

IMPORTANT NEW BOOK

The Future of the SOUTH DOWNS

Landscape, Ecology, Land Use and Conservation

Gerald Smart and Peter Brandon, Editors

The South Downs are among the best loved landscapes in southern England. The beauty of their rolling chalk hills and steep escarpments, open river valleys, dramatic sea cliffs, sandy wealden ridges and woodlands, and colourful wildlife, has been an inspiration to writers and artists for centuries. The beauty is enjoyed daily by the 120,000 residents of local towns and villages, and the area attracts nearly 40 million visits a year, a total which is more than for any National Park. The Downs are, nevertheless, essentially working countryside, landscapes that have changed and are still changing in response to farming and forestry practice. This book describes in a readable way the local, national and international value of the Downs, the problems arising from their multiple use, and the steps that have been, and can be, taken to conserve them. It is published at a critical time, for the long-term health of the area is at last under formal scrutiny by central and local government and is openly debated, with the designation of a South Downs National Park in mind. The area the Park may cover encompasses the familiar chalk escarpments that stretch from Winchester in the west to the coast at Eastbourne in the east, and also includes the greensand areas to the north near Alresford and Alton, over to Blackdown south of Haslemere, and then on to Petworth, Steyning and to the country north of Lewes.

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This book is the fourth in a series that focuses on threatened or vulnerable land- and seascapes, in which experts discuss the cultural, historical, economic, land-use, land management and nature conservation issues that are part of those environments. The aim is to put all the necessary background information from different studies, research and references between the covers of one publication, so that all who live in the area, and manage and plan its future, can base their involvement on known attitudes, facts and figures. Previous books in the series have covered the Norfolk & Suffolk Broads, the Solent and the Cairngorms. More are being prepared.

THE EDITORS:

Gerald Smart is Emeritus Professor of Planning at University College London and formerly County Planning Officer for Hampshire. In addition to contributing to books on planning and countryside management, he was co-author in 1990 of the Countryside Commission's Review of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and in 2001, co-author of the book, *Landscapes at Risk? The Future of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty*. He has been a council member of the RSPB, and is currently on the council of the Solent Protection Society. Professor Smart was appointed CBE in 1991 for his contribution to strategic planning, and in 2001 was the first recipient of the Bowland Award of the National Association of AONBs. He lives on the New Forest coast near Lymington, Hampshire.

Peter Brandon is well known for his many books on landscape history, particularly his most recent ones on the South Downs (2005 & 1998), the Weald of Kent and Sussex (2003) and the North Downs (2005). Dr Brandon is a native of Sussex and a resident since 1958; since retiring he has become involved in promoting and protecting the countryside. He is a former Head of the Department of Geography at the University of North London, and is a Vice-President of the Sussex branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and of the Sussex Archaeological Society, and President of the South Downs Society (formerly the Society of Sussex Downsmen). He lives at Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex.

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