The Novium, said: "Since the Apple Down cemetery was first discovered in the 1980s archaeologists and academics have continued to question why such different burial practices were used across the cemetery, particularly grave orientation and the inclusion, or not, of grave goods, and what these things can tell us, if anything, about the people buried there. To be in a position to answer some of these questions through up to date ancient DNA and genetic study is fascinating and really does highlight just how important retention of these wonderful archives is."

Achievements in archaeology



Two archaeological projects in the South Downs have been shortlisted for major national awards.

Cissbury Goes Digital and the Seaford Head Project are contenders for awards from the Council for British Archaeology to recognise outstanding achievement.

The first project worked with archaeologists at Worthing Museum and the National Trust to develop 10 films exploring the archaeology of Cissbury Ring, bringing together the landscape with the archaeological archives and discoveries made there by the grandfather of modern archaeology, Augustus Pitt-Rivers, and local archaeologist, John Pull. The films are shared on site using NFC and QR codes on plaques installed on existing landscape furniture, providing high-quality engaging interpretation.

The East Sussex project brought together Seaford Town Council, Archaeology South East and Historic England to trial what a rapid survey response at a vulnerable coastal site could look like, topographic site surveys and drone monitoring.

A further innovation was to commission an artist and writer to interpret an archaeology report and the deeper context of an archaeological site, to the public, which resulted in "If You Can Imagine", a spoken word performance by Alinah Azadeh.

The project has ensured that a 3D detailed model of Seaford Head now exists, helping ongoing monitoring of the site and the impact of climate change.

Anooshka Rawden, who leads Cultural Heritage for the National Park, said: "It's a huge privilege to see two projects supported by the National Park Authority shortlisted for awards that celebrate archaeological achievement across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

"Both projects have been a celebration of partnership working.

"Both projects demonstrate what we can achieve despite modest budgets when we come together and share ideas, expertise and enthusiasm."

The winners will be announced on 29 November.



A South Downs adventure!



Teenagers have given heartfelt accounts of amazing mental health benefits after connecting with the great outdoors.

Young people from across the South East have been taking part in action-packed clubs in the National Park that involve getting closer to nature.

Fun activities have included wildlife walks at Seven Sisters Country Park, photography and sound recording sessions at Friston Forest, plus the excitement of river paddleboarding.

The inspiring initiative has been led by a partnership of Make (Good) Trouble, East Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park Trust.

Make (Good) Trouble focuses on helping young people with their emotional wellbeing and encouraging teenagers to “think outside the box” to develop lifelong skills. Many of the teenagers taking part in the initiative had never explored a National Park before and several had experienced social isolation and mental health challenges during the pandemic.

One of the teenagers said: “Lockdown was very boring – I didn’t really have anyone to talk to. This is a break from normal life and it’s good fun. You stop worrying about things that you normally worry about and you’re able to just enjoy yourself.”

Another said: “I look forward to coming here every morning, even if it means getting up early.”

A parent of the one of the participants said: “Looking after a young person whose homelife has been traumatic, this has been an absolute lifeline for them and for me.”

See the video at <https://vimeo.com/745417645>

Jane Keating, from Make (Good) Trouble, said: “It gave them a break from their normal lives and it was incredible to see how much more curious, engaged and connected they were. It was such a joy to get them out into nature!”

Amanda Elmes, who leads learning and outreach in the South Downs National Park, said: “It’s been wonderful to work with these teenagers and see them blossom through this experience.

“Unfortunately a significant proportion of young people are disconnected from the natural world around them and the pandemic has only exacerbated this. We’re really passionate at the National Park about giving young people opportunities to get out into the South Downs, learn about nature and have fun – they might even come home with muddy shoes! We strongly believe that all children should have access to nature.”

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Raising a toast to celebratory beer



A delightful beer crafted from the stunning landscape around the South Downs Way will be unveiled to mark the 50th anniversary of the National Trail.

Expert brewers at Long Man Brewery have been beavering away all summer creating a special ale to mark the big birthday this year.

And now the wait is over!

Rambling Man One Hundred, created from malted barley sustainably grown in the National Park and water captured from the glorious South Downs aquifer, will be unveiled at a celebratory event at Seven Sisters Country Park between 11am and 4pm on 19 November.

The newly-refurbished visitor centre will be the venue for the celebration and everyone visiting on the 19th will have the chance to try a sample.

The celebration will explore the tasting notes and characteristics.

The South Downs Way is a hilltop route running along the chalk ridge of the South Downs. At 100 miles, it runs from Winchester in Hampshire to Eastbourne in East Sussex, taking in chalky peaks, ancient forest, magical river valleys and brilliant white cliffs.

The route has been trodden by people for millennia, but such was its national importance for walkers that it was approved to become a new National Trail in March 1963.

On 15 July 1972 it was officially opened as the South Downs Way National Trail, making it the UK’s fifth national trail to be established and its first long-distance bridleway.

As well as the celebratory beer by Long Man Brewery, a commemorative plaque was produced by the National Park Authority for the 66 parishes along the trail.

Richard Ayres, who manages the visitor centre at Seven Sisters Country Park, said: “The South Downs Way runs right past us here, so it’s very fitting that we’re getting to unveil this fabulous beer. Having tried it, I can tell you it’s a corker!

“If you can’t make it on the day, we’ll be selling the beer in our shop and it would make the perfect Christmas gift!”

The Long Man brewers will also be back with a stall at the Seven Sisters’ Christmas Market over the weekend of 10 to 11 December.

The market will feature local produce, honey, arts and crafts and plenty of Yuletide gift ideas!

Pick up our amazing calendar!



With the festive period fast approaching, why not come to visit us at the South Downs Centre?

You can find a variety of gifts for Christmas, from our branded items to our new locally-sourced products, such as beeswax candles and soaps.

Our branded items include keyrings, magnets, mugs, and a whole lot more!

We also have a 2023 calendar available for purchase online or in-store, featuring stunning photos from across the national park.

Visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/south-downs-calendar-2023 to buy a calendar or pop into our visitor centre in Midhurst!

WIN A FREE CALENDAR! We've got five calendars to give away. People who sign up to the newsletter during December will automatically be entered into the draw. Or, email "holly and oak" to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on November 30.

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



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

“Resources needed to match ambition” – Chief Executive



The South Downs National Park Authority has responded to a national media report on the funding of England's National Parks.

An article in today's Guardian titled **"Funding cuts leave England's National Parks facing 'existential crisis'"** outlines a "funding crisis" facing National Park Authorities.



Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "The financial situation for all National Parks is incredibly difficult and the South Downs National Park is no exception.

"SDNPA funding has fallen by 40 per cent in real terms over the past decade and this year the Authority has had to make £1.1m of savings, including substantial staff cuts, closure of a depot, merging ranger teams, less funding for projects and other efficiency savings.

"The South Downs National Park has received a flat cash settlement from the Government of £10.486m in every year since 2019/2020 and this amount will remain the same until 24/25 – the same cash funding over a period of six years at a time of rapidly rising costs for all services. Inflation continues to erode this sum, meaning we continue to have to make cuts in delivery on the ground, as well as seeking alternative funding. This is before any further cuts that might arise as a result of the Chancellor's 17 November budget.

"The South Downs National Park is the third biggest in England, has the largest population and is among the top 20 planning authorities in the UK by both geography and volume of applications. Expectations on us continue to rise as our budget reduces in real terms.

"The Authority has balanced the books until 2024/2025, through cuts, efficiency savings and fundraising, after which we will be facing a deficit of at least £849,000 over the subsequent two years, unless funding increases.

"National Parks are the 'green lungs' of the nation, providing a vital public service to help people access the countryside and protect and enhance our cherished landscapes. We are also the linchpin of the UK's ambitious nature recovery and climate change targets. We need the resources to match our ambitions for nature recovery, access for all and the national response to climate change."

Things to do in the South Downs this November

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 [The Royal Ballet](#) streamed live from the Royal Opera House to a cinema screen and in full surround at Leconfield Hall in Petworth on 16 November.
- Head to Stansted Farm Shop for a [Christmas Taster Evening](#) on 16 November to get you in the festive mood and help you plan your Christmas menu.
- Enjoy a tour of [Chawton House](#) in Hampshire on 20 November. Join exhibition curator Emma Yandle for a tour of their current exhibition “Trailblazers: Women travel writers and the exchange of knowledge”.
- Head to [Charleston House](#) in East Sussex for a one-day workshop on 21 November where you will be given your own handmade card lampshade to paint and take home.
- Join Hounds for Heroes on 27 November for a festive [sponsored dog walk](#) at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Waterloo in Hampshire.
- Join [Petworth House](#) for a wreath-making workshop on 28 November and 5 December to add festive cheer to your home. Learn how to make a wreath using foliage collected from the grounds of the historic house.

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 Michael Harris; P3 left Brian Toward; P3 right Jeff Travis; P4 left Charlie Hellewell; P4 right Pallant House; P5 left The Novium; P5 right Chip Creative;