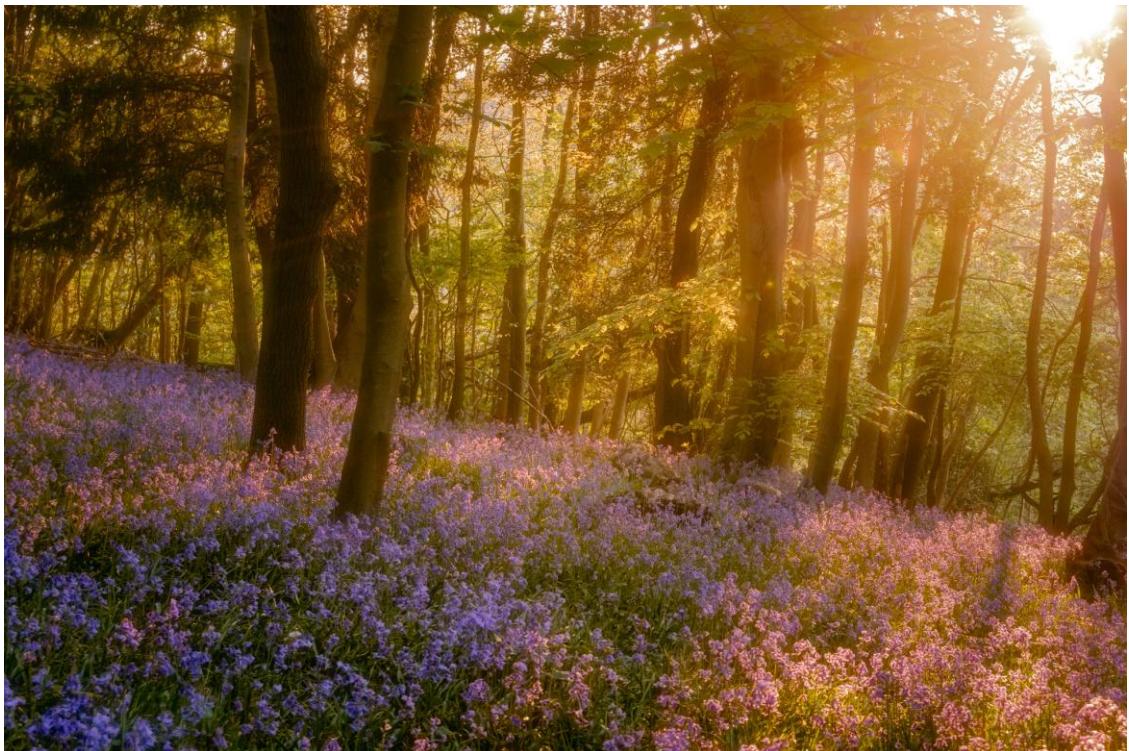


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Spring has sprung in the South Downs!

Welcome to the [April 2026 newsletter](#) for the South Downs National Park.

Everywhere you look at the moment is a blaze of colour and the National Park's bluebell woods are looking particularly masterful! It's been a busy few weeks at the National Park as we received a **royal visit** and there was also the poignant planting of

a very special tree to mark our **16th birthday**. Find out more in this month's newsletter and lots of other interesting updates!

For our competition this month we're offering a **fabulous discount at One Garden Brighton** - a beautiful venue in a historic setting with so much to enjoy for all ages and interests.

Our gratitude to Larry Van Howe for this dreamy image of bluebells at golden hour.

Thanks Larry! 😊

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



“Tree of Hope” is planted in South Downs

A “Tree of Hope” grown from the iconic Sycamore Gap tree on Hadrian's Wall has been planted in the National Park.

The tree was grown with seeds taken from the original Sycamore Gap tree that was illegally felled in Northumberland National Park in 2023.

Vanessa Rowlands, Chair of the South Downs National Park Authority, said: “It’s incredible to think that this beautiful tree has been grown from the Sycamore Gap tree and it just shows how nature can bounce back and recover.”

[Find out more about the planting here.](#)



Royal approval for new nature reserve

A new National Nature Reserve spanning a vast area of East Sussex has been announced to help protect vital water resources in the unique chalk landscape.

The Seven Sisters National Nature Reserve (SSNNR) is the UK's first groundwater-inspired reserve of its kind and seeks to protect our drinking water, which filters through the chalk landscape of the South Downs.

The National Nature Reserve, which covers 1,500 hectares, includes precious wildlife habitats, including chalk grassland, rare chalk heath, woodland, saltmarsh, scrubland, flood plains, an estuary and underwater chalk reefs.

His Majesty The King came to see it for himself and also unveiled an amazing new coastal path.

[Find out more here.](#)

The secrets of the South Downs sword

A beautiful fitting from a rare Anglo-Saxon sword discovered in the South Downs has gone on display for the first time.

[Learn more here.](#)





Path improvements and facilities at country park

A section of the South Downs Way has been given a makeover at a country park alongside new changing facilities for walkers, runners and cyclists.

[Find out more here.](#)

Major fungal discovery at ancient site

Amateur fungi enthusiast Liz Frost was stunned after spotting a tiny, tongue-shaped fungus that turned out to be the first-ever UK sighting of the Blue-Based Earthtongue, and only the second ever recorded in Europe.

[Learn about Liz's find here.](#)





“We never get bored of exploring the Park”

Nicola Robertz lives in Portsmouth and enjoys trips to the National Park with her family.

Here she writes about the wonderful joys of spring and her family’s discovery of a new favourite walk.

[Read Nicola’s piece here.](#)

Other news from your National Park



“The View’s Better Up Here” by John Lauper

Climate network grows

A network all about tackling climate change in South Downs communities has just welcomed its 100th member.

[Read More →](#)

Please don't risk your life!

As the warmer weather comes, we're reminding people to stay well back from cliff edges and to help care for nature.

[Read More →](#)

Enjoy a trip to One Garden Brighton!



Sandwiched between rolling green downland and the bustling city of Brighton is a garden for all seasons and imaginations.

One Garden Brighton, on the **historic Stanmer Estate**, features stunning walled gardens that have been expertly designed by modern-day landscape architect Dominic Cole, who is renowned for his work on the Eden Project.

Restored five years ago as part of a partner-wide project that was supported by the National Park Authority, the site has become a destination in Sussex and boasts a café, market and a wide range of events and activities for all ages.

The gardens are captivating – find peace in the contemplation section or learn how to make the most out of tiny spaces in the urban garden.

Owned and managed by Plumpton College, there are a huge range of courses on offer, from floristry to medicinal plants and how to make the perfect sour dough bread.

New for 2026 is the unveiling of the **Sussex Butterfly Gardens**, which will officially open to the public on 23 May. It follows an ambitious restoration project that has breathed new life into the estate's historic Palm House.

"Transforming the historic Palm House into a lush, tropical sanctuary for hundreds of butterflies is a proud moment," says Matthew Simmonds, Director and Founder of Sussex Butterfly Gardens. "We are creating a fully immersive visitor attraction. It offers an interactive jungle experience for the public while providing students with hands-on experience in a truly unique environment."

We've teamed up with One Garden Brighton to offer a £25 voucher to use in the café, which offers Pharmacie coffee that's delivered on an e-bike fresh each week from their roastery in Lewes and a selection of impressive cakes from the in-house bakery.

People signing up to the newsletter during April will be automatically entered into the draw to win the family pass.

Those who are already signed up can email "Nicholas Dubois" to newsletter@southdowns.gov.uk before midnight on 30 April. Sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and see competition T&Cs [here](#).



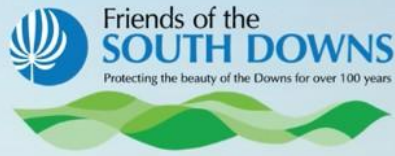
Coming up this April



- Join the Western Sussex Rivers Trust's passionate and knowledgeable Chief Executive Aimee Felus for a deep dive into the state of our rivers and how we can take action for our riverscapes – for ourselves, the wildlife who live on them and for future generations. Find out why we need to bring the power of imagination to the realm of river restoration, and what can happen as a result! This is a time of unprecedented challenges, but also of unprecedented opportunities. [This talk on 21 April](#) is guaranteed to leave you feeling inspired!
- [Fittleworth House in Fittleworth](#) will be opening its glorious gardens every Wednesday afternoon from 22 April to 13 May. It's a tranquil, romantic 3-acre country garden with a redesigned walled kitchen garden growing fruit, vegetables, and flowers, including a large collection of dahlias. A magnificent cedar tree overlooks the wisteria-covered, Grade II listed Georgian house (not open to public).
- Calling all history buffs! [A guided walk](#) will be taking place on 26 April, led by James Sainsbury, Curator of Archaeology at Worthing Museum. The walk will explore the Lewes Downs with views over the beautiful Ouse Valley. The

Caburn is an impressive Iron Age hillfort that has seen extensive excavations over the last 150 years. The Caburn sits on a fascinating block of downland, with numerous archaeological features still visible in the grassy landscape, including 4,000-year-old barrow cemeteries. This walk involves a long steep climb at the beginning (and a long easy descent at the end!)

- Starting at [Arundel Museum](#) on 2 May is a fascination exhibition about the Women's Land Army. This exhibition will explore the practicalities of how the Land Army was organised, the key figures involved and some of the challenges that were encountered along the way.



*A deep dive into the state of our
rivers and how we can take
action for our riverscapes*

Reimagining Rivers
with Aimee Felus
Chief Executive of the
Western Sussex Rivers Trust

Tuesday 21st April at 7pm
Pulborough Village Hall

Tickets £3

