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A winter wonderland of nature and calm

Welcome to the [December edition](#) of the South Downs National Park's newsletter.

It's been a busy and eventful year and, like many of you, we're looking forward to some away time enjoying special moments with loved ones - in the beautiful surroundings of the South Downs if we can! It's the most wonderful time of the year, but it can be a bit overwhelming at times, so we're sharing some ideas for **Christmas**

walks to help rejuvenate your body and mind. We're also celebrating some big milestones for this 15th anniversary year - including reaching our target of planting **100,000 trees to help wildlife!** Plus find out the community projects benefitting from **£1.9m of funding.**

We've also got a **great competition** for a tour and tasting at an amazing South Downs distillery, so read on!

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



A treemendous success!

We've smashed our target of planting 100,000 trees by the middle of this decade – and have now set our sights on planting **at least one million more.**

The huge tree planting drive includes a much-needed resurgence of the iconic elm tree, a lost beacon of our countryside due to elm disease. A total of 3,500 disease-resistant elms will be in the ground by the end of this winter, providing havens for threatened species such as the White Letter Hairstreak butterfly.

Find out more and where all the trees have been planted.

[Find out more about Trees for the Downs](#)



An early Christmas present

Improving village halls, schools, playgrounds, bus shelters, access paths and libraries are among the goals of a major funding boost from the South Downs National Park Authority.

As 2025 draws to a close, the National Park is announcing **31 projects across Sussex and Hampshire that will receive a share of just under £1.9m**. The funds have been raised through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which is administered by the National Park Authority and paid by developers as a means of supporting new community infrastructure.

[Find out the list of projects here.](#)



Inspiration for Christmas walks

Tis the most wonderful time of the year – and a great opportunity to connect with your National Park and enjoy a festive stroll!

With crisp fresh air, crunchy leaves underfoot, frost-capped hills and stunning vistas to invigorate the soul, there's something very special about a **winter walk** in the South Downs.

It's the perfect place to enjoy a festive amble, dusting off those Christmas cobwebs after one too many mince pies and mulled wines!

But where to go?

[Get some inspiration here for your festive adventure!](#)

Helping young people to connect with nature

Thousands of children have been able to enjoy the wonders of the natural world and experience incredible landscapes thanks to two much-needed grants schemes.

Over the past year around 6,800 children from across Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey have had the opportunity to visit the South Downs on school trips as part of



the National Park's **Outdoor Learning Grant** scheme.

[Learn more](#)



A coat for all seasons

A very special coat is coming to Lewes in the new year as a powerful reminder of the power of community to tackle threats to the natural world.

Bull House, the Lewes home of one of America's founding father's Thomas Paine, will be welcoming **"The Coat of Hopes"**.

[Learn more](#)



COMPETITION: Win a free tour and tasting!



Overlooking stunning views of the National Park is the multi-award-winning distillery, [Spirit of the Downs](#).

It's in fact the only Brandy House in the UK using the finest local grapes to craft a range of award-winning brandy, grape vodka, and liqueurs at its distillery.

And hot off the press, just in time for Christmas, **Spirit of the Downs** is launching its new and very delicious Wild Stork Gin, made with locally sourced and foraged botanicals. The gin was officially launched at the distillery on 1 December and is also available at their Christmas Fair on 14 December from 11am till 3pm.

Sales of the new spirit will help to protect the National Park and create new havens for nature as 50p per sale of each bottle will go towards the South Downs Trust, the official charity of the National Park.

Michael Yeoman, CEO and Founder, explains that sustainability is at the heart of this local business.

“We’re based near Bolney wine estate, overlooking the National Park where most of the vineyards that we work with are based and have won 13 international awards for our range of grape based spirits,” he says.

“Our spirits are made with sustainability in mind, typically using pressed grapes from the finest small-batch sparkling wine producers. ‘Leave No Trace’ is one of my fundamental life and business principles minimising our impact on the planet.”



Spirit of the South Downs currently has a range of its drinks on sale at the visitor centre at Seven Sister Country Park, as well as a [well-stocked online shop here](#).

We've teamed up with Spirit of the Downs to offer two free pairs of tickets for a tour and tasting at the distillery.

People signing up to the newsletter during December will be automatically entered into the draw to win the tickets. Those who are already signed up can email “Spirit of the Downs” to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 31 December.

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

