

Malvern Hills Trust: A position statement on trees and tree planting against a background of global climate change

Adopted by Board 21/11/2019

Relevant background documents:

Tree safety policy 2019

Land Management Plan 2016-2021

Suburban tree policy 2015

Malvern Hills Trust recognises the wealth of scientific data evidencing anthropogenic global climate change including recent reports from the International Panel on Climate Change. The Trust supports efforts to reduce the effect of climate change through many means including the planting of trees in the right place to sequester carbon dioxide.

MHT is actively managing woodland and expanding tree cover. However, the Malvern Hills and Commons have a limited capacity for tree planting for several reasons: firstly, our holding already has a high amount of tree cover including orchards, in-field trees, hedgerows, tree avenues and 340 ha (30 % of the holding) of native woodland.

This amount of tree cover today is in stark contrast to the Hills and Commons of the 1930's when less than 50 ha was covered in trees, that's a 7-fold increase. MHT has already overseen a huge afforestation process, that's now absorbing 2176 tonnes of CO₂ per year. Current tree coverage is also markedly higher than the national average of 10 % (England). It is of note that the majority of CO₂ is in fact locked up in soils as well as all vegetation types including grasslands and heath.

Secondly, much of the Hills and Commons are covered by conservation designations, including 3 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), covering 633ha, and 3 Scheduled Monuments. These designations protect features and require parts of them to be kept open as acid grasslands and heath, mire, geological exposures and archaeological remains. Tree planting here would degrade these features that are of national importance, losing irreplaceable wildlife and cultural heritage.

85 % of MHT land is also within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Trust has an obligation to maintain landscape character including the open high hills and slopes and unenclosed open commons. These are grazed by low numbers of sheep and cattle.

We undertake practical work including tree felling every year to maintain and restore these designated features in partnership with Natural England. Details of where this work will happen is available in our Land Management Plan (LMP) here:

<https://www.malvernhills.org.uk/looking-after/land-management-plan/>

The conserving of priority open habitats or archaeology, and the conscious decision not to plant trees on them, is widely undertaken by conservation agencies and NGOs across the country including the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust.

Our Land Management Plan contains clear goals on improving the condition of woodlands and on expanding woodland where possible through natural succession and planting of site-native trees. Woodland creation continues at several sites including 1.4ha by Wells Road. Further opportunities for tree planting, including memorial trees, are considered every year.

The Trust can make land purchases within 9 miles of Malvern Priory and opportunities for new woodland creation, in the right place, will be considered.

MHT will:

- Continue to improve woodland condition
- Expand existing woodlands where possible
- Increase tree cover through in-field and hedgerow planting
- Continue to replace any trees removed for safety reasons
- Reassess our Land Acquisition Policy in light of climate change