



WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **A tremendous effort!** Find out about the thousands of trees planted over the past few months and how landowners and community groups are now being invited to apply for more planting.
- **Big Give** Can you be part of something big this April and help wildlife to flourish? Find out about a fundraising challenge to coincide with Earth Day.
- **Discover National Parks fortnight** Learn 10 facts about the South Downs Way for its 50th birthday.
- **WIN museum tickets!** Be in with the chance of a day out at an award-winning destination.

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

Trees bring new lease of life to South Downs

As the warmth of spring sunshine bathes the South Downs, thousands of new life-giving trees are sprouting up from the soil.

It's been a busy few months because well over 11,000 trees have been planted across the region – on top of 10,000 trees planted during the previous winter.

Now the inspiring initiative, called “Trees for The Downs”, is putting out the call for new applications for even more tree planting in 2022.

Applications are welcome from landowners, farmers, parish and town councils, schools and community groups in the National Park.

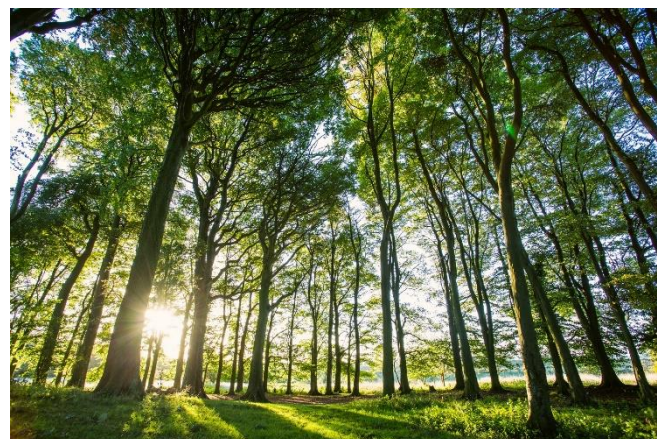
The call-out comes after a tremendous public response to the Trees for the Downs campaign, which launched three years ago.

So far, almost £200,000 has been raised by the South Downs National Park Trust, the official independent charity for the National Park, which has set its sights on raising £260,000 to be able to plant 100,000 trees in total.

The tree planting is restoring those lost to pests and diseases, including Ash Dieback and Dutch Elm Disease, as well as creating new habitat for wildlife and amenity value for local communities. The trees will be a mixture of disease-resistant elm trees and native species, such as oak and black poplar. Sites include schools, farms, recreation grounds and historic parks.

The Trust is working with the National Park Authority's woodlands team to deliver the project.

Sonia Lorenzo Martín, Woodlands Lead for the National Park Authority, said: “We've worked really hard with



partners this winter to plant all these new trees and are excited to plant even more later this year.

“Trees are amazing and such an important part of the South Downs landscape, which has more woodland by area than any other National Park in England and Wales. They give us clean air to breathe and are the life support for so many animals and other plants.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to be part of nature recovery, restoring habitat that has been lost, as well as creating new habitat for nature to flourish. We're looking

forward to seeing the new applications that come forward.”

And Sonia added: “Trees for the Downs is also an important strand of the National Park's long-term 'ReNature' initiative, fighting biodiversity loss and also helping to tackle climate change and creating a more resilient ecosystem in the future.”



Authority responds to Defra consultation

The South Downs National Park Authority has responded to the Government's Landscapes Review consultation, recommending a strengthened role for National Parks around nature recovery, climate change and health.

It comes after the Government laid out proposals earlier this year following Julian Glover's independent Landscape Review, which was published in 2019.

Following approval by Members, the Authority broadly welcomes the ambition of the proposals, particularly around nature recovery and access for all.

However, the Authority believes it is a "huge missed opportunity" that there are no specific proposals, or resources, to help National Parks take the lead on nature recovery and climate change.

Among the National Park Authority's responses are:

- Strengthen the first statutory purpose of National Parks to become: "Conserve, actively restore and enhance the landscape, its natural beauty, biodiversity, Natural Capital and cultural heritage, and in so doing contribute to tackling climate change and adapting to its impacts."
- Strengthen the second statutory purpose of National Parks to become: "Enable all of society to be involved with and champion the special qualities of these places through enjoyment, access and education, whilst promoting opportunities for the nation's health and wellbeing."
- Welcome the promised greater role for National Park Authorities in the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS). We would like Defra to work with us as it shapes the Nature Recovery element of the new system of agricultural support.
- The National Park Authority already works closely with the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) family through South East and East Protected Landscapes,(SEEPL). We would like to build on this model to further assist our neighbouring AONBs, by making National Parks a central point of Nature Recovery Networks regionally.

A letter to the Government from Ian Phillips, Chair of the Authority, highlights the huge amount of work already undertaken by the Authority around nature recovery, including the "ReNature" campaign.

"SDNPA's rapid progress in this area merits active support from Defra," says Ian.

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs will now analyse all the consultation responses from across England before considering its next steps.



Thirty sites across Hampshire, West Sussex and East Sussex have been receiving trees for planting over the past few months. Here are some of the highlights:

- A hundred trees were planted at Longmoor Range and Training Area, near Liss, as part of a joint initiative with Soroptimist International, a global women's organisation celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2021. Tree planting mirrors the project of 1921 when the organisation began in Oakland, California, and women were successful in protecting redwood trees at that time.
- Trees were provided from the National Park Trust for the new Tercentenary Wood at Penns Place, Petersfield. All pupils and staff at Churcher's College planted a tree to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and to commemorate the school's 300-year anniversary by leaving a lasting legacy for the future.
- Five elms, seven oak trees and two field maple trees were provided by the Trust and dedicated to the Queen's Green Canopy in the grounds of Glyndebourne Opera House. The Lord-Lieutenant of East Sussex, Andrew Blackman, planted one of the disease-resistant elms.
- More than 1,500 trees were planted by volunteers at Wild Heart Hill, near Worthing.
- Elms have been provided for the community at East Dean, near Chichester, to create a new avenue of elms, replacing one that was lost many years ago.



Andy Player, Rural Estate Delivery Advisor for Landmarc Support Services, who helps to manage woodland at Longmoor for the Ministry of Defence, said: "The trees are not only increasing the size of the woodlands, but also the species diversity, providing habitat for the endangered white letter hairstreak butterfly. These trees are also mitigating the effects of climate change and enhancing the amenity value of the treescape of the camp and training area for the benefit of visiting troops and the public.

To find out more about making an application for Trees for the Downs, visit www.southdownstrust.org.uk/trees-for-the-downs/

The deadline for applications is 15 May and the trees will be planted between December 2022 and February next year.

The tree planting has been made possible thanks to generous donations from the public, as well as support from Aspinall of London, Cinven, Jude's – a carbon negative B Corp, Nyetimber and South East Water.



A magical sculpture inspired by local legend



If you go down to the woods today, you're sure of a big surprise...in the form of a beautifully-crafted giant's head.

The incredible sculpture, made of woven branches, is currently in the making at Queen Elizabeth Country Park and is due to be unveiled to the public during the Easter school holidays.

Made by internationally-acclaimed environmental artist Mark Antony Haden Ford, the artwork depicts Ascapart, a legendary giant from Hampshire folklore.

Mark will spend over 80 hours painstakingly weaving locally-sourced hazel and willow to make the sculpture, which will be strong enough to last for several years (*picture shows a mock-up of completed sculpture*).

Storyteller Chris North will be holding storytelling sessions inside Ascapart's head on Saturday, 23 April, and Mark is inviting the public to take part in a giant mandala-making workshop using natural materials. The event takes place from 10am to 4pm.

The arts and heritage project has been supported by the South Downs National Park Authority and has a simple call to action: "Stop A Minute".

Mark, based in Slindon, West Sussex, explained: "This is part of a lockdown legacy project to encourage people who might not ordinarily access the countryside to go out and enjoy it.



"The idea is just to come, be and stop for a minute, taking in the surroundings and nature. The head of Ascapart is a place where you can stop for a moment, take stock and connect with the woodland landscape.

"You walk in via the sideburns of the giant's head. The sculpture will be around 3m across and 4m high, so it will be big enough to have storytelling sessions in the head and for a family to sit inside."

Mark, whose other recent creations include an outdoor classroom at Amberley School, is working at the country park, fresh from returning from the world rock-stacking championships in Texas.

Mark, who has been a land artist for almost 30 years, said: "I have the privilege of travelling the world making sculptures from natural materials. I create site-specific works that are connected to the location and the landscape around them.

"For this project, I'm working with coppiced materials all sourced from within the South Downs National Park. The South Downs is full of hazel because of its history as an iron-making region. The hazel was planted in the 1500s because it was needed for charcoal, so hazel has been managed in this area for centuries.

"By the First World War unfortunately many of those people who managed the woodlands did not return from the war, so today we have these huge estates of overstood hazel woodland. I have a real connection with the materials, and I pride myself on using techniques and traditional methods that have been used for centuries."

Anooshka Rawden, who leads cultural heritage for the National Park Authority, said: "The South Downs has a celebrated history spanning many centuries of legends around magical giants.



"Mark's skill is in his sensitivity to landscape and materials, and a playfulness in form and approach, and we hope families 'stop a minute' to enjoy this 'living' art work linked to the folklore of Hampshire."

According to the saga, Ascapart was 30ft tall but the smallest of his land and was defeated after his club – made from a whole tree – was swung at Sir Bevis of Hampton and became stuck in soft ground.



Rather than slaying the giant, Sir Bevis decided to make him his Squire. Later Ascapart betrayed Bevis and took his wife Josiane, who was imprisoned, with Ascapart as her jailer. For his part, Ascapart was later killed by Bevis' friends when they freed Josiane.

Ascapart is part of a long mythological history of giants in this area of England. Queen Elizabeth Country Park was once the site of a "Giant's Chair" created by artist Robert Jakes who installed it in 1991. Local artist and researcher Laura Buckle carried out extensive research into the giants chair and more information on the project is available on Hampshire County Council's website at www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryparks/gecp

The challenge is on! Can you be part of something big to help nature?



Did you know that for just £2.50 you could pay for a square metre of wildflower meadow to help bees and butterflies?

Or that your £10 could pay for two metres of new hedgerow, while £50 could pay for eight disease-resistant elm trees?

As Earth Day approaches on 22 April, a huge week-long nationwide effort to help the environment is launching as part of the Big Give.

Here in the South Downs, the National Park Trust is hoping to raise £5,000– an amount that could then be match-funded to raise a whopping £10,000 to help nature.

But the clock will be ticking as the Trust will need to have raised £5,000 by midnight on 29 April for the fundraising to be doubled.

Funds will go towards the inspiring #ReNature initiative, which is aiming to create 13,000 hectares of new habitat to help wildlife flourish (an area over three times the size of Portsmouth!).



Sophie Ritson, fundraiser for the Trust, said: “Earth Day is a really important day to focus everyone’s minds on what an amazing, but also incredibly fragile, planet we have. The Earth gives us everything, from food, water and clean air to beautiful wildlife, and the Big Green Give is a way of showing our appreciation and giving back.

“The race is on to raise this vital cash in super-quick time and every penny really will make a big difference. It’s exciting to think that every donation we get can be doubled in value, allowing us to do even more than we normally would. We’re really hoping we can raise the £5,000 by 29 April that can then be doubled! Every donation will go towards helping wildlife flourish and creating a better, greener environment for both people and nature.”

To donate [click here](#).

Beautiful views of countryside are restored after community effort



A picturesque view of the National Park has been restored thanks to the undergrounding of electricity infrastructure.

The £150,000 programme of works by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), which started in late summer of last year, has been completed and restores an historic view from the medieval Hampshire market town of Bishop’s Waltham (*before view below*).

The site had been proposed by local stakeholders as having the potential for visual improvement through the removal of the overhead network.

The project – carried out across land on the Franklin, Dean and St Clair’s Farms – has removed a one-kilometre section of overhead cables and supporting poles, replacing them with modern, robust underground cabling and providing the many people who use the local footpaths with an uninterrupted view across the local countryside.

Kim Wilkie, from Franklin Farm, said: “SSEN has made a big difference to the landscape and bridleways at this entrance to the National Park. The poles and lines have all gone and the trees are now allowed to grow uninterrupted.”



Veronica Craddock, who leads landscape and green infrastructure for the National Park, said: “This valuable work by SSEN has restored the breathtaking views across this part of the South Downs National Park. Many people will now be able to enjoy the uninterrupted landscape from footpaths and bridleways, whilst our wildlife will enjoy the new areas of tree growth which were previously trimmed under the overhead lines. It’s fantastic that SSEN have completed this project and the Authority is very grateful for all work that is undertaken to protect the natural beauty of the National Park.”

Help SSEN find new areas of the National Park where undergrounding overhead lines could improve the landscape for both people and nature by nominating them using this [online form](#).

Help care for heaths as bird numbers soar



Walkers and pet-owners are being encouraged to play their part to help nature recovery after a resurgence of rare birds on precious heaths.

A new ecological report on the Wealden Heaths around Whitehill and Bordon has shown that birdlife is flourishing.

The seven heathlands – collectively called the The Wealden Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) and Shortheath Common SAC (Special Area of Conservation) – are internationally-protected because they are breeding sites for three rare bird species: Dartford warbler, European nightjar and woodlark.

Now scientists have found that populations of these three species are higher than at any time in the past 25 years.

Since the designation of the SPA in 1998, there has been an eight-fold increase in the number of Dartford Warblers, with 143 birds spotted last year. Numbers of woodlark have almost tripled, with 58 counted last year, while the Nightjar has seen a steady rise, with 77 spotted in 2021.

The increase is being put down to conservation efforts, community awareness and milder weather conditions.

With such encouraging nature recovery, rangers are now calling on walkers and dog-owners to continue doing their bit by sticking to the main paths, keeping dogs on leads.

It comes as ground-nesting bird season begins at Bramshott & Ludshott Commons, Broxhead Common, Kingsley Common, Longmoor Inclosure, Woolmer Forest and Shortheath Common.



Olivia French, Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: "It's wonderful news that these birds are doing so well – even better than we expected to be honest!

"The next few years are going to be crucial though to really solidify all our efforts and ensure this is a safe haven for these birds.

Ground-nesting bird season started in March and mothers and their eggs, or chicks, are particularly sensitive to disturbance right through until September.

"We're asking walkers and dog-walkers to do simple things, like sticking to the main path and keeping dogs on leads and out of the vegetation. These protected birds use the cover of the heather and gorse to build nests and can be easily disturbed by inquisitive dogs. Mothers will often abandon a nest and her eggs if disturbed. Look out

for these signs as you enter protected sites where these birds are breeding and nesting."

And Olivia added: "The resurgence of these birds on these beautiful Wealden heaths is partly down to careful site management, with scrub clearance and conservation grazing over the past few years to improve the heathland habitat. People being more aware of how fragile these sites are and increased use of the SANGs has also helped.

"This is a real success story for biodiversity and we want to continue this upward curve, helping to connect people with nature and caring for it at the same time."

The Heathlands Reunited: Wealden Heaths Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) Project is an inspiring project that started last year and is being funded by East Hampshire District Council and Whitehill and Bordon Town Council, with the support of the South Downs National Park Authority to deliver the scheme.

A team of seasonal rangers has been tasked with monitoring these sites as well as offering talks, site visits, and pop-up wildlife events to local community groups in the Whitehill and Bordon area.

If you're local to Whitehill and Bordon and interested in linking up with the seasonal engagement ranger team and the incredible wildlife which can be found in the area, please email heathlands@southdowns.gov.uk to register your interest.

Dartford Warbler

This bird depends on mature, dry heath habitats in the UK, and particularly on gorse that is in good condition for surviving cold, harsh winters. It only eats insects and does not migrate for the winter, which means it's vulnerable to cold weather. The bird makes a grassy, cup-shaped nest, in which it lays three to five eggs.



Nightjar



Arriving in the UK in April and May from its wintering grounds in Africa, the nightjar nests on the ground on heathland and in young conifer woods. It's nocturnal, feeding on moths, flies and beetles. Incredibly well-

camouflaged, the nightjar is most easily spotted at dusk when the males display to females, flying around them, wing-clapping and making their distinctive 'churring' calls.

Woodlark

The secretive woodlark favours open, dry habitats with short grasses. This species can be seen all year-round, but is most notable in February and March. Feeding on seeds and insects, woodlark usually nest in grassy tussocks or heather bushes, often digging a shallow scrape. Scattered trees and woodland edges are used as song or lookout posts.



Rain garden bid is launched



Hundreds of rain gardens to help protect the South Downs aquifer around Brighton and encourage wildlife are set to be created as part of a new initiative.

The theme for World Water Day on 22 March was groundwater and The Aquifer Partnership (TAP) launched a major campaign to create as many rain gardens as possible across the Brighton, Hove and Lewes area by 2025.

The campaign, with the motto “Slow it down, soak it up”, is calling on communities, residents, schools and businesses to help create simple, inexpensive rain gardens that deliver many benefits for the environment. Online and in-person training workshops are also being offered over the next three years to build local expertise in rain garden techniques.

A rain garden is a DIY-friendly way to manage rainwater run-off and create a welcoming space for wildlife. The area, either dug into a garden or using a planter, uses specially-selected grasses and plants to slow and purify water run-off from hard surfaces and allow it to soak into the ground naturally.

TAP was established in 2016 to develop projects and solutions to protect the groundwater of the chalk aquifer, which supplies drinking water to Brighton, Hove and Lewes. Climate change and extreme storm events, combined with more impermeable surfaces from development, mean that the aquifer is under increasing threat from pollution.

Susie Howells, Partnership Development Manager for TAP, explained: “Rain gardens are one part of the solution. They use plant power to slow down and cleanse water, replenishing the aquifer below naturally.

“Climate change is a reality. We’re having hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters and more frequent and intense storm events. At the same time more land is developed, putting increasing pressure on drainage systems and, ultimately, on the aquifer. So we have to take good care of our natural resources.”

For more information about creating a rain garden, visit <https://wearetap.org.uk>

To find out more you can email Susie at TAP@southdowns.gov.uk

Rangers dig deep for school



Schoolchildren have teamed up with National Park rangers to create a new wildlife corridor to help butterflies and moths flourish.

A thousand plug plants have gone into the ground at Seaford College, near Petworth, to create a south-facing “butterfly bank” that rangers hope will be teeming with life by the summer.

Around 30 children rolled up their sleeves to help plant a variety of specially-chosen plants and wildflowers. The plants, such as Vipers Bugloss, Agrimony, and Birdsfoot Trefoil, will provide much-needed food for caterpillars that will later transform into butterflies and moths.

It’s hoped the butterfly bank will support a large variety of species, including the Common Blue, Marbled White, Green Hairstreak, and rarer species, such as the Grizzled Skipper, Duke of Burgundy and Small Blue.

The planting comes after rangers helped the school transform an old waste area, creating a new bank that replicates the chalky habitat on the South Downs that attracts butterflies.

Charles Winchester, Ranger for the Wealden Heath team, said: “It was a fun day and all the children got really enthusiastic about the planting, despite some showery downpours!

“The National Park is internationally-renowned for its butterfly and moth biodiversity, but like all wildlife, these animals need our help in order to flourish. As well as being incredibly beautiful, these butterflies are important pollinators and are a lynchpin of so many ecosystems here in the south east of England.

“It’s great to see young people getting involved in conservation action that will make a big difference. We can’t wait to see this butterfly bank blazing with colour later this year!”

Julian Hart, Deputy Head of Prep School and teacher of Countryside Management, said “Our children thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to work with rangers and make such a positive contribution to our local environment.”



Helping children connect with their National Park



A raft of inspiring initiatives are launching to help connect young people with nature and empower them to get involved in climate action.

The South Downs National Park Trust is announcing several schemes, including funding for nature-based activities and a fun eco-art competition.

It comes as the Trust, the official independent charity for the National Park, is stepping up activities in 2022 to ensure more young people than ever before can enjoy the South Downs and connect with the amazing landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Julie Fawcett, Chair of the South Downs National Park Trust, said: "Young people are the future stewards of the South Downs, and indeed our planet, and so it's vital that we help them learn about biodiversity and how we can protect it. Fortunately, young people are more nature-focused than perhaps ever before and there's a real appetite to get involved with climate action."

The initiatives include:

- Youth Action Fund grants of up to £1,000 are now available. Organisations wanting to carry out projects that will empower and support young people between the ages of 12 and 25 to engage with the National Park are invited to apply. Beneficiaries last year included helping young refugees connect with the South Downs and 50 young people with complex learning needs taking part in nature activities and there is funding to support approximately five additional projects. This fund is managed by the Trust on behalf of the National Park Authority and Clarion Housing and the deadline for applications is 28 April.
- A fun "clean-up and create" competition has been launched and is open to all 5 to 16 year olds living in Hampshire or Sussex. The "Art in the Park" contest invites young people to create an eco-art masterpiece out of any litter they find while exploring or being inspired by the National Park. Delivered by Sussex Green Living with funding from The Boltini Trust, winners will win up to £75 of art resources for their school or uniformed youth group. Individuals may enter via their guardian. The deadline for entries to the competition is midday 20 June.

For more information about any of the grants or initiatives visit www.southdownstrust.org.uk/schools/

"A safe familiar retreat, secure from life's long reach"



For World Poetry Day, we celebrated the wonderful work of Jenny Arach, a talented poet of Ugandan and English heritage.

About her poetry, Jenny says: "I write through the lens of the Sussex coastal landscape which has long been a favourite area for me."

Enjoy! We hope these poems inspire you to get creative and pen your own odes to the South Downs. Send any poems to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk



The Matriarch Landscape

The South Downs ancient landscape,
ever present against the seascape.

Looming large, strong matriarch
English mother, African aunt

She is the everyday feature.

Beauty overtaken by functional nature.

Recognise her in the
gorse and hawthorn.

Impenetrable thickets and
interlaced finger digits.

Aged joints, swollen and arthritic.

Limbs twisted and misshapen,
fingernails jagged and thickened.

Dry, sun and wind rusted hair.

Eyes now cloudy, vision impaired.

Tattooed with varicose veins and lichens
on branches bent in relentless winds.

Backs stooped under life's weighty burdens

In the snarled, gnarled furze and thorn,
space for gentleness, love and warmth.

Get closer, bend lower,
 enter the secret shaded enclosure.
 A place of sanctuary and learning, licking life's wounds
 and healing.
 Where her scolding tongue,
 like the snag of the thorn,
 serves as a lesson well learned
 The calm port in a storm
 Source of wisdom for life's breakdown.
 Lender of last resort
 Holds off creditors and predators.
 Provides protection, food and shelter.
 A safe familiar retreat,
 secure from life's long reach.

Win tickets to museum!

Housing a nationally-important collection in a stunning venue of Victorian and contemporary buildings, Ditchling Museum of Art + Craft is one of the must-sees for the eastern side of the National Park.

It's now almost a decade since Sir Nicholas Serota, Director of Tate, formally opened the museum following a £2.3m redevelopment and it has continued to push the boundaries, showcasing an illuminating mix of art, culture, and heritage.



Its current temporary exhibition "Dame Vera Lynn: An Extraordinary Life" runs until 15 May and features over 100 objects from the estate of the 'forces sweetheart', including numerous previously unseen personal items.

The permanent collection provides the opportunity to see acclaimed arts and crafts in the place they were made, championing local artists and craftspeople such as Eric Gill, Hilary Pepler, Desmond Chute, Joseph Cribb, Edward Johnston, Rowland Emmet, Ethel Mairet, Frank Brangwyn and Charles Knight.

A remarkable new exhibition, starting at the end of May, will feature eight mural panels by Sir Frank Brangwyn RA (1867-1956), who produced the large-scale paintings for Skinners' Hall in London to depict the history of the City of London Guild.

For this month's competition, we're offering two pair of adult tickets to the museum.

People signing up to the newsletter during April will be automatically entered into the draw.

Those who are already signed up can email "Eric Gill" to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 30 April. Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).

Cliff safety initiative launched



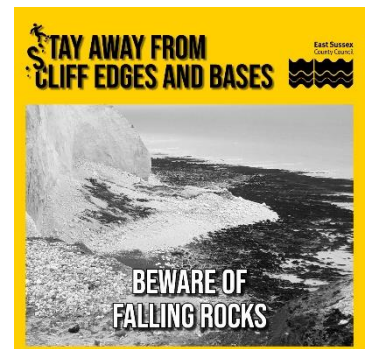
With the Easter holidays on the horizon, people are being reminded of the dangers of cliff falls on the East Sussex coast.

Without warning, large chunks of chalk cliff can fall hundreds of feet to the ground below, and, if you're on the edge, you'll be in danger.

Visitors are also being warned not to gather at the base of cliffs for shade or if the rest of the beach is busy. Chalk can fall from above without warning, and you will be in danger of getting crushed or trapped.

There have been at least 50 cliff falls in the past year.

The cliff safety campaign is being led by a partnership of The National Trust, South Downs National Park Authority, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Seaford Town Council, Wealden District Council, Eastbourne Borough Council, Lewes District Council and Rother District Council.



Sam Cordery, Manager of Seven Sisters Country Park, said: "We want people to enjoy this stunning coastline, but you always have to be aware of cliff safety because chalk, by its very nature, is crumbly and unstable.

"Our simple safety advice is to stay well away from the cliff edges and bases of cliffs. No photo is worth risking your life for.



"It's also important that people are aware of the tide times if they're walking along the beaches.

"Some beaches are only accessible during low tide and walkers could find themselves cut off by the tide and needing to be rescued by the emergency services."

For information on tide times visit www.tidetimes.org.uk

Discover National Parks Fortnight: 10 amazing facts about the South Downs Way



Many people have an epic tale to tell about the South Downs Way.

Whether you've walked the whole 100-mile length, or just a section of the route, its breathtaking views of coast and countryside are truly inspiring, uplifting for the soul and can't fail to stir the imagination.

The hilltop 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.

In 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.

Since then tens of thousands of people have walked, cycled or ridden the trail from Eastbourne to Winchester (or visa versa!) – each with their own unique story to tell.



The route, with its highest point at Butser Hill at 271m, provides people with the opportunity "to get away from it all" without having to travel too far in this busy part of England.

So, as we mark its 50th birthday for **Discover National Parks Fortnight** (2 April to 18 April) here's 10 fascinating facts about this amazing meandering passage along the chalk escarpment of the South Downs.

Have you got a story to share about the South Downs Way, or, if you've never been before, why not start your adventure today!?

1. The National Trail wasn't always 100 miles. Initially it ran almost entirely in Sussex, from Buriton, on the Hampshire–Sussex border, to Beachy Head, near Eastbourne. In 1987 it was decided to extend the route westwards through Hampshire to Winchester.
2. The recommended time to walk the South Downs Way is 8 days, with an average of 12.5 miles/20km a day.

3. If you fancied a crack at the world record for completing the South Downs Way on foot, you could try and beat Mark Perkins time of 14 hours, 3 minutes and 54 seconds, set in 2014 at the Centurion Running SWD 100 event.
4. The fastest South Downs Way single cycle ride is Ian Leitch at 7 hrs 3 mins, while Ian also holds the record for the fastest double cycle ride at 15 hrs 35 mins.
5. The route has stood the test of time. Humans have been using the tracks that have been linked to form the South Downs Way for around 8,000 years as its elevation made it a safer and drier route than the wetter lowlands.
6. The fastest non-motorised wheelchair user to complete the route is Swasie Turner in 9 days.
7. In 2021 Neil Laughton and Tom Clowes took on the South Downs Way – riding on a penny farthing and a unicycle.
8. Ditchling Beacon is one of the most famous hills on the trail and was used to warn Queen Elizabeth I of the Spanish Armada that could be seen sailing up the English Channel.
9. Just off the chalk path is a biodiversity oasis. Chalk grassland is known as "Europe's rainforest in miniature" and can have up to 40 different wildflowers and over 20 different butterfly – and that's just within one square metre!
10. It's very accessible by train or bus! Step off the train at Southease, Amberley or Winchester and you can be on the South Downs Way within minutes! Check out our **useful guide** on accessing the South Downs Way by public transport.

Andy Gattiker, National Trails & Rights of Way Lead, said: "2022 is a really special year for the South Downs Way and it's amazing to think that the trail opened half a century ago.

"The beauty of the trail is that it offers something for everyone, whether it's an interesting day-trip, short break or a week-long ramble.

"We couldn't maintain the route without the help of dedicated volunteers, who get involved in surveying, practical work, helping at public events and administration, so a big thank you to them as we celebrate this birthday.

"Here's to another 50 years of enjoying this iconic journey through some of the most captivating countryside Britain has to offer!"

There is a dedicated team at the South Downs National Park Authority looking after the South Downs Way day to day. This team is funded and guided by the South Downs Way Trail Partnership made up of the South Downs National Park Authority, Natural England, Hampshire County Council, West Sussex County Council and East Sussex County Council.

For more information about the South Downs Way and to plan your visit see www.southdownsway.org



Things to do in the South Downs this April

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/



- Head to [Petersfield Museum](#) for a fascinating film festival about the legendary actor Alec Guinness, who was born in Midhurst and buried in Petersfield. The venue will be showing four films this month, including *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Bridge on the River Kwai*.
- Enjoy an [Easter nature-inspired trail](#) at Petworth House and Park, with events running until 24 April.
- Learn about our native birds and their nesting habitats at [Gilbert White's House](#) in Hampshire, with Easter egg events running until 24 April.
- Looking ahead to May, tickets are now on sale [for "Two Pairs of Eyes"](#), an immersive ghost story taking place at Newhaven Fort from 19 May to 22 May. Featuring live theatre, music, song and dance with a mixed professional/community cast and rooted in local stories from Newhaven and the surrounding areas, this show will be a shiver up the spine and a celebration of life.

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

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www.southdowns.gov.uk/join-the-newsletter/

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P1 Sam Moore; P2 Charlie Hellewell; P3 Mark Ford; P4 left Nigel Symington; P4 right SSEN; P5 Steph Horn; P6 left Susie Howells; P6 right Seaford College; P7 left Rebecca Saunders; P7 Right Sam Moore; P7 Right Jenny Arach; P8 Right Sam Moore; P9 Mischa Haller; P10 portrait Chris Horner.