SOUTH DOWNS



# Water Voles Bringing People Together in the River Meon

11<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Restoring Ratty Conference

Elaina Whittaker-Slark

# The Meon Valley





# The Meon Valley

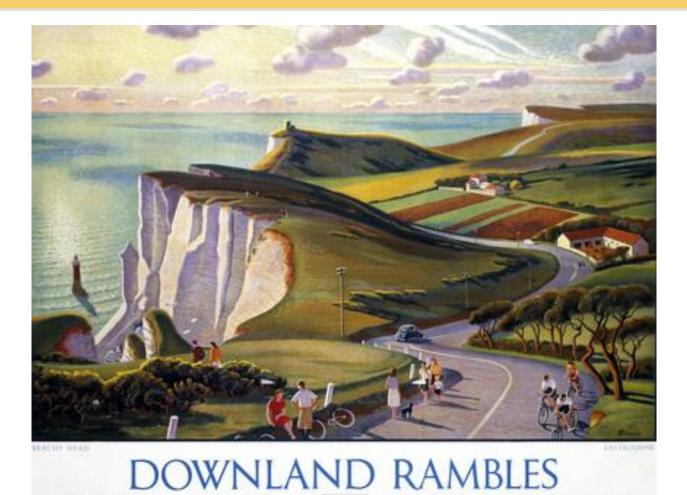




# The first National Park?

WITH CHEAP TICKETS

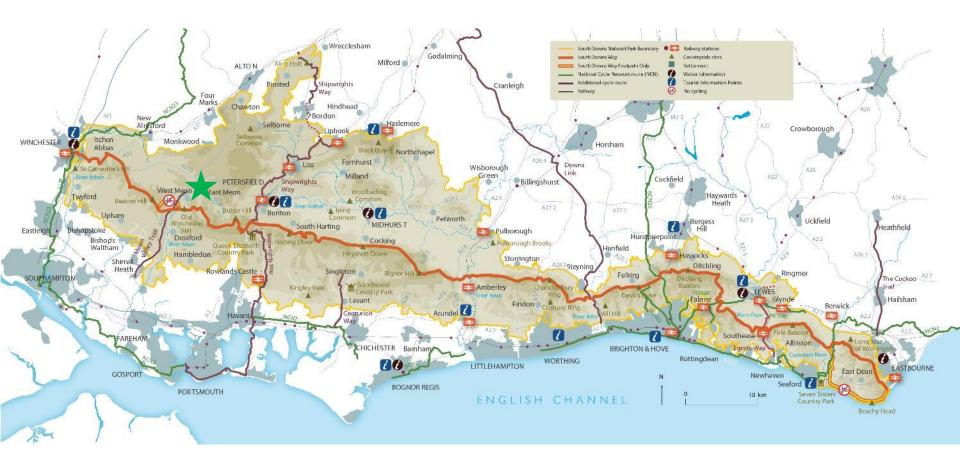




(BAUTUM BAILWAYS) FREQUENT ELECTRIC TRAINS









## Chalk streams





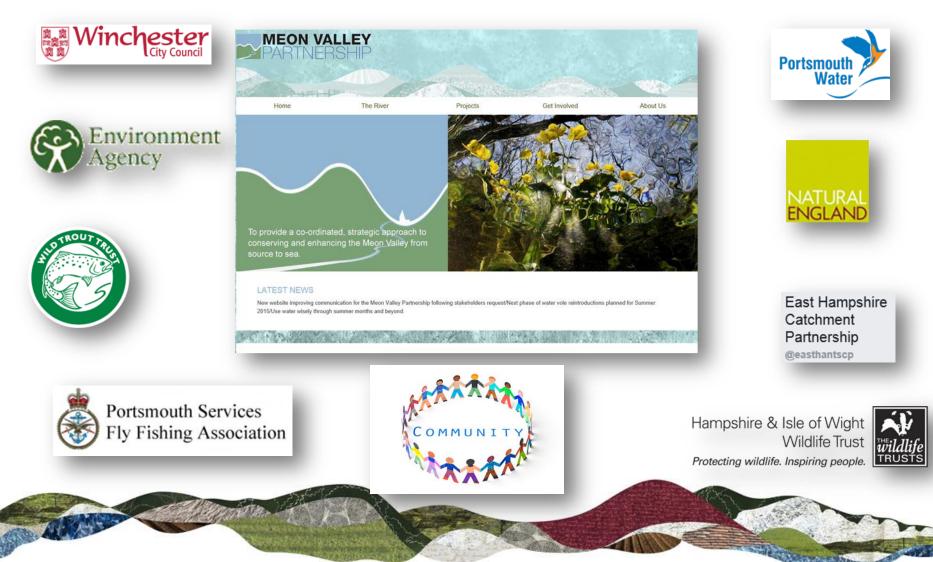
**River** Meon





# Meon Valley Partnership





# Water Vole Reintroduction to the River Meon





#### Overview





Self sustaining population of water voles



Landscape scale approach



Community engagement



Restore and maintain the river



### The release







2833 water voles



20 release sites



# Habitat Suitability Survey



Habitat Suitability features (from Harris et al 2009)	Score 1 if present	
	L	R
Well-developed (>60%) bankside and emergent vegetation <sup>a</sup> (Discount if excessive shading from overhanging branches)	1	1
Year round availability of food sources <sup>b</sup>	1	1
Suitable refuge areas above extremities in water levels <sup>c</sup>	1	1
Steep banks suitable for burrowing (Discount if solid / manmade banks)	1	1
Permanent open water <sup>d</sup> (Discount if Estuarine / Brackish water)	1	1
Presence of berm (a ledge at water level) <sup>e</sup>	0	0
Lack of disturbance (poaching, grazing +/- recent management)	1	1
Nest building opportunities in vegetation above water level <sup>f</sup>	1	1
Total	7	7

< 3	Unsuitable (no potential for enhancement)
3 – 5	Sub-optimal (potential for enhancement)
> 5	Optimal









#### Restricted public access to the River Meon



#### Sustainable mink control



#### Compromised natural river function







#### Access - Engagement with stakeholders & local community



#### Compromised function - River restoration & advice



# Engagement

- 56 Landowners,
  Farmers,
  Residents,
  River Keepers &
  Angling clubs
- 8 school activity days
  12 community talks
  What's in it for me?



# Mink Monitoring





Provide raft operator's pack



Bespoke service



Regular liaison

Investigate surrounding river valleys

# Volunteer support





#### 34 volunteers

Liaison, admin, mink control, release, survey, monitor, photographer, media and education



Training programme





# Twitchers flock to Titchfield Haven as rare birds of prey return

Friday, 18 August 2017 - Local People



#### A RARE bird of prey has been spotted for the first time in 45 years at a nature reserve in the lower Meon Valley.

Titchfield Haven National Nature Reserve has become a hotspot for twitchers as a pair of marsh harriers has raised two chicks in the reed-beds.

It's the first time that marsh harriers have bred at the Hampshire County Council (HCC) run beauty spot since its establishment in 1972, and only the second time marsh harriers have bred in the county since 1957.

Habitat loss and persecution nearly led to



# **River restoration – Droxford**





# **River restoration – East Meon**





### Advice







on 24.04.15





#### 61 sections surveyed



Developed feedback visit pack

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# Wildlife Cameras





# Any questions?





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