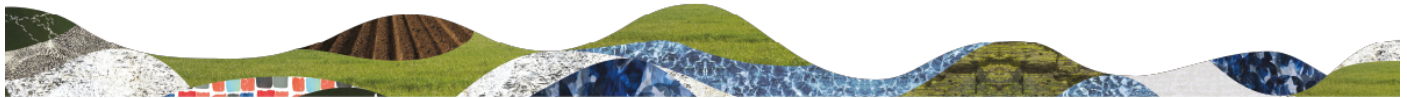


SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

SOUTH DOWNS NEWS



WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **An action-packed year** Find out about the innovative work being done by the National Park Authority to help make the South Downs even more inclusive and accessible.
- **Autumn wellness** As the nights draw in, discover why getting outside and enjoying the tranquillity of the National Park can do wonders for your mental health and wellbeing.
- **Wildlife resurgence** Learn more about the story of a small field that became a nature haven.
- **Spooky South Downs** Discover five spots full of mystery and intrigue.

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

Reflecting on progress a year since major Government review



**A message from Trevor Beattie,
Chief Executive of the South
Downs National Park Authority.**

It's now more than a year on since the publication of the Glover Review of Protected Landscapes, a milestone report grounded in a deep love of landscape and strong support for National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural

Beauty.

The report underlined the fact that the South Downs National Park was on the right track in most of our key areas – including engaging with young people and under-represented communities, improving accessibility and tackling the biodiversity emergency. However, we know much more remains to be done to address the long-term challenges facing all protected landscapes.

Earlier this year we published the ***Partnership Management Plan*** for the National Park, which brings together environmental organisations, land managers, farmers, community organisations, communities, businesses and volunteers, and sets out the 10 ambitious outcomes we want to achieve over the next five years.



Two crucial ambitions are to help nature recover and to connect everyone with nature for the benefit of both nature and people.

These are two of the most important recommendations of the Glover Protected Landscape review.

The Covid pandemic has brought challenges for the National Park, as it has to all aspects of life. Yet we know the pandemic has led to people needing the National Park more than ever, and to a positive shift in the importance people give to protecting and enhancing nature:

- We're continuing to work really hard to turn the tide on biodiversity loss on a big and small scale, through larger landscape projects such as Heathlands Reunited and via smaller initiatives for individual indicator species such as the Field Cricket and Water Vole. We're also spearheading a number of innovative schemes, including Bee Lines, to create a new network of wildflower corridors, and Trees

for the Downs, which is planning to plant over 8,500 trees this season. Working with partners, we've already planted over 1,500 disease-resistant elms over the past two years – restoring an iconic tree of the Downs that is also a key driver of biodiversity.

As part of our work to help nature recover, we launched our People and Nature Network Strategy in August. This is all about identifying how we can conserve, expand and restore nature across the entire South East through a network of "green infrastructure". Nature doesn't recognise administrative boundaries, so this bold long-term initiative makes space for nature in urban as well as rural environments and create links with the National Park which already has over 1,000 nature conservation areas.

- We have also been working hard to connect people to the National Park. Before the pandemic began, more than 3,000 people of all ages from across the National Park and our urban fringes came to enjoy the Dark Skies Festival in February to learn more about the amazing stargazing opportunities on their doorstep.

- Our annual schedule has, in recent years, shifted to running targeted engagement events to reach those groups currently not visiting the National Park, including the young, urban and BAME groups. Last year, for instance, we met and spoke to over 18,000 people at events, many in urban areas in and around the National Park. It was clear that it would not be possible to run these events as usual in 2020, so we have been piloting some very successful virtual events. Our first pilot, the Wild Chalk Festival in July, reached many thousands of people, with large audiences tuning in from Brighton, London, Portsmouth, Southampton and as far as Manchester and Bristol. In September we followed this up with our Secrets of the Heath event. Together these two festivals helped us bring the National Park to over 166,000 people, hopefully encouraging many to enjoy and care for the National Park.

- There are now five Miles Without Stiles routes in the National Park that enable people with limited mobility, wheelchair users or mobility scooter users to be able enjoy extremely easy access to glorious parts of the National Park. Work is under way on new stile-free routes.



- Work has continued to increase accessibility to the National Park from urban areas, with extensions to multi-user paths at Centurion Way (connecting Chichester and surrounding communities) and Egrets Way (connecting Lewes and surrounding communities).

- Our education team continue to build a strong foundation of schools' engagement. This autumn they have launched an innovative new programme of online teacher training to help encourage more learning outside the classroom. The education team have also launched two new grants schemes to help facilitate school trips in the National Park and/or an expert to visit the school.

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- Over the summer we had over 70 sign-ups from families – many from urban areas – who were able to join in a nature activities programme. With the help of our Families Outreach Officer, we're delighted that seven families and two individuals achieved their John Muir Award. We are now trialling face-to-face family work with a charity in Portsmouth working with young people who have a disability.

- Our health and wellbeing work continues to expand and diversify and we have been pleased to help run several successful community initiatives, including arts projects to promote wellness at popular sites such as Butser Hill in Hampshire and Truleigh Hill in West Sussex. Our new health and wellbeing strategy will be launched soon.



We've been working incredibly hard to address recommendations in the Glover Review, building on the strong foundation we already had and also devising new innovative ways to extend our impact and influence.

We are, however, disappointed that one year on the Government has not yet produced a response to the Glover Review. Our hope is that this will be coming very soon.

Implementation of all of the recommendations in the Review will clearly require significant additional funding which is secure over the long term to match the scope and ambition of our plans for nature recovery. We will be seeking this clarity and certainty in the Government's response.

We stand at a pivotal moment for National Parks and other protected landscapes. In these challenging times, access to green space is needed more than ever and the global biodiversity emergency is now firmly on the public agenda. The COVID-19 pandemic has seen people from all areas re-connect with nature, giving many a new appreciation of how just valuable it is to our health and wellbeing. Now is the time to make the most of this renewed enthusiasm. The South Downs National Park Authority, as a major environmental and planning advocate and practitioner across the South East, is taking a key leadership role.

As the Government commits to a Green Recovery, we're ready to develop the proposals laid out in the Glover Review to build a better future for people and nature together. The message to policy makers is clear – that investment in nature and the environment is the best long-term investment that any nation can make.

Feel uplifted this autumn and connect with nature



Tranquil, enchanting, inspiring and a place to replenish the soul.

The South Downs has always had these special qualities, but the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to amplify the value of having a National Park on our doorstep.

Whether you were walking in the forest, running along one of the many rights of way, or riding your horse through quiet country lanes, it was hard not to pinch yourself during these past few difficult months and remind yourself that we're very lucky to live in this wondrously beautiful, sun-kissed corner of England.

The importance of the South Downs National Park as a breathing space and part of a network of "natural health service" providers has been increasing in recent years.

And, with mental health and wellness coming into sharper focus during the pandemic, the National Park Authority is working with a variety of partners to develop opportunities for people to benefit from connecting with the natural world.

One of the priorities is to develop more "green prescribing" – working with health and social care providers to encourage people to make the most of the National Park. It could be as simple as a weekly walk in the National Park, or taking part in an arts class inspired by the picturesque landscape.

A COVID-19 Recovery Fund was also launched earlier this year and a raft of community projects are set to benefit from funding that will help connect communities to the National Park.

"I think many people across all walks of life have found 2020 a difficult and stressful year as they've been balancing work, childcare and the effects of lockdown," says Kate Drake, Health and Wellbeing Officer for the National Park, who was given the newly-created role last year.

"We've certainly seen a renewed wave of interest in connecting with nature and getting out and just enjoying fresh air and a beautiful view. It's been a real 'pick-me-up' for so many people and we've certainly seen that from the feedback we've had.

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"Mental illness accounts for 23 per cent of all ill-health in England and affects more than one in four of the population at any time. It's a stark statistic that is being taken really seriously by National Parks and is driving us to develop new health and wellbeing strategies that complement our wonderful NHS.

"The key thing is we know it does work. Being outside and active with natural sunlight releases serotonin and helps us to feel less stressed. Research shows that just being in nature can have a positive impact on mental and physical health and can enhance one's mood."

As part of the lottery-funded Heathlands Reunited project, the National Park recently helped to launch an educational sculpture trail, with seven stone carvings that tell the stories of the heritage and wildlife of the heaths. There's a field cricket, sand lizard and even an uplifting quote from the poet Tennyson! Families and walkers are being encouraged to download the [**walk leaflet**](#) this autumn and explore the trail.

Kate adds: "We know people have enjoyed the benefits of the outdoors and we're keen that they continue to reap the benefits during the autumn and winter. As the days shorten, it can be very easy to become inactive. With more people working from home, it's become even more important to take breaks away from the screen or even take a 30-minute walk at lunchtime.

"I would encourage people to start small. Perhaps go for an hour long gentle walk on a Saturday afternoon. Take notice of the beauty around you, look at the trees, listen to the birds and look up at the sky and soak up the views on the horizon. These are all simple, free things that nature has to offer us and you'll be surprised by how uplifted you feel!"

Kate says she's really proud to be working for the National Park as it marks its 10th birthday this year.

She adds: "We live in one of the busiest parts of the UK. So what makes the South Downs National Park so special for me is its ability to provide an outlet for escape, adventure, enjoyment, inspiration and reflection. And those stunning views never get boring!"

Have you tried forest bathing?

As October sees the return of world Mental Health Day, why not try a walk in the woods to bring a sense of wellness?

The National Park is a treasure trove of woodland, such as Alice Holt, Stansted and Friston. As the autumn leaves fall, now is a great time to explore these treescapes! Forest bathing simply means immersing yourself in a forest setting. Originating in Japan and now a cornerstone of Japanese healthcare, it's a natural way to calm the senses and promote a feeling of peace in a busy world!



A wildlife resurgence!

Phillippa Morrison-Price, Lead Ranger for the Eastern Downs, explains how species numbers continue to rise thanks to the community pulling together.



White-letter hairstreak, Adonis blue butterfly, small blue butterfly and a brown Argus – not bad for an area of chalk grassland the size of a small swimming pool.

These are the most recent sightings in a small area near the YHA at Truleigh Hill, West Sussex where the SDNPA and various partners have been working to improve the area for wildlife, as well as visitors. The site as a whole is only one hectare in size – a football pitch! Back in 2012, all that could be found there was a field of nettles, a few trees and an overgrown dew pond, that looked more like a puddle with a willow tree growing out of it.



Brown Argus butterfly by Neil Hulme

Over the next few years, with the help of Veolia Environmental Trust, Rampion Mitigation Fund and National Grid, the SDNPA, with countless volunteers, school groups and Duke of Edinburgh participants, set about creating an accessible site that showcased the many habitats of the South Downs, chalk grassland, dew ponds and woodland, as well as their management.

First on the list was getting a digger in to scrape the soil back to chalk. This created a blank canvas for chalk grassland plants to thrive, free from competition from other more vigorous species. Plug planting and seed spreading (all locally sourced) followed, along with weeding and an annual cut and collect (grazing will be introduced once it is established). Next was the pond – digging out the old liner, re-profiling the banks and lining with clay.....then waiting for the rain. Then the dipping platform and easy access trail – providing an opportunity for people of all abilities to access the site, sit by the dew pond, or enjoy the wildflowers. Finally, the whole site was re-fenced, to allow for the re-introduction of sheep...a traditional form of downland management.

Eight years on and the species list is getting longer and more impressive. To date, 14 species of butterfly have been recorded and six species of dragonfly and damselfly, and many young people have also accessed the site and been able to connect with nature.

Right on the South Downs Way, this site is accessible and open to all.

Let's paws and reflect – dog walkers invited to take part in new survey



Dog walkers who use South Downs heathlands to exercise their furry friends are being invited to take part in a short survey.

The Heathlands Reunited team has launched an online survey to look at dog walking habits on our heathlands, including whether people are going for out longer and more frequent walks since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The poll, which is filled in anonymously, also looks at other behaviours, including keeping canines on leads around livestock and picking up dog mess.

It comes as the Heathlands Reunited team – which is working to protect and enhance the precious heaths of the South Downs – analyses the impact of the Take The Lead campaign. The initiative, working with the National Park Authority, encourages responsible dog walking and has engaged with hundreds of dog walkers, including holding doggy training courses and community events.

Colin Carre, Heathlands Reunited Project Manager, said: "Heathlands are such beautiful, tranquil places and are understandably popular with dog walkers. A key focus of our project has been to engage with them and promote responsible dog walking to help nature flourish at these incredibly sensitive sites.

"There are no right or wrong answers, but this research will help build a better picture of current dog walking habits and look at how effective the Take the Lead campaign has been. We'd like as many dog walkers as possible who use heathlands to take part in the survey and it will take no more than 10 minutes. Your opinions and experiences are very valuable to us."

The Heathlands Reunited Team is particularly keen to hear from dog walkers who use Chapel Common, Iping Common, Wiggonholt Common, Black Down, Woolmer Forest, Ludshott Common and Shortheath.

To take part in the survey visit

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/KYPV7YM

The deadline for responses is 13 November 2020.

Families across region enjoy inspiring outdoors activity programme



A new appreciation of our beautiful natural world was experienced by scores of families who took part in a fun nature-based activity programme.

Families from across the South East took part in the John Muir Award programme over the spring and summer months – doing everything from nature walks in the woods to building bug hotels. Inspired by the “founding father” of the National Park movement, John Muir, families simply had to get out and explore green spaces on their doorstep, whether that be a garden, local park or nature reserve.

The scheme was spearheaded by the National Park’s new Families Outreach Officer, Siân Jones, who produced a series of newsletters and things-to-do sheets, packed with ideas of fun nature-based activities families could do at little cost.

Over 70 families signed up to the newsletters and used them as inspiration for activities over the summer, sharing their experiences with others. Seven families and two individuals completed over 25 hours of nature-based activities and have now earned themselves a Family John Muir Award.

Achieving an award is Vicki Stewart, and her sons Hugo, six, and Charlie, eight, who had a whale of a time exploring the National Park, including Butser Hill.

Vicki, from Waterlooville, Hampshire, said: “We loved every minute of it! We had not long got a puppy so we thought it was a brilliant way for us to explore more of the local area.

“Then we went into lockdown and it became a great excuse to just get outside and get some fresh air. We had been to Butser Hill before, but we weren’t aware that it was part of the South Downs National Park. At first we did loads of research and found out about the local area we live and where we could explore. We didn’t realise how many amazing places we had access to!

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“My boys just loved the exploring part – they’re little adventurers! They would get all their gear on and binoculars ready and it felt like a big day out for them. We loved the bug hunting and also took part in the big butterfly count. They even learned how to build an outdoor shelter using natural materials they found on the ground.



“We did walks at Queen Elizabeth Country Park and had a “mindfulness spot” where we’d just stand and listen to nature. Just being outside, seeing all that green really grounded us and almost pressed the ‘reset’ button.”

And Vicki added: “The whole experience has definitely reconnected us with nature and to understand how important it is. It’s probably something everyone should do! The boys have not stopped talking about it and it’s really sparked their interest in what they can do to help the environment. They’re thinking more about recycling and what they can plant in the garden. One of my sons has even got himself a compass now. We just enjoyed it so much and would do it all over again!”

Jo Gold, from Yapton, West Sussex, completed the activities course with her five-year-old grandson Jacob.

She said: “It came at a difficult time when a lot of children weren’t able to go to school and I’ve always had the ethos of being outside. So I thought it was something nice that Jacob and I could do together.

“We did loads of activities – nature walks, swimming in the sea, collecting leaves and identifying flowers. We also visited the Weald and Downland Museum and Jacob loved it so much that we’ve got him an annual pass. We even played hide and seek in the woods. He hid so well we couldn’t find him!

“I do feel that we got more connected with outdoor space and Jacob really blossomed. He became more confident being outside in the natural world. And I think he learned about conservation by osmosis. It was a really rewarding experience for us both.”

Siân said: “It’s been so lovely working with all the families and hearing about how much they’ve enjoyed the experience.

“One of our participants summed it up for me with their testimonial: ‘It makes you realise how precious nature is’. We can never take nature for granted and it’s wonderful to see people, especially children, discover this new appreciation for all that it gives us and, most importantly, want to care for it.”

Over the next year, Siân and her team will be trialling more face-to-face family work with charities such as Enable Ability, which is Portsmouth-based and works with young people who have a disability.

Sian added: “This work is due to start this autumn, and we hope this will be the beginning of us being able to directly deliver activities to families in the South Downs National Park.”

Five of the spookiest spots in the South Downs this Halloween



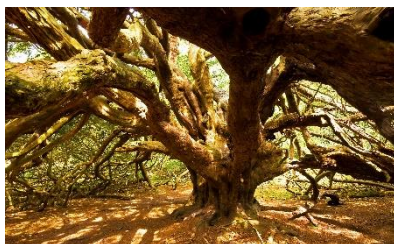
With humans inhabiting the South Downs for millennia, it's no wonder this rolling landscape is a swirling cauldron of myths, legends, folklore and ghost stories.

Misty mornings, magical woodlands, an abundance of ancient monuments, and some of the darkest skies in England, only add to its enigmatic and atmospheric allure.

So, for Halloween 2020, we take a look at five intriguing spots – all with stories cloaked in mystery and guaranteed to stir the imagination!

Kingley Vale, near Chichester

Who or what lies beneath Kingley Vale? A special place of Bronze Age burial mounds and Iron Age camps, tales of hauntings in the dark and silent grove of ancient yews will come as no surprise to those who know this spot. Stories tell of the Kings' Graves or Devil's Humps as the tombs of Viking leaders buried in 894, with the yews marking the battlefield site, stained red with the blood of dead warriors.



Legend has it that the woods are haunted by these Vikings, while one story suggests that the gnarled trees transform into human forms at moonlight.

Devil's Dyke, near Brighton

According to local legend, the devil decided to stop the Christian conversion of Sussex by digging through the Downs, letting in the sea and drowning them all.

Clods of earth thrown up by his digging formed Chanctonbury, Cissbury, Rackham Hill and Mount Caburn.

An old lady saw him, lit a candle behind a sieve and knocked her rooster awake. The devil thought the sun

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was rising and ran away, throwing the Goldstone into Hove on the way. One more clod fell from his hoof and became the Isle of Wight, or perhaps he landed so hard in Surrey he formed the Devil's Punch Bowl!

Cheriton, near Winchester

Does a ghost army of defeated Royalist soldiers return to the English Civil War battlefield near the village every four years?

Chanctonbury Ring, near Steyning

This popular spot is reputed to be one of the most haunted locations on the South Downs. The beech trees that circle the



ring were first planted in 1760. But long before it was the site of Bronze Age burials, Iron Age forts and a Roman temple. According to local stories, walking widdershins (anti clockwise) seven times round the ring will summon the Devil, ready to offer you a bowl of milk, soup or porridge in exchange for your soul.

The Long Man of Wilmington, East Sussex



Picture by Joan Barham

There are many theories about the age and history of the Long Man – from a Prehistoric fertility symbol to a 4th century Roman emperor. One local legend claims that the Long Man of Wilmington is a memorial outlining the figure of a giant from Windover Hill who fell and broke his neck. Another talks of a fight between the Long Man of Wilmington and another giant from Firle Beacon, which ended in the death of the tallest man to have ever lived in England.

Anooshka Rawden, who leads on cultural heritage for the National Park, said: "We all love a good ghost story and there are plenty in the South Downs to choose from! The rich folklore of the South Downs only adds to the magic of the beautiful landscape, so I would encourage visitors to get out and explore this autumn and winter!"

Calling all schools! New outdoor learning programme launches



Schoolchildren across the South East are set to benefit from a new learning programme and two grant schemes to help connect them with nature.

The South Downs National Park Education Network is launching a new set of initiatives to help schools deliver more learning outside the classroom.

The network, made up of more than 100 education providers that offer learning experiences for young people, have developed an extensive online teacher training programme to support teachers as they return to school under difficult circumstances.

Meanwhile, two new grants have been launched that will help schools to benefit from a visit from an expert, or a field trip visit to a site in the National Park.

It comes as the Department for Education has recommended schools use outdoor spaces for learning and school trips have been given the go-ahead. Research has consistently shown that outdoor learning and connection with nature increases attainment and improves the health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff.

Jonathan Dean, Education Officer for the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "We want teachers and young people to have positive experiences as they settle back into school this Autumn Term.

"When we held our education network meeting in June this year – our first virtual meeting – a lot of the network members were reporting a huge decrease in their summer business.

Many schools were closed and outdoor education officers, museum guides and bushcraft teachers alike were left with empty diaries when they would normally have been engaging thousands of young



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people with the incredible landscape, history, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park.

"We knew that when schools returned in September we would have to find new and innovative ways to share our passion and knowledge with others. We hope this new programme of online teacher training and two new grants will help schools make the most of outdoor learning opportunities and create positive memories in these challenging times."

The education network, county council outdoor education advisors and headteachers fed into the development of the new programme of online teacher training. Online teacher training sessions, delivered virtually by the Education Network, will support teachers across one or more of six key themes, which were developed following consultation with around 80 schools.

The themes are: using learning outside the classroom to deliver specific curriculum subjects, specific curriculum topics, school ground development, using woodland effectively, fieldwork skills, and health and wellbeing. All sessions will be linked to the special qualities of the South Downs National Park.

Interested schools are now being encouraged to book places on the online teacher training programme and apply for the grants. The sessions and visits are linked to the special qualities of the South Downs and they will be of greatest benefit to schools within the National Park or within an approximate 10km radius of the National Park, e.g. Portsmouth, Winchester, Farnham, Chichester, Brighton and Eastbourne.

The new initiatives will support:

- Over 250 teachers to feel more confident about delivering their curriculum in the outdoors.
- Over 1,000 pupils to benefit from high-quality learning experiences delivered by experts in their schools grounds or in local green space.
- Over 500 pupils, especially those experiencing the highest levels of deprivation with the least access to high-quality green space, to benefit from fully-funded trips to sites within the National Park.

All schools will be eligible for free teacher training provided by the network.

All schools will be eligible to apply for a grant to cover the costs of an in-school visits from an expert.

Secondary Schools, Special Schools and any school with over 25% pupil premium funding will be eligible to apply for a grant to cover the full costs (transport and activities) to a site in the National Park.

All the training has been put together taking into account the latest COVID-19 guidance on keeping children and staff safe.

Full details can be found by visiting www.southdowns.gov.uk/learning

Things to do in the South Downs this October

Please check with the venue on availability and remember that prebooking may be required 😊



- [The Petworth Festival](#) returns with a star-studded line-up including Sheku & Isata Kanneh-Mason, Mitsuko Uchida, William Boyd and Joanna Trollope. Taking place from 16 October to 1 November, there are a plethora of musical and literary events to enjoy online. Events will be taking place in St Mary's Church or the Leconfield Hall, and there will also be small audiences at each event, to create the sense of occasion and atmosphere so essential to a 'real' event.
- Enjoy the great outdoors this autumn half term at the [Weald and Downland Living Museum](#), with fun family activity packs and turn into an explorer at their pumpkin trail from 24 October to 1 November.
- Make a visit to [Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft](#) to enjoy their permanent collection, including the work of Eric Gill, Edward Johnston and Ethel Mairet Throughout the 20th century the village attracted artists and craft workers of national repute. This museum provides the opportunity to see the works in the place where they were made.
- Enjoy the [Halloween Outdoor Trail](#) at Queen Elizabeth Country Park near Petersfield during October half term.
- Visit the [South Downs Centre](#) in Midhurst. Open between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday, there is a small visitor centre with an exhibition that can accommodate five visitors at a time. A great one-stop shop to learn more about the National Park and get ideas for walks and days-out!

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? 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

Please note that only contributors who submit their full name and address can be considered for publication though we will not publish your full address. Please make it clear whether you are speaking on your own behalf or that of an organisation you represent. We reserve the right to shorten comments and edit where necessary.

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