



Malvern Hills Trust

Annual Meeting of the Board

Thursday 16 November 2023

The Council Chamber,
Malvern Hills District Council,
Avenue Road, WR14 3AF

Ordinary Meeting of the Board

Council Chamber, Avenue Road, WR14 3AF

Thursday 16 November 2023 7pm

Agenda

1. Election of Chair *Details of nominations will be E-mailed before the meeting*
2. Election of Vice-Chair *Ditto*
3. Apologies for absence
4. Chair's Report for 2022/23 Pages 1, 2
5. Chair's Announcements
6. Declarations of Interest
7. Public Comments
8. Appointment of Committees
 - Land Management
 - Finance Administration and Resources
 - Governance
 - Staffing
- Appointment of Board members to other bodies
 - 4Cs (2 representative)
 - Recreation Advisory Panel (4 representatives)
 - Wildlife Panel (4 representatives)
 - AONB
 - Malvern Spa Association
9. Appointment of trustees pursuant to bullying and harassment policy.
Update staff contacts
10. To confirm the Minutes of the Board meetings held on 19 October 2023
To follow
- Matters arising
11. Meeting and induction timetable Verbal update
12. Information
 - 12.1 Update on Risk Management Schedule Verbal update
 - 12.2 Conservation Manager's report Verbal update
 - 12.3 Malvern Spa Association Verbal update
 - 12.4 AONB Joint Advisory Committee No meeting
 - 12.5 Wildlife Panel No meeting
 - 12.6 Recreation Advisory Panel No meeting
 - 12.7 Management Report Pages 3 - 6
13. Urgent business
14. Date of next meeting
30 November 2023, 18 January 2024
15. Confidential
Resolution to exclude the public for discussion of item 16 on the agenda 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 (personnel matters).
16. **Confidential**
Report of CEO Appointment Working Group & to appoint interview panel
PTO

If you or anyone in your household has experienced any Covid symptoms in the last 7 days, please do NOT attend this meeting unless you have a negative lateral flow test result on the day of the meeting. Symptoms are commonly runny nose, sore throat, headache, fatigue and sneezing and not necessarily a cough, fever or loss of sense of taste or smell.

Seats will be placed socially distanced within the venue - please don't move the chairs closer to others unless you have checked that they are happy for you to do so.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO BOARD 2023 10 31

Before I reflect on the events and disruptions that have marked the past twelve months, I would like to remind Trustees of the major contribution that the Trust has made to the stewardship of the Hills and Commons for which we care. Our estate, which has grown a little over the year with the acquisition of new land, is in good shape and the Land Management Plan, the core of our conservation and management work, continues to guide the essential job that we do. In the 2023 Annual Review we feature several notable projects, many of them made possible by our dedicated corps of volunteers who supplement the sterling efforts of field staff and wardens. Those of us that walk the hills and commons can see and feel the progress that is being made towards our primary objectives; there is always more to be done but our levy payers, our car park patrons and our stewardship partners can be confident that we are spending our money wisely.

That financial prudence has been demonstrated in our annual report and accounts, adopted in October accompanied by a clean audit report from our newly appointed auditors. We ended last year with healthy reserves and that situation has been maintained and is on target to continue.

In the past year, towards the end of the four-year term we had lost the services of two more trustees in Helen Stace and Helen I'Anson, we thank them for their substantial contributions, and we welcomed Michelle Alexander and Duncan Westbury as WCC nominees for Powick and Newland. The four-year term renewal will bring more changes on the board which my successor can report when the situation is clearer beyond November 2nd.

The year has seen, and is seeing, much more substantial changes in the Staff of the Trust. Cheryl Gentry retired from the Finance and Administration post after twenty years' service, two successors have since come and gone and recruitment is underway once again. Susan Satchell is retiring as Secretary to the Board after many years' exemplary service and our CEO, Duncan Bridges is leaving us too having achieved so much and having led us calmly and purposefully through turbulent times over his eight years in post. Stabilising the organisation is clearly a focus for the new Board and a critical review of the sustainability of the staff structure should be an early priority.

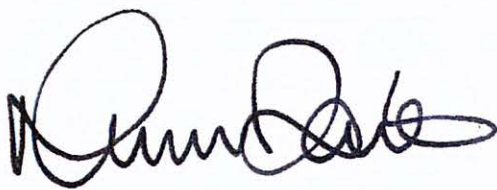
During the year, governance matters have occupied an unwelcome proportion of the resources and energy of the organisation and have undoubtedly contributed to the disturbance among the staff.

Arrangements for appointing and inducting a new auditor have been disruptive and costly; the application to the Charity Commission for authority to invest in a new Malvern Hills Act, while being a necessary step following previous government advice, has occupied staff time, trustee energy and organisational focus and then the months of uncertainty about election arrangements falling out of the Local Government Boundary Commission review have all taken their toll on the Trust and its people.

The approach to 2024 will bring a partly new Board, new leadership for the organisation, new staff and a renewed engagement with stakeholders about the vital need for governance reform in some form, a need that is understood and acknowledged by almost everyone.

I'll finish by drawing on my address to Malvern Hills District Council on 19th September this year when I recounted that I had followed my instincts and ignored some unhelpful advice before being nominated as a Trustee eight years ago. The experience of those eight years, being with so many people who work hard and really care, has been fulfilling and rewarding.

I am confident that you will continue to have pride in the service that the Trust provides and that you will work to leave a proud legacy to sustain that service for future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mick Davies', with a large, stylized initial 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

Mick Davies

Chair of the Board of Trustees

2023 10 31

MANAGEMENT REPORTS JULY - NOV 2023

CEO

1. Work in preparation of the Trustee elections for November 1st and December 7th
2. Responding to ongoing planning matters
3. Work on recruitment and interim arrangements for FAM post. With Finance Assistant maintaining ongoing financial management.
4. Liaison and work with outgoing FAM and auditors on 2023/24 accounts and report.
5. Work on preparation of budgets for 2024/25
6. Assisting working group on recruitment processes for successor CEO.
7. Reviewed ongoing projects and revised priority in light of above and budget preparation.
8. Work on Annual Review
9. Dealing with ongoing boundary and neighbouring landowner matters.
10. Responding to and dealing with various utility companies regarding ongoing projects – Cadent, Gigaclear, Severn Trent at various locations.
11. Work in respect of recruitment and appointment of new Secretary to the Board.
12. Attendance at AONB meetings and liaison with ongoing projects.
13. Ongoing work on Risk Assessments and updates to H&S procedures / PPE provisions.
14. Talks to and meeting attendance at Parish Councils and other local groups
15. Dealing with GDPR and SAR matters.

Secretary to the Board (SttB)

1. Preparing Board/ committee agendas and papers, attending meetings and preparing minutes.
2. Preparation for meeting at which Auditors appointed and accounts signed.
3. Assisting with preparation of Trustees' Annual Report, liaising with auditors and assisting with signing and filing accounts post approval.
4. Liaising with Charity Commission re s 74 consent.
5. Work on planning for Private Bill.
6. Working on outline terms of loan from Land Purchase Fund.
7. Seeking legal advice on matters relating to MHDC ward boundary review and liaising with Parliamentary Agent and Counsel.
8. Assisting with elections, including reviewing documentation and liaising with solicitors.
9. Financial Induction of new trustees
10. Write to all nominating bodies inviting them to appoint trustees.
11. Preparing for new term of office for trustees (including preparation of documents, updating Charity Commission website etc).
12. Reviewing planning applications.
13. Easements and wayleaves - Cadent, Full Fibre, BT + private easements.
14. Reviewing Governance Handbook and recirculating revised documentation.
15. Covering in CEO's absence.
16. Consideration of issues arising from staff resignations
17. Speaking to all candidates interviewed for Secretary to the Board role
18. Preparing for arrival of new Secretary to the Board.

19. Attended training session on changes in relation to land law made by Charities Act 2022.
20. Dealing with Board member queries.
21. Responding to public queries.

Conservation Manager (CM)

1. Completed access and infrastructure improvements at new lands at Evendine Lane and made final grant claim (FIPL).
2. Completed access infrastructure improvements at 9 locations and made grant claim (Access for All).
3. Completed project to construct new storage building at Colwall Lands.
4. Planned winter works 23/24 – tree and scrub habitat works.
5. Weeded and maintained new trees at Poolbrook and Sherrard's Green (UTCF funded).
6. Reviewed tree safety report and planned delivery with CCO and OM.
7. Revised and re-issued, with CO, the grazing licence for Old Hills.
8. Oversaw horse-drawn bracken rolling at Swinyard Hill.
9. Oversaw 5 days of contractor with robocut on the Hills.
10. Reviewed the design of hand gates used on the Hills with graziers, PROW, AONB, disabled ramblers.
11. Ongoing visits / liaison with utility companies, especially Gigaclear and Openreach.
12. Led trustee tour of work at Evendine Lane land and the adjacent land which had been offered to the Trust.
13. Ran tender exercise for an NVC vegetation survey of the estate in 2024.
14. Led a guided walk for environmental students from University of Worcester.
15. Attended Castlemorton Common CS Delivery Group meeting.
16. Attended VVV training on updates to how charities deal with land and property.
17. Liaised with residents over drainage issues at Hollybed Street.

Conservation Officer

1. Continue to clear dead cherry laurel from All Saints Wood.
2. Liaised with Kew to get 12 female Black Poplar rooted cuttings of two different clones which are now potted up to grow on.
3. Continuing to liaise with Forest Research about a possible outbreak of Acute Oak decline at Old Hills. Swabs of lesions taken and sent off for analysis.
4. Ordered new fruit tree to replace this year's losses from the Trust's orchards.
5. Submitted Scheduled Monument Consent for further repairs and maintenance of erosion at British Camp. Consulted Historic England about repairs to the non-scheduled sections of the Shire Ditch north of Worcestershire Beacon.
6. Supervised the Robo cut of sections of Chase End Hill. Cleared access for contractor to install a hand gate at the White leaved Oak End of Ragged stone Hill.
7. Ran a volunteer work day clearing willow regrowth at Swinyard Mire.
8. Reseeded sections of glade meadows following mower collect at St Cloud.
9. Planted a further 27 petty whin plants at 4 sites across Castlemorton Common.
10. Stem injected a number of non-native invasive trees across the hills and commons.
11. Treated all Japanese Knotweed across the Hills and Commons.

Community and Conservation Officer (CCO)

1. Reviewed the Tree Safety Report and drawing up contract.
2. Oversaw the installation of the 2023 memorial bench scheme seats.
3. Spoke at Colwall Parish Council (election), Malvern Town Council (election), and various community groups.
4. Attended the Malvern Autumn Show.
5. Assisted with the response to a number of insurance enquiries.
6. Assisted in the collection of seed of the Slender Hare's Ear for storing at the Millennium Seed Bank (Kew).
7. Organised and led the Recreation Advisory Panel meeting.
8. Attended a Social Media policy webinar.
9. Oversaw the renewal and replacement of signage along Mountain Bike routes.
10. Completed the draft of the Annual Review 2023.
11. Responded to a number of event applications including for a community pub event, school event and local sports clubs.
12. Assisted with the promotion and publicity for the trustee elections and staff vacancies
13. Attended a site visit with Disabled Ramblers, Graziers, MHAONB and public rights of way to review accessibility of hand gate on Hills.

Operations Manager and Field Staff

July 2023

1. Vegetation management –
 - a. Grass strimming around car parks, benches street furniture – multiple sites.
 - b. Remove fallen tree from private property at Gullet Quarry, clear fallen tree at Fossil Bank, clear fallen tree at Upper Wyche/Frog Island, split chestnut at Upper Wyche and fallen oak at Old Hills.
 - c. Clear overhanging branches along fenceline at West Field in advance of planned fencing works.
 - d. Mowing multiple sites.
 - e. Side-arm flail work along roadsides and paths – multiple sites.
 - f. Strimming hill paths.
 - g. Remove ivy from trees due for formal inspection in September/October.
 - h. Remove basal shoots from street-side limes at Graham Rd. and Poolbrook Rd.
 - i. Cut back roadside vegetation to allow safe passage of traffic.
 - j. bracken mowing on hill sites.
2. Dismantle fence at Colwall Lands in advance of building works.
3. Culvert and catch-pit maintenance following heavy rain.
4. Undertake ash dieback survey work.
5. Checks and maintenance of erosion control fencing at Summer Hill.
6. Litter collection and emptying litter bins.

August 2023

1. Vegetation management –
 - a. Bracken mowing hill sites.
 - b. Clear scrub from o/head telecoms cables at Clevelode.
 - c. Grass mowing Evendine fields.
 - d. Grass mowing multiple sites.
 - e. Grass strimming multiple sites.

- f. Felling ash affected by dieback on Jubilee Rd. during HCC road closure.
2. Machinery repairs – flails.
3. Drains maintenance at St. Ann's Well.
4. Checks and maintenance of erosion control fencing at Summer Hill.
5. Litter collection and emptying litter bins.

September 2023

1. Vegetation management –
 - a. grass mowing multiple sites
 - b. grass strimming – multiple sites.
 - c. bracken mowing hill sites.
 - d. cutting ivy from trees due for formal inspection in September/October.
 - e. clear fallen branch on Holywell Rd. and breakdown felled oak at Evendine field to leave cattle scratching post.
 - f. chip brash cut from fenceline at upper Purlieu field.
 - g. thin rideside trees and remove diseased ash from community woodland.
 - h. cut and collect glade areas at St. Clouds, Old Hills and Black Hill.
2. Repairs to cut quarry fencing at Gullet Quarry.
3. Repair fencing and install dog gate on roadside fence at British Camp.
4. Repair damaged stonework at St. Ann's Well.
5. Install bench at British Camp reservoir.
6. Machinery repairs – adapt new small tractor for side-arm flail and collect flail.
7. Checks and maintenance of erosion control fencing at Summer Hill.
8. Litter collection and emptying litter bins.

Contract work – Richard Horne drains maintenance work at Poolbrook Rd., Purlieu and Happy Valley silt traps and drains.

October 2023

1. Vegetation management –
 - a. bracken mowing hill sites.
 - b. grass mowing multiple sites.
 - c. grass strimming – multiple sites.
 - d. leaf clearance from drain and silt trap at Happy Valley.
 - e. cut back roadside vegetation at the request of Highways opposite Ellerslie and Wykewane near Eston Avenue.
2. First Aid training for x2 field staff members.
3. Install temporary piping at All Saints Wood to avoid water draining into church grounds – thought to be a spring but subsequently found to be a long-running Severn Trent water main leak.
4. Machinery repairs – bent tow hitch and oil leak.
5. Lay out materials and erect 300m new stock fencing at upper Purlieu field and install new pedestrian gate into Park Wood.
6. Install benches at Red Hill Link Common, Old Hills, Westminster bank and Holywell woods
7. Drains maintenance in advance of and following heavy rainfall.
8. Undertake quarry fence inspections.
9. Training course for x3 field staff members – use of arm-mounted cutting equipment (side-arm flail).
10. Checks and maintenance of erosion control fencing at Summer Hill.
11. Litter collection and emptying litter bins.