

Malvern Hills Trust
Land Management Committee
Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern
Thursday 12 April 2018 7.00pm

Present: Mr D Baldwin, Dr S Braim, Dr P Forster, Mr S Freeman, Mr A Golightly, Mr R Hall-Jones, Mr D Hawkins, Mr J Michael, Mrs G Rees (Chair), Mr C Rouse, Ms S Rouse (non-voting), Ms H Stace, Mr T Yapp.

In attendance: Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Administrative Assistant, Conservation Manager (CM), Operations Manager, Mr M Gardner, Mr M Davies, Mr P Watson, 2 members of the public.

Mrs Rees welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Mrs P Cumming, Ms S Stewart.

2. Declarations of Interest

Ms Rouse and Mr Rouse declared an interest in the HLS Scheme.

3. Chairman's Communications

Mrs Rees thanked the committee for their responses to her recent E-mail requesting topics for future consideration.

A Land Management Committee outdoor meeting would take place on 7 June 2018. Further details would follow.

A memorial service would be held for Dudley Brook on Thursday 19th April at 2pm at Malvern Priory, and everyone would be welcome to attend.

4. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

5. Matters Arising from the meeting of 7th December 2017

Proposal to resurface Brockhill Road: The CEO reported that he had spoken with Mr Earp, who would be sending an E-mail with further information. The CEO would report again at the next meeting.

Funding of work on the community woodland: The Conservation Manager confirmed that this still being investigated.

Skylarks: The CEO had received a further communication from Ian Wells. He and the Conservation Manager would consider whether to respond direct, or whether the matter needed to be brought back to the committee.

6. Update on the Countryside Stewardship Scheme

The Conservation Manager confirmed that an offer of a Countryside Stewardship Scheme grant for the Northern and Central Hills had been received and accepted. He went through the paper.

Mr Watson asked if MHT planned to provide mains water instead of using water bowsers on the Hills. The Conservation Manager confirmed that where possible, mains water would be introduced. This would help the graziers by removing the need to transport water to their stock.

The Conservation Manager confirmed that the work which would be funded by the Scheme had been agreed between MHT and Natural England and was consistent with the Land Management Plan. The only new item was additional woodland work (as a result of the amalgamation within the Countryside Stewardship Scheme of the previous HLS and Woodland Grant schemes). The new Scheme required more detailed record keeping and Natural England would monitor performance against the grant criteria. The Scheme did not cover any of MHT's routine works, such as path maintenance.

Ms Stace asked for the Committee's thanks to be recorded for all the hard work carried out by the Conservation Manager in submitting the Countryside Stewardship application and she congratulated him on his success.

7. Annual progress report – Land Management Plan

The Conservation Manager went through his report and additional comments were made as follows:

Item 003: The Conservation Manager confirmed that 100% of the tree safety works was now complete. Some logs had been left in situ at Thirds Wood. It was not economic to remove them. MHT had to deal with 7 snow events over the winter.

Item 005: Mr Hawkins said no work had been carried out on the barrows at British Camp. Ms Stace stated that these features were listed but were believed to be a medieval rabbit warren. In relation to the increased threat to tranquillity posed by drones, Dr Braim suggested MHT information boards in the car parks should make it clear that flying of drones was prohibited. The Conservation Manager agreed that this might be included in the bigger car parks. He highlighted that one of the special qualities identified in the Land Management Plan was the distinctive profile of the Hills.

Item 006: The Conservation Manager felt that publication of the Good Neighbours' Guide placed MHT in a stronger position and people would no longer be able to claim that they did not know what they should or should not be doing. The CEO had passed leaflets on to some of the local estate agents and had received a positive response.

The CEO confirmed that MHT would not be having a stand at the Three Counties Show this year, but would be running a Roadshow as part of the public consultation for the Charity Commission Scheme. It was pointed out that the stand had been very poorly attended in 2017. Mr Hawkins expressed a personal view that MHT should become involved with taking children out on the hills. The CEO said that the Community and Conservation Officer gave talks to schools. MHT had to be clear that any activity it undertook would further the charity's objects. The CEO confirmed that the new Walking and Cycling Map and Guide

was a key tool to educate bike riders on the use of appropriate pathways on the Hills. Mr Michael had received a complaint about mountain bikers which he would pass on to the Conservation Manager.

Mr Rouse thought there had been a change to the grazing regulations in relation to commoners and the Conservation Manager said he would look into it.

Item 007: Brakenburn had gone into liquidation. Mr Rouse thought there was a company in South Wales which converted bracken into an oil product. A new information leaflet had been produced by Dr Demidowicz on the King's Thirds ditches and banks. He had observed these as a result of the management works undertaken by the field staff on North Hill.

Ms Rouse asked when work on the next five years of the Land Management Plan would start. The Conservation Manager explained that in addition to the annual interim reviews, the outcomes of the current plan would be fully reviewed in 2021, and this would inform the writing of the next 5 year plan starting in 2022. He confirmed that in addition to this review, consideration would be given to new suggestions from all sources. The CEO pointed out that there were constraints on making changes to the current plan, as it had been agreed with Natural England and Historic England. Some parts of the existing plan would be rolled over into the next 5 year plan. In response to a question from Ms Rouse, the Conservation Manager confirmed that one element of the plan was "Special Items" which had been identified, to be progressed should additional funding become available. It was agreed that it would be helpful to revisit this list to focus attention on particular funding requirements and for it to be passed to the Fundraising Working Group.

8. Project progress update

The CEO went through his report. The following additional points were made:

Bridleway repair, Link Common – Ms Rouse suggested contacting Cllr Paul Tuthill about funding for this work.

Improve Access, Community Woodland – Asking Morrisons, 'Crowd Funding' or funding under s106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 were options to consider for this project.

Veteran Trees survey – Dr Braim offered to source a copy of a survey form, and Ms Stace said she was aware that a number of volunteers had been trained to carry out these surveys by the Wildlife Trust.

Manor House works – A structural engineers report was required before this could be progressed.

British Camp and Wyche Toilets Review – Mr Watson asked if toilet facilities could be considered for the North Quarry Car Park.

Donkey Shed – The Field Staff had recently cleared the shed. The building was not listed. A conservation architect needed to be instructed to produce a specification for the work required so that grant funding could be sought. Mr Hall-Jones suggested contacting the Civic Society for support.

Building Maintenance Schedule – The CEO had met with a representative of the insurers so that a revised insurance valuation could be prepared. The shelter at the

Wyche Cutting was in need of redecoration and the CEO had asked for quotes based on the original colour scheme.

Update Interpretation Boards –Mr Hawkins asked if MHT should start charging for parking at Tank Quarry car park.

Ms Rouse asked if MHT could increase the numbers of volunteers to free up MHT staff time.

9. Graziers' Report

Mr Gardner reported that the weather had been the main issue over this winter period. It had been particularly difficult for the Hill graziers, who had struggled to get to their stock on occasions and to cope with frozen water bowsers. Mr Gardner had used electric fencing to keep his cattle on dryer areas of Castlemorton Common and also to keep them off the roads during the darker months. The Conservation Manager reported that some of Barbara Wilkes' sheep had been involved in road accidents.

10. Conservation Manager's report

The Conservation Manager confirmed he had received no negative comments from the public in relation to the work at Thirds Wood. Repair works at British Camp were about to start.

The Conservation Manager gave a PowerPoint presentation showing open habitat restoration works, winter works and snow. He read out a report from the wardens highlighting difficulties faced during the snowy conditions.

The Isuzu pickup had proved invaluable during the bad weather, but the vans were useless in the snow.

Closing the car parks was not effective as members of the public were determined to continue to park and packed the snow down into ice. Some drivers required help from the wardens after ignoring the signs and becoming stuck.

It was particularly time consuming to clear snow and spread salt on the car parks at the weekend as this all had to be done by hand without any specialist equipment.

British Camp car park had only been closed for one day.

There had been some cars and quad bikes driving on the commons in the snow, and verges had been damaged by cars driving on them in very wet conditions as the snow thawed.

There had been a number of trees brought down by the snow. The Operations Manager spoke about the difficulty of removing a fallen Hornbeam on Holywell Road. A large crane had to be hired and as a consequence the tree budget had been over spent.

Mr Rouse asked the Conservation Manager if he would take some photographs of the damage caused by badgers at The Hacketts.

The CEO added that damage had been caused to the verges to the west of the Hills by snow ploughs working snow off the carriageway. He felt that consideration should be given to including additional contingency funding in the budget to cover unforeseen events such as adverse weather conditions. Mr Yapp asked if MHT could get insurance cover for the cost of this. The CEO said he would look into it.

11. Matters for Future Consideration

Dr Braim reported on suggestions from members of the Land Management Committee for future topics for consideration. He confirmed that this list would be updated as additional topics arose.

Mrs Rees thanked the committee for their suggestions and Dr Braim for preparing the report.

Mr Rouse mentioned that laurel and rhododendron were taking over on parts of the hills. The Conservation Manager confirmed that this work has been included in the budget. He also raised the issue of bags of dog faeces being left on MHT land. The CEO agreed this was a problem but of more concern was the amount of household waste being dumped on MHT land following the change to MHDC's waste collections.

Mr Watson was concerned about parking on the grass at Black Hill Car Park. The CEO confirmed that consideration needed to be given to how this could be controlled particularly in wet conditions. The Conservation Manager confirmed that on the busy days the wardens posted extra signs asking people not to park on the grass.

Mrs Rees thanked the field staff and wardens for all the hard work during the adverse weather conditions.

12. Confidential item

On the proposal of Mr Rouse, seconded by Mr Hawkins it was **RESOLVED** to exclude the public for discussion of an item of urgent business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the exempt or confidential nature of the business to be transacted (commercially sensitive matter).

Minutes released

13. Urgent business

Mr Rouse declared an interest in the matter to be discussed and left the meeting. The CEO alerted the committee that a piece of land in which MHT were interested was being offered for sale by auction, and a Special Board meeting would take place on 3rd of May at 6pm to consider its purchase.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm