

The South Downs National Park Experience

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SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK



The South Downs is, like Dorset, a working farmed landscape with major towns and villages. It is England's newest National Park and is the relevant comparator for Dorset.

In this briefing note we highlight some of the South Downs National Park's recent news and achievements.

Giving wildlife a home: answering the call of nature...



Can you answer the call of nature?

A major search began in November to find **new spaces for nature** in the South Downs National Park. With the UK hosting the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), the urgent need to save nature has never been clearer. And now, as part of its ambitious 10-year campaign to **ReNature** the South Downs, the National Park Authority is launching a call-out for potential sites for nature.

The appeal is inviting farmers, land managers, communities and conservation groups across the National Park to put forward possible sites where new wildlife habitat could be created. Proposals of any size or scale will be considered and could include, for example, creating **wildflower meadows**, new hedgerows, more natural rivers, planting trees, creating heathland or installing dew ponds. **Village greens**, road verges and allotments may also have potential.

The South Downs Trust: Big things are being achieved

The South Downs National Park (SDNP) has a charitable trust to which local supporters can belong and which can bid for funds from a range of sources¹. **Over 6,000 children have been able to visit the National Park thanks to the South Downs Trust and its supporters.** The Trust's achievements since the birth of the charity in 2018 are covered in its Annual Report for 2020-21.



1. <https://www.southdownstrust.org.uk>

Partnering for Nature

The SDNP is part of a partnership, with the National Trust, to restore chalk grassland with £2.23m of funding. This includes money for communities, connecting with nature, developing skills, improving training, creating jobs and improving access across the National Park².

The Changing Chalk partnership, which is led by the National Trust and includes the National Park Authority and eight other organisations, will work with local communities across the eastern Downs to restore and protect chalk grassland, bring diverse histories to life and provide new experiences in the outdoors for those who need it most.

A clutch of new jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities will be created across Brighton & Hove, Eastbourne and Lewes, while around 2,500 volunteers will have the chance to learn new skills and support the partnership's vision.



Connecting Downs and Towns

The Changing Chalk partnership will improve well-being through connection with the local landscape. Eco-therapy activities will benefit local people with physical and mental health needs, and new accessible maps co-created with local charities will help under-served and less physically able communities to access green space. Meanwhile, the South Downs will come to the towns with new chalk grassland planting on 12 town and city sites. A Community Grants Scheme will award £150,000 to local communities for community-led initiatives supporting Changing Chalk's vision. The South Downs National Park will lead a grazing project, working with farmers and landowners to establish more conservation grazing to help restore and improve chalk grassland.



Celebrating the Seven Sisters

In a major vote of confidence in the South Downs National Park, ownership of the Seven Sisters Country Park has been transferred to the National Park by East Sussex County Council. The SDNP will now invest some £2m in a gateway experience as well as pursuing its goal of improving habitats for wildlife and bringing people closer to nature³.

1. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/multimillion-pound-funding-to-help-restore-south-downs-chalk-grassland/>
2. <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/new-era-for-seven-sisters-to-benefit-people-and-nature/>

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