

News release from date of receipt

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Malvern Hills Trust responds to public consultation

The Malvern Hills Trust has been analysing nearly 500 pieces of feedback from members of the public and organisations about its proposed governance changes. Trustees have carefully considered all the responses and the Trust sincerely thanks all who have given their views and helped to inform the Trust's decision-making process.

The public consultation findings produced by market research consultancy 56 Degree Insight, along with a summary of the consultation process and the Trust's key responses to the views expressed, are now available on the Trust's website at

<https://www.malvernhills.org.uk/governance-changes/consultation/>

This includes full details of the changes made by the Trust in response.

Changes to the Trust's proposals for the draft Bill will include:

1. Having a trustee as a named point of contact with each local area to build the relationship with local communities.
2. Improving the drafting of the proposed general power to address some of the specific concerns about when and how it could be used.
3. Replace the term 'membership organisation' to make it clear that such a group would have no role or influence on the Trust's decision-making. The term 'supporters' group' would be more appropriate.
4. Removing the provision to allow fencing for animal health reasons. There were many comments about preserving the open nature of the commons.
5. A six-month break period between taking down an area of temporary fencing for grazing and reintroducing fencing over the same land (with an exception to allow re-fencing of small areas, for example to control difficult vegetation).

The Trust is also looking at strengthening the language of the Bill to reflect concerns about licensing activities on its land which could lead to commercialisation.

Trust Chair John Michael said:

“The open landscape of the Malvern Hills and Commons is one of the outstanding features of the area and it is clear that this is treasured by many of those who took part in the consultation.

“The consultation raised some emotive issues. For example, some people thought the Trust would be fencing alongside roads crossing commons. I must emphasise that this would not be the case and there would be not be fencing eg along the Welland straight or the road to Gullet Quarry. There were also concerns expressed about the Trust moving away from conservation and allowing commercialisation of the Hills or restricting public access.

“The Trust is a registered charity and all use of its powers must be accordance with the objectives of the charity which are looking after the Hills and Commons and keeping them open and unbuilt on for the benefit of the public. I would like to stress that the Trust has a duty to keep its land unenclosed and unbuilt on except as specifically provided for in the Acts, and that obligation will be re-enacted in the Bill.

“I note that there had been a concerted local campaign to instil in people a sense of concern about what might happen in the future as a result of new legislation. Misinformation spread on social media was picked up in some of the consultation comments, such as suggestions that the new powers would enable the Hills to be used for developing solar and wind farms.

“On the contrary, the Trust could not do such things because of the environmental designations that apply to much of the land under our care, and the fact that our charitable objects would not allow them.”

Notes for editors

In a series of special board meetings, trustees discussed the consultation outcomes and agreed a number of changes to be reflected in its Parliamentary Bill which is now almost complete. The Bill will incorporate many of the provisions from the current Malvern Hills Acts. The fundamental duty of the Trust to keep the Hills and unbuilt on as an open space for public recreation will not change. The Trust analysed all of the feedback from the consultation and recognised that although some comments might be based on misconceptions, they reflected a great love of the Malvern Hills and strongly held local concerns.

The Trust made a decisive vote 17:2 on 17 October to deposit its proposed Private Bill with Parliament on 27 November this year. ENDS.