

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

Castlemorton Parish Hall

Wednesday 30 November 2022 8.00pm

Present: Phil Birley, Ann Brennan, Mick Davies (Chair), Chris Rouse, Matthew Gardner, Peter Hancock, Julie Moore, Keith Stevens, Barbara Wilkes, Susan Windle.

In attendance:

From Malvern Hills Trust (MHT): CEO, Secretary to the Board, Conservation Manager.
7 members of the public

1. Election of Chair

On the proposal of Keith Stevens, seconded by Peter Hancock, Mick Davies was appointed unopposed.

2. Apologies for Absence

Andy Sayers.

3. Committee membership changes

Chris Rouse had replaced David Fellows as one of the MHT nominations to the committee.

4. Report of meeting 16 March 2022

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

5. Public Questions

Mr Garton-Jones asked about the track serving his property and what the position was in relation to surface drainage. Water ran off the common and eroded the surface of the track (the track surface being the responsibility of the users). He appreciated that this was a grey area, but asked if the owners of the properties served by the track could establish a clear arrangement with the Trust for dealing with this.

The CEO said there was no direct responsibility upon the Trust to maintain the drainage associated with the easements and if there was a pipe under the easement that was the responsibility of the properties benefiting from the easement. However the Trust would help where it could and this was sometimes preferable to allowing third party contractors to carry out work on

Trust land. The Trust would consider permitting residents to carry out work on occasions so long as a methodology could be agreed.

The Conservation Manager confirmed that some drainage issues had been reported in relation to Hollybed Street and he had spoken to the Operations Manager about carrying out maintenance.

Mr Garton Jones asked whether historically there had been drainage on the common and whether anyone had knowledge of it. The CEO said there might be some local people. It was pointed out that underlying structures sometimes showed up as surface marks when the weather was very dry. There was also a discussion about the appropriate type of stone to use. He asked that anyone hoping to carry out work should speak to the Trust beforehand. The Trust could recommend quarries supplying the appropriate type of stone.

The CEO said that the Trust was not liable to repair track surfaces because of run off from the common. There were further queries and the CEO invited residents to get in touch so that someone from the Trust could meet them on site to discuss any issues on a case by case basis.

Mr and Mrs Milne had sent a question via Castlemorton Common Association, asking about the Trust's plans for the Mill Pond. They were concerned about detritus left by fishermen and its damaging effect on wildlife. They were also concerned about vegetation growth around the perimeter including invasive plants. The Conservation Manager said that the wardens would clear litter and speak to anyone fishing in the wrong place or at the wrong time. The current Land Management Plan included dredging the pond in the final year of the plan (2025/26). The invasive plants were being monitored and removed. Anyone fishing should have a rod license but only Environment Agency approved water bailiffs or the police could enforce the requirement. The Conservation Manager said the Trust would monitor the balance between trees, scrub and open areas around the pond.

The Trust was asked if it could do anything about the brambles around the church wall at Hollybush. The Conservation Manager asked the people concerned to get in touch.

6. Matters Arising

There were none.

7. Update on Countryside Stewardship Scheme

The Conservation Manager said that this was going well. The delivery group had met a couple of times. Payment from the RPA was awaited.

8. Report from Malvern Hills Trust

The CEO said there had been an increase in joy-riding on the common. He thanked the people who had reported it to the Trust and to the Police. Some evening patrols had been undertaken both by the Trust and the Police. A couple of car registration numbers had been passed on to the police and two registered keepers had been sent s59 letters.

The activity had reduced a little recently. Any linear barrier to stop cars driving onto the common of over 200m would require Commons Act consent, together with consent from Natural England if on the SSSI. The Trust wanted input from 4Cs and the graziers. Measures could not be taken in isolation because of the risk of pushing the problem somewhere else.

Comments included:

- The ditch on Berrow Down had been very successful.
- Would any type of surveillance be workable?
- Any plan would need to be for the whole CR9 unit.
- There were places where access was effectively prevented by scrub, and perhaps that could be worked into the scrub clearance plan.
- The main problem with any request for permission would be if there was a group against the plan. Natural England should be supportive as it afforded protection to the SSSI and the police had already suggested a ditch and bank. Some groups objected in principle to barriers on common land.
- The nuisance to residents should be followed up with the police.
- The joy-riding incidents did not follow a particular pattern.
- The public were not allowed to drive on the common to park but it was tolerated to a certain extent in some areas.

The CEO said that if the majority of people living around the common thought preventing vehicular access was something they wanted, then that could be harnessed. It would be quite a bit of work to create a comprehensive plan.

There were a number of planned utility upgrades – work to the reservoir by the Bowling Green and the water main on New Road, Western Power plans to replace a mains cable running close to Pink Cottage, a new power cable from by Pink Cottage to the Gullet cottages, Severn Trent to replace the valves on the main at the foot of Swinyard Hill..

9. Report from MHT Conservation Manager:

Mowing and bracken rolling had been carried out in the summer and scrub clearance from September, concentrating on the area of mire near Hancocks Lane. Further scrub clearance took place near New Road around the old quarry

face. The volunteers had carried out work on Hurst Bank and the Trust was obtaining quotes to clear one of the quarries on the side of Swinyard Hill.–

It was generally known that the Shails were thinking about stopping grazing the common. As at the date of the meeting nothing had been confirmed in writing but if this did happen the Countryside Stewardship delivery group would have to decide how to react to that.

10. Stock visibility/casualties

Matthew Gardner said he was aware of 1 casualty about a month ago. The main part of the common was short of grass as a result of the drought.

11. Reports from CCA

The day time events at the Shindig had been cancelled because of the heat, but the evening event went ahead in July. The dog show and gymkhana were held in September thanks to the support of Marlbrook Farm. The events raised £3,000 which went to Ukraine, British Heart Foundation and towards a defibrillator for the village hall. The group continued to liaise with the Foundation for Common Land in relation to the future development of the ELMS scheme. The Association hoped to plant some memorial trees in Snookes Croft. The Association planned to replace the goal posts on Hollybed Common and they were on order.

12. Reports from other represented bodies

Mrs Windle said a small fundraising event had been held to support the management of Coombe Green Common and the Parish Council had offered matched funding. It was hoped to plant a tree next autumn to mark the coronation.

Mr Rouse said that the car park near Welland needed some potholes filling. Mr Hancock wondered whether a ditch might help to stop water flowing across that car park. Welland Parish Council were planning to enhance the pedestrian access routes to the common.

13. Other Information

The CEO said he had been talking to Worcestershire County Council about the triangle at Chandlers Cross. They had agreed to put in place a scheme to reinstate, but not until Severn Trent had renovated the sewer.

There had been no further communication with Severn Trent over the future of British Camp reservoir.

The planning application for housing off the B4208 in Welland was due to come to Planning Committee possibly in December.

14. Date of next meeting

15 March 2023.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm