

Malvern Hills Trust
Land Management Committee
Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern
Thursday 12 October 2017 4.00pm

Present: Mr D Baldwin, Dr S Braim, Mrs P Cumming (until the end of item 11), Mr D Hawkins (until the end of item 11), Mr J Michael (until the end of item 11), Mrs G Rees, Mr C Rouse (Chair), Ms H Stace, Mr T Yapp.

In attendance: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Secretary to the Board, Deputy Conservation Officer, Conservation Manager, Community and Conservation Officer (CCO), Mr M Gardner, 2 members of the public, Mr M Davies, Mr P Watson.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Dr P Forster, Mr S Freeman, Mr A Golightly, Mr R Hall-Jones.

2. Declarations of interest

There were none.

3. Chair's announcements

Forthcoming Visits

23 November 2pm Old Hills, Bowling Green and Clevelode. Park at the southern Old Hills car park

4. Public questions

There were none.

5. Matters arising from the meeting of 13 July 2017

The CEO understood that the proposals to reorganise the working arrangements for Hereford and Worcester Fire Service had been reviewed and Malvern would not now lose its water and rope rescue teams.

6. Winter scrub work

The Conservation Manager said that he understood Natural England had set a deadline of the end of November to send out the offer in relation to the Countryside Stewardship Scheme to MHT for signing.

He went through the paper. He agreed to add the area of self-seeded sycamore adjacent to Third's Wood to the winter work schedule if time allowed. It was agreed to arrange a visit in spring to look at the results from work which had been carried out.

7. Climbing policy

The CCO thanked Mr Watson for the advice he had given and went through the paper. The British Mountaineering Council had agreed the draft policy and had agreed to put a link to it where climbs on MHT land were listed on their web site. The CCO agreed to include a reference to group activities in the policy. On the proposal of Ms Stace, seconded by Mrs Rees, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend the adoption of the climbing policy to the Board.

8. Invertebrates report

The Conservation Manager went through the paper. He confirmed that contributions for the “Nature of the Malverns” book were now 95% complete. The target publication date was autumn 2018. The Conservation Manager confirmed that the research detailed in the paper would help inform MHT’s management of the Hills and further research would be encouraged.

9. Report on goat trial

The Deputy Conservation Officer went through the paper and confirmed that notwithstanding the failure of this particular trial, grazing with goats was still being actively considered.

10. Horse chestnut leaf miner

The Deputy Conservation Officer went through the paper.

11. Sponsored walks and events

The CCO went through the paper. She had researched the policies of other similar organisations, and all had charging policies for events. If the Committee and the Board agreed in principle that MHT should make charges for some events, she would undertake further work and produce a draft charging schedule for approval at a later meeting. Consideration would need to be given to which events might incur a charge and whether some events should be exempt. There would then need to be consultation with the Recreation Advisory Panel, local charities and sports clubs, with a view to introducing any charges in 2019.

On the proposal of Ms Stace, seconded by Mrs Rees, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend to the Board that, subject to confirmation that MHT had a power to make such charges, they agree in principle to the adoption of a charging scheme for events.

12. Visit to Minchinhampton Common

The Conservation Manager gave a presentation on a visit by staff, Board members, David Armitage from the AONB and Mr M Gardner to Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons (owned by the National Trust) to look at the cattle grids which had been installed there. The commoners there had been instrumental in driving the work forward. They formed a group of interested parties – including the Open Spaces Society, Natural England and the Highways Authority and once that group had agreed to the required work in principle, the commoners had dealt with the public consultation, planning application, s38 Commons Act application,

tendering process, fundraising and also represented themselves at the public inquiry. They estimated the cost at £50,000 per grid (including professional fees and signage).

Mr Davies reported that there had been a lot of consultation over a long period and it seemed clear that Peter Gardiner, who had been one of the driving forces behind the project, had been instrumental in dealing with objections in a very persuasive way. The group had made use of a lot of capability within the community. He also noted that there was a 40 mph speed limit across the common. Mrs Rees commented that the MHT representatives had been told that County Highways and their legal department had not always been familiar with what was required. There was also very clear signage and that was something to be investigated. It was acknowledged that these Commons were a different habitat to Castlemorton Common and there were more active graziers. Mr Gardner said that the Minchinhampton model of intensive grazing from May to October would not transfer to Castlemorton with the existing graziers. The CEO said that it was notable that there were 10 graziers at Minchinhampton who felt confident turning their stock out as the commons were secure. Mr Rouse suggested a working group might start to take the project forward. The Conservation Manager said that the next steps were (1) report to Highways, who had asked for recent examples of installing cattle grids, and (2) to gain consensus from all the relevant groups and bodies about the problems on Castlemorton and surrounding commons. Mr Watson asked if a first easy step would be to improve the signage. The Conservation Manager said that although there had been some improvements to signage, more could be done.

13. Issues reported at Clevelode

There was a public fishing platform at Clevelode. The CEO had received reports from a reliable source that there had been significant misuse of the location, including taking fish, disturbance to birds and the discharge of a firearm. The Environment Agency were aware that the site was subject to increasing misuse. Their staff and the police had visited the site in response to requests to attend. The Wardens did not have the power to demand to see a fishing licence. The CEO was considering setting up a permit only arrangement for the site. Applicants for permits would have to present their rod licence and MHT could then demand to see the permit of anyone fishing on site.

14. Project progress update

The CEO reported that completion of the work at St Ann's Well would be delayed, but good progress was still being made. In response to a question about the slow roll-out of the rebranded signage on the Hills, the CCO reported that the final draft of the British Camp interpretation boards had been received. All of the other signage for British Camp, North Quarry and Tank Quarry had been delivered (apart from the interpretation boards). A final draft of the interpretation boards for North and Tanks Quarries was expected week commencing 16 October, so she

hoped the signage would be installed in early November. Work on the other key car parks would follow.

15. Graziers' Report

Mr Gardner noted, in connection with the proposals for British Camp Reservoir, that there was an obligation to provide a flow of water into the discharge stream which flowed across Castlemorton Common. There had been one road incident since the last Land Management meeting and 7 dog incidents.

16. Conservation Manager's report

Jubilee Drive would be closed to enable the work at Thirds Wood to be carried out 6 – 10 November inclusive during the day. All the major works to the wood would be carried out during this week, with minor work to follow. Information about the work was now being communicated to the public. A Q & A sheet would be available on the web site. The Conservation Manager confirmed that the number of trees felled would be less than 4 % of the total.

Severn Trent work was still ongoing at Malvern Common and Lower Wyche Road. The Conservation Manager had complained to a senior level about the service provided in relation to communications and tidying the site.

Severn Trent had made a planning application to ascertain whether an environmental impact assessment (EIA) was required to carry out work to reduce the capacity of the redundant reservoir at British Camp. The current legislation to bring the body of water outside the Reservoirs Act required it to be reduced to below 25,000 cubic metres, but the CEO understood that the legislation was to be amended to reduce the requirement to below 10,000 cubic metres. A decision from MHDC on the requirement for an EIA was awaited.

MHT field staff had been carrying out cut and collect work on some of the grass areas. When this work was complete they would move on to access projects and scrub clearance work.

The Good Neighbours Guides had been printed. Any volunteers to help with delivery would be welcome.

17. Matters for Future Consideration

The Secretary to the Board said that agreement had been reached with the applicant for the easement from Chance Lane on reimbursement of MHT's professional fees and she would let Board members know when the application was ready to be considered.

18. Urgent business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm