

What's Up on the Downs

Spring/Summer 2024

Compostable Packaging... What's the Truth?

Did you see our recent feature on ITV's Meridian News featuring the Sustainability Centre? The spotlight was on compostable packaging, with a special focus on Anita Carey, a dedicated PHD Researcher and volunteer at the centre. Anita is spearheading a year-long investigation into the breakdown of compostable materials, aiming to determine their true eco-friendly impact. Through hands-on experiments and insights from fellow composters, she's unravelling the mysteries behind these products - her mission is clear, to unravel the truth and pave the way for more sustainable choices.



PHOTO:

Home composter
Joanne Hughes,
PHD Researcher Anita
Carey, ITV Meridian
Presenter Lucy Warhurst.

WATCH THE INTERVIEW

tinyurl.com/v23vy7vh

Folk in the Forest

Exciting news! Folk in the Forest returns on Saturday, July 6th! Join us for an unforgettable evening filled with foot-stomping music and vibrant energy. With tickets in limited supply, be sure to secure yours soon to take advantage of the early bird discount.

MORE INFO AND BOOKINGS
tinyurl.com/FolkintheForest



Sat 6th July



**FOLK IN THE FOREST - 10% Stay Overnight Discount For B&B,
Yurts, Camping or Hostel book by phone 01730 823166**

The
Sustainability
Centre

A message from our CEO, Christine Seaward...

Currently we are buzzing with activity at the centre! School groups, home education groups, adult courses and overnight guests in our campsite, yurts, hostel and B&B are keeping us busy. We are thrilled to welcome the Rural Refugee Network back and excited that our new Fair Share Fund has so far enabled three new school groups to enjoy day trips here.

Nature is hinting at summer, with long light evenings and the discovery of a beautiful bee orchid in our 'no mow May' grassland. As midsummer approaches, we are gearing up for the Summer Solstice Dawn to Dusk Walk with Queen Elizabeth Country Park and Churcher's College, providing a midnight checkpoint for walkers.

Although we were unable to host the South Downs Green Fair this year, we have launched a fundraising programme to bridge the gap. We are aiming to complete the final phase of replacing old and worn single-glazed windows with triple glazing, purchase an off-grid shepherd's hut to replace aging yurts, upgrade the outdoor shelter for the pizza oven, buy tools and equipment for our volunteers and install interpretation boards to enhance visitor understanding of our rewilding efforts. You can find out how to support our projects here:

sustainability-centre.org/fundraising-projects.html

We have several job opportunities available, including roles in our hospitality and accommodation team and a new Centre Manager/CEO position later in the year. Details can be found on our website:

sustainability-centre.org/job-opportunities.html

Thank you for your continued support!

The bee orchid is one of the most stunning and iconic native orchids in Britain, so it's always a delight to find them on site!

Bee Orchid Facts

- Thrives in chalky, neutral soils, sands, and gravel.
- Found in grasslands, meadows, woodland rides, road verges and railway embankments.
- Can appear in large numbers for a few years before being outcompeted by other plants.
- Mimics female bees to attract male bees for pollination; can self-pollinate if needed.
- May only flower once in their lifetime, leading to fluctuating numbers year to year.
- Protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act; do not pick them!
- Not very rare, but habitat destruction from development and agriculture threatens their colonies.



Rediscover Inner Harmony in Nature with the Power of Your 'Sit Spot'

In today's fast-paced world, finding tranquility can feel like a luxury. Reconnecting with nature might be the key to restoring balance in your life. Enter the 'Sit Spot' – your personal sanctuary in the great outdoors. Imagine a spot where you feel completely at ease, whether it's a secluded forest corner, a peaceful meadow, or a quiet spot by the water. Choose a location that speaks to your soul and immerse yourself in nature's beauty. The Sit Spot practice is about slowing down, unplugging from digital noise and reconnecting with the earth's rhythms.

HERE ARE SOME 'SIT SPOT' TIPS:

- **DISCONNECT AND BE PRESENT** Switch off your phone and fully engage with nature. Let go of worries and be present in your surroundings.
- **ENGAGE YOUR SENSES** Observe and interact with the natural world. Notice the shapes, colours and textures around you. Listen to the birdsong and the breeze. Feel the earth beneath your feet.
- **EMBRACE CHANGE** Visit your Sit Spot regularly to observe the seasonal changes. Witness the rhythms of growth and decay that remind us that change is a natural and inevitable part of life.
- **CULTIVATE AWARENESS** Engage with nature in various ways, from tracing leaf veins to inhaling forest scents, deepening your connection with the natural world.
- **FIND THE MAGIC** Return to your Sit Spot often and discover new wonders. Let nature's subtle magic surprise and inspire you.

Wellbeing Courses

In addition to our practical courses in gardening, land management and sustainable crafts, we offer a wide range of wellbeing courses, including retreats and meditation sessions. We take pride in providing a safe and supportive environment where people can learn at their own pace. For more information about our wellbeing courses, please visit...

sustainability-centre.org/wellbeing-courses.html



Dates for the Diary

Women's Woodland Retreat Fri 21st June

Take time to relax and unwind in the company of other women. This retreat is designed to support your wellbeing, help you connect with nature, learn something new and take some time to just be. Jonathon Huet will close the course with a guided meditation.

sustainability-centre.org/womens-woodland-retreat.html

Gardening in a Changing Climate Sat 13th July

Be inspired by Tom Nielsen who is a garden designer and nursery owner specialising in naturalistic design using nature positive plants that are reliable, tough and beautiful. Tom's own garden was featured on BBC Gardeners' World last year.

sustainability-centre.org/gardening-in-a-changing-climate-course.html

Youth Mental Health First Aid Course Thurs 26th - Fri 27th Sept

Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is an internationally recognised training course for anyone who works with, lives with or supports young people aged 8-18. Gain the skills and confidence to step in, offer first aid and guide young people towards the appropriate help.

sustainability-centre.org/youth-mental-health-first-aid-course.html



Forest School Cabin

Recently our patron, Lady Angela Stansfield-Smith, ceremoniously cut the Ivy ribbon on the cabin porch of our new, locally crafted Woodmouse Forest School Cabin. The forest school children, along with their parents, gathered together for the grand opening of the cabin, which will play a crucial role as a storage facility for teaching equipment, as well as an indoor space for arts and crafts activities when the weather is less accommodating. A huge thank you to our supporters who generously funded the project.





Fair Share Fund

As an educational charity, our mission is to be accessible to all and to spread the message of sustainability far and wide. To support this goal, we recently established the 'Fair Share Fund' to provide bursaries for schools that face financial barriers to visiting us for a day.

We are delighted to share that three schools have already benefited from this scheme, with more scheduled to attend. It has been incredibly rewarding to see these young people enjoying their time here and expanding their knowledge of environmental stewardship.

During their visits, students have the opportunity to learn about habitats and conservation, participate in forest skills sessions and explore nature crafts, among other activities. To find out more about the 'Fair Share Fund' and how you can apply, visit...

sustainability-centre.org/fair-share-fund.html



Free School Visits

Explore the wonders of nature with FREE school visits courtesy of The South Downs National Park and The Sustainability Centre! We're thrilled to announce that we're covering all learning and transport expenses up to £300, making your school trip hassle-free and unforgettable! This funding is perfect for schools who have 25% or more pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals. Tailor your trip to suit your students' interests. Don't miss out on this amazing opportunity!

tinyurl.com/southdownsexplorers

Summer Sessions

Looking for a nature-centric environment with expert tutors for your educational groups? Explore our tailored sessions, featuring a variety of captivating subjects taught in our outdoor learning spaces - set within our beautiful 55 acres of woodland. In addition to our well-equipped outdoor facilities, we also have indoor facilities and a vegetarian café on site, open Wednesday - Friday.

sustainability-centre.org/group-bookings.html



Ideal for Home Ed
& Activity Groups

Book on
Week Days
29th Jul -
6th Sept

The Sights and Sounds of Summer

An update on our meadows and gardens by volunteer coordinator, Rachael Mairey...

Sweet potato tendrils elegantly wind up a willow wigwam, content in the warmth of our bustling polytunnel. Various species of bees are drawn to the delightful scents of broad bean flowers, drinking their sweet nectar and using them as cozy resting spots when the rain falls. Our polytunnel is truly a productive haven! Though the outside temperatures are still mild, our plants are already in 'summer mode,' growing rapidly and thriving.

In the orchard, small apples have started to grow and will continue to mature in the coming months. The vegetable and herb gardens are beginning to yield their bounty, while our wildflower and medicinal meadows are on the verge of blooming - promising a vibrant display and a gentle, satisfied hum from our buzzing pollinators. Beautiful colours will flutter above the flowers as butterflies and moths dance from one bloom to the next.

Providing a space for nature is a real joy and it's all thanks to our amazing team of volunteers. They work tirelessly each week, tending to our wild and edible areas and keeping the site tidy. Their dedication ensures that our gardens and meadows remain a sanctuary for both plants and pollinators.

