



WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **Walking, words and wonderment** Find out about the new Writer-in-Residence for Seven Sisters and the Sussex Heritage Coast and her exciting plans to share diverse voices about the landscape.
- **Spooky South Downs** Discover some of the most mysterious places in the South Downs that are entwined with local folklore, myth, and legend.
- **All aboard!** Find out some of the best places in the National Park to visit by bus this autumn.
- **Protecting nature** Learn more about two initiatives that are helping wildlife in our chalk landscape.

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

Talented writer is appointed to lead stories of landscape

Meet Alinah Azadeh, the new Writer-in-Residence for one of the most iconic and special coastlines in Britain.

Alinah has been commissioned by the South Downs National Park as the first Writer-in-Residence for Seven Sisters Country Park and the wider Sussex Heritage Coast.

The writer and artist, who lives in Lewes, East Sussex, will be the creative lead for an inspiring project supported by Arts Council England called "We See You Now".

At the heart of the project is a love for this iconic landscape and the desire to share the voices, reflections and experiences of Black, Asian and ethnically diverse



writers, people of colour, people on the move and those who have been absent from the recorded history of the area due to class, gender, sexuality, disability, socio-economic or mental health barriers.

The project, running until the end of 2022, is supported by funding from Arts Council England as well as the National Park Authority, with partner



support from Writing our Legacy, New Writing South, ONCA and Enthum Foundation.

A key strand of the project is a series of National Park-led audio podcasts called "The Colour of Chalk" – with ethnically-diverse writers sharing their reflections on the landscape and a new podcast released every month. Alinah's first podcast can be listened to [here](#).

Other exciting elements of the project include:

- A new set of audiowalk stories and poetry launched next year across the landscape and online written by Alinah and writers/poets of colour from the writers' community she is part of.
- A series of outdoor writers' retreats and workshops. This will include a specific strand for young people. The first writers' retreat took place in September.
- A simple downloadable walking and writing 'guide' for anyone who wants to engage with and contribute to the project next year.
- An anthology for the area, out in late 2022.

- Social media takeovers by Alinah and some of the writers.

Alinah said: “My earliest memories of the South Downs are visiting Beachy Head, with my tiny hand firmly clasped in my vigilant mother’s, bending backward into the strong winds, spotting the red and white outcrop of the lighthouse in the creamy blue sea.

“My partner, two children and I have always enjoyed regular wanderings into the ancient woods and chalkland hills around us, and my nearest favourite spot is a hidden valley in the Malling Down Nature Reserve, where I have seen deer, Adonis blue butterflies and birds of prey circling overhead.

“Especially since the Covid pandemic began, like many who live near the Downs, I go there to connect with nature, stay mentally balanced, download new ideas and dream ahead – note, sketchbook or voice recorder in hand! From there I develop ideas for projects or the outline of a poem or story.

“I feel very strongly that the South Downs National Park is incredible medicine for the soul and a free space which could be far more widely accessed and socially inclusive and am very excited to be part of making this happen.

““My mother, whose deep love for her Iranian culture and for political freedom, gender equality and inclusivity – in the face of bigotry and oppression – still influences my work and life, loved the epic vistas of the Sussex coast, where she first lived in Eastbourne, on arriving to train as a nurse in 1965.”

The project builds on the success of a beautiful audio story produced by Alinah in 2020 called “We See You Now”. The story invites listeners to reflect on their own sense of belonging and relationship to our shared coastal land and future.

Alinah added: “I hope the project will act as a bridge to a post-Covid world with a stronger sense of connection to the power, beauty, fragility and importance of this rapidly changing landscape from which we imagine new futures and collective, creative possibilities in the face of current intense life and environmental changes.”

Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the National Park, said: “The project adds to a body of work we have been doing to create ‘Landscapes for All’, finding ways to better understand the barriers people face to accessing the South Downs, and giving people space and opportunity to explore this landscape through creative outlets.”



The first writers’ retreat took place last month

Grants benefit young people



An exciting new funding scheme is giving young people from across the region the chance to experience the great outdoors and get up close to our amazing natural world.

Thirteen grants have been awarded to a range of youth organisations as part of the National Park’s new South Downs Youth Action Fund.

The grants will enable:

- 50 young people with complex needs including ADHD, Autism, ODD, and global learning delay to get hands-on in the management of heathland near East Clayton Farm, West Sussex.
- 20 young people to litter pick by bike with Sylvia Beaufoy Youth Centre at Petworth, West Sussex.
- 16 young archaeologists to learn about the heritage of the National Park at Butser Ancient Farm in Hampshire.
- 10 young refugees and asylum seekers to participate in a South Downs discovery project with the Rural Refugee Network.
- 2,000 young people in Lewes to help take action to help the environment in their local area through the Green United initiative.
- 10 girls with mental health challenges to take part in a “Space to Breathe” summer camp
- 10 young people to develop heritage skills at the Weald and Downland Museum, near Chichester, West Sussex.
- Eight young people with learning disabilities and ASD to create “great outdoor” films that celebrate access for all.
- Young farmers from Lewes, Ringmer and Pulborough to build owl boxes and enjoy art inspired by the landscape.
- Young people who have poor mental health to take part in conservation activities with Impact Initiatives.
- 12 young people to enjoy practical conservation activities at the Railway Land Wildlife Trust, in Lewes.

The grants have been made possible thanks to funding from the South Downs National Park Trust, the official independent charity of the National Park, the Clarion Futures charity and the #willfund.

Amanda Elmes, who leads learning in the National Park, said: “Young people are the future custodians of this precious landscape and that’s why these kind of initiatives are so worthwhile.”

Bronze Age is brought back to life with new roundhouse



A unique reconstruction of a traditional Bronze Age Roundhouse has been unveiled in the National Park by acclaimed archaeologist Professor Alice Roberts.

The new addition at Butser Ancient Farm, in Hampshire, is the result of a collaboration between archaeologists working with wounded, injured and sick military veterans, serving personnel and volunteers from Operation Nightingale.

The scheme helps the recovery of veterans by getting them hands-on in archaeology.

Twenty five military veterans, together with archaeologists from Butser, spent over 1,000 hours working on the build.

The reconstructed roundhouse is based on a Bronze Age building from around 1200 BC that was uncovered at Dunch Hill on Salisbury Plain.

The project has allowed archaeologists to gain new insights into the way earth-walled roundhouses might have been built and it also allowed the military veterans to learn construction skills including thatching, woodworking and daubing, as well as other essential ancient skills, including pottery, spinning and cookery.

The cost of the materials was funded by a grant of £10,000 from the South Downs National Park Authority's Covid-19 Recovery Fund, together with £35,000 from the Step Together charity.

Military veteran John William Bennett said: "Working through each stage of the project has been brilliant and I still find it hard to believe how much my life has turned around because of it. Not just feeling myself again, gaining more independence and confidence, but what else the project has led on to."

Anooshka Rawden, Cultural Heritage Lead for the National Park, said: "The South Downs National Park Authority is extremely proud to have been able to contribute towards this project, and the new partnerships it has brought for Butser Ancient Farm, which is a site like no other in the National Park."



Well-used path is given a £300,000 makeover



A popular pathway giving access to the heart of the National Park has undergone a major facelift.

A partnership between Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and the South Downs National Park Authority has seen more than £300,000 spent on the Falmer Road path, which links Falmer and Woodingdean, near Brighton.

The new smoother and wider surface means it's now accessible for anyone using wheelchairs or mobility scooters, as well as for people walking, cycling, wheeling, scooting and horse riding.

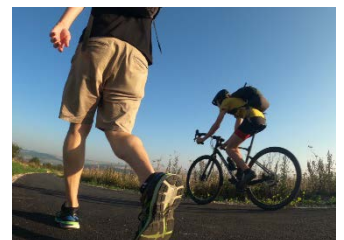
On the doorstep of the National Park, the 2.5km path has been a popular route for walkers, cyclists and commuters since it was installed alongside Falmer Road in 2013 with the help of funding from the Department for Transport.

The new-look path has 6665m² of improved surface and 5km of new edging

The path, which is to be dedicated as a bridleway, will be jointly maintained by Brighton & Hove City Council and East Sussex County Council.

Councillor Martin Osborne, a Member of the National Park Authority and representing Brighton & Hove City Council, said: "The path looks fantastic and I'd like to thank everyone who has worked so hard on the project.

"It's a great traffic-free link between Woodingdean and Falmer and I know will be well used by people getting to and from the University of Sussex, work or just people out for a walk or bike ride."



Alister Linton-Crook, who leads cycling in the National Park, said: "The new surface is the best solution for this well-used route, making it easier for people to get into the South Downs from Brighton or from Falmer station.

"We know people will enjoy using this route, soaking up the views and connecting with the amazing landscape and biodiversity of the National Park."

A fun video about the path improvements can be seen [here](#).

Where are spookiest spots in the South Downs? 🎃



If the shape of the land shapes our myths and legends, it's no wonder that the South Downs hills, scattered with ancient barrows and hill forts, have inspired such a rich folklore.

The October mists that blanket the river valleys, sunken lanes of autumn leaves, pumpkins in the fields and the smoky air certainly add to the enchantment at this time of year.

Here are some of our favourite mysterious places to let your imaginations run wild this Hallowe'en.

Cowdray Ruins

There are many spooky stories connected to this Tudor home that was consumed by fire during restoration work in 1793.



Some attribute the fire to a curse that expired when the 8th Viscount Montague died two weeks after the blaze and the inheriting descendant died childless.

The Grey Lady is the ruins' most frequently seen spook and she manifests so often that her usual haunting route has been coined the 'Lady's Walk'.

Dragons delight

Legend says that the distinctive ridges curling around Bignor Hill were cut by a giant worm wrapping his enormous tail around the hill.

Meanwhile a fearsome dragon guards his marvellous hoard of gold and precious stones in an underground tunnel near Cissbury Ring.



Hinton Ampner

The Tudor Old Manor House that previously stood on the site of Hinton Ampner was reputed to be one of the most haunted houses in Britain – complete with howling, shouting, gun shots, screaming, loud bangs, mysterious music and an overwhelming feeling of dread.

A ghost army of defeated Royalist soldiers is said to return to the nearby English Civil War battlefield at Cheriton.

Green men of Winchester

Was it the verdant spirit of Hampshire's countryside that led the people who built Winchester cathedral to carve mysterious Green Men into its ancient walls?

Estimates vary from 60 to 70 of these strange faces covered in leaves, spewing vegetation from their mouths or sprouting it from eyes, noses, mouths and ears.

Arundel

Bevis of Arundel was a giant so huge that his sword, Morglay, was longer than a man and Hirondele, his horse, was taller than a house. As the gate-keeper for the earls of Arundel, he lived in a special tower with an allowance of a whole ox and two hogsheads of beer each week. On the eve of his death he threw Morglay from the tower window and asked to be buried where it fell. In Arundel Park there is a spot still known as Bevis' Tomb.



Hangers Way

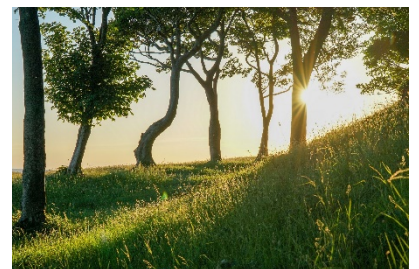
This 21-mile long woodland route takes from Alton Railway Station to Queen Elizabeth Country Park and is oozing with historical intrigue.

The Oakhanger stream which snuggles under the shelter of the impressive Selborne Hanger is reputed to be haunted by the ghost of a monk.

Chanctonbury Ring

Reputed to be one of the most haunted locations in the South Down, the beech trees that circle the ring were first planted in 1760. Yet long before it was the site of Bronze and 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.



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!"

Enjoy the simple pleasures of a countryside bus ride!



There's nothing quite like the freedom of exploring the South Downs National Park by bus, taking in the expansive breathtaking views as you breeze through beautiful rolling countryside.

You can also hop on and off the bus without having to worry about parking!

Last month saw the return of International Car Free Day and Allison Thorpe, who leads access and recreation in the National Park, wanted to share 10 of her favourite bus journeys that offer a great day-out in the South Downs.

Allison said: "A day-out in the countryside by bus can be a real family adventure and removes all the hassle of trying to find a parking space and paying for parking. We know the little ones always enjoy a ride on the bus too!

"If you do normally visit the National Park by car, why not try something different by leaving the motor at home and try one of the bus services. Apart from helping the environment, it's also a different way of seeing the countryside and you may spot things you'd never noticed before.

"It's also a great option if you're looking to visit one of the National Park's many wineries, breweries and real-ale pubs.

Here are 10 of Allison's recommendations:

Route 1 from Worthing to Midhurst

Did anyone mention picturesque views that warm the cockles of your heart? This journey has an



endless supply! There are potential stop-offs at Stopham Vineyard and Winery, or if you're a beer-lover, why not visit the Langham Brewery and Tap. The beauty of Cissbury Ring must be seen to be believed, while a visit to Petworth House combines stunning views with opulent art and history.

Bus 37 from Havant to Petersfield Breezing past the highest point on the South Downs chalk escarpment, Butser Hill, this is such a convenient route to get right into the heart of the National Park and one of its most historic towns. Enjoy the beauty of Petersfield Heath or why not visit the sparkling-new Petersfield Museum that's had a multi-million pound transformation?

Route 38 from Petersfield to Alton via Selborne

Travelling through some of the most densely wooded areas in Hampshire the 38 takes in Jane Austen's village of Chawton and Gilbert White's village of Selborne. If you're on the double decker (Mon to Fri except bank holidays) it's definitely worth heading upstairs and trying to bag the front seat.

Route 54 from Chichester to Petersfield A route for walkers and pub lovers, the 54 runs through a series of small villages and gives access to famous downland churches, Harting Down and the ancient yew trees at Kingley Vale.

Route 60 from Midhurst to Chichester Taking a romantic Tudor ruin, a medieval cathedral, great shops at Chichester, downland villages, and deep wooded valleys, the 60 has something for everyone. Stop off along the way to visit West Dean Gardens and the Weald and Downland Museum.

Route 67 from Winchester to Petersfield Weaving between the Hampshire hills through the Itchen and Meon valleys, the 67 is a route for lovers of wildlife and picturesque villages. The pristine chalk River Itchen is home to otter and wild trout and a program is currently underway to return water vole to the River Meon where they had been locally extinct.

Route 79 from Brighton to Ditchling Beacon Taking in Ditchling Beacon, one of the highest points in the National Park, the 79 gives 360 degree views out to sea in the south, across the weald to the north and along the high chalk ridge of the South Downs from west to east. This bus runs on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

Route 99 from Chichester to Petworth If the views around Petworth were good enough for Turner, they're good enough for us! The 99 also offers a flexible service that will take in the iconic Halnaker windmill.

Route 125 from Lewes to Eastbourne via Alfriston

Last but not least wind your way through the Cuckmere valley on the heels of the



Bloomsbury set. One for culture lovers the 125 also stops at Glynde – home of the famous Glyndebourne Opera – before joining the same route of the 12 along the coast.

Route 12 from Brighton to Eastbourne Easily in the running for the most scenic bus route in the country, the Coaster takes in the world-famous Seven Sisters white chalk cliffs and the classic serpentine meanders of the river Cuckmere.

For more information and ideas visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/travelling-around/

Protecting precious chalk streams



Sophie Evingar, from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, gives an update on an inspiring project that is working to protect and enhance the county's precious chalk streams.

It's been another action-packed six months for the Watercress and Winterbournes Landscape Partnership Scheme. Its 16 partners, including the South Downs National Park Authority, have been busy protecting, enhancing, and celebrating the chalk stream headwaters of the Test and Itchen.

These precious places are under increasing pressure, and really need our help to thrive.

In Stoke, we tackled bank erosion caused by herds of carefree cattle. Their grazing along the Bourne Rivulet had loosened the soil, releasing sediment into the channel; this caused problems for the resident fish and aquatic insects.

Our new fencing will protect the banks, while a Hampshire gate allows the site to still benefit from occasional grazing.

In Cheriton, the local primary school and conservation group have continued adding beautiful blooms to their stream, with our support. Water-loving wildflowers like valerian, small scabious, and meadow crane's-bill provide shelter for fish fry and waterfowl, as well as helping to reduce flooding by drinking up excess water.

In the villages of Laverstoke and Freefolk, we improved access to part of the Upper Test. Previously boggy and overgrown, the site now has a wheelchair-accessible footpath, a bench for restful moments, and a platform that extends out over the water. A local pre-school have already been pond dipping there, as part of our educational sessions.

Our intrepid volunteers have been removing invasive non-native plants like monkeyflower, parrot's feather, and Himalayan balsam across our scheme area. These fast-growing species spread very easily, and can quickly dominate large stretches of stream. They can also reproduce from tiny fragments, so affected sites often need repeat visits!



We launched our community grant scheme and our education programme, which teaches schools and youth groups about these amazing habitats.

Learn more at www.hiwwt.org.uk/winterbournes

Action is taken to protect SSSI



Vital work has begun to protect an important wildlife and grazing site.

Fencing is being installed on both sides of the bridleway heading north-west from The Clayton Windmills, in West Sussex, to protect a wildlife-rich site and the conservation grazing livestock that help to conserve it.

The priority is to protect the site and the animals that keep it special, while also ensuring there is no adverse impact to the right of way. The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) has one of the highest levels of wildlife protection due to its rare chalk grassland species, including the round-headed rampion and several butterfly species.

The fencing is necessary to protect this site on a privately-owned farm after a long list of incidents and attacks where dogs have been allowed to run off lead, chasing, attacking and killing livestock and causing others to be harmed as they are chased through fences.

The work is being carried out by the farmer, with support from the National Park Authority and West Sussex County Council, as well as permission from Natural England.

There will still be access to the site via the bridleway and South Downs Way – routes that offer stunning views of the landscape and “Jack and Jill” windmills. A grass bund next to the car park is also a good spot to enjoy the views.. Tours of the windmill will be unaffected.

Farmer Gary Lee said: “We know so many people love this site as much as we do. Please help us conserve it by sticking to the right of way, keepings dogs on the lead and taking home your rubbish.”

The longer-term plan, subject to permissions, will be to divert the pathway to the edge of the farmer's field, rather than passing through the centre of it as it currently does.

Nigel James, a Countryside and Policy Manager, who leads access for the National Park Authority, said: “This privately-owned farm has never been open access land, but the amazing views will always be there for people to enjoy through the extensive rights of way network.

“Our core aim is to prevent serious damage by dogs to this sensitive wildlife site without having an adverse impact on access. This work does not prevent access to areas that people are legally entitled to go.

“It's important that we all help care for this wonderful chalk grassland site that supports an array of rare plants and invertebrates. Through our Take The Lead campaign, we welcome responsible dog walking in the National Park and we would advise dogs to be on leads anywhere near livestock.”

Thousands flock to Secrets of the Heath extravaganza



Mighty sword battles and magnificent reptiles were the stars of the show as more than 2,000 people joined in the fun of Secrets of the Heath.

The extravaganza celebrates the amazing wildlife and history of heathlands and came to Whitehill and Bordon for the first time after taking last year off because of the pandemic.

The atmosphere was buzzing at Hogmoor Inclosure as people of all ages enjoyed an array of fun hands-on activities such as bug hunting, archery, and snake handling, as well as the awesome spectacle of Roman and Saxon re-enactments.

Pooches were also put through their paces in the Countryside Dog Ability Challenge to test obedience when faced with mock cut-outs of sheep and cows.

A photographic exhibition showed off the flora, fauna and landscape of heathlands, which are home to several rare species such as the Natterjack toad, sand lizard, smooth snake, nightjar, and Dartford warbler.

The festival was organised by the Heathlands Reunited project – a partnership of 11 like-minded organisations funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and led by the South Downs National Park.

Olivia French, Engagement Officer for Heathlands Reunited, said: “It was a truly incredible weekend at Hogmoor Inclosure and we had two glorious days of September sunshine.

“The event took many months of planning and we’re so pleased we were able to put on a great free event that everyone enjoyed. Some families loved it so much they came back on the second day as there was so much to do!

“We had lots of visitors from the Whitehill & Bordon, Farnham and Petersfield area, as well as from further afield from Havant, Waterlooville and Portsmouth.”



Picture perfect South Downs calendar is now available



A calendar featuring breathtaking photographs of the National Park is now available to buy.

The 2022 edition can be bought either online or at the South Downs Centre in Midhurst.

Zara Kelleway, who manages the visitors' reception at the South Downs Centre, said: “We’re really proud of our 2022 calendar and this edition’s photography is a wonderful mix of some of the most iconic views and wildlife in the National Park. It’s a wonderful Christmas present, so do pop in to buy a copy or order one from the comfort of your home!”

Calendars are priced as following:

- £5.99 when purchased from the South Downs Centre in Midhurst
- £7.30 (including postage and packaging) or £14.60 for two (including postage and packaging) when ordered online.

You can order yours by phoning us on 01730 814810 or **[buy your calendars online](#)**.

Measuring the satisfaction of our planning customers

We want to provide the best possible service to customers who use planning services in the South Downs National Park.

For this reason the National Park Authority has commissioned independent research agency Marketing Means to undertake a Planning Customer Satisfaction telephone survey on our behalf with planning applicants and agents and Parish/Town Councils who have recently used the Authority’s planning service.

If you have submitted a planning application to Authority or recently used our planning service you may receive an email from Marketing Means inviting you to tell us about your experience – either online or in a telephone interview. We hope that you will take up this offer but please do let them know if you would prefer not to take part in the survey. The survey itself will take place between 11 October and 10 December 2021.

If you have any questions or concerns or would like to find out more about this research please contact **CSS-Planning@southdowns.gov.uk**

Things to do in the South Downs this October

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/



- Join in the fun of the [Beachy Head Half Marathon](#) on Sunday, 17 October, starting at Eastbourne Seafront at the start of the South Downs Way.
- Enjoy local ales and ciders at the popular [Eastbourne Beer Festival](#), taking place from 18-20 November.
- Take part in the “Spooky Laser Tag” at [Queen Elizabeth Country Park](#) from 24 October to 30 October.
- Try the new “What Lurks Beneath” interactive trail at [Arundel Wetland Centre](#).
- Visit [Jane Austen’s house](#) in Chawton from the comfort of your own home! The award-winning tour takes place on 23 October and is hosted by an expert guide.
- Horrible tasks of the past! Visit the [Weald and Downland Living Museum](#) over half-term from 23 to 31 October to learn about the not-so-nice-things that people (including children) had to eat, smell, experience or do as a job or household task in the past.

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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Sign up to the National Park’s Planning Newsletter, issued three times a year, by visiting

www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning-newsletter/

Pic credits

P3 – Harvey Mills; P4 (dragon) – David Floyd; P4 (Arundel) – Jamie Fielding; P4 (Chanctonbury) – Alan West; P5 (Halnaker) – Guy Edwardes; P6 left – Terry Whittaker. Otter and SDNP Pumpkin Carvings – James Valente.