

MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS LAND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern
Thursday 9 April 2015, 4:00 pm**

Present: Mr D Baldwin, Mr R Chamings, Mr R Cousins (Vice Chairman), Mr S Freeman, Mr A Golightly, Mr D Hawkins, Mr B Pilcher, Mrs G Rees, Mr C Rouse (Chairman), Mr T Yapp, Mrs S Young.

In attendance: The Director, Secretary to the Board, Deputy Conservation Officer, Community and Conservation Officer, Operation's Manager, Mr R Vale, Mr M Gardner (Grazier), Mr R Morton, Mr D Street, Mr P Watson and 1 member of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ms H Stace and Mrs C O'Donnell.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Rouse declared an interest in matters relating to the HLS scheme.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

i) Election Results

Mr Richard Bartholomew had been elected with a turnout of 11.92%.

ii) VE Day Beacon

The Director had given permission for Worcestershire County Council to place a gas fired beacon on Worcestershire Beacon on 8 May 2015.

iii) Visits/Strolls

Mr Rouse suggested arranging visits to the Brecon Beacons (with Ian Rowat) and Cleeve Common. The Director/Secretary to the Board agreed to E-mail Board Members to assess the level of interest. Mr Golightly had offered to lead a walk on Castlemorton Common and Mr Rouse was trying to contact Peter Garner to lead a walk on the Hills. The Director suggested that these might be linked to consideration of part III of the Management Plan.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 8 JANUARY 2015

There were no matters arising that were not on the agenda.

5. MOUNTAIN BIKE CAMPAIGN

The Community and Conservation Officer (CCO) went through the paper that she had prepared on Mountain Biking on the Hills. Enforcing the byelaw which prohibited cycling on the Hills (other than on the bridleways) was very difficult. She set out a proposed action plan:

Short term:

- New design of 'Code of Conduct cards' – distribution to local biking stores/outlets, Kiosk at British Camp car park etc.
- Awareness raised on site by wardens providing information and distributing cards.
- Meeting with cycling groups to provide them with cards to distribute to members.
- Promote awareness on the MHC website and social media, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Continue to discuss ideas and information with the Recreation Advisory Panel. Use their expertise and contacts to raise awareness and promote responsible cycling.

Medium Term (in addition to the above):

- Wardens, staff and Conservators will identify key points at which mountain bikers are illegally accessing the Hills and Commons on footpaths. Signage will be installed to clearly identify that access is not permitted at those points.
- Where appropriate, place large obstacles such as boulders and wood materials to restrict access for cyclists.
- CCO to contact magazines and other publications and websites to encourage them to remove cycling routes which are deemed illegal.
- CCO to seek funding for a new mountain biking and walking guide and launch event, which could include sponsorship from local cycling businesses and cycling clubs.
- Promote the development of the mountain biking and walking guide involving local groups and cycling organisations.

Long Term – before 2016 (in addition to the above):

- To hold workshops and meetings with the Recreation Advisory Panel, local mountain bikers, Wardens, Sustrans and other organisations to develop a comprehensive and easy to use map and guide for mountain bikers and walkers which clearly identifies bridleways
- Organise an event to launch the biking guide.
- Invite local cycle clubs and groups and cycle businesses to attend and share stories and ideas and work together to cycle responsibly.
- Mountain bikers will be encouraged to attend and talk to walkers and other users of the Hills on how they cycle responsibly.
- Invite famous mountain bikers from the area to support our work and the launch event.
- MHC staff and local experts in archaeology, geology and biodiversity to attend meetings of local biking clubs to ensure the relationship between bikers and MHC is continued and that each party are aware of the issues.
- Increase the amount of staff time spent on championing the new guide and talking to cyclists.

It was suggested that she might also ask the Gazette to run an article on the problems posed by inappropriate cycling on the hills, and make sure that there were guides in the pubs and cafes where the cyclists congregated. The Wyche Innovation Centre was also suggested as a place where information could be provided. One of the problems identified was the difficulty of informing cyclists where the bridleways were, and of the requirement to stay on them. It was impossible to attach a map of large

enough scale to a card or leaflet, and difficult to identify the correct route on the ground without way markers. Identifying riders was also a problem. It was agreed that information needed to come before enforcement. The CCO was researching best practice of other organisations.

Mrs Rees asked for some of the Code of Conduct cards to distribute in Colwall and thanked the CCO for the work which she had put into the paper. On the proposal of Mrs Rees, seconded by Mr Cousins it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend that the Board to support the actions outlined above.

6. PARK WOOD

The Deputy Conservation Officer reported that a petition had been received from 27 residents living in the area of Brockhill Road, registering their dismay at the woodland management work at Park Wood. The Conservation Officer and Deputy Conservation Officer had met with them, and given a presentation on coppicing. A site meeting was planned to discuss future management and improving access. Muntjac continued to be a problem in the wood.

7. STOCK COUNTS

Since December, stock counts had been carried out on a regular basis on Castlemorton Common by staff sometimes accompanied by members. Mr Golightly commented that the grass had been slow to grow this spring, possibly resulting in stock being kept on the in-by land. The Deputy Conservation Officer said that the graziers were only required to graze for 10 months of the year under the licences.

8. GEOLOGY CLEARANCE

Earth Heritage Trust Volunteers had cleared 4 sites, to make the geology more visible, part funded by the Sustainable Development Fund (AONB). This work would continue next year. Mrs Rees asked to see the budget for the work.

9. LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The consultation on Part II (the features and special qualities of the Hills) had closed. The Director suggested Members site visits to look at some of the particular areas that would feature in Part III. Mr Street said that he wanted costings including in Part III of the plan.

10. WINTER WORK

This winter about 24ha of scrub had been cleared by field staff, volunteers and contractors. Notable sites include Hollybed Common and the western outer ramparts of British Camp. Within 24 hours of the latter work being complete, positive feedback was received from 4 members of the public, Natural England, local herpetologist Nigel Hand and English Heritage. The Conservation Officer wished to congratulate the field staff upon a job sensitively done. 1420m of badly eroded path had also been repaired, between St Ann's Well and the De Walden path and from Sugarloaf/Worcestershire

Beacon saddle to Westminster Bank. Tree safety work had been completed. Mrs Rees, on behalf of the Committee offered her thanks and appreciation for all of the work which the volunteers and Field Staff had done for MHC. The CCO said that there was a Volunteers Week in June, when she would be focusing on the volunteers, and thanking them for their work. Mrs Young said that the work undertaken by volunteers should be brought to the notice of the general public.

11. LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

The arrangements in principle for increasing cattle numbers had been approved by the Board. Cumulus Consultants were drawing up an agreement and Mr Gardner hoped to acquire 20 Belted Galloway cattle under the scheme by the end of April.

12. FARM BUSINESS TENANCIES

Halls had been asked to undertake a review of all tenancy agreements/licences.

13. ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED

The Recreation Advisory Panel had discussed access to the Hills for the less able. John Cuthbertson from the Disabled Ramblers and Adrian Burden from the Wyche Innovation Centre were investigating acquiring a Trumper mobility scooter which would be based at the Centre, and which could be used by the less able for a small charge to access the Beacon up a specified route. Training would be given to users.

14. VOICE OF THE MALVERN HILLS

This group had had its inaugural meeting and the CCO had attended to observe. Their aim was to campaign against the cable car. The Director and the CCO were planning to meet Richard Edwards, who was setting up the group to see what his plans were.

The Director reported that Harriet Baldwin had made a statement in support of MHC's position on the cable car.

15. GRAZIER REPORT

Mr Gardner had nothing to add.

16. MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Mr Watson said that the Easements Policy did not clearly say that decisions had to be made in the best interests of the charity's objects. He would like the policy to be amended to clarify this point.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm.