

Natural England to declare a new London National Nature Reserve

South London Downs will be officially declared later this month.

Published 10 July 2019 From: [Natural England](#)



London's third National Nature Reserve (NNR) will be officially declared later this month during a ceremony in Croydon, Natural England announced today (10 July 2019).

South London Downs, a 417-hectare site along the border of Croydon and Surrey with stunning views across south London, will be the second largest NNR in London after Richmond Park.

Jointly managed by the City of London Corporation and Croydon Council, the new NNR brings together 152.5 ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for nature, including the rare flower-rich chalk downland of Riddlesdown, Farthing Downs and Happy Valley, with non-SSSI sites of value to wildlife. These include Coulsdon Common, Kenley Common, Hawkhurst, New Hill and Sanderstead to Whyteleafe Countryside Area.

The new NNR will be at the heart of recovering nature across South London, improving and connecting areas that will benefit wildlife and people. It seeks to enhance the management of the area for wildlife, while creating a site where people can enjoy, learn and engage with the natural world. With its location on the urban fringe, the NNR opens up opportunities for recreation and access to nature for the 385,000 Croydon residents and beyond.

The public are invited to celebrate the declaration at the '[South London Downs Discovery Day](#)' on 25 July at Farthing Downs, Ditches Lane, Coulsdon CR5 1DA from 13:00-17:00, as part of the National Park City Festival. Activities will include guided walks, meet the sheep, citizen science, outdoor yoga and

other nature activities for all the family.

A declaration ceremony will be taking place at 15:00, involving speeches from Marian Spain, interim Chief Executive of Natural England; Councillor Oliver Lewis, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport at Croydon Council; and Graeme Doshi-Smith, Chairman of the City of London Corporation's Epping Forest and Commons Committee.

Marian Spain, interim Chief Executive of Natural England, said:

I am delighted that we can now formally declare the South London Downs as London's third National Nature Reserve. The new NNR will make a huge difference to South London's wildlife and the lives of Londoners by giving them access to some of the country's very best wildlife in beautiful open spaces right on their doorsteps, demonstrating why London is indeed a National Park City.

The declaration ceremony at Farthing Downs on 25 July will be a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the beauty of the NNR and its importance for nature with the local community. It will also give us the opportunity to celebrate the hard work of our partners who have helped to make this a reality.

Graeme Doshi-Smith, Chairman of the City of London Corporation's Epping Forest & Commons Committee, said:

We are very proud to be part of London's new National Nature Reserve – recognising the importance of these open spaces to nature and the environment.

This site will be celebrated for years to come as an iconic natural sanctuary in South London, a haven for wildlife and a centre for learning.

These precious sites are a natural resource for Londoners and visitors from across the UK. Together we are ensuring that they are protected and conserved for generations to come.

Councillor Oliver Lewis, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport at Croydon Council, said:

I'm delighted the diverse and unique landscape around Happy Valley has been recognised as a new National Nature Reserve.

The South London Downs Discovery Day is set to be a memorable event and I look forward to welcoming the community to the day.

There will be wide range of fun free activities with something for everyone to enjoy.