

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

Castlemorton Parish Hall

Wednesday 26 November 2025 at 8.00 pm

Members:

Phil Birley	Recreation Representative
Matt Gardner	Grazier
Pete Hancock	Welland Parish Council
Janet Hughes	Castlemorton Commons Association
Chris Rouse	Malvern Hills Trust
Andy Sayers	Castlemorton Commons Association
Barbara Wilkes	Grazier
Mike Wilkinson	Castlemorton Parish Council
Susan Windle	Landowner Representative, Coombe Green
Simon Yates	Birtsmorton Parish Council

Present:

Mike Wilkinson (Chair), Pete Hancock, Matt Gardner, Janet Hughes, Chris Rouse, Andy Sayers, Barbara Wilkes, Susan Windle, Simon Yates.

In attendance:

Ann Brennan

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

1. Election of Chair

Mike Wilkinson was unanimously elected as Chair, proposed by Pete Hancock and seconded by Andy Sayers.

2. Apologies for Absence

Phil Birley

3. Committee membership changes

Keith Stevens and Jeremy Hubbard (both Castlemorton PC nominees) had stepped down from the committee, Keith Stevens due to relocation. Mike Wilkinson had resigned from the Board of Malvern Hills Trust and was now representing Castlemorton PC on the committee.

4. Report of meeting of 19 March 2025

The report of the meeting of 19 March 2025 was approved unanimously. It was agreed that draft reports should be published on the MHT website without delay and that the Secretary to the Board would provide summary reports for the next available meetings of Castlemorton PC and the Malvern Hills Trust Board, rather than waiting for the full report to be approved at the next meeting.

5. Matters Arising

It was suggested that future meeting reports should include the name of the organisation that each committee member represented, and it was agreed that this was a good idea.

Janet Hughes asked for an update on the boundary at Little Malvern Estate. The Conservation Manager (CM) said that he had contacted the estate agent, Fisher German, and understood that the sale had completed on the day of this meeting. Fisher German would relay to the new owner that it was their responsibility to maintain the boundary fences. MHT's Property Manager would be sending further information on this requirement to FisherGerman.

6. Public Comments

None.

7. Committee Member Items

a. Increase in motorbikes and travellers/campers on the Common

Andy Sayers reported that a number of residents had raised concerns about travellers and campers on the Common. There was a perception that the problem was getting worse and that the Trust was taking no action. Residents were not in receipt of any communication about action.

The CEO explained the procedure followed by the Trust when an encampment was reported to staff. A notice would be issued, delivered in person by Rangers working in pairs. There would be positive engagement every couple of days, with the CEO instructing Rangers *how* to engage; it was always a bespoke arrangement. It was unfortunate that there was only a maximum of four Rangers available at any one time, which meant that there was little capacity for in-person feedback to residents. The CEO pointed out that there was often a safeguarding challenge, which could not be communicated to the public.

Andy Sayers recommended that the Castlemorton Security web page would be a good place to update the public on action taken by the Trust. A retrospective article for the Parish Newsletter was also suggested.

The CEO said that there would normally be tens of calls to the MHT Office when there was an incident; the office staff did keep in touch with the callers. Rangers recorded every incident and they were tracked. The Trust had a bailiff to call on if necessary, but their services were expensive. The CEO urged members of the public witnessing illegal motorbiking to report it to the police, especially in respect of children riding mini motorbikes. The more people who reported, the more likely the incident would be to move up the police's priority list. The police had declined to intervene in any of the unauthorised encampment incidents during the summer, informing the Trust that the incident in question did not meet the threshold for the police's new Section 61 powers.

There was little the Trust could do physically to prepare for these incidents. The threat of byelaws and bailiffs was the best deterrent it had. Following a problem with people attending the Motorhome Show parking their motorhomes outside a pub in Malvern Link, the CEO had written to the organisers to ask them in future to advertise to show visitors that camping on the Commons was not permitted.

Pete Hancock asked who had the power to act when someone was found to be breaking the Byelaws. The CEO confirmed that it was only Trust staff, unless the breach reached a certain threshold at which point the Trust could involve the police. In the case of illegal motorbiking, she urged members of the public to call the police.

Mike Wilkinson said that local councillors habitually attended Castlemorton Parish Council meetings, which enabled them to flag up concerns of this sort. He encouraged committee members to keep the Parish Council informed too and suggested that a 4Cs WhatsApp group might be helpful for sharing information.

The CM pointed out that once the Trust had succeeded in moving on encampments, it was left to deal with the mess, including human excrement, which was very unpleasant and time-consuming for staff.

b. Road/livestock safety management

Mike Wilkinson suggested that the time had come for another discussion regarding livestock safety on the Common, given that MHT currently had a Board member with highways expertise and that with the possible arrival of a new local authority in two years' time, there might be an opportunity to reduce traffic speeds on the Common. Andy Sayers thought that a push should be made now, given that there was more traffic in the area due to the road closure at British Camp. He suggested that the County Council should be asked about

their risk assessment, and that perhaps there should be more livestock warning signs. The CM said that action was already underway; a Castlemorton Commons Association (CCA) representative had contacted Highways, as had a member of the public following a cow fatality, and Highways was now in touch with the Trust. Mike Wilkinson added that the local County Councillor, Tom Wells, had been copied into the email from the member of the public and was taking an interest. Pete Hancock said that Councillor Wells planned to push Highways to reduce the speed limit on the Common. He had also been in discussions with Welland Parish Council on the same subject.

The CEO said that road safety initiatives tended to be about people; there were no records of injuries to livestock on the national road incident map (think.gov.uk/thinkmap). West Mercia police acknowledged that many of their staff, who were based in Worcester, did not appreciate rural issues and therefore they had been providing training to enable them to learn what crimes had been committed. An engagement session was planned for Easter.

It was suggested that a working party should be set up, including members of Castlemorton Parish Council, CCA and 4Cs, and led by the Parish Council, who were likely to have the most influence with the County Council.

8. Report from Malvern Hills Trust

The CEO provided an update on MHT activities particularly relevant to Castlemorton:

- a. During April, BBC Hereford and Worcester had shown particular interest in the previous Castlemorton Rave. The Trust was conscious of local difficulties and so had chosen not to be that helpful. The story seemed to have fizzled out.
- b. The field team had installed a water trough on the Common.
- c. The Commons had been very dry during the summer. An area of wet ground appeared near Marlbrook Farm. This was due to a water pipe leak and reported to Severn Trent. They then took two attempts to fix it. The Trust had appointed a Land and Property Manager who was taking a proactive approach with utility companies, leading to increased engagement and cost recovery. Pete Hancock noted that Severn Trent had not removed the heras fencing following their work and the CEO said she would ask the Land and Property Manager to follow up on this.
- d. The Trust's purchase of the orchard near Foxhills had completed. The Trust was developing a good relationship with the property owner.
- e. A drop-in information session on the Malvern Hills Bill had been held in Castlemorton in July but had not attracted much interest. Drop-in sessions

continued around Malvern, with the next one being planned in Malvern Link in the New Year.

- f. In August a complaint had been received about legering (fishing using a weight rather than a float). Rangers had dealt with four individuals who had been found legering at Hollybed; legering was banned from Trust land.
- g. Volunteer work parties to improve the orchards continued.
- h. The Annual Meeting of the Board had taken place on 13 November 2025. John Michael and David Core had been re-elected as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, and the 2024-25 accounts signed off. In his Chair's Report, John Michael had referred to the problem of fires caused by barbecues. Rangers had dealt with around 30 of these; this figure didn't include fires attended to directly by the fire service.
- i. The Trust was working with the National Sheep Association on engaging with the public about dog attacks on livestock.
- j. There had been reports of the hunt gathering on the Common; hunting was not permitted on Trust land.
- k. The Malvern Hills Bill had received its second reading in June and would move to committee stage from January 2026.
- l. There was a vacancy on the Trust Board for a trustee nominated by the County Council on behalf of Castlemorton Parish Council. The CEO urged anyone who might be interested to contact the Parish Clerk, Christina Leake. Mike Wilkinson added that the Parish Council newsletter had invited expressions of interest by mid-December, ahead of the next meeting in January. He pointed out that the appointment would be for two years: the remainder of the current Board cycle.

9. Report from the MHT Conservation Manager

The CM provided an update on work done and current issues:

- a. The Trust had finished resurfacing the car park at Welland and footpaths leading off it. Pete Hancock thought there might be some snagging required and said he would contact Mick Davies about contacting the contractor.
- b. All bracken cutting had been completed as normal.
- c. Contractors had begun scrub works as soon as the bird breeding season finished. Patches had been complete from Bowling Green House down to Hunters Hall and along Hancocks Lane. The CM thanked committee members for sending in requests.
- d. The robot mower had been used to carry out works at Shady Bank and along the narrow hedges.
- e. The Trust was currently working on the next Land Management Plan, due to start from 2027, and the CM was keen for all stakeholders to get involved. Two consultations were underway:

- a call for evidence that might be useful to the Trust in managing the land e.g. old photos, maps, scientific reports. There had already been a good response to the call, which was open until January.
- A light touch postcard exercise, inviting members of the public to nominate their top three special features of the Hills and Commons and to give their views on the likely environmental challenges of the next five years. Postcards were available in 20+ locations around the area including Welland Post Office, the Robin Hood pub and the Woodshed café.

There would be a third consultation in due course aimed at those wishing to get involved in the detail of the Plan.

- f. The CM had established that the duck boards along the cut from the Hollands up to Millpond, discussed at the last meeting, were definitely not on Trust land and would need to be repaired/replaced by the relevant Parish Council.

10. Stock casualties

Barbara Wilkes reported that two of her sheep had been killed on the roads in July. One driver had stopped at the scene. Matt Gardner said that a cow had been killed in the week prior to this meeting on the Welland strait. Although not technically speeding, the car had been going fast and had hit the cow very hard. A calf had also been hit in the last week and had a leg injury but was expected to recover. The latter driver had been very upset, was concerned about the calf and admitted the accident had been his fault.

Pete Hancock asked whether the Trust issued press releases on this topic. The CEO said the local press had covered these incidents, raising awareness about livestock worrying sheep; John Chance (grazier) had lost 10 sheep during the year. The Trust had been able to publicise the problem through its connections with the National Sheep Association and the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

11. Report from Castlemorton Commons Association (CCA)

Andy Sayers reported that the Summer Shindig in July had raised £2,700 for local charities, including the British Heart Foundation, who had offered to run a Revive R (extensive CPR course) for local people free of charge (usual price £20,000). Expressions of interest in attending were very welcome; the CEO thought some of the Trust volunteers might be interested. CCA had also held a social supper. The Association's AGM would take place as usual on the last Friday in January.

12. Reports from other represented bodies

a. Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council

Pete Hancock thanked Trust staff for their work on Welland car park and paths. He suggested the installation of blocks to stop cars accessing the paths. The CM said he had agreed with the PC Chair to find something that would stop cars but would allow Matt Gardner's quadbike through.

Welland residents were continuing to contact the Parish Council about roaming sheep and cows in the village and Pete Hancock would like the committee to discuss what action, if any, would be reasonable. It was thought that the issue might well be raised in the Land Management Plan consultation.

b. Castlemorton Parish Council

Nothing further to report.

c. Coombe Green

Sue Windle reported that Worcester Footpaths, with help from Malvern Hills National Landscape, was going to fund replacements for the duck boards. These were likely to be installed in the spring. It also looked as though funding was available to replace the bridge; this would be a 12-month project. There were now 12 members of the volunteer group.

14. Information and Any Other Business

None

15. Dates of meetings in 2026

Wednesday 18 March

Wednesday 9 July 2025 – summer outdoor meeting

Wednesday 25 November

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm

Signed..... Chair

18 March 2026