

BOARD MEETING MINUTES
14 September 2006
The Committee Room, Council House, Malvern

Present:- Mrs. S. Adeney, Mr. M. Angell, Mr. M. Cordey, Mr. R. Hall-Jones, Mr. J. Mills, Mr. A. Myatt, Mr. A. J. Phillips, Mr. R. Roberts, Mr. C. Rouse, Mr. P. Rumney, Dr. B. Smith (Chairman), Mr. R. Stockton, Mrs. S. Thetford, Mr. R. Thomas, Mr. J. Tretheway, Mr. W. Watts, Mr. J. Webb, Mr. R. Witcomb.

In attendance:- The Director, Administrative Officer, Conservation Officer, Financial Consultant.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. Mr. A. Macmillan, Mr. D. Masters, Mr. B. Pilcher, Prof. J. Raine, Mr. S. Try, Mr. B. Wilcock, Mrs. J. Wildin.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS. None.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS. None.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. None.

5. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES. On the proposal of Mr. Roberts, seconded by Mr. Phillips, it was **AGREED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on the 13 July 2006 should be **CONFIRMED** and **SIGNED** as a true and correct record.

6. MATTERS ARISING.

6.1 6.5 Malvern in Bloom. The Chairman reported that the Director on behalf of all the staff had received a letter of thanks from the Chairman of Malvern Town Council for their support and contribution to the Town's entry in the Heart of England in Bloom Competition for which a Gold Award had been received. This was **NOTED**.

7. COMMITTEE REPORTS.

7.1 LAND MANAGEMENT. Mrs. Thetford presented the following report of the meeting held on the 27 July 2006 and moved its adoption. This was seconded by Mr. Witcomb.

REPORT OF LAND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Thursday, 27 July 2006 Manor House, Malvern 2 p.m.

Present:- Mr. A. J. Phillips, Mr. B. J. M. Pilcher, Mr. J. G. Plant, Mr. C. Rouse, Dr. B. G. Smith, Mrs. S. Thetford (Chairman), Mr. J. A. Tretheway, Mr. J. Webb, Mr. R. G. Witcomb.

In attendance:- The Director, Conservation Officer, Administrative Officer, Mr. R. Roberts, Miss Bernadette Noake, Mr. Anthony Muller (English Nature), Mr. John Wallace (WCC Highways Partnership).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. Mr. Webb declared an interest in item 6.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS. The Chairman welcomed Bernadette Noake who would be working with the Conservation Officer during her nine month bursary placement under the Lemur Project.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON THE 1 JUNE 2006.

4.1 6. Grass Seed Harvesting. The Conservation Officer reported that grass seed harvesting had started on an area of the Worcestershire Beacon taking wavy hair grass seed. In answer to a question, the Conservation Officer advised that grass seed was imported into areas where the ground had been disturbed. This was **NOTED**.

4.2 10.2 Severn Trent Water – Works at Malvern Common. The Director reported that Severn Trent Water had been experiencing problems which would mean a delay of a couple of weeks before they could make a final link up and therefore be in a position to reinstate the land. He had reiterated to Severn Trent the fact that in September/October reseeded needed to be undertaken on all areas where this had previously been unsuccessful. This was **NOTED**.

5. PRESENTATION BY JOHN WALLACE OF WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS PARTNERSHIP ON PLANS FOR HIGHWAY NETWORK AT LINK TOP. Mr. Wallace advised that local authority planning approval had been given for 490 houses to be built on North Site, Leigh Sinton Road which would result in extra traffic. Any major development required the developer to look at significant junctions and satisfy the Highway Authority that there would be nil detriment. As there would be extra traffic using Link Top the developer had sent in proposals (already circulated to members). One proposal which had received planning consent was the reopening of a short section of the former Moorlands Road requiring a further set of traffic signs on the A449. However the preferred option which would be simpler and less intrusive would be the purchase of 115 sq metres of common land to facilitate the construction of a new left turning lane at Newtown Road at its junction with Worcester Road.

6. LAND AT LINK TOP - REQUEST FROM WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL. After a full discussion with various alternative schemes explored, it was proposed by Mr. Phillips, seconded by Mr. Witcomb, to recommend to the Board that, subject to the approval of DEFRA the Conservators sell 115 sq. metres of common to Worcestershire County Council on condition that the trees in the vicinity of the area were safeguarded. This was **CARRIED** by 5 votes with three against.

7. MALVERN HILLS AND CASTLEMORTON COMMON SSSI. The Chairman welcomed Mr. Anthony Muller of English Nature who gave a talk and answered questions on the issues relevant to the Conservators in managing SSSIs and important changes with the formation of Natural England which comes into being on the 2 October 2006.

8. ENGLISH NATURE'S 'VIEWS ABOUT MANAGEMENT' ON THE MALVERN HILLS SSSI. The Conservation Officer presented his report which included English Nature's 'Views about Management' required under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. The paper was a platform for more detailed Site Management Schemes. This was **NOTED**.

9. PARKING AREA ADJACENT TO THE LAKE HOUSE, PEACHFIELD ROAD, MALVERN. In presenting his report the Director showed members a photograph of the plastic mesh box that he and the Operations Manager had seen working at a car park in Kidderminster and proposed that this material should be laid at the entrance to the parking area. It was estimated that the cost would be approximately £3,000.00. Mr. Pilcher endorsed the Director's initiative and proposed, seconded by Mr. Plant, that the work should be carried out. This was **AGREED**.

10. CASTLEMORTON COMMON COMMITTEE. The Director's report was noted and on the proposal of Mr. Tretheway, seconded by Mr. Plant, it was **AGREED** that the recommendation that the Committee supported the Director and the Chairman of Land Management Committee in bringing this about and reporting to future committees when the terms of reference and composition of the Committee was known, should be **ADOPTED**.

11. INFORMATION.

11.1 Gullet Quarry. The Director reported that on the 26 July a man had injured his neck and spine after climbing over the fence at the back of the quarry face and falling into the water.

Following the incident the Director had spoken with the Fire Officer and discussed a temporary sign highlighting the danger and contacting local fruit farms with an interpreter advising workers of the dangers. This was **NOTED**.

Arising.

7.1.1 6. Land at Link Top – Request from Worcestershire County Council. Mr. Witcomb stated that after further consideration he felt that a pavement was not required in that area and in view of the fact that the work would jeopardise two mature trees important for the amenity of the area, he proposed an amendment to the recommendation that the Conservators sold sufficient land to the Highway Authority to make a left turning lane without a pavement. This was seconded by Mrs. Thetford. However on being put to the vote the motion was lost by 5 votes to 7.

7.1.2 9. Parking area adjacent to The Lake House, Peachfield Road, Malvern. The Director reported that the work had been completed. This was **NOTED**.

7.1.3 10. Castlemorton Common Committee. In answer to a question, the Director advised that at the next meeting of the Committee, Land Use Consultants would be presenting their recommendations for the future management of the Common for incorporation in the Castlemorton Plan. Once this document had been finalised he felt that there would be more interest in forming the committee. This was **NOTED**.

The report was **CARRIED**.

7.2 ADMINISTRATION & RESOURCES. In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Angell presented the following report of the meeting held on the 23 August 2006 and moved its adoption. This was seconded by Mr. Myatt and apart from item 13 to be taken in committee, was **CARRIED**.

ADMINISTRATION & RESOURCES COMMITTEE **Wednesday, 23 August 2006 at 7 p.m.**

Present:- Mr. R. F. Hall-Jones, Mr. A. Myatt, Mr. P. Rumney, Mr. J. A. Tretheway, Mr. B. A. Wilcock (Chairman).

In attendance:- The Director, Administrative Officer, Financial Consultant, Mr. R. Roberts, Mrs. S. Thetford.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. Mr. M. Angell, Mr. M. Cordey, Mr. A. K. C. Macmillan, Dr. B. Smith and Financial Assistant.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST. None.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS. Mr. Tretheway advised members that the Chairman of the Board had been appointed Chairman of the new Worcestershire Primary Care Trust from October 2006. This was noted and members passed on their congratulations to Dr. Smith.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON THE 22 JUNE 2006.

4.1 7. Forward Strategy. Mr. Tretheway advised that due to unforeseen circumstances the Director and Chairman had been unable to prepare a final draft to enable a working party of the Board to meet prior to the September Board meeting. In the circumstances the Chairman of the Board had suggested that the working party met at 7 p.m. on the 4 October 2006 at Manor House in order that the Strategy could be adopted at the November Board meeting. This was **AGREED**.

5. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THE THREE MONTHS TO 30 JUNE 2006. In answer to a question, the Director advised that the expenditure on a new boiler and radiators for St.

Ann's Well was emergency work and whilst an electrician was on site the opportunity had been taken to upgrade the extractor fan in the toilet block. The matter had been discussed with the Chairman of the Committee and would be funded from the additional income received from BT Wayleaves which was not known about when the annual budget was prepared. This was **NOTED**.

Members **NOTED** the accounts and **AGREED** that the £395.00 spent on a safety survey on the idea in the Forward Strategy to run a tourist train to St. Ann's Well should be charged to the Development Fund.

6. PAYMENT OF SUPPLIERS. The recommendation that the Telepay system be used to make payments to suppliers where this was practicable and therefore Standing Order 13.2.1 would be amended as follows (changed words in italics):-

'All payments of items of accounts included in the Conservators' budget shall be passed through the current Account *either by cheque or direct payment. Cheques or instructions for direct payments shall be signed by any two of the Chairman, Vice Chairman of the Board, Administrative Officer, Financial Assistant and Financial Consultant. For direct payments, the Bank's security stickers shall be applied to the instruction by the second signatory.*'

7. REVIEW OF UNDERGROUND EASEMENT CHARGES AND CIRCUS/FAIRGROUND RENTS.

7.1 Underground Easements. It was **AGREED** that with immediate effect the charge for easements to existing properties would be £20.00 per metre, subject to a minimum charge of £500.00 per trench.

7.2 Circus/Fairground Rents. It was **AGREED** that the bond should remain at £300.00.

8. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND. Noted.

9. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY UPDATE. Noted.

10. INFORMATION.

10.1 Gas supply to Manor House. The Director reported that a gas leak had been identified in the supply to the office and therefore it was necessary to renew the pipe at a cost of £750.00. This was **NOTED**.

10.2 34 Wyche Road. The re-roofing work had been completed and arrangements were now being made for an electricity check at the property. A dead Beech tree in the garden was being removed at a cost of £500.00. This was **NOTED**.

10.3 St. Ann's Well. An electricity check of the cafe had been satisfactory but the Director was obtaining quotations for work to be carried out to the living quarters. This was **NOTED**.

On the proposal of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Tretheway, it was **AGREED** that the remainder of the meeting should be taken in committee as the matters to be discussed were confidential.

7.3 ACCESS & INFORMATION. Mr. Roberts presented the following report of the meeting held on the 31 August 2006 and moved its adoption. This was seconded by Mr. Thomas and **CARRIED**.

REPORT OF THE ACCESS & INFORMATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, 31 August 2006 Manor House, Malvern, 2 p.m.

Present:- Mr. J. R. Mills, Mr. R. Roberts (Chairman), Mr. R. Thomas, Mr. J. Tretheway, Mr. W. Watts.

In attendance:- Director, Administrative Officer, Mrs. S. Thetford.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. Dr. B. Smith, Mrs. J. Wildin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

3. SITE VISIT TO 154 MADRESFIELD ROAD, MALVERN. The Chairman adjourned the meeting for members to make a site visit.

4. PRESENTATION ON BIODIVERSITY. The Chairman introduced Steven Bloomfield who explained his role as Conservation Officer (Planning) with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, a non-statutory body, whose Mission Statement was to make Worcestershire part of a UK richer in wildlife, where everyone can appreciate, enjoy and help restore and protect wildlife in the future. Begun in 1968 the Trust owned 73 nature reserves and managed 2,500 acres. Mr. Bloomfield drew attention to the problems faced by loss of habitat with the consequent loss in numbers of some species and explained biodiversity which was looking into eco-systems and interlinking between communities and habitats. The accomplishment of this relied on good partnership working with, in particular, local authorities on planning matters. He drew attention to the similarities between the problems the Trust and the Conservators face and the benefits from sharing these problems and knowledge. He therefore looked forward to working more closely together with lessons learned, providing useful dialogue for the future. The Chairman on behalf of members thanked Mr. Bloomfield for his presentation.

5. PRESENTATION BY DAVID ROBINSON OF TECHNOLOGY RESPONSE. The Chairman invited David Robinson to address members about a plan he had for a film. Mr. Robinson advised that he was a local resident and science communicator by training. One of the projects he was working on was to make a 50/60 minute television film about the Hills based on the four elements of fire, earth, water and air. In view of the statutory role of the Conservators in managing the Hills, he would wish to include in the film their activities and responsibilities. He therefore asked for the Conservators' support and practical help with the project. The Chairman thanked Mr. Robinson for advising of his scheme and following consideration it was **AGREED** to support in principle the making of the film.

6. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS. None.

7. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2006.

7.1 4.1 Charity Fair. The Chairman advised that this year's Charity Fair had been cancelled. This was **NOTED**.

7.2 11. Clean Neighbourhoods & Environment Act 2005 Working Party. The Director reported that campaigns had been held at the car parks during the summer and he was now arranging for the temporary signs to be taken down. He felt that it had generally been a good exercise in encouraging the public to clear up after their dogs. This was **NOTED**.

7.3 12. Logo. The Director circulated members with a mock-up of a new style letter heading which not only brought it up to date but included a strap line 'Managing the Hills' to further enforce the role of the Conservators both locally and nationally. This was **NOTED** and **APPROVED**.

8. LAND ADJOINING 154 MADRESFIELD ROAD, MALVERN. The Administrative Officer reminded members that it was the policy to notify occupiers of properties affected by applications and to invite comments. She read a letter from the occupier of No. 154 who asked the Committee to consider permitting access to the plot diagonally across the Common rather than along the hedge line as he felt it would be difficult for vehicles coming from the plot to negotiate the corner and would make it unsafe for vehicles leaving his property as visibility would be obstructed by the hedge. Members noted these comments and on the proposal of Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Watts, it was **AGREED** to grant an easement for vehicles and services into the site, subject to the usual conditions and to the route of the vehicular easement going diagonally across the Common where it left the existing easement to No. 154.

9. SEATS POLICY. In presenting his report the Director advised that he had been asked to review the present policy following a request made to the Vice Chairman of the Board from a

local resident to replace two metal seats on Malvern Common with wooden benches in memory of her husband. He therefore asked members to consider the following:-

(a) *To replace the two metal benches with wooden benches on Malvern Common.* On the proposal of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Tretheway, it was **AGREED** to replace metal seats only if unrepairable as these were seen as a feature of Malvern.

(b) *To alter the policy to allow donations for seats where the donor identified a need.* Members appreciated the disappointment this decision would give to all those people who over the years had asked to donate memorial seats and in the circumstances on the proposal of Mr. Mills, seconded by Mr. Thomas it was **AGREED** on the Chairman's casting vote and with two abstentions, that the seats policy should remain unaltered.

(c) *That the Conservators accept general donations to be used to supply oak plank benches to new sites, or the replacement of old benches.* Members felt that to give to a general fund would not satisfy those people who were looking for a personal memorial to a loved one and in the circumstances it was **AGREED** to continue with the policy of suggesting that donations be given to specific projects. Currently this was for the planting of rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas in the area south of Rose Bank Gardens to enhance that corner of the Hills.

10. LOCAL COLUMN IN MALVERN GAZETTE. On the proposal of Mr. Tretheway, seconded by Mr. Thomas, the Director's recommendation that an article was written for the Malvern Gazette on a weekly basis was **AGREED**.

11. HOSPITALITY BUDGET. On the proposal of Mr. Mills, seconded by Mr. Thomas, it was **AGREED** that a figure of £400.00 be included under 'Hospitality' in the public relations budget for the year 2007/08, subject to the Financial Consultant and legal adviser confirming that this was in order.

12. WALKING FESTIVAL. The Director advised that the original concept of a walking festival had been from Malvern Traders Association as a way of encouraging people into the Town. Although tourism was not in the Conservators' remit, he felt that by being involved in walks it was an opportunity to impart knowledge and care of the Hills. This year's Festival had been poorly attended and as there was a meeting on the 12 September to discuss next year's, he asked for the Committee's guidance as to whether the Conservators should become more involved in the organisation of the event. This was noted but it was felt that it was not for the Conservators to organise the event.

13. INFORMATION.

13.1 Geopark Way. The Director's report was noted and it was **AGREED** that in view of the number of information leaflets involving the Conservators' land being issued by the AONB Unit, those members present asked the Director to invite the AONB Manager, Paul Esrich, to an informal meeting.

On the proposal of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Tretheway, it was **AGREED** that the remainder of the meeting should be taken in committee as the matter to be discussed was confidential.

The meeting closed at 4.53 p.m.

8. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES.

8.1 Malvern Spa Association. Mr. Roberts reported that during the past two months the Association had had a social event with a river trip and there had been some interesting developments with the Well restorations funded by the Heritage Lottery. Work on the Clock Tower at North Malvern had revealed an old path leading from the Clock Tower to the road and a bridge set high above and behind the Clock Tower shown on early engravings over what was then a large cascade of water. There had also been exciting developments at The Holy Well with both an Education Centre and a small spring water bottling works being considered by HLF and the owner. This was **NOTED**.

Members were reminded that the land surrounding the Clock Tower structure was under the Conservators' jurisdiction and the Director advised that a meeting had taken place with residents who were in favour of cutting back some of the vegetation. The Operations Manager and Field Staff would therefore be carrying out this work during the winter.

8.2 Great Malvern Town Centre Partnership. Mr. Roberts reported that the Partnership had not met since the last Board meeting, the next meeting being on Wednesday, 20 September. He did advise, however, that he would be representing the Conservators at a meeting of the Civic Society for discussions on the 'Main Street UK' initiative. This was **NOTED**.

8.3 Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee. Dr. Smith reported that the next meeting of the JAC was on Friday, 22 September 2006. This was **NOTED**,

9. URGENT BUSINESS. None.

10. INFORMATION.

10.1 Management Report. The Director presented his report as follows which was **NOTED**.

MANAGEMENT REPORT

DATE: 14 SEPTEMBER 2006

DIRECTOR

- Presentation to WCC Rights of Way staff on Malvern Hills and common land
- Met with MHDC Solicitor to try and establish ownership of Townsend Way hedge
- Attended Welcome to our Future AGM
- Gave a guided walk to Rural Development Service (administrators of Stewardship Grants)
- Helped organise and lead guided walk for Countryside Management National Conference
- Acted as guide to Chinese delegation on Malvern Hills
- Member of organising committee for Malvern in Bloom
- Attended residents' meeting at North Malvern Clock Tower to advise on landscaping work
- Attended Court with Warden/Car Park Attendant Robin Hill over prosecution for non-payment of parking charge; the decision was in favour of the Conservators
- Began re-write of Good Neighbours leaflet
- Front line staff obtained official clearance from Criminal Records Bureau for working with young people

CONSERVATION OFFICER

- Carried out induction for Bernadette Noake (Lemur Placement)
- Matched voluntary site wardens with appropriate small management areas.
- Organized and attended 3 moth trapping events including one for the Ledbury Field Naturalists Club.
- Meeting with Rural Development Service about the Stewardship scheme.
- Attended Sheep 2006 event at Three Counties Showground
- Meeting with Natural England partners about Higher Level Stewardship.
- Quality assessed habitat survey.

FIELD STAFF

- Mowing and strimming hill paths and Commons
- Litter clearing – 1 full skip is emptied every 2 weeks during the summer
- Bracken rolling at various locations
- Installed bollards in track to the Gullet
- Repairs to Gullet Quarry fence

