

SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

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SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Boost for butterflies** Find out about plans to improve habitats for the beautiful insect at the highest point on the ancient South Downs chalk ridge.
- **Shady walks** Phew it's hot! Discover some lovely walks to escape the heat.
- **Tea for two?** Discover some of the best Afternoon Teas in the National Park.
- **COMPETITION!** Win a family day-out at a new interactive play facility in the National Park.

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

Beautiful butterflies take centre stage at reserve

A major boost for wildlife, including rare butterflies, is on the way at Butser Hill Nature Reserve – the highest point on the South Downs chalk ridge.

Over the next three years, the *Boosting Butser's Butterflies* project will restore 48 hectares – or around 2,000 tennis courts – of chalk grassland and woodland edge.

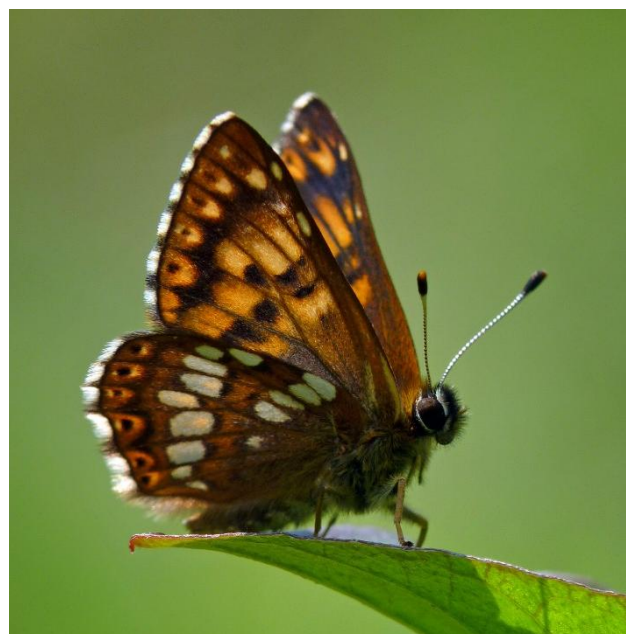
Once complete, the work will provide improved conditions for orchids, cowslip, harebell, and beautiful butterflies such as the Chalk Hill Blue and the nationally-scarce Duke of Burgundy (*pictured right*).

The project is being led by Hampshire County Council, working closely with the South Downs National Park Authority.

The £160,000 funding has been supported by National Grid's Landscape Enhancement Initiative, the Big Chalk Partnership's Nature Recovery Fund and the National Park Authority's Community Infrastructure Levy.

Key works include installing features that will help reinstate the chalk landscape and reintroducing a natural water supply to enable areas to be grazed by animals – a more natural, less intensive approach to managing this fragile habitat.

The funding will also improve visitor access to this area of Butser and provide natural features that will screen the view of pylons on the horizon.



Allison Potts, Director of Landscape and Operations for the National Park, said: "Butterflies are synonymous with the South Downs National Park and chalk grassland is an amazing habitat for so many species of animals and plants, so we're pleased to be working with partners on this very exciting project."

"We want more nature everywhere for everyone, as we collectively tackle huge challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss and this initiative will enhance a really key site in the National Park."



New Local Plan moves ahead

More than 2,700 representations on the South Downs National Park's new Local Plan are currently being analysed in preparation for the next important stages of the planning process.

The latest consultation on the new South Downs Local Plan closed on 23 June, with 2,700 comments submitted from around 1,300 people and organisations. All representations received during the consultation, together with supporting evidence and submission documents, have been registered and are now being reviewed by officers at the National Park Authority.

The new Local Plan will guide how and where development takes place in the National Park over the next two decades, replacing the current Local Plan adopted in 2019. The goal of the Local Plan is to address vital issues such as the need for affordable housing, quality development, restoring nature, climate action, a flourishing rural economy and helping local communities thrive.

In November and December this year, the National Park's Planning Committee and the Full Authority will consider the outcomes of the consultation, including any proposed modifications to address the representations and any other changes since the Local Plan was agreed last March.

Subject to this consideration, the new Local Plan, together with any proposed modifications and the latest consultation representations, will then be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.

Claire Tester, Head of Strategic Planning, said: "This is such an important plan for the future of this wonderful National Park and I'd like to thank each and every person who has responded so far to the consultations.

"One of the key concerns from the community that came up in our latest consultation was that the South Downs Local Plan includes more proposed housing and other development given that this is a National Park.

"We have statutory purposes to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, and to help people understand and appreciate those assets. However, we also have a statutory duty to foster the economic and social wellbeing of our communities. The South Downs is Britain's most populated National Park with more than 113,000 residents, living in one of the four towns and smaller villages and settlements, and we have nearly 6,000 businesses.

"Therefore, it's important we plan for the future and the continued vitality of these towns and villages, supporting local facilities and ensuring there are suitable homes, particularly affordable homes for local communities. This is a plan about innovative and diligent placemaking, so with appropriate, sustainable growth comes significant wider benefits for people, including health and wellbeing, habitat creation for wildlife, community infrastructure, jobs and climate action." See the proposed plan [here](#).

Councillor Kirsty North, Hampshire County Council's Cabinet Lead Member for Universal Services, said: "Protecting and enhancing Hampshire's natural environment is one of our key priorities, and this project shows how practical action can deliver real benefits for both people and wildlife.

"It will enrich this treasured landscape, creating more opportunities for nature to thrive while ensuring it remains a wonderful place for residents and visitors to enjoy, helping us meet the challenges of a changing climate.

"By working together, we can preserve these unique landscapes and leave a lasting legacy for future generations."



Restoring the water source at the reserve, alongside long-term conservation grazing, will improve soil quality, increase floral diversity, and create vital refuges for species that depend on healthy chalk grassland, including pollinators.

In addition, the work will also reduce wildfire risk, mitigate the landscape impact of nearby pylons, support better land management, and enhance natural carbon storage – the process by which plants and soils absorb and retain carbon from the atmosphere, helping to mitigate climate change.



National Park Rangers will support the County Council's countryside team with volunteer tasks and impact monitoring.

This investment forms part of a wider effort to revive and reconnect

chalk and limestone ecosystems across southern England.

Butser Hill stands at 271 metres and its name is derived from the Old English *Bryttes Ora*, meaning "Briht's slope", or "bright or famous slope".

Its elevation and clear views over the Solent area have made it strategically important to humans for millenia and there are the remains of Bronze Age round barrows and Iron Age earthworks and hillfort ditches.

Some of the best afternoon teas in the National Park!



The great British tradition of tea, finger sandwiches and scones is almost 200 years old and is one of the true joys of the summer – or any time of year for that matter!

Afternoon Tea Week takes place from 10 August to 15 August and is the perfect excuse to enjoy some sweet and savoury treats in the National Park.

Here are some interesting facts about this social ritual that started during the Victorian era:

- It's the seventh Duchess of Bedford, Anna Maria Russell, who we have to thank for the invention of afternoon tea, sometime around 1840. Due to increasing urbanisation and the rise in industrialisation, the evening meal was becoming later and later, with many wealthier classes having dinner close to 9pm. The Duchess of Bedford, who was one of Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting, was having none of it and requested that some tea, bread and butter and cake was brought to her room in the late afternoon. The ritual spread through the upper classes and the fashionable custom soon became a mainstay across Britain.
- British tea-drinking pre-dates the introduction of afternoon tea by a couple of hundred years, having first been popularised in England by King Charles II and his Portuguese wife, Catherine de Braganza, in the 1600s.
- The fine porcelain cups and tea bowls of 18th and 19th-century England needed the cool milk added first to prevent them from shattering from the sudden heat of the tea.
- Scones originated in Scotland in the early 1500s. Originally large, flat oatcakes cooked on a griddle, they evolved into the oven-baked, flour-based treats we know today after the introduction of baking powder in the Victorian era.
- National surveys indicate that almost a third of the UK population goes out for an afternoon tea at least once a month!

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Here are seven recommendations for a sumptuous Afternoon Tea in the South Downs:

- Enjoy an afternoon tea in the ancient walls of **Amberley Castle**, which dates back to 1103 when it was a timber hunting lodge before being fortified into a Bishop's summer palace in the 14th century. Whether celebrating a special moment or simply enjoying an unhurried afternoon, this is an Afternoon Tea to be savoured in truly memorable surroundings.
- 
- Tucked away in the charm of Chesapeake Mill, Wickham, is a traditional tearoom known for its warm welcome, freshly prepared food, and irresistible homemade cakes. From relaxed coffee catch-ups to special celebrations, **Crumbs at Chesapeake** creates a space where every visit feels a little indulgent. The mill was built in 1820 using timbers from the American warship USS Chesapeake and is now home to a huge collection of antiques.
 - Just a stone's throw from Arundel Castle is the very elegant **Avisford Park Hotel**. Indulge in a selection of carefully prepared sandwiches, home baked scones and a variety of mini desserts accompanied by a glass sparkling Prosecco or the finest leaf tea.
 - **The Tea Barn café**, located between Petersfield and Midhurst, is nestled in the heart of the South Downs at Durloughmarsh Farm. It's owned and run by husband and wife team, Ben and Maddison, who pride themselves on using fresh and seasonal ingredients to create tasty breakfast and lunch menus with fantastic, locally sourced tea and coffee. Maddison is passionate about baking and so the café specialises in producing delicious and seasonal cakes, scones and afternoon teas that are available all day, every day.
 - If you're looking for a beautiful tranquil location for an afternoon tea, the **Riverside Café** at Amberley is a must! Offering a traditional afternoon tea and a signature option, what better way to spend a couple of hours as you soak up the views across the River Arun?
 - Experience a luxury afternoon tea in the dog-friendly Olive Lounge between 3pm and 5.30pm each day at the stunning **Tottington Manor**, near Edburton. Located close to the South Downs Way, Tottington Manor is an ideal base for walkers, cyclists, leisure travellers and business guests alike. Afternoon tea is also available for larger parties of 10 or more in their private dining rooms, perfect for baby showers, hen parties, anniversaries or birthdays!

Wherever you go in the South Downs, have a tearrrific time! Will you put the clotted cream or jam first on your scrumptious scone? Decisions! 😊

Best shady walks this summer



Finding a shady walk to shelter from the blinding heat of the sun has become an essential task for many this summer.

The South Downs is actually one of the most wooded of the English National Parks and offers some lovely alternatives to the classic 'top of the Downs' experience.

We've put together a collection of routes in the South Downs that offer some shade whether you are walking with your family, out for a serious trek or taking your dog out for a stroll in the early morning.

Queen Elizabeth Country Park – near Petersfield

With over 2,000 acres of open access woodland and downland, there's lots to explore at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Petersfield. There are both short and long shady tree-lined trails that are clearly waymarked from the visitor centre taking you through the beech, mixed and coniferous woodland, as well as a grassy ride.

[Read more](#)

West Walk, Forest of Bere – near Wickham



Explore the remnants of an old Royal hunting ground on this shady, accessible woodland walk. A '**Miles without Stiles**' route, the tracks are easy access gravel, lined by trees including a small number of 19th century oaks that were planted for shipbuilding in Portsmouth.

Keep an eye out for tracks and signs of wildlife; they can be secretive, but if you look closely, you'll find evidence of their whereabouts. Roe and muntjac deer, foxes, rabbits and many species of bird, including tawny owls, buzzards and kestrels all live here.

[Read more](#)

Alice Holt Forest – near Farnham

There's over 240 hectares of woodland to explore at **Alice Holt Forest** in the north of the National Park. With waymarked trails to suit every level in the forest, come and discover a way to keep cool but still be outside.

[Read more](#)

Ashford Hangers – near Petersfield

This National Nature Reserve has beautiful, shady, wooded paths among beech, ash and yew trees 'hanging' above and below the path on steep chalk hillsides. Also known as 'Little Switzerland' for obvious reasons, it also offers fantastic views of the South Downs at viewpoints such as 'Shoulder of Mutton'. The name 'hanger' comes from the Old English 'hangra' meaning a wooded slope.

[Read more](#)

River Rother Walk – Midhurst

For a cool refreshing walk, follow the path from North Street through the trees alongside the river Rother towards the Woolbeding Estate. As you leave the river either turn back on yourself to stay in the shade or complete the circular walk back to town with mixed tree coverage, where you could get an ice cream or other refreshments from the many cafes in Midhurst.

The wetland around the boardwalk is full of reedmace, willow and rushes. You may also be lucky to spot the quick flash of a kingfisher or a bobbing grey wagtail along fast-flowing stretches. Beautiful blue-banded demoiselles, a type of damselfly, gather in large numbers by the river.

[Read more](#)

Kingley Vale – near Chichester

Experience the majesty and shade of ancient yew trees at this stunning National Nature Reserve near Chichester. Among the oldest living things in England, the twisted



yews offer not only shelter on a hot and sunny day but allow us to connect with our ancient ancestors who may have also sheltered here. There are approximately 14 scheduled monuments on the reserve, the Devil's Humps being one of the most iconic.

Kingley Vale is a butterfly hotspot in the summer with species such as chalk hill blue, holly blue and brimstones being numerous. Also don't forget to look up to see soaring buzzards and red kites above.

[Read more](#)

National Trust Slindon Estate

This route, starting and finishing in Eartham, is perfect for a hot, sunny day as most of the path is shaded by overhanging trees. Take some time at the bench by Nore Hill Folly and enjoy the panoramic views reaching out over the coastal plain to the sea beyond.

[Read more](#)

Chanctonbury Ring – near Steyning

On a hot day you can access this iconic prehistoric hill fort on the South Downs via the wooded north facing escarpment near Chanctonbury. Park at the

Tourism gives back to South Downs



More than £16,000 has been raised for charity over the past year as businesses across Hampshire and Sussex are giving back to help nature.

The South Downs National Park's Visitor Giving Scheme continues to go from strength to strength, with fundraising poured into inspiring projects such as tree planting, creating wildflower meadows, planting new hedgerows, renovating paths and helping children access the great outdoors.

The scheme is a simple way of inviting voluntary donations from visitors to the South Downs. It means customers to tourism businesses across the region have the option of donating on top of the cost of their stay or purchase to help protect the extraordinary landscape.

Over the past seven years, over £70,000 has been raised from the initiative and the National Park is now keen to get more businesses involved.

All donations go to the South Downs National Park Trust, the official independent charity of the National Park.

The current partners are: **Foot of the Downs, Henfield; Hydro Hotel, Eastbourne; THE PIG in the South Downs, Madehurst; Woodfire Camping, Graffham; Freshly Fermented (Friendly Fungi), Fareham; Upwaltham Barns, Petworth; Spirit of the Downs, Bolney; Upper Parsonage Farm, Petersfield; and MASON Cycles, Coombes.**

Angela Ellin, from Foot of the Downs, which offers a luxury glamping experience with stunning views, said: "Having farmed here for over 100 years, we're passionate about helping to maintain the wonderful South Downs for now and the future."

Sue Atkinson, from Upper Parsonage Farm, which offers various camping facilities on a traditional 1,400-acre working family farm in the picturesque Meon Valley, said: "It's been fantastic to see our guests so willing to contribute to the preservation of the South Downs. They really value the opportunity to give back to the beautiful landscape they are enjoying during their stay."

Any business interested in signing up to the scheme can email visitingiving@southdownstrust.org.uk or call Chris Hannon on 07387 419746.

Chanctonbury Ring Road car park (off the A283) or from the Washington Bostal car park (off the A24). Both routes involve a steep woodland climb before arriving at the ring itself.

[Read more](#)

Stanmer Park – near Brighton

Leafy Stanmer Park is another perfect place for a shady walk with the Great Wood offering a refuge from the heat. Soak up the archaeological information there too with Bronze Age barrows, tumulus and a cross ridge dyke. With 5,000 acres to explore in the Stanmer Estate there's something for everyone with refreshment available at the One Garden.



[Read more](#)

National Trust Black Cap Estate – near Lewes

Discover the secret woodland glades of Ashcombe Bottom to the south of Black Cap on a hot sunny day and you will find another butterfly hotspot. Home to colonies of silver-washed fritillaries and white admirals along the edges of the rides in the wooded valley.

More butterflies can be found on the slopes of nearby Black Cap in similar conditions, but you won't find so much shade here. Access from either the village of Offham or from Landport Bottom nature reserve. Another shady way up to Black Cap could be via Warningore Wood – a large, ancient broadleaved woodland near East Chiltington.



[Read more](#)

Friston Forest, near Eastbourne

A beautiful beech woodland, Friston Forest is another great location for a shady walk. Part of the newly-formed Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve, which also includes Cuckmere Haven and Lulington Heath, this is a very special place for nature. There are walking and cycling trails throughout the forest and visitor facilities at Seven Sisters Visitor Centre nearby at Exceat.

[Read more](#)

Investing in community energy



The National Park Authority is investing in community-based renewable energy, including a range of new solar panels in the Brighton area.

The Authority recently invested £50,000 into Brighton & Hove Energy Services Co-operative's (BHESCo) 2026 Community Energy Share Offer.

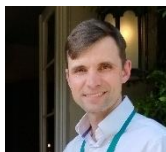
So far BHESCo's share offer has raised £150,000 from local residents and supporters further afield.

The funds raised are being used to deliver multiple innovative renewable energy projects in Sussex including:

- An in-roof solar PV installation at Dyke Golf Club, located within the South Downs National Park (*pictured above*)
- The installation of solar panels and battery storage systems at ten households in the Preston Park neighbourhood of Brighton as part of BHESCo's "Solar Powered Communities" programme.

Together, these projects will generate clean, local electricity, reduce carbon emissions and help households and organisations protect themselves against future energy price volatility.

Chris Hannon, Business Development Lead for the National Park Authority, said: "We're keen to boost energy resilience in the South Downs."



"By supporting BHESCo's community energy projects there's a real win win for climate and communities — generating clean power while ensuring the benefits of that transition are shared locally."

Kayla Ente MBE, Founder and CEO of BHESCo, said: "We're grateful for this support from the South Downs National Park Authority. It demonstrates the trust that respected local institutions place in community energy and the impact it can deliver."

"The SDNPA shares our commitment to protecting the natural environment, and we're proud to be working towards many of the same goals."

"Their support sends a strong signal that community-owned renewable energy is a practical and effective way to build a cleaner, fairer and more resilient energy system."

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Think piece: "Nature is critical infrastructure for all of us"



Aimee Felus is Chief Executive of the Western Sussex Rivers Trust and writes about the impact of the climate crisis this summer and how it must sharpen our focus on restoring nature, including our precious rivers and streams.

As I sit here sweltering at my desk, I know I am not the only one feeling uncomfortable, in body and mind. Having seen the National Emergency Briefing 3 times now, I feel the weight of the climate crisis even more than ever. This year has perhaps brought home to many of us the most tangible effects of the climate crisis in a way that it has not before. And how lucky we are if sweltering at our desks and a bit of sleep deprivation are the main problems we must cope with in extreme heat.

I have been thinking recently about my motivations for doing this work. Some people think that we do this work because we love cute and furry otters and beavers and want to see them back on our rivers. And they are correct, I do indeed love cute and furry otters and beavers and want to see them back on our rivers, as both a sign of healthy habitat and for their potential to help create one.

But thinking that this is my principal motivation is seriously missing the point. Here's the real reason.

I deeply appreciate living in a nation which, whilst imperfect, is still a liberal, relatively privileged, democratic country. I feel my luck in the accident of being born here, and I am truly grateful for that. I love our country, and the people in it, and I want us to be able to weather the literal and figurative storms that we will face with our changed climate. And I know, both intellectually and instinctively, that it is an absolute truth that nature is vital to safeguard our future safety, prosperity and happiness. I want that for my kids, but I want it for our whole country too. Of course, I also care about the global perspective, and by following the mantra of 'Think Global, Act Local' we can do our little bit to influence the bigger picture.

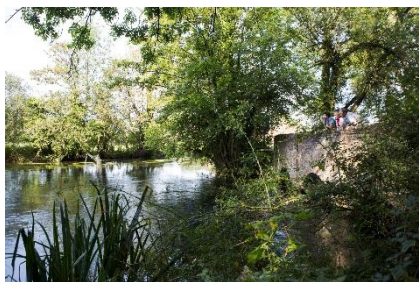
The work that we do in protecting and restoring our rivers is not just relevant for you if you happen to love nature. If you are one of the humans who need to breathe clean air, drink clean water, eat food, and keep your body at roughly 37 degrees, you need to pay attention to the state of nature too.



The River Rother

Nature provides us with a wealth of ecosystem services that we simply cannot do without. Healthy riverscapes purify our drinking water. They protect us from flooding and mitigate the impacts of drought. They can provide buffers from coastal flooding and storm surges. Well-functioning wetlands sequester carbon from the atmosphere more effectively than forests, locking it up and helping us to mitigate the effects of climate change as well as adapting to it. Rivers, ponds, lakes and wetlands cool the air around them, providing sanctuary from sweltering heat. Being close to nature has innumerable positive impacts on our physical and mental health. Nature is critical infrastructure, we need it to help us through the climate crisis, and there is no time to waste in restoring it.

And that's another facet to the importance of our work. Rivers bounce back quickly. If you have dedicated your



career to the restoration of forests, you will never see your work come to fruition. Meadow restoration? Maybe that's your entire career. But with rivers, when we restore their natural processes, they can self-heal in a matter of months. And we need to heal nature now more than ever before, and quickly. This knowledge drives me on every day. Because I want my kids to see joy in their own children's faces as they watch otters, lithe and graceful through the water, the surprise giving way to giggles as they are startled by a beaver's tail slap. But more fundamental than that I want them to be safe, prosperous and happy, and I want this for everyone else too.

And if we dedicate ourselves to helping nature, that's what nature will give us in return.

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Celebrating our amazing rangers



World Ranger Day took place recently, so we thought we would catch up with one of our Rangers, Kirsty Murray, who swapped police patrols for nature walks on heathlands.

What did you do before becoming a ranger?

I was a Detective Sergeant in the police.

What inspired you to become a ranger?

I've always loved spending time outdoors and caring for nature as a way to support my wellbeing. I also enjoy practical tasks and problem solving. I started volunteering with the South Downs National Park to give something back to the places I care about, but quickly realised that being a Ranger was a way I could have a job that allows me to do all of these things and more.

What does your average day look like?

Spending time out on the heathlands interacting with the public and getting to meet lots of lovely dogs, working alongside partner organisations to help enhance heathland habitat or planning our next volunteer task, highlighting issues that affect wildlife via pop-up events, such as dog disturbance or wildfires. During the summer we also attend lots of community events and provide guided walks to the public, one of my favourite things is seeing the joy on people's faces when they hear a nightjar or see a bat in flight for the first time.

What's one similarity with being a ranger and being a detective?

Collaborating with partner organisations on projects.

Why do you love the South Downs National Park?

We're so lucky to have such rare habitat on our doorstep. These areas are fantastic for biodiversity but also are a great example of the cultural heritage of the South Downs. As the most densely populated National Park in the UK it provides a fantastic opportunity for people to experience such a beautiful landscape close to home.

What would be your biggest tip to anyone aspiring to be a ranger?

Volunteer in any way you can, there are so many different ways to do so. Any experience you can get, big or small, will help you learn about the landscape around you.

"We're young, we're involved,
and we're making a big
difference to the South Downs!"



Paula da Luz, the National Park's Youth Engagement Officer, writes about how young people are helping to shape the future of conservation and highlights the many volunteering opportunities we have for people aged 16 to 25.

Think young people don't get up at the weekend? Think again.

Across the South Downs National Park, young volunteers aged 16 to 25 are swapping lie-ins for loppers, scythes and teamwork as part of **South Downs Youth Action** – a hands-on conservation group making a real difference to the landscape.

Every month, volunteers give up their weekends to take part in practical conservation projects that help protect and enhance the National Park. Depending on the season, they might be restoring wildlife habitats, managing chalk grassland, tackling invasive species, building accessible paths or supporting nature recovery projects with partner organisations.

South Downs Youth Action runs across the National Park, with several opportunities to volunteer, including:

- **Monthly sessions at Seven Sisters Country Park with Ranger Lawrence Leather.**
- **At a variety of locations across the South Downs, often alongside partner organisations including the RSPB and Sussex Wildlife Trust for example.**
- **In the western part of the National Park with Heathlands Engagement Ranger Kirsty Murray.**

Kirsty has seen first-hand the enthusiasm and determination that young volunteers bring.

She says: "One day that really stands out was when a small group of volunteers had to change tasks completely after a large silver birch tree came down across a public footpath during high winds.

"We only had bow saws, but they got stuck in, worked their way through the whole tree and reopened the path

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for everyone to use again. They had great fun doing it too!"

To make volunteering as accessible as possible, reasonable travel expenses and lunch are provided. It's an investment in the next generation of conservationists.

Young people are essential to the future of the National Park. Their ideas, enthusiasm and perspectives will help shape how conservation is delivered for years to come.

Volunteer Fraser Smith says the experience has already made a difference to his studies and confidence.

He says: "I had a really good day learning how to make a new path. It was quite hard work but great fun to have the opportunity to learn a new skill. Coming out with the Youth Action group is really helping me develop my range of skills as I am studying conservation at college. I really appreciate these opportunities and the chance to meet and work alongside new people."

For staff and rangers, the rewards go beyond the practical work.

Listening to young volunteers talk about their ambitions, motivations and experiences reveals a common theme. Many join to improve their wellbeing, connect with nature and make a positive difference to the environment. Spending time outdoors, learning practical skills and working as part of a team has proven benefits for mental wellbeing, while every task completed benefits the landscape too – a win for both people and nature.

Volunteer Bea explains: "I initially started looking for volunteering opportunities for college, but also for my own personal interest and to give something back to the local countryside and environment. I have developed lots of useful new skills and knowledge from my time volunteering, and it's been wonderful getting to know other young people with similar interests."

Whether it's clearing invasive Himalayan balsam from riverbanks, restoring habitats, repairing footpaths or tackling unexpected challenges, every volunteering day leaves a lasting impact.

Just as importantly, it builds friendships, confidence and teamwork. Even if volunteers arrive not knowing anyone, they leave having achieved something together and with a real sense of pride in what they've accomplished. Skills, knowledge and experience are shared throughout the day, creating opportunities for young people to grow while helping care for one of Britain's most treasured landscapes.

The South Downs National Park is always looking to welcome new members to the Youth Action programme.

Ready to get involved?

Visit [**South Downs Youth Action events**](#) to book your place

Want to be the first to hear?

Sign up to our mailing list [**here**](#) For general enquiries, please contact Paula at

[**Paula.daLuz@southdowns.gov.uk**](mailto:Paula.daLuz@southdowns.gov.uk)

The Queen visits South Downs



Her Majesty The Queen recently visited the National Park to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Plumpton College.

The college, which specialises in land-based studies, gave The Queen a warm welcome before her Majesty was given a special tour of the 800-hectare estate, meeting staff and students.

The Queen has strong links to both the college and the local area and is Patron of the Plumpton College Charitable Foundation and WineGB.

During the visit, Her Majesty toured the Animal Education Centre with students, including the new lemur enclosure, before visiting the Veterinary Studies Centre. Opened in 2023, the centre includes commercial training facilities such as a canine hydrotherapy pool, giving students experience in a real working environment.

The visit provided a valuable opportunity to update Her Majesty on the college's continued contribution to the English and Welsh wine sector during its centenary year.

The Queen, who grew up in the South Downs, concluded the visit by unveiling a plaque outside the AgriFood Centre to commemorate 100 years of land and environment education at the South Downs campus.

Jeremy Kerswell, Principal of Plumpton College, said: "It's a huge honour to welcome Her Majesty to Plumpton College during this special year for the college. It was a privilege to share our centenary celebrations, showcase the £40m investment we have made in our campus over the past decade for sector leading technical resources, and give students the opportunity to speak directly about their learning and ambitions."



SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY Win family pass to new exhibits!



An exciting interactive exhibit inspired by the rare chalk streams of the National Park has opened at Winchester Science Centre.

Three new outdoor exhibits - Dino Dig, The Chalk Stream and Dormouse Den - have opened as part of a "play wild" theme.

The new facilities are the brainchild of educational charity Wonderseekers, which is based at the science centre.

In the stream-inspired area, children can sit under a waterfall and experiment with water flow using a pump, dams and accessible interaction points - all designed to encourage collaborative play and scientific curiosity.

Meanwhile, youngsters can also dig for prehistoric life and identify fossil finds at a real research station.

And, if that wasn't enough fun, they can climb, leap and hide like hazel dormice on an interactive immersive exhibition.

Ben Ward, CEO of Wonderseekers, said: "Set within the breathtaking landscape of the South Downs National Park, these new experiences invite children to explore, experiment and discover the world around them, turning every visit into an opportunity for adventure, investigation and learning."

Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the National Park Authority, said: "It's fantastic that Winchester Science Centre & Planetarium is helping children understand the importance of their local landscape and the rare habitats that depend on our protection."

We're offering a family ticket (up to six people) to try out the new facilities. The ticket includes entry to the Science Centre (access to all indoor and outdoor exhibits), one show in the Planetarium, and live science shows and demos.

People signing up to the newsletter during August will be automatically entered into the draw to win the family ticket. Those who are already signed up can email "Wonderseekers" 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/



'Harvest Home' by Ron De'Ath



- Get ready for a vibrant celebration of music, arts and drama as MADhurst returns to Midhurst with a fantastic programme of events and activities. From live performances and exhibitions to workshops and family-friendly fun, there's plenty to look forward to this month. Events include comedy shows, historic walks, opera and jazz. See the full programme [here](#).
- Head to Kennel Hill, near Chichester, on 22 August for a wonderful [vintage market](#). You can browse a handpicked collection of vintage clothing, hats, jewellery and accessories from the 40s, 50s and 60s. Whether you're searching for a show-stopping dress, a dapper waistcoat or those all-important finishing touches, you'll find plenty of inspiration for the season ahead. Vintage style authority Dawn Gracie will be bringing her signature energy to the day, sharing expert styling advice, shopping tips and vintage know-how, all accompanied by a soundtrack of classic tunes from the eras we love.
- Head to [Findon Place](#), near Worthing, on 23 August for an open day as part of the National Garden Scheme. The most glorious setting for a tapestry of perennial borders set off by Sussex flint walls. The many charms including a yew allée, cloud pruned trees, espaliered fruit trees, a productive ornamental kitchen garden, rose arbours and arches, and a cutting garden. Pre-booking essential.
- The [Ouse Valley Folk Festival](#) takes place on 28 and 29 August, celebrating the rich musical heritage of the area and the artists keeping folk culture vibrant, evolving and deeply rooted in community. Set against the riverside backdrop of The Sidings in Newhaven, the festival brings together traditional music, contemporary folk, storytelling, workshops and dancing for an intimate celebration of one of Britain's most enduring musical traditions.
- If you live, work or visit West Sussex, a new climate survey has been launched to find out people's views on a climate adaptation plan for the county. [Take part here](#).