



Report of the Recreation Advisory Panel

Wednesday 30th March 2022 (outdoor meeting – Beacon Road)

Present: Beck Baker (Community and Conservation Officer), Jonathan Bills (Conservation Manager), Steve Braim (trustee), John Cuthbertson, Mick Davies (trustee), Richard Davies, Stuart Mason, Linda Medcalf, Maggie Radway, John Raine (trustee), Simon Smith.

1. Welcome, introductions and appointment of Chair (annual)

The CCO welcomed everyone to the meeting and the new members to the panel:

- Stuart Mason – Malvern Hang Gliding Club
- Linda Medcalf – Malvern Hills Riding Club
- Maggie Radway – Friends of the Malvern Hills
- John Raine – MHT trustee

2. Apologies for absence

David Baldwin, Nick Collins, Warwick Taylor, Dorothy Weet, Rich Vale (warden)

3. Matters arising from the report of the meeting held on the 15th December 2021

The CCO welcomed the members of the Panel to the meeting and provided the following updates from the previous meetings and reports:

- Tree planting season had come to an end and the Trust had planted 49 new trees in Sherrards Green, along Poolbrook Road, and in a plum orchard near St Andrews Road as part of the Forestry Commission's Urban Tree Challenge Fund. A further 9 trees had been planted and 470m of hedgerow thanks to Farming in Protected Landscapes funding from Defra/Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Parking passes – As with last year, parking passes will expire on the 31st May (not March) and will be available to renew from the 3rd May (more information at www.malvernhills.org.uk/visiting/parking)
- The thoughts and information shared by the group relating to Gullet Quarry would be fed back to staff in preparation for the spring/summer season.

4. Warden updates

Wardens had sent apologies but had provided information read out by the CCO. The warmer weather had brought more people out but this had not led to any issues. There were now 4 wardens employed by the Trust to provide information to visitors, patrol the landscape and speak to local residents. This would be very

helpful in helping to manage the large numbers of visitors to the Hills and Commons since Covid19.

5. Visitor impacts

CCO introduced the topic for discussion. The Trust had seen a large increase in the numbers of visitors to the Hills and Commons following the Covid lockdowns in 2020. Visitor numbers had remained high. To assess the impact, a detailed visitor survey and study had been commissioned jointly by the Trust and local Councils (due to be published in the summer). The study would also include possible suggestions on how to reduce the impacts of additional visitors to the Hills and reduce damage to the archaeology, geology, habitats and wildlife.

In particular erosion of the ridgeline was discussed by the panel:

- Erosion of ridgeline and widening of paths was damaging rare grassland habitats and creating difficult gravelly walking conditions which were further exacerbated by rain.
- Deep rain gullies were making access difficult in some places
- Fencing - current method of fencing was possible in some locations but not in all. Fencing had not been vandalised and had been up for 2 months. It was similar to the grazing compartment fencing. Fencing could be in place for years depending on how well the vegetation recovers.
- Rocks or obstacles to discourage walking in particular areas. How to secure them? What type of obstacles? Could rocks be sourced from the quarries / hills?
- Surfacing along route – what types of materials e.g. resin, concrete, plastic matting? How to install? Evidence of different types of surfacing e.g. Beacon Road and British Camp.
- Large amount of work to undertake along the ridgeline and would need different solutions in different places
- Recruiting volunteers to help for example Fix the Fells / working holidays
- Provide signage to explain the situation and ask people to consider their impact.
- Would the evidence from the study help the Trust access more funding?
- Research other similar projects including Fix the Fells, National Trust projects.

The Panel also discussed how more visitors were impacting their activities. It was noted that:

- Although there were more visitors, the issues were the same rather than new issues arising from more visitors
- Some horseriders had chosen not to ride at weekends because it was too busy and to ride on the southern hills where it was quieter

- New trails had been created by mountain bikers particularly in the area around the Gullet.
- An increase in professional dog walkers and some with more than 6 dogs with issues around livestock worrying.

6. Path improvement works

Conservation Manager updated the group that the path up Happy Valley would be repaired with some drainage to reduce water erosion.

J Cuthbertson had sent an email with suggestions for work which would improve access for the Disabled Ramblers group. R Davies suggested path repairs at the cairn on the saddle of Worcestershire Beacon and Sugarloaf Hill. Members were invited to report any path issues which could be added to the work plan by emailing beck@malvern hills.org.uk

7. Conservation Manager update

The winter scrub and tree works had finished and staff were now beginning work on path repair, mowing and interpretation. CM thanked the hang gliders for their help in clearing vegetation which benefited both wildlife and their activity.

8. Round the table updates

A question was asked about the opening of the well at St Ann's Well for visitors. This had been closed due to repair work and an electrical fault.

9. Any other business

None to report.

10. Date of next meeting

6pm Wednesday 14th September 2022