

# Some Highlights of SDNPA Work – November 2016

## On the Ground

- Rangers and volunteers joined forces with Natural England to carry out maintenance work at Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve.
- Four more mink rafts were installed on the River Itchen working with Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and local landowners. There have been regular mink sightings on this stretch of the river.
- Volunteers and rangers started the annual monitoring for harvest mice nests in the Selbourne Partnership area. Working with the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust in new locations many nests have been located already in the first few days of surveying.
- Invasive vegetation was cleared from two Scheduled Ancient Monuments above Cocking in West Sussex.
- Volunteers constructed and installed 'cages' to protect juniper bushes from browsing livestock and deer on a site in the Central Downs area. Once relatively common on the Downs, juniper is now very rare and needs careful management and protection to secure its future.
- Rangers and volunteers carried out work to create better links between coppice coupes in Rewel Wood to improve the habitat for the pearl bordered fritillary.
- Preparation of materials for hedgelaying over the next few months were obtained from Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and several hedgelaying tasks were carried out by volunteers in the Western area.
- Volunteers cleared scrub from chalk grassland on Mill Hill Local Nature Reserve.
- Volunteers replaced fences and replaced a stile with a kissing gate to improve access at Bishopstone in East Sussex.
- Invasive bramble was cleared on Farm Hill Site of Nature Conservation Interest.
- Rangers and volunteers carried out several dormouse box checks in Binsted Wood.
- Volunteers carried out 38 blackthorn clearance tasks across the National Park.
- Clearance of scrub to limit damage to two cross-dykes (both on the Heritage at Risk register) in the Central Downs led to the estate agreeing to clear larger trees from the sites.
- Rangers facilitated a MIND conservation work party.
- Volunteer rangers carried out 21 days of coppicing on 9 sites across the National Park to improve habitat diversity and produce materials for other activities like charcoal making and hedgelaying.

## South Downs Way (SDW)

- Three fingerposts were installed on the SDW between Cocking and Treyford.
- 50m of vegetation clearance was carried out on the SDW between Heyshott and Treyford to improve access for users of the path.
- Signage promoting the Chattri memorial was installed on the SDW in partnership with Brighton and Hove City Council.
- Volunteers and rangers worked with local partners and landowners to establish wild flower seed on a tumuli by the South Downs Way near Winchester. This involved creating a margin around the tumuli within the arable field.

## Learning and Outreach

- Staff attended the Brinsbury College careers and volunteering fair to showcase careers and volunteering in the National Park to students studying a range of outdoor focused courses.
- 60 providers attended the two 2016 annual learning outside the classroom (lotc) network meetings held at The Sustainability Centre and Saddlescombe Farm where the group discussed the health and wellbeing benefits of learning outdoors as well as receiving training on the Secrets of the High Woods heritage learning resources from consultants, Past Participants.

- Staff supported the education team at Queen Elizabeth Country Park in delivering a Year 5 school session on the special qualities of Butser Hill.
- Students from Chichester College were hosted at the South Downs Centre for a session looking at career opportunities within the South Downs National Park.

### **Access and Sustainable Travel**

- A new shared use path from Petersfield to Queen Elizabeth Country Park officially launched. Built by Hampshire County Council, this was the final scheme to be delivered from the programme of Cycle Ambition schemes funded by the Department for Transport and partners.

### **Viewshed Character**

- The Viewshed Character work and GoogleMaps based tool that was developed as part of our landscape evidence work won the Strategic Landscape Planning Award at the Landscape Institute awards event in London.
- Defra submitted a copy of the South Downs Climate Change Adaptation Plan to the UK Climate Change Adaptation Committee for them to review. They were keen that the Committee get a chance to consider the report in detail so it could inform the next iteration of the UK wide Adaptation Plan.

### **Planning**

- Three parish workshops took place across Hampshire, West and East Sussex as part of our Sites & Settlements consultation on emerging allocations and designations in the Local Plan.
- The Pre-Submission Joint West Sussex Minerals Plan was considered by Members at Planning Committee with the recommendation to approve for consultation at the full Authority meeting on 29 November.

### **Publications**

- The new *Secrets of the High Woods: Revealing Hidden Landscapes* book was published and launched at an event attended by over 80 of the project's volunteers. The book gives an insight into the findings from the 3-year project, Secrets of the High Woods, such as evidence of prisoner of war camps, docking stations for airships the size of nine double-decker buses, abandoned unexploded bombs and a training school where Canadian soldiers underwent an assault course under live fire, all in the South Downs National Park.

### **Media**

- A short film promoting the South Downs National Park to national and international visitors launched on World Tourism Day and has been viewed over 50,000 times. Ben Fogle presents this online film which showcases cycling, trail-running, picnicking and geocaching as top South Downs activities, as well as the local produce and dark night skies of the South Downs. Watch it here - <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/ben-fogle-adventures-in-the-south-downs/>
- We supported the Arun and Rother Connections project with media work around their winning the Campaign for National Park's Park Protector award 2016.
- We supported Hampshire County Council with the launch of the new shared path from Petersfield to Queen Elizabeth Country Park with local news interest.
- On social media we used National Tree Week as an opportunity to promote the South Downs woodland work and Secrets of the High Woods project book.

### **South Downs Centre**

- 216 people visited the South Downs exhibition area at the South Downs Centre in Midhurst.