

PRESS RELEASE

8th January 2008



Blow off the cobwebs at Dunstable Downs

If your new years resolution is to be more active or you just feel like getting out and blowing off the cobwebs, this month's Health Walk at the Dunstable Downs could be just the ticket. On **Wednesday 16th January**, Groundwork Luton & South Bedfordshire and the National Trust are encouraging people to enjoy a free short walk at the idyllic setting of the Dunstable Downs. Groundwork will be leading a 40 minute walk, leaving from the Chilterns Gateway Centre at 10.30am. The walk will make use of the new surfaced route at Dunstable Downs which is accessible to everyone; it avoids the steeper, muddy sections of the site and so walkers can wear any sensible footwear including trainers.

The walk is just one in a series of healthy walks taking place at the site on the third Wednesday of each month and is part of a variety of activities being offered based around the new walking, cycling and wheelchair accessible path at the Downs. When completed the route will link the new Chiltern's Gateway Centre to the town of Dunstable, allowing visitors to access the site on foot or by bike whilst avoiding busy roads or steep hills.

The activities aim to encourage more people to visit the new facilities at Dunstable Downs and to make other journeys by walking or cycling, helping people to lead healthier and more active lifestyles. The project is supported by Bedfordshire County Council with funding from Sport England and the Big Lottery Fund's joint 'Active England Fund'.

Groundwork will be working with a number of partners including Bedfordshire County Council and the National Trust to continue a programme of activities at the Downs including guided walks, conservation volunteering and family days.

For further information about the walk or other activities in the programme please contact Debbie Vidler, Groundwork Luton and South Bedfordshire on 01582 345313 or email deborah.vidler@groundwork.org.uk.

Debbie Vidler, Senior Community Project Officer, Groundwork Luton and South Bedfordshire said:

“Groundwork is pleased to be involved in this project, particularly the healthy walks which provide opportunities for all visitors to enjoy and learn about the inspiring landscape that Dunstable Downs offer”

- ENDS -

Press Enquiries

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Notes to Editor

Groundwork Luton and South Bedfordshire

Groundwork Luton and South Bedfordshire is a member of a federation of over 50 Groundwork trusts across the UK. Groundwork works with all sectors of the community to improve the environment and create sustainable communities that are vibrant, healthy and safe.

For more information, please visit our web site at

www.groundwork.org.uk/lutonandsouthbedfordshire

Dunstable Downs (including Whipsnade Downs owned by the National Trust) is a sinuous chalk escarpment stretching from the very edge of Dunstable south-westwards. It includes common land managed on behalf of Bedfordshire County Council by the National Trust. It is some 119 ha in size and includes part of a larger Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (61 ha) and two Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The SSSI is acknowledged to be a key site for nature conservation in the Bedfordshire Chilterns. Adjacent to the downs is the National Trust owned Chute Farm, an additional 70 ha.

The Chilterns AONB

In 1965, 833 square kilometres of the Chilterns were designated by the government as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This recognises that the Chilterns countryside is amongst the finest in the country, on a par with National Parks. The main aim of the AONB is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, which means that the Chilterns is protected for future generations to enjoy. There are 40 other AONBs across England and Wales.

Bedfordshire County Council: Countryside Access Service

Helping people enjoy the Bedfordshire countryside is the main role of the Countryside Access Service. Thousands of kilometres of footpaths and bridleways are maintained so that people can walk to unwind, cycle to work or exercise the dog - and the family. BCC manages large country parks and many more small woodlands and nature reserves close to where people live so that they have access to attractive countryside, on their doorstep.

The National Trust is the largest conservation organisation in Europe. With the support of our 3.4 million members and 43,000 volunteers, we manage over 600,000 acres of countryside, more than 700 miles of coastline and more than 200 buildings and gardens of outstanding interest and importance.