



Report of the Recreation Advisory Panel

Wednesday 29th March 2023, Lyttelton Rooms.

Present: Beck Baker (Community and Conservation Officer), David Baldwin (trustee), Jonathan Bills (Conservation Manager), John Cuthbertson, Nuala Dalton, Mick Davies (trustee), Richard Davies, David Fellows (trustee), John Freeman, Steve Hannon, Stuart Mason, John Raine (trustee), James Richards, Simon Smith, Dorothy Weet.

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

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

- James Richards – Malvern Cycle Sport, Mountain biking
- Nuala Dalton – Boundless Outdoors

David Baldwin was elected as Chair of the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies from Warwick Taylor (Malvern Joggers). CCO explained that the representative for walking group was unable to attend as their group had folded and so would no longer be happy joining the panel. A new walking representative was being sought to join the panel.

3. Matters arising from the report of the meeting held on the 30th March 2022

The Conservation Manager informed the panel that the temporary fencing was still in place on Summer Hill and was working well. There were some signs of vegetation reestablishing however recovery was severely affected by the dry and hot summer. The Trust would continue to monitor over the spring and summer to see how it recovers.

There had been no reports of access issues however some temporary posts had been removed and had been replaced with more permanent posts. Signage was on site to explain the reason for the fencing.

The following points were discussed by the panel:

- What were the main causes of erosion?
- Had previous attempts to restore vegetation on the Shire Ditch south of the Wyche Cutting been successful?
- Would this method of allowing places to recover be repeated elsewhere?

The CM explained that the increase in visitors and social distancing during the pandemic had led to increased erosion which was further exacerbated by water run-off. This was a long-term project and it would take a considerable period of time for full recovery. Previous similar works to the Shire Ditch were successful however once the temporary fencing was removed, the erosion continued to it is likely that areas will need to be returned to.

Detailed research had been carried out to provide baseline data for the current levels of erosion along the ridgeline and a consultant had been employed to consider and recommend solutions to reduce erosion and restore vegetation.

The Chair asked that this report be shared with the group.

4. Car park charges and passes

The CCO outlined the upcoming changes to car park charges:

- Increase in pay and display ticket to £5.25 from the 1st April (£4.80 currently)
- Introduction of new evening ticket from the 1st April. Those parking after 6pm would pay £3.00.
- Introduction of pay and display at the Old Hills, Callow End from this summer. Charge to be £2.50 per day.
- Increase in Annual Pass price to £50.00 (second pass for £25.00) from the 1st April (£41.00 currently)
- Levy payer parking passes would be on sale from May costing £7.00 per pass. These are valid from 1st June 2023 to 31st May 2024.

Residents wishing to purchase a Levy payer pass must now provide their Council Tax bill to confirm eligibility and also the V5C document for each vehicle to confirm that the vehicle is registered to the levy paying address. The CCO explained that this was due fraud and people purchasing levy payer passes for owners of vehicles that were not eligible for the concessionary pass. As a charity, the income from the car parks is an essential contribution to the conservation of the landscape.

Contactless payments were available in all car parks. British Camp car park, North Quarry car park, Upper Beacon Road car park also have a cash option.

The CCO confirmed the Annual Pass would apply to the Old Hills car park so those with an Annual Pass could park in the Old Hills car parks without having to purchase another pay and display ticket.

5. Events and drop-in sessions

The Trust would be restarting an events programme for the first time since the pandemic. The first event, a community litter pick, had gone well and the second event, a family woodcraft workshop, will be held on the 11th April. Events will be advertised on the Trust website, social media and with the local Tourist Information Centre.

Trust staff would also be holding 'drop-in' sessions at car parks around the Hills and Commons this spring and summer to engage with visitors and provide information about countryside access, wildlife and the work of the Trust.

Action: Panel members to suggest any information that they think would be beneficial to share with visitors during these sessions.

6. Trustee elections

The CCO explained that the Trustee elections are due to be held in October 2023. Panel members are encouraged to find out more if they are interested in standing for election and to speak to family, friends and those who may be interested in joining the Malvern Hills Trust as a charity trustee.

Further information would be made available in the run up to the nominations. Mick Davies (Chair of Trustees) invited interested members to speak to current trustees to find out more about the role and standing for election. Many of the positions were uncontested due to low numbers of standing nominees so an election was not always contested.

Action: Panel members are encouraged to share this with fellow club members and friends to encourage people to stand for election. Members to contact the CCO to be put in contact with current trustees to find out more information.

7. New land acquisitions

The CM updated the panel that the Trust had recently acquired 16 acres of land on the western side of the Hills. This included an ancient woodland site called Colwall Coppice and pasture land called Westfield. The acquisitions joined land already under the jurisdiction of the Trust together and would be open to the public for access.

At Evendine Lane, near Colwall, 3 parcels of land had been acquired including 2 pasture fields and a woodland area at the foothill of the Malverns.

This land would now be protected as green space in perpetuity. Access arrangements would be the same as that to places already under the jurisdiction of the Trust – open access for those on foot and horseback and bridleways for cycle access. Permissive footpaths would be identified to better connect existing rights of way, for example where walkers are currently forced onto the road for a short section.

RD asked if the new land could be mapped for use by the Harlequins Orienteering Club. CM confirmed this was fine.

8. Access for all

The Trust had applied to the Defra Access for All grant fund and had been successful. The funding for nine new hand gates of the latest design would replace stiles and other types of gate, and provide new access points into recently acquired Trust land. The gates would improve accessibility into these areas for a wider range of visitors.

A second round of Access for All grants from Defra will be available in 2024/25 and the Trust would be looking to draw up projects to apply.

JR asked whether the opening of a section of disused bridleway on North Hill would be funded? The CM replied that it was likely that only new projects would be eligible but the question would be asked of the funder.

Action: Panel members to let the CM jonathan@malvern hills.org.uk know about any potential access projects for which funding could be applied for.

9. Vehicular deterrents

CO reported that there had been a spate of antisocial behaviour on Castlemorton Common where drivers were driving on the common causing damage and disturbing the local community. The police have been involved and the Trust have carried out extra patrols however it has been difficult to witness these activities.

The Trust has been considering the use of appropriate deterrents including lines of rocks, bank and ditch, and wooden bollards to stop vehicles. A survey has been undertaken and 1/3 of the Common is protected by bank and ditch or scrub. A 'whole common' plan is being considered to stop vehicular access whilst maintaining public access for legitimate users.

These measures would require Secretary of State consent under the Commons Act. The Panel discussed various points relating to:

- Consultation to identify any concerns from groups e.g. cyclists, horseriders etc would be carried out
- Police are drawing up a letter of support
- Some deterrents were already in place. Due to the meterage these cover, consent was not required however a large project with longer sections of deterrents would require consent

- CCTV could be employed to identify drivers with neighbours' consent for erection on their property. Source for CCTV cameras to be identified.

10. Round-the-table updates

John Cuthbertson, Disabled Ramblers – Thanked the Trust for work to repair the path from North Quarry car park which had opened access for the Trampers in this area. A programme of rambles would be organised for the Malverns later this year.

James Richards, Malvern Cycle Sport- Would like to open a discussion relating to legitimising access for mountain bikers on the western side of the Hills in Herefordshire. The following discussion included

- Local riders using these routes for many years / concern riders are already using routes they shouldn't
- Opening up more space for cyclists would spread people out more thinly and reduce conflict
- Use of bells / calling out, slowing when approaching walkers or horseriders would reduce conflict
- A larger campaign may be needed to provide information for mountain bikers on where to ride and how to share / drop in sessions to provide visitor advice

Nuala Dalton, Boundless Outdoors (Malvern) – the centre was seeing an increased number of visitors who used the Hills in some of their activities.

Simon Smith, Malvern Hills District Council – Plans for the upcoming Well Dressing Festival were well underway with tours and activities. SS invited the Trust to share their events with the TIC / Visit the Malverns for promotion.

Richard Davies, Harlequins Orienteering Club – orienteering events continue alongside the detailed mapping of sites.

Stuart Mason, Malvern Hang Gliding Club – Volunteers from the club had been clearing scrub, in liaison with MHT, on the slopes of Pinnacle Hill to improve their flying conditions.

11. Any other business

RD requested that information about the planned winter scrub work be included on the next agenda. This was noted.

ND requested information about access to the Tank Quarry be shared for abseiling activities.

Action: The CCO would ask wardens to contact to arrange access.

DW raised a concern about the number of dogs being walked by professional dog walkers. This was noted as a possible topic for a future agenda.

12. Date for next meeting

6pm Wednesday 13th September 2023

Indoor meeting – venue to be confirmed