

28/05/2020

## South Downs tourism sector pulls together for recovery preparations

The South Downs National Park Authority is working with partners on recovery plans to help revive the region's important tourism sector.

Over 360 people from the Sussex tourism sector have virtually come together to discuss the myriad of challenges facing the sector, including restoring consumer confidence, finding innovative revenue streams, adapting to social distancing measures and the use of technology in tourism.

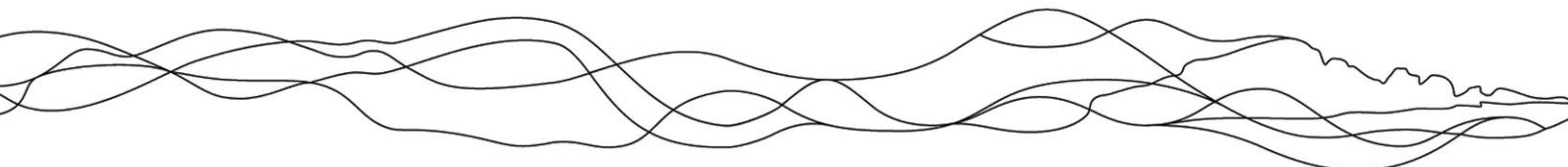


With many venues and sites only re-opening when it is safe to do so, the focus has been on ensuring the sector continues to get the support it needs and is able to “survive, revive and thrive”.

The strong collaboration comes as a new report underlines the value of the visitor economy in the South Downs. It comes as **English Tourism Week** this year focuses on the theme of supporting the recovery of English tourism and raising awareness of the importance of the sector to the UK economy.

The independent study into trends, commissioned by the Authority and showing the latest-available data, shows direct expenditure by visitors went up by over seven per cent – from just over £304.39m in 2017 to £327.25m in 2018. The overall economic value was £436.81m in 2018 – up by over seven per cent from £406.12m in 2017.

The sector employed 5,775 people in 2018 – a rise of six per cent from 5,426 in 2017. The data also shows that the number of visitors rose to 19.08m in 2018 – up from 18.88m in 2017.



Kat Beer, who leads sustainable tourism for the South Downs National Park, said: “There’s no doubt that the tourism, heritage and hospitality sector has been hit extremely hard and there are still uncertain times ahead.

“During this unprecedented time, I think it’s really important the sector pulls together and that’s why we are collaborating with partners across the region and across a variety of niches within the visitor economy.

“The South Downs is still a relatively young National Park and still developing its sustainable tourism offer, but these new statistics are very encouraging. Our focus has not been looking for a big rise in visitor numbers, rather an increase in expenditure and employment, and this data clearly shows some very positive growth. As we mark English Tourism Week, it underlines the value of the South Downs tourism sector to the economy.”

The webinar project is being curated by Experience West Sussex, Sussex Chamber of Commerce, Coast2Capital Growth Hub and the South Downs National Park Authority.

Two Sussex MPs, Andrew Griffith, of Arundel, and Sally-Ann Hart, of Hastings and Rye, attended the first webinar.

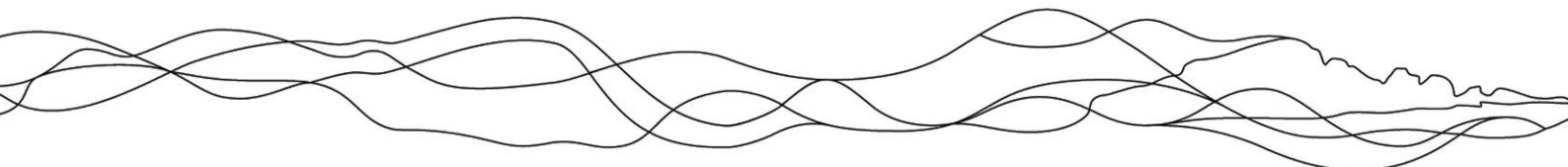
The final webinar, on Monday, 2 June, between midday and 1.30pm, will focus on the theme of building resilience in times of uncertainty, with experts and tourism operators exploring consumer confidence, innovative revenue streams and the use of technology in tourism. Limited spaces are available and people can register here:

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_92q1vjbXTNSTHyGA7WWHvQ](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_92q1vjbXTNSTHyGA7WWHvQ)

Kat added: “The safety of our visitors and those living and working in the National Park remains our priority and the Government guidelines remain to stay at home as much as possible. That means it may be some time before ‘tourism’ as we know it returns.

“However, we’re looking at the long-term recovery picture and part of that could mean people spending more time locally, visiting attractions nearby and an increase in staycations. When it is safe to do so, this could present a real opportunity to help the recovery of visitor attractions and hospitality businesses in the South Downs. We will be working closely with partners across the sector to help facilitate this recovery.”

Visitor attractions are looking into adapting their operations with new social distancing arrangements and if people are planning a visit they should check with the business before they travel to ensure they are open. For the latest advice on enjoying the National Park safely visit [www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/coronavirus-covid-19-update/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/national-park-authority/our-work/coronavirus-covid-19-update/)



For more information on English Tourism Week, visit [www.visitbritain.org/english-tourism-week](http://www.visitbritain.org/english-tourism-week)  
#EnglishTourismWeek20

## Ends

### Notes to Editors

- Members of the South Downs National Park Authority have approved a COVID-19 Recovery Fund of £375,000 to help support local communities and step up the National Park's role as a 'natural health service'. The funding has been split into five priority themes: landscape and biodiversity, cultural heritage, sustainable access, connecting people and communities, and economy and tourism, with an additional, smaller amount going towards engaging more people with the National Park during this unprecedented time. For more information see [www.southdowns.gov.uk/recovery-fund-gets-green-light-from-national-park-authority/](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/recovery-fund-gets-green-light-from-national-park-authority/)

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