

Meeting of the Castlemorton Common Co-ordinating Committee

Castlemorton Parish Hall

Wednesday 8th November 2017 8.00pm

Present: Lionel Bartlett, Ann Brennan, Mick Davies (Chair), Matt Gardner, Peter Hancock, Chris Rouse, David Smallwood, Dermot Weaver (left after item 2), Sue Windle.

In attendance: From Malvern Hills Trust (MHT): CEO, Secretary to the Board and Conservation Manager; members of the public: Ian Flanders, Angus Golightly.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Med Snookes and Barbara Wilkes. Julian Taylor had sent his resignation.

2. Election of Chair

Lionel Bartlett was proposed by Dermott Weaver and seconded by Ann Brennan.

Mick Davies was proposed by Peter Hancock and seconded by Matt Gardner. The Secretary to the Board clarified that 2 MHT Board members were members of the committee. The MHT staff were present to report and in an advisory capacity and were not members of the committee. There was nothing in the constitution to prevent an MHT Board member from chairing the meeting.

In a secret ballot, Mick Davies was appointed by 5 votes to 4.

Dermott Weaver indicated his intention to resign from the committee.

3. Committee membership

The Secretary to the Board said that there was currently a vacancy for a representative of the recreational interests. Ms Brennan indicated she would be willing to fill the vacancy but it was noted that as she was Secretary of Castlemorton Commoners Association, ideally a representative should be found to widen the interest groups represented. The Chair asked for suggestions for candidates to be passed to the Secretary to the Board. There were only 2 active commoners on the committee (3 places available). It was agreed to ask if Barbara Wilkes would continue in the capacity of grazier, and Castlemorton Parish Council could send a different representative.

4. To receive the report of the meeting held on 17 May 2017

On the proposal of Mr Smallwood, seconded by Mr Hancock, the report of the meeting held on 17 May 2017 was approved by the meeting.

5. Matters Arising

The Conservation Manager reported that MHT's "Good Neighbour" leaflet had been printed and distribution was being organized. Mr Smallwood said that the cinema club distributed to every household in Castlemorton (contact Don Lupton) and possibly Birtsmorton and Hollybush. The local milkman was also willing to deliver leaflets (although only to the houses to which he delivered). Mr Smallwood understood that West Mercia Police had bought the phone box opposite the Plume of Feathers. Subject to all necessary permissions, they hoped to install a defibrillator. The CEO said the original permission was for use as a phone box, so technically any new owner would have to seek permission for a change of use from MHT. Castlemorton Parish Council had voted to support the installation of a defibrillator.

Information on which graziers had exercised their rights in times past had not been provided to MHT. The Conservation Manager had obtained some information. Chris Rouse had obtained a list from George Smith and the Secretary to the Board asked if that information could be forwarded on to her. Mr Bartlett thanked MHT for the repairs carried out to Hancocks Lane.

6. 4C's website

The content of the old 4C's website was no longer available. Ms Brennan had printed off copies of some of the pages before it was taken down.

4C's minutes and agendas were published on MHT's website and MHT were able to make a page available for those and for brief details about the committee, for example details of the members and which groups they represented. The Secretary to the Board would check with committee members whether they wanted their contact details showing.

The CEO said that if 4C's wanted its own web site, a fully dynamic web site would cost £2,000 - £2,500. A more basic one with static pages would cost around £1,000 - £1,500.

Mr Smallwood said that Castlemorton Parish Council had a blog, which could be operated free of charge. He thought Jerry Fryman would be willing to show someone how to set one up and keep it up to date. It was suggested that committee members looked at the Castlemorton blog:

<http://castlemortonparishcouncil.blogspot.co.uk/>

to see whether such an arrangement would be suitable with a view to discussing the matter again at the next meeting. One option would be to use a page on the MHT web site with a link to the blog. The CEO offered to ask the web site developers to send links to 2 basic web sites for comparison. If the

committee wanted a web site, they would need to find funding. The other issue was who would keep any blog or web site up to date?

7. Report from Malvern Hills Trust

Charity Commission Scheme

The CEO reported that MHT intended to have a Charity Commission Scheme to revise its governing Acts. There would be a public consultation prior to the Scheme going before Parliament. The planned timescale was to complete the Scheme by 2019.

8. Report from MHT Conservation Manager

Stock numbers and grazing

Stock numbers had been stable at around 600 sheep and 60/65 cattle. There had been a combination of targeted grazing and non-targeted grazing.

Update on mowing and scrub clearance

An area of about 1.5ha of scrub had been cleared near the plank bridge by Hunters' Hall. MHT was intending to clear some of the bramble on Hollybed Common and clear scrub on Hurst Bank. The Conservation Manager invited committee members to contact him if they had any other sites to suggest.

Securing commons grazing

MHT were engaging with County Highways with a view to securing the common. A number of MHT Board members and interested parties had been on a visit to Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons near Stroud. Mr Davies reported that their work to install cattle grids in order to secure those commons was a really impressive long term project. Mr Gardner said that the grazing on Minchinhampton Common had been continuous and it appeared the local residents accepted the presence of the cattle and all houses off the common had their own cattle grids. It was unlikely that a perfect balance could be found for Castlemorton as the graziers were not in a position to deliver a high stocking density in the summer and then remove them over the winter as was done at Minchinhampton. Because of the lack of scrub, the cattle could be seen at a distance from the roads, which carried a lot of traffic. There were still a number of collisions involving stock.

The visit had provided a good example of how to carry out such a project and how to get everyone on board. The CEO said it was reassuring that they had seen a number of different cattle grids and the noise levels were very reasonable. The Conservation Manager and David Armitage of the AONB were writing a report for County Highways as they had asked for a recent example of a project similar to the one which MHT were planning at Castlemorton.

9. Incidents/byelaw breaches

The CEO said there had been a number of minor incidents of driving on the common. Mr Gardner reported a number of sheep worrying incidents.

10. Stock visibility/casualties

Mr Gardner reported one traffic collision. A committee member reported another incident by the Plume of Feathers, but the animal seemed to have escaped unscathed. Mr Gardner intended to fence in the stock during the winter months. . The Conservation Manager said that additional stock could usefully be accommodated provided the grazing was targeted in specific areas. It was noted that at Minchinhampton there were warning triangles painted on the road. The Conservation Manager intended to approach Highways to see if that could be done at Castlemorton.

11. Report from CCA

There was nothing to report, but Mr Bartlett asked about Severn Trent's plans to drain the British Camp Reservoir. The Secretary to the Board said that MHT was aware that there was currently a statutory requirement to provide a flow of water to the stream that ran across Castlemorton Common. The CEO said that if Severn Trent were required to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment, there would be a public consultation and he would endeavour to bring this to the attention of the Committee.

Mr Bartlett reiterated that CCA would like to see Hurst Bank cleared of scrub, and indicated the Association would help to fund this. He also asked about the ant hills. The Conservation Manager said that any tractor work would knock down the ant hills.

12. Reports from other represented bodies

Coombe Green

Mrs Windle said that brambles had been cleared and some trees removed from the common, as per the maintenance plan prepared by Janet Lomas. There had been a fundraising event, and Birtsmorton Parish Council had said they would offer matched funding for further work.

13. Information and Any Other Business

~~There Matt Gardner washad reported~~ a long standing water leak on Hurst Bank between the Plume of Feathers and the track to Baker's Farm to Severn Trent. Please could committee members take the time also to report it in order to try to raise its priority with Severn Trent?

The CEO confirmed that the meter in Swinyard's Car Park had been replaced.

14. Date of next meeting

9 May 2018, 8pm.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm