



SOUTH DOWNS NEWS

WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

This month:

- **National Park's first Local Plan is adopted** Find out about the strategy that will put landscapes first, benefit local communities and increase climate change resilience.
- **Authority unveils £1.4m plans for Seven Sisters** Read about plans to create a world-class visitor experience and biodiversity hub at the iconic country park.
- **Magic, mystery and myths** Learn about the colourful new story book that is raising awareness of our beautiful heaths.
- **Chalk and ponds!** Two free family events this July to discover our amazing wildlife.

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

First South Downs National Park Local Plan is adopted

Landscape and the needs of local communities are central to the new South Downs National Park Local Plan which has been adopted by Members this month.

The Plan covers the entire National Park for the next 14 years and rather than being "target driven", the policies in the Plan are based on the nationally-designated landscape. The Plan sets out measures to mitigate climate change including that any major new developments should seek to be carbon neutral, have better drainage schemes to reduce flood risk and limit water consumption for new developments.



Margaret Paren, Chair of South Downs National Park Authority, said: "This is a significant moment for the South Downs National Park and our local communities."



"Our adopted Local Plan puts our nationally important landscapes first and ensures that they sit at the heart of every planning decision we make. But, while our first priority is to conserve and enhance the landscape, this Local Plan goes one step further by clearly outlining how we will nurture a living, thriving landscape that benefits local people and looks to increase resilience to climate change."

"The Local Plan includes over 50 Neighbourhood Plans developed by South Downs' communities which provide local development management policies and

Beelines campaign creates a real buzz



Nearly £5,000 has been raised in just over a month as part of a new campaign to help reverse the decline of bees in the South East.

Dozens of donations have been received by the South Downs National Park Trust since it launched Bee Lines at the end of the May.

The campaign will work with farmers and other landowners to create new wildflower corridors – essentially a “road system” for insects – that will link habitats and encourage pollination.

The Trust, the official charity for the South Downs National Park, is hoping to raise £75,000 to help restore flower-rich habitats and create a haven for pollinators in the South Downs.

Nick Heasman, Countryside and Policy Manager for the South Downs National Park and who is leading the project, said: “We’ve been overwhelmed by the amazing response to our Bee Lines campaign and would like to say a big ‘thank you’ to all those who have donated so far.

“The campaign is off to a flying start and we’re pleased to have had lots of messages of support. The fact that our pollinators are in trouble and need our help has really struck a chord with the public.

“Bees are absolutely vital to the planet and we’re hoping our campaign can both raise awareness and help populations recover.”

Bees pollinate around a third of food crops and 90 per cent of wild plants. Key pollinating species in the National Park include honey bees, bumblebees and the Adonis blue butterfly.

To find out more about Bee Lines and to donate visit www.southdownstrust.org.uk/beelines/

allocate land for development. We are grateful to all those who spent so much time assisting us in developing the Local Plan.

“The exciting plan also sets out the high standards that all proposed development must meet to protect nature and the vital ‘ecosystem’ services it gives us such as clean water, food and space to breathe.”

The Plan replaces more than 1000 overlapping policies that were in existence across the area of the National Park with 92 clear policies covering all aspects of planning.

It follows extensive public consultation with local communities and detailed scrutiny and examination by the Government’s Planning Inspectorate, which found the policies to be sound subject to a number of modifications.

The Local Plan has been informed by a range of factors, including the geography and geology, biodiversity and heritage sites of the National Park, Neighbourhood Plans, local economic needs and the impact of climate change.

Key highlights of the Local Plan include:

- **Services provided by the environment such as clean water and air, dark night skies and tranquillity provided by the National Park.**
- **As evidenced by feedback from local communities, growth is dispersed across the towns and villages of the National Park, rather than just allowing growth around the largest settlements such as Lewes and Petersfield.**
- **This is provision of 250 dwellings per year across the National Park.**
- **High goals for affordable housing – the bar is set at 50 per cent on sites of 11 or more new homes will have to be affordable.**
- **Conservation of internationally-important landscapes such as Woolmer Forest and the Sussex Heritage Coast, for example.**
- **Provision of 10.3ha of employment land to create jobs and support the rural economy.**
- **Conservation and enhancement of “green corridors” to link up habitats and support wildlife, as well as promoting the planting of new trees and hedges.**
- **Adoption of strategic sites that represent one-off opportunities for developments of exceptional quality – Shoreham Cement Works and North Street Quarter, Lewes.**

To see the full Local Plan, visit

www.southdowns.gov.uk/SDLocalPlan

Exciting plans are unveiled for Seven Sisters Country Park



The South Downs National Park Authority has been named as the preferred bidder for Seven Sisters Country Park and is announcing ambitious £1.4m plans, including improving habitat for seven key species and creating a world-class visitor experience.

Following a decision by East Sussex County Council's Deputy Leader, Cllr Nick Bennett, a process will begin to finalise the terms and transfer ownership of the iconic 280-hectare site to the National Park Authority.

The site will remain in public ownership and it is expected that the site will be fully transferred over and under the stewardship of the SDNPA by March 2020.

As part of a long-term plan to conserve and enhance the Country Park, the National Park Authority is announcing a number of plans:

- **To improve habitat for seven important native animal and plant species which are indicators of biodiversity and landscape quality – the Lapwing, Adonis Blue Butterfly, Redshank, Meadowsweet, Ringed Plover, Reed Warbler, and the Wigeon.**
- **To create a world-class visitor experience through improved interpretation and education displays to tell the story of the Country Park's landscape, habitats, wildlife and the effects of climate change.**
- **Refurbishment of the visitor centre and extension of its opening hours to improve the experience for visitors.**
- **Improved trails and bird watching facilities to make the Country Park a destination for wildlife watching.**
- **Careful landscape management to increase chalk grassland, grazing marsh and wet meadows to enhance biodiversity.**

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: "Seven Sisters Country Park offers some of the most stunning views in the world but it could be so much more.

"We would like to make it a national centre for biodiversity, conservation and climate change, telling the story of this extraordinary landscape to a wide audience and using it to test out new approaches to the national challenge of climate change.



"There is huge potential to create an exemplar in the management of chalk grassland and to create world-class wetlands in Seven Sisters Country Park."

And Trevor added: "We're pleased to have been chosen as the preferred bidder and it marks an exciting new chapter for the South Downs National Park as we approach our 10th birthday next year. East Sussex County Council has done a fantastic job and we now want to build on that further to improve people's understanding of this national treasure.

"We're looking forward to further enhancing this wonderful national and international icon for future generations."

Cllr Nick Bennett, East Sussex County Council deputy leader, said: "I know how valued our countryside sites are by residents and visitors and it's vital that we put them on the best footing so they can be enjoyed for generations to come.

"Keeping these sites in public ownership and transferring them to organisations with proven experience in conservation, involving local communities and improving the experience for visitors will safeguard their long-term future.

"I was really impressed by the commitment the South Downs National Park Authority has shown to protecting, enhancing and improving one of our most iconic sites.

"They have been able to pledge the kind of significant investment the council is not in a position to deliver, which will go towards improving biodiversity and creating a world-class visitor experience."

The SDNPA will apply best practice from other nationally and internationally significant sites to improve the biodiversity and enhance the visitor experience.

Although interesting bird species such as avocets do visit the Country Park, they rarely stay.

With expert management to provide a rich food source for birds, it is hoped that the area will attract much larger numbers of birds, as well as other native species, in the years ahead.

Inspiring new initiative is launched to connect families with nature



A major new initiative to connect families with nature through fun outdoor learning experiences has been launched.

Inspired by the “founding father” of the National Park movement, John Muir, the South Downs National Park Trust is announcing a new scheme that will see families across the region getting out into the National Park and learning more about the amazing natural environment.

The initiative will be aimed at families, particularly in inner city or highly-urbanised locations near the National Park, where children and their parents have had little to no access to wild places such as the South Downs.

To kickstart the new John Muir Families Outreach programme, a series of “starter packs” – a rucksack full of outdoor essentials such as maps, walking boots, binoculars, waterproofs and nature guides – are being purchased. These will be funded through the newly-launched National Parks Futures Fund, an initiative between National Parks and Forest Holidays.

Richard Palmer, from Forest Holidays, joined the South Downs National Park’s Education Officer, Jonathan Dean, and Helene Rossiter, from the National Parks Partnership, for the launch of the scheme at Cissbury Ring in West Sussex.

The starter packs will be given to selected community centres and children’s centres across the South East as families are encouraged to learn about the environment.

SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

And, with the help of donors, The Trust, the official charity for the South Downs National Park, will also be funding a dedicated two-year outreach post to deliver the project.

Families taking part in the scheme will be encouraged to complete a John Muir award, a national environmental award that encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. These activities will take place during school holidays.

Richard Palmer, Director at Forest Holidays, said: “Unlike so many wild places in the country, the South Downs has a huge advantage because there are so many people living nearby.

“Forest Holidays shares the National Park’s ambition to connect more people with nature and is committed to opening up new opportunities for people to experience these special landscapes first-hand.”

The John Muir Award is a flexible scheme that sees participants completing four challenges – discovering a wild place, exploring its wildlife, taking responsibility to conserve it, and then sharing their experience.

Jonathan explained: “Some families who live near the South Downs National Park have never had the opportunity to explore it. This could be for any number of reasons: the cost of travel, perceived barriers or simply lack of awareness.



“We hope this scheme will help those families discover the fun there is to be had in the great outdoors while earning themselves a nationally-recognised environmental award.

“The John Muir Award is simple and flexible, there’s very little paperwork, which means more time for fun! The first steps could be as simple as a family going for a walk in the South Downs, starting to identify some common species before undertaking some conservation work and finally sharing and celebrating their achievements. Participants gain an appreciation of the natural world and feel empowered to take action to care for it.”

Trevor Beattie, Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority, added: “John Muir was one of the founding fathers of the National Park conservation movement and his legacy lives on today by inspiring people of all ages to get close to nature.

“Our new John Muir Outreach Programme will encourage families to connect with, enjoy, and care for the South Downs, its special landscape and incredible biodiversity.”

Writer in Residence goes on tour



Sara Clifford is touring the length and breadth of the National Park this summer as she gathers people's stories and uses this material for a series of inspiring performances later this year. Here Sara reflects on her travels so far...

Since April, I have been meeting with and talking to a fantastic range of people in and around the South Downs National Park.

Together with my artist colleagues, we have written poems, drawn pictures, made felt stones, dramatised 'adverts' for the National Park, and talked and talked. I have sat on stalls at fetes in sunshine and rain, interviewed elders at lunch clubs, run drama workshops in schools and with youth theatres, and hosted family drop-ins in tiny country pubs. By the middle of July, we will have run events in Newhaven, Litlington, Lodsworth, Pulborough, Bowdon, Slindon and Winchester, right across the National Park.

The pictures come from my time at Amberley Working Museum, where I interviewed 'Land Girls' at the Home Front day and retired chaps who regularly volunteer to demonstrate rapidly disappearing skills, such as lathing, wheelwrighting and printing and at the Hollist Arms in Lodsworth, a picture postcard village with a friendly pub, where families dropped by to draw, paint and write poems about their most loved places in the National Park.

We have talked about the lost times of just two generations ago of drawing water from the well and lighting rooms with oil lamps; but also about the future of the National Park, a commitment to conservation and preserving rare wildlife, and how everyone can access the glorious countryside on our doorstep.

Now my research process is coming to an end, and I'm about to start writing a one-person show that will somehow encapsulate this love of the land and its rich detail.

For further details on the upcoming shows visit <https://inncrowd.org.uk/writers-in-residence/>

"Giving back to a place I love so much"



Giles Babb fell in love with the countryside from those summer walks on the South Downs as a child.

Now the well-known businessman and publican is giving something back by partnering with charity the South Downs National Park Trust.

Giles recently took over The Star & Garter, an 18th century pub nestled in downland at East Dean, near Chichester.

Giles has agreed a Visitor Giving partnership where guests at The Star & Garter will be invited to make a £5 donation to the charity on top of their stay at the inn. Diners are also invited to donate £1 to be added to their meal bill at the restaurant.

The Trust is working closely with national and community-based organisations for the benefit of the National Park and initiatives include the protection of endangered species, new walking and cycling routes for people with disabilities, and a new campaign this year to reverse the decline of bees.

Giles, who owns The Blue Bell Inn in Emsworth, said: "Even though I grew up in Portsmouth and have lived in Emsworth most of my life, I've always felt a strong connection with the South Downs. It's such a special place and the views really do take your breath away.

"It's very exciting to now be working in the heart of the South Downs and I was keen to give something back. The Visitor Giving partnership is the perfect way to do my bit – it's very straightforward and easy to incorporate into the business.

"This donation scheme is a wonderful way for local businesses and their customers to play their part in protecting and enhancing the South Downs."

Visitor giving is a simple way of inviting voluntary donations from visitors, inspiring them to put something back into looking after the places they love to visit. For further details contact Sandra Grant at Sandra.Grant@southdownstrust.org.uk

Way to go! Event showcases amazing National Trail



A sterling team effort on a glorious summer's day saw the entire 100-mile South Downs Way completed in a single day.

Whether they ran, walked, or cycled, people of all ages and fitness levels covered a stretch of the national trail as part of the Way In A Day challenge.

The day included South Downs National Park staff and raised funds for the upkeep of the much-loved trail. The challenge also provided opportunities for people to learn more and be inspired by the iconic route.

As part of a pilot initiative, members of the public were invited to walk four of the 16 sections to complete the 100 miles.

The public legs raised much-needed funds which will be ploughed back into the upkeep of the national trail.

Participants from the South Downs National Park also picked up litter they found along the way.

Allison Thorpe, one of the organisers and Access and Recreation Officer for the South Downs National Park, said: "This was the second year we have organised Way In A Day and we were really pleased with the feedback from the members of the public who decided to take part.

"It was a great day to showcase all this is wonderful about this famous route, whether that be the diverse wildlife you'll see along the way or the ever-changing views of the landscape from East to West.

"We're now proposing to widen the scope of the Way In A Day initiative next year to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the South Downs National Park. Watch this space!"

New community hub starts to take shape



A new community hub and heritage centre in Droxford, Hampshire, is taking shape thanks to the support of the National Park's Sustainable Communities Fund.

The Friends of Droxford Church launched their appeal for £75,000 in October and were able to appoint a contractor in January and start building the Community Hub annex.

Progress has been rapid and the construction phase is nearly complete, with the flint walls and pitched roof blending well with the existing building and attracting favourable comments from passers-by.

In addition to individual donors, funding has come from the South Downs National Park, Hampshire County Council, Heritage Lottery Fund, Garfield Weston Foundation, Allchurches Trust, Headley Trust, Droxford Country Fair, and Droxford PCC.

The Appeal has raised nearly £60,000, or 80% of the target.

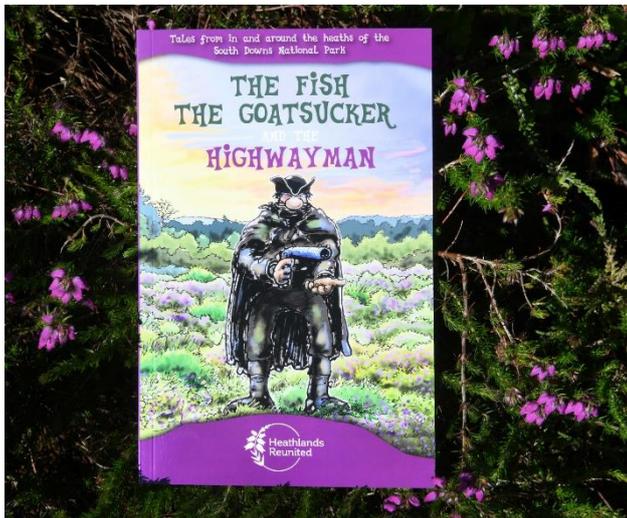
The Appeal will fund fitting out and equipping the Community Café and the Heritage Centre.



The Friends supported the village's Country Fair last month and held a 'ribbon cutting' ceremony to mark the completion of the construction phase of the Hub Annex.

For those who still want to donate to the Appeal, the MyDonate page is accessible from the website at www.friendsofdroxfordchurch.org.uk

Colourful story book explores the weird and wonderful history of heathlands



The magic, mystery and myths of heathlands have been brought to life in a fun new book that explores the history of the unique landscape.

Since the beginning of last year, 17 heritage volunteers have been working across Hampshire and West Sussex to uncover the hidden treasures and historic tales of the heaths.

The final result is a colourful book of stories, entitled "The Fish, The Goatsucker and The Highwayman". All written by the volunteers and drawing upon their interviews with local people and archive research, the tales are a mixture of fact and imaginative fiction.

The book was launched around the campfire during a storytelling session at Blackdown, the highest point in the South Downs National Park. One of the volunteers who helped produce the book, Janet Goring, who is also a professional story teller, told the story of "The Poet's House: Blackdown" to local families.

The stories will now form the basis of a schools



engagement programme across Hampshire and West Sussex, starting in September.



Mary Saunders, Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Heathlands Reunited Project, said: "This book has been a labour of love for the volunteers and we're really proud of it.

"Each story has been carefully crafted and is aimed at encouraging young people, local communities and visitors to discover the heritage of these wildlife-rich landscapes that are actually rarer than the rainforest.

"There are lots of interesting facts that we unearthed in our research that have been used in the book. For instance, the experiences of a city boy evacuated to the heathlands of Graffham in World War Two; the rebellion of starving farm workers, and the fears generated by a small heathland bird in superstitious minds.

"It's a great read and I would encourage people of all ages to give it a go!"

The book includes stories relating to: Shortheath Common, Lavington Common, Wiggonholt Heath, Blackdown, Graffham Common, Woolbeding Common and Iping and Stedham Common.

The book has been produced as part of the Heathlands Reunited Project, which is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The book's production was supported by partners in the project, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, National Trust, Hampshire County Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust

The 41 heaths in the South Downs are teeming with wildlife, including one with all 12 of the UK's native reptiles as well as incredibly rare species such as the Nightjar. Just one per cent of the original heathlands in the South Downs remains and over several centuries the heaths have been separated into 'islands' of habitat – making plants and animals far more vulnerable to local extinction.

The Heathlands Reunited team have been working over the past three years to help restore heathland sites and raise public awareness of the heaths' importance.

The book is now available to buy from the South Downs Centre in Midhurst for £7.99.



Wild Chalk is coming back to Brighton!



Following on from a successful first year in 2018, 'Wild Chalk' is coming back to Brighton this month.

Taking place at East Brighton Park on Sunday 21 July from 11am to 5pm, 'Wild Chalk' is a free family fun day championing the rare and beautiful chalk grassland habitat of the South Downs National Park, raising the profile and awareness of this unique landscape and helping to ensure that it's protected for future generations.

On the day, there will be:

- a giant wildlife colouring wall
- sheep to meet and stroke
- Stone Age re-enactment
- virtual reality booth
- birds of prey demonstrations
- storytelling beside a shepherds hut
- mini-beast hunting and wildlife spotting
- drinks and refreshments

Sheepcote Valley, situated next to East Brighton Park, is one of the best examples of rare chalk grassland in the UK.

Grazed by sheep for several centuries, chalk grassland is home to a remarkable array of plants and creatures, including many types of wildflowers that provide sweet nectar for bees and butterflies.

However, since the Second World War the UK has lost around 80% of chalk grassland and with it the decline of pollinator species.

The Bee Lines project is working with farmers and landowners in the Arun to Adur area to create new wildflower corridors linking species rich chalk grassland to sites which are in need of pollination and restoration.

Pond life – free fun for all the family



Are you fascinated by the freshwater wildlife lurking beneath the depths?

If so, a fantastic free event in the National Park aims to help people discover more about the amazing biodiversity of our ponds.

The Insect Discovery Day will be held on Saturday, July 13 from 10am to 1pm at South Pond in Midhurst.

Midhurst's South Pond has a fascinating history. It's as old as the town itself and is fed by two streams which were once the boundaries of Saxon settlements.

The South Pond was formed when one of the medieval lords of Midhurst dammed the streams with the intention of making a breeding pool for the fish, which the household ate on Fridays and in Lent.

For many years the Pond suffered from general neglect but several years ago a determined group of residents formed the South Pond Group with the aim of improving water flow and creating a wildlife haven in the heart of Midhurst.

The introduction of reeds, sedges and flowers like yellow iris and purple loosestrife have now encouraged freshwater invertebrates, amphibians and warblers to flourish.

The Group's work has been supported by Chichester District Council, The South Downs National Park Authority and Midhurst Town Council.

Anne Rehill, a volunteer for the group, which is organising the event, said: "Our Insect Discovery Day promises to be a great morning out for people of all ages and there'll be lots of fun bug-related activities.

"We'll be identifying moths living around the pond, discovering wildlife in the water, and counting bees. It's also a good opportunity for people to find out more about the history of the pond and its transformation."

Make a difference this summer and join a Youth Action Day



Like so many of our natural spaces, the South Downs National Park is on the frontline of climate change.

While urgent action is needed at the national and international level to stem carbon emissions, reduce pollution and protect wildlife, local action is just as important for setting a good example for others to follow.

This summer we're launching our very first series of Youth Action Days to champion the next generation of custodians who want to make a difference in our National Park.

The Youth Action Days are for anyone aged between 16 and 25 who is passionate about environmental action and is looking to learn practical skills for helping us to conserve and enhance the South Downs National Park.

There are five action days and all with a different theme. All of the events are free and, with a limited number of spaces, be sure to grab a space early!

Plastic Pollution action day at Seven Sisters Country Park

Join us in the South Downs National Park for a plastic pollution action day at Seven Sisters Country Park. We'll be doing a beach clean to remove plastic pollution washing up on the shoreline to protect wildlife and our environment.

You will also get the chance to learn about the amazing wildlife habitats we have along the Sussex coast.

Date: Monday 5 August 2019

Time: 11am - 3pm

Restore the Rivers action day at Rotherlands Local Nature Reserve

This is your chance to help river wildlife and to learn more about their habitats. National Park rangers need your help to pull invasive Himalayan balsam from the river banks and to survey for insects living in the river.

Date: Wednesday 7 August 2019

Time: 11am - 3pm

Help the Heaths action day at Iping and Stedham Commons

Heathland is one of the rarest habitats in the world and some of the heathland sites in the South Downs are the only places in the country where you will spot all 12 native reptile and amphibian species.

National Park rangers will be guiding you on how to identify reptiles like common lizards and slow worms and show you how you can help to protect their habitat.

Date: Monday 12 August 2019

Time: 11am - 3pm

Microvolunteering action day at Truleigh Hill

Join us in the South Downs National Park for a microvolunteering day at Truleigh Hill on the South Downs Way!

We need help promoting the voices of young people in the South Downs and we want you to help us! There will be several activities and sessions learning about how to use social media effectively, getting the most out of your camera phone and more.

Date: Wednesday 14 August 2019

Time: 11am - 3pm

Precious Pollinators action day at Kithurst Hill

This is your chance to help protect our precious pollinators like butterflies and bees and to learn more about their habitats.

National Park rangers will be guiding you on how to identify butterflies and how to submit sightings on a smartphone, as well as guiding you around the South Downs to learn about the history and wildlife found there.

Date: Thursday 22 August 2019

Time: 9.30am - 1.30pm

Tickets can be obtained through Eventbrite. For details visit www.southdowns.gov.uk/make-difference-summer-join-youth-action-day/

Authority launches consultation

The National Park Authority is always looking for ways we can improve the services we provide and how we can engage with the communities within the National Park. **We welcome your views, which will be used to help us develop our plans, and to improve the delivery of our Purposes and Duty.**

Our Purposes and Duty are:

Purpose 1: To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area.

Purpose 2: To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

Duty: To seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park in pursuit of our purposes.

With growing pressure on central and local government budgets, Central Government has also indicated that all National Park Authorities should seek to diversify their income streams.

To take part in the survey visit

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/8L9VGYL>

The consultation will end at 5pm on Friday 30 August 2019.

Things to do in the South Downs this July

Find these and more events across the National Park and submit your own events at southdowns.gov.uk/events/



- Come to our free **Wild Chalk** event on July 21 and find out about the beautiful chalk grassland habitat of the South Downs National Park. Enjoy a giant colouring wall, storytelling, a Stone Age re-enactment and **birds of prey** demonstrations.
- Ride on a narrow gauge railway and see the annual **model railway exhibition** at the **Gala Weekend** on 13 and 14 July at Amberley Museum.
- Go on a **Butterfly Safari** at RSPB Pulborough Brooks on 23 July. A perfect way to enjoy a sunny summer afternoon – a gentle stroll around the nature reserve admiring our **fantastic butterflies**, followed by cream tea!
- Discover the **moths of Selborne** with a dusk walk at Gilbert's White House on the evenings of 25 and 26 July. Look out for the displays of the **famous male Ghost Moths** on the meadow!

YOU SAY:

Do you have a story you want to tell about the National Park? A burning issue that you think needs to be addressed? Please let us know!



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