

Malvern Hills Trust  
Land Management Committee  
Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern  
Thursday 10 October 2019 7.00pm

**Present:** Dr S Braim, Mr M Davies (non-voting), Mr D Hawkins, Mr J Michael, Mrs G Rees (Chair), Mr C Rouse, Mr Yapp.

**In attendance:** Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Conservation Manager, Community and Conservation Officer (CCO), Mr M Gardner, Mr D Street, Mr P Watson, 5 members of the public.

**No attendance:** Mr R Hall-Jones, Mrs C O'Donnell.

Mrs Rees welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Mr D Baldwin, Mr P Forster, Mr S Freeman, Mr A Golightly, Ms S Rouse, Mrs H Stace.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Mr C Rouse declared Croft Farm but offered no further clarification.

**3. Chairman's Communications**

Mrs Rees thanked the Conservation staff for organising the stroll in August.

Another walk would be arranged for new trustees in November.

Mrs Rees thanked all those trustees (Mrs C O'Donnell, Mr P Forster, Mr A Golightly, Mr R Hall-Jones, and Mr D Hawkins) who would not be returning to the committee after November, for their contributions and wise council.

**4. Public Comments**

There were none.

**5. Matters Arising from the meeting of 11 April 2019**

The licence granted to Worcestershire County Council to erect a bus shelter on Poolbrook Common had been amended so that it accorded with the revised dimensions which had been supplied.

The work on the Belvedere had been completed in the first week of September.

Fencing of the newly purchased fields at Castlemorton had been completed.

Severn Trent Water had agreed a new supply and would make the connection once the water troughs were installed.

The Conservation Manager would prepare a paper on mowing (by householders of MHT land) for discussion at the next Land Management Committee meeting.

**6. Winter works programme**

The Conservation Manager distributed copies of the winter works programme to members of the committee and went through the key pieces of work which were planned.

There was just under £18,000 of grant funding through Stewardship for the northern and central hills. The work in other areas was being funded from MHT General Fund.

In response to a query, the CEO confirmed MHT had consent from Natural England to burn material on site which had been removed as part of habitat restoration.

The Conservation Manager confirmed that gorse which had been set on fire in 2018 at Castlemorton would not be removed.

Mr Street drew attention to the condition of the path above the Cottage in the Wood and the CEO said that it would be inspected. The Conservation Manager confirmed that this winter, it was planned to carry out remedial work to the bridleways across the Link Common and the path south of Gardiner's Quarry.

Mr Michael observed that the dog poo bin at British Camp had been extremely full when he visited. The CEO confirmed that the bin was checked daily and emptied frequently by field staff and wardens. Consideration had been given to installing a notice to encourage people to take their waste to the car park when that bin was full.

## 7. Hang gliding policy

The CCO presented the paper.

Mr Watson asked about the hang gliding club's relationship with other landowners. The CCO said that this policy related to hang glider and paraglider activity on the Trust's land and was not concerned with landing sites outside MHT's jurisdiction.

CEO had discussed with the group a concern expressed by other recreational users that the paragliders and hang gliders were silent. A recommendation was that pilots should complete a circuit to allow themselves to be seen, and call out to announce their presence prior to landing on Trust land.

The CCO confirmed that the policy in relation to soaring would be the next one to be addressed.

On the proposal of Dr Braim, seconded by Mr Michael, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend the adoption of the hang gliding and paragliding policy to the Board.

## 8. Project progress update

The CEO went through the paper. He made several additional points:

- Access improvement works in the Community Woodland were due to begin the week of the 14 October.
- Planning permission for work to the Donkey Shed had been granted, the cost was being estimated and funding sought.
- British Camp toilets sewage treatment: the tender deadline had been extended as the CEO was awaiting the consent to discharge. The system to be installed would be a self-contained digester.
- All the new car park machines had been installed. There had been some teething problems in relation to signal strength. Larger external aerials had been installed to solve the problem.

- The new tractor had been returned several times for repairs (under warranty).

## 9. Position statement on trees

The Conservation Manager went through the paper. Tree cover had increased in area by 7 times since 1930s and woodland now covered over 30% of MHT's land holding.

Comments made included:

'Malvern' meant 'bare hill' and a balance between open habitats and woodland should be maintained.

Tree species which might be expected through natural regeneration included ash, birch, oak, horn beam and hawthorn, as well as sycamores.

Would it be contrary to commons law to proactively plant a woodland on common land?

Grassland and heathland also absorbed CO<sub>2</sub>.

The Conservation Manager said he would like to add a sentence to the statement about other habitats also sequestering CO<sub>2</sub>. He commented that there was more work to do on this topic.

On the proposal of Dr Braim, seconded by Mr Rouse it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend to the Board the adoption of the position statement (amended as suggested by the Conservation Manager).

## 10. To approve revised easement process

The CEO went through the paper and the draft process, which now included a training requirement for trustees and more detail on publicising easement applications. The document had been prepared following consideration of the outcomes from the Chance Lane easement application and receipt of legal advice in the course of that application. There had also been other easement-related issues in recent months that would benefit from clarification.

On a related topic, the CEO said that three residents with existing easements had been told by Highways that the first 5 metres of their easement should be bound material. This potentially conflicted with both the Commons Act and MHT guidelines. The CEO planned to meet with Highways to discuss this.

Mr Watson asked how the Trust would deal with a compulsory purchase. CEO confirmed that Local Authorities had this power in certain circumstances.

Subject to a minor reordering of the wording, on the proposal of Dr Braim, seconded by Mr Michael it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to recommend the adoption of the Process by the Board.

## 11. Graziers' report

Mr Gardner said that the cattle were freely grazing around Hunters Hall, prior to the area being flailed. Most of the sheep were off the common with the rams.

There had been a low speed traffic accident involving 3-4 cattle as the animals crossed the road in low sun. The grazier had not observed any injuries to the cattle following the incident.

Reports of sheep worrying by dogs had reduced in number in recent weeks. The Conservation Manager added that in many cases, the public had intervened to stop the offending dog and owner leaving the scene before a warden or the grazier arrived.

## **12. Conservation Manager's Report**

The Conservation Officer reported on recent works.

- All the mowing, cut and collect and hay cuts had been completed by contractors and field staff. The cut and collect material was stored to produce soil conditioner. A local contractor had taken the hay from Link Common. The biodiversity had improved there following hay strewing in 2012 by volunteers.
- Grazing animals at Old Hills had moved to the second compartment.
- Four of the five graziers on the southern Hills had been sent an offer of 90 % of the current payment rates for continued grazing during the interim period between the end of the current HLS scheme and the start of any new Stewardship scheme. The fifth offer would be sent out in the next week.
- Repairs to British Camp had been completed using methodology approved by Historic England. The condition of the repair would continue to be monitored. Hill Fort repairs were not carried out frequently and the example used in best practice guidance was a repair carried out by MHT 20 – 30 years ago.
- Electricity pylons had been replaced by Western Power Distribution at Shady Bank Common. The timing of the work had been agreed with the Trust and an ecologist had been on site during the works.
- A closed road car rally had taken place on 7 September on Castlemorton Common. CEO and the Conservation Manager had spent most of the day preventing spectator vehicles from parking on the Common.
- Repairs had been carried out to the main path from British Camp car park to the top of the monument, for safety reasons.
- A new information board had been installed at Black Hill car park. The position of the new board enabled visitors with limited mobility who were using the Easier Access path to view the information - the old board required visitors to climb steps to reach it.
- Quarry fencing had been improved at Earnslaw and Westminster Arms Quarry.
- A new woodsman has signed a licence to carry out coppicing work in Park Wood. The licence ran until the end of the Stewardship scheme (9 years' time).
- Seven members of staff have completed their PA6 training for herbicide stem injections to reduce the need for spraying.

The Conservation Manager reported that about 35 sheep not belonging to the licenced grazier had been turned out by a commoner on Table and North Hills (CL18). Mr Rouse said 2 commoners were grazing - Matthew Rouse and Gordon Hacking. The Conservation Manager said that people claiming common rights

were expected to verify that they had the right to graze. The CEO said he had written 10 days ago to ask for clarification of Mr Hacking and Mr Rouse's rights but no response had been received. Mr Rouse said that rights were recorded in the commons register and he would discuss this after the meeting.

Mr Watson asked about the condition of the horse chestnut trees. The CCO replied that there were 2 separate issues. The browning of the leaves was due to the Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner which was not proven to have any long-term effects on the trees. A second disease, bleeding canker, was more serious, but had not currently been identified on MHT land. The Conservation Manager said that the committee had had a paper on leaf miner (October 2017) and it was easily identifiable. MHT's arboriculturalist would inspect for evidence of the bleeding canker disease when carrying out the annual tree survey.

**13. Urgent business**

There was none.

**14. Date of next meeting**

5 December 2019

**The meeting closed at 9.05 pm**