

**Meeting of the Castlemorton Commons
Co-ordinating Committee**

Castlemorton Parish Hall

Wednesday 27 November 2019 8.00pm

Present: Lionel Bartlett, Phil Birley, Ann Brennan, Mick Davies, Matthew Gardner, Don Lupton, Julie Moore, Chris Rouse, Keith Stevens, Barbara Wilkes.

In attendance:

From Malvern Hills Trust (MHT): Secretary to the Board, Conservation Manager.

11 members of the public

1. Election of Chair

Jenny Phelps was appointed as Chair, but in her absence it was agreed that Mick Davies should chair this meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Duncan Bridges (MHT), Peter Hancock, Jenny Phelps, Sue Windle.

3. Report of meeting 28 August 2019

The report of the meeting was agreed and signed as such by the Chair.

4. Public Questions

A member of the public asked a question about stocking rates on the common, supplemental feeding and the balance between grazing and recreational use. Ms Brennan responded for CCA and said that there were now less animals grazing the common than there had been in the past. CCA's calculation was that there were rights to graze over 4,500 sheep. Whilst the public also had a right to enjoy the common, they had to ensure that their dogs were controlled around the grazing animals. The Conservation Manager confirmed that each commoner had a legal right to graze a certain number of animals but the landowner had the right to permit individuals to graze additional animals as long as they did not compromise the other commoners' grazing rights.

5. Matters Arising

British Camp Reservoir – Nothing further to report. Mr Bartlett asked if someone from CCA could attend any meeting. The Secretary to the Board said that MHT could enquire.

Roadside parking by Swinyards car park – the Trust had placed some stones to stop unauthorised parking and further work was planned.

Footpath by Welland boundary – stepping stones had been put down (but they were currently under water).

Signage on the common – The CEO had prepared some signs and the Secretary to the Board would circulate the design. Barbara Wilkes reminded MHT that she had suggested warning signs to protect the frogs on Hollybed Common. **JB, SS**

Problems around Hancocks Lane gate – WCC had identified a replacement horse rider friendly latch. Matt Gardner offered to fit it.

JB

6. Report from Malvern Hills Trust

The Secretary to the Board outlined the process for analysis of the results of the Charity Commission Scheme (CCS) consultation and said that she anticipated the responses would be available for the public in January 2020.

7. Report from MHT Conservation Manager:

Mowing and scrub clearance – MHT were halfway through the winter works on the common. The Secretary to the Board would circulate details of the volunteer day. **SS**

Stock numbers and grazing – there were about 70 cattle and over 500 sheep on the commons. Marlbrook Farm were now grazing some sheep on the common in exercise of their commoners' rights.

Securing the commons – this was on hold, awaiting the CCS.

Southern Hills and Castlemorton – replacement for HLS Scheme. The provisional deadline for applications for Countryside Stewardship Schemes was 1 May 2020. Sue Windle was considering whether an application could be made for Coombe Green.

Pond restoration –Castlemorton Parish Council and the CCA had been notified of the plans to restore these ponds. Matt Gardner confirmed that the ponds by Swinyards were insignificant for stock watering but the Conservation Manager said a bowser could be provided if it was needed. The work was being carried out under licence from Natural England, and an ecologist was working with the Trust. The work was being timed to minimize impact on pondlife.

8. Stock visibility/casualties

Matthew Gardner said he was not aware of any incidents other than one minor collision, where the animal appeared uninjured.

9. Reports from CCA

Ann Brennan reported on various events which CCA had run, including showing around visitors from the Foundation for Common Land. Matt Gardner reported on the work of the group which had been looking at rights of estover. They had researched the history of exercise for the rights, identified 52 properties with rights attached and were currently looking at how the exercise of the rights fitted in with SSSI status and the Schemes. It was intended to produce a report with a frame of reference within which everyone could work. Ann Brennan said people were pleased to see the scrub clearance on Castlemorton Common.

10. Reports from other represented bodies

CCA and Castlemorton Parish Council had responded to the Trust's CCS consultation. Chris Atkins was the new MHT board member appointed on behalf of Castlemorton. There was a discussion about flooding around the area of the gate in Hancock's Lane. This had been referred to Little Malvern Parish Council. Julie Moore reported from Sue Windle that she felt the scrub clearance carried out at Hollybush had improved road safety for the sheep.

11. Other Information

Lionel Bartlett said there were more pot holes in Hancocks Lane and the shoulder of the road was breaking away by the middle bridge. **DB**

Julian Taylor asked what was going to happen at Swinyards when the car park was full. The Conservation Manager said consideration would be given to opening the barrier, but the car park was rarely full.

The Trust was asked what it was doing to reduce its carbon emissions. The Chair said that the question would be registered with the Trust. **DB**

12. Date of next meeting

25 March 2020 – at which an outdoor meeting would be planned.
Future meetings dates were set for 29 July and 25 November.

The meeting closed at 9.09pm