

January 2025

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WORK AND PLAY IN YOUR NATIONAL PARK

THIS MONTH:

- **Gallery of seasonal delights** [Find out the winners of our annual photo competition](#) and how you can get involved to crown the “People’s Choice” champion.
- **Have your say!** [Our Local Plan Review launches this month](#) and we want your feedback!
- **MBE** [Learn about a man whose dedication to the South Downs](#) has earned him a top honour.
- **Win a FREE gourmet lunch!** [Dine in one of the region’s best restaurants, the PIG.](#)

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

[Click here to read a PDF version of South Downs News](#)



PICTURE OF THE MONTH: January may be known for its "blues", but blue can mean many things - it could be a blue sky or the crystal-clear waters of amazing blue spaces such as the **River Meon**, as pictured here by Western Downs Ranger (and talented photographer) Andy Reeves. We're being blessed with some cold, sunny days so do make sure you get out into the National Park, if you're able, for a blast of fresh air and those uplifting views!

If you have an amazing seasonal image, please do email us!



Seasonal splendours of the South Downs

Two of Britain's most iconic birds, **a majestic wintry river** and the joy of springtime wild garlic in an ancient English woodland are among the winners of the National Park's Annual [Photo Competition](#).

Photographer Piers Fearick was a double winner, taking both the first and runner-up prize in the National Park's ever-popular wildlife category by capturing the beauty of a yellowhammer and wren in the South Downs.

The theme for the main competition was "Stunning Seasons of the South Downs" and judges were treated to an incredible assortment of images showing off the changing landscape, treescape, weather and light conditions throughout the year. This year saw a record number of entries, with over 800 photographs.

[Find out all the winners here!](#)

[Vote for your favourite in The People's Choice](#)



Have your say on the Local Plan Review!

An eight-week consultation begins this month as the National Park invites people to have their say on how and where development takes place.

The award-winning South Downs Local Plan is being reviewed to ensure it's up-to-date and addresses important issues such as nature recovery, climate change, affordable housing and helping local communities thrive.

The public consultation of the Local Plan Review starts on 20 January and will run until 17 March. **This is the main opportunity for people to help shape the final Plan**, so we're encouraging the public to get involved. [Learn more here and find out about our engagement events.](#)

[Get involved and have your say](#)





Funding of £2m for community projects

Cycle path improvements, new toilets, a school extension, wildlife viewing platform and the **restoration of a historic walled garden** are among the community projects to benefit from a major funding boost from the South Downs National Park Authority.

To kick off 2025 the National Park is announcing 27 projects across Sussex and Hampshire that will receive a share of just over £1.9m. [Find out more and see the full list of schemes.](#)



Dark Skies Festival 2025

Monday 13 February - Thursday 23 February

Key Event Dates

Saturday 15 February, 6pm-8.30pm

Walk the Planets & Star Party at Seven Sisters Country Park.

Sunday 16 February, 6.30pm-8.30pm

Star Party at Goodwood Country Park.

Tuesday 18 February, 6pm-8.30pm

Walk the Planets & Star Party at Alice Holt.

Thursday 20 February, 6pm-8.30pm

Walk the Planets & Star Party at Queen Elizabeth Country Park.

Saturday 22 February, 5.30pm-8.30pm

Star Party on Brighton Seafront.

southdowns.gov.uk/darkskies

Look out for the
full programme
of events on our
website!

Dark Skies Festival is back! Dates for your diary

It's nearly time to embrace the darkness!

Our ever-popular Dark Skies Festival returns next month, with 11 days of events and activities celebrating the dark skies of the South wildlife that lives here.wildlife that lives here.

This year's theme is **"glimmers"** and we'll be celebrating the sparkling lights of stars, planets, meteors and moons in the night sky, the bioluminescence of glowworms and biofluorescence of other life, and linking this to becoming aware of those small, positive moments in our lives that encourage feelings of happiness, wonder and awe.

Here are some key dates for the diary and the full brochure with every event and activity will be coming out later this month. Some events have to be booked, while others you can just turn up!

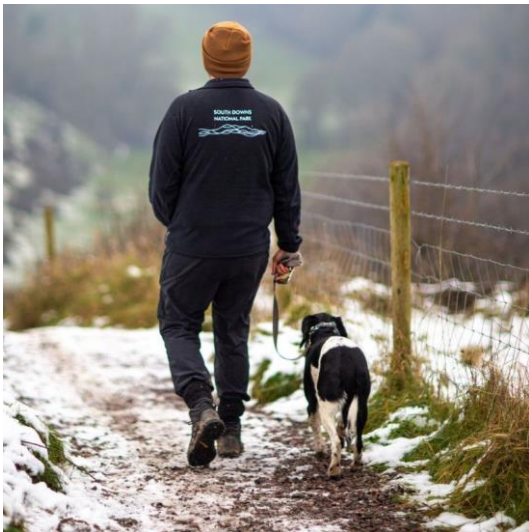
Activities will include stargazing through large telescopes, talks, storytelling, a "Walk The Planets" trail, night walks and runs, craft activities, podcasts and lots more.

Please note that all in person events are subject to cancellation at short notice due to weather conditions. [The full brochure will be available here.](#)

Trevor's MBE honour

Trevor Beattie, the long-serving former Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority, is receiving an MBE for his services to the natural environment.

Trevor retired just over a year ago and was quite surprised to receive the good news that he was part of the **New Year's Honours list**. [Find out more here.](#)



It's National Dog Walking Month!

Olivia French, Heathlands

Engagement Lead, encourages responsible dog walking and explains why picking up dog poo is so important to help protect sensitive habitats such as South Downs heaths.

[Find out more from Olivia here.](#)

Community nature group are the bee's knees

A group of community volunteers

have won two coveted awards for their stellar efforts to create much-needed habitat for wildlife.

The Friends of Blacknest Fields have been working hard over the past few years to improve eight acres of land in the parish of Binsted, Hampshire. Now they have won two top accolades. [Find out more here.](#)



Win a gourmet lunch at the PIG!

Bees and butterflies are being given a helping hand in the National Park thanks to the generosity of guests at a **popular greenhouse restaurant**.

Over the past two years, more than £16,000 has been donated to the South Downs Trust from the award-winning [PIG restaurant](#), which is situated in the hamlet of Madehurst, near Arundel.

It comes after diners had the option of adding a £1 donation to their bill, while the business has also donated £4,000 from its own funds to help local wildlife.

All the funding has been poured into the National Park's Bee Lines initiative, which has so far created over 100 hectares – or 160 football pitches – of brand-new wildflower meadows to help pollinators thrive.

Olivia Dear, from the restaurant, said: "We love our bees, but they are not just useful for our Kitchen Gardens, humming and dipping from plant to plant, they are essential for helping preserve the ecological balance and biodiversity of nature. It is fantastic we can support bees. and many other important pollinators, beyond our grounds and gardens through the Bee Lines initiative."

The PIG, which also includes sumptuous rooms for overnight stays, prides itself on its amazing kitchen garden and anything it cannot grow is sourced from within a 25-mile radius.

We've teamed up with the PIG to offer a delicious midweek two-course lunch for two people (£28.50 excluding drinks) at the Madehurst restaurant. The lunch offer is available until the end of February.

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

Those who are already signed up can email "homegrown" to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 31 January.

Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).



Things to do in January



[Find other events and activities](#) across the National Park and [submit your own](#). Please remember booking may be necessary and do check full details with the venue.

- Head to **Cowdray Farm Shop Café**, Midhurst, on 25 January for the fourth in their series of “Evening Dining events” to enjoy a seasonal feast inspired by local ingredients. Each evening in our series will shine the spotlight on an ingredient that comes straight from Cowdray Estate with the January evening focusing on the estate’s beef. There will also be a delicious vegetarian menu to enjoy if you’d prefer.
- Watch a film about the harmony of farming and nature. In collaboration with Bedales, Petersfield Climate Action Network are hosting a screening of the soil health film *Six Inches of Soil*. The film will be shown in the school theatre, followed by a discussion with a panel of local experts. The event will run from 6.30pm to 9.30pm on 28, January. The film tells the inspiring story of British farmers standing up against the industrial food system and transforming the way they produce food – to heal

the soil, benefit our health and provide for local communities. Book a seat [here](#).

- Looking ahead to next month, there are glimmers of spring and longer days with the snowdrop festival at [The Manor of Dean](#) Tillington, Petworth. As part of the National Garden Scheme, there will be an open afternoon in the gardens on 2 February, with a chance to enjoy the early spring bulbs.
- Book a spot on one of the National Park's Youth Action Days! Are you aged 16-25 (or know someone who might be interested) and want to make a difference to nature and the environment? We're offering the chance to get involved with Steyning Downland Scheme, which is working towards improving biodiversity and improving accessibility. The fun volunteering day on 15 February is FREE to join and a great chance to add to your CV! [Find out more here](#).

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