MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS
MEETING OF THE BOARD

Council Chambers (formerly Priory Lodge Hall), Avenue Road, Malvern
Thursday 9th May 2013, 7:00 pm

Present: Mrs S Adeney, Rev'd C Attwood, Mr D Baldwin, Mr R Chamings, Mr R Cousins (Vice Chairman), Mr S Ginn, Mr R Hall-Jones, Mr D Hawkins, Mr P Hughes, Ms R Massey, Mr T Musgrove, Mr B Pilcher, Mrs G Rees, Mr J Roskams, Mr C Rouse, Mr C Smith, Mrs H Stace (Chairman), Mr D Street, Mr J Tretheway, Mr P Tuthill, Mr P Watson, Mr T Yapp, Mrs S Young.

In attendance: Director, Deputy Director/Secretary to the Board, Conservation Officer, and 2 members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Mr M Cordey and Mrs B Nielsen.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS
2.1 Welcome to new Board Members. Mrs H Stace welcomed Mrs S Young and Mr J Roskams to their first Board meeting.
2.2 Welcome to new Conservation Officer. Mrs H Stace welcomed Mr J Bills, Conservation Officer.
2.3 Thanks to the Director. Mrs H Stace thanked the Director for attending the meeting during his annual leave.
2.4 Training from the Auditors. Mrs H Stace stated that the Auditors had provided several dates to conduct a training session to the Board. Upon a show of hands it was determined that the date most Members could attend was the 16th August.
2.5 Reports from Committees. Mrs H Stace reminded Members that a decision taken by a Committee, within its terms of reference, shall stand unless within 3 working days the Chairman or any six or more members give written notice to officers that they require the decision to be referred to the next meeting of the Board. However, if the decision was on an item delegated from the Board to the Committee, then the Committee will make a recommendation that will be placed before the Board for decision. It was **NOTED** that the Board may have further issues to debate on a decision made by a Committee.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS
None.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Mr C Rouse declared in interest in the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

Mrs H Stace reminded Members that at anytime in the meeting a Member may declare an interest in an item.

5. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 14th MARCH 2013

Mrs H Stace presented the report and proposed that the minutes be **ADOPTED** as a **TRUE** and **ACCURATE** record. This was seconded by Mr P Watson and was **CARRIED** with 1 abstention.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM BOARD MEETING

6.1 3. Playground on Common. Mrs H Stace stated that on looking at the MHC Acts of Parliament it would appear that a playground would not be legal. The Director had met with the Parish Council to look at other options. An area with no fencing or surfacing with natural timber playground items may be allowed under the Acts. The Parish Council will produce a mock-up of how such a playground would look on the Common. It was understood that there were no guarantees that a playground would be granted.

6.2 10. Malvern Hills Conservators Summary Duties and Powers. Mrs H Stace stated that the amended document will be circulated to Members.

6.3 7.2.5 ATBRU. The Director confirmed that a firmer agreement with ATBRU will be drawn up and that they will be required to pay for any utilities used.

6.4 7.2.7 MHDC Members. Mr R Cousins confirmed that 2 new Board Members have undertaken an induction and that in the near future the Council will be asked to nominate another Member.

7. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES:

7.1 GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28th MARCH 2013

Rev'd C Attwood presented the report and proposed that the minutes be agreed by the Committee as a **TRUE** and **ACCURATE** record. This was seconded by Mrs G Rees and was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED.**

MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern
Thursday 28th March 2013, 5:30pm

Present: Mrs S Adeney, Rev'd C Attwood (Chairman), Mr R Cousins (Vice Chairman), Mr S Ginn, Mr T Musgrove, Mrs B Nielsen, Mrs G Rees, Mrs H Stace (ex-officio).

In Attendance: Director, Deputy Director, Mr D Hawkins, Mr C Smith, Mr P Tuthill, Mr T Yapp, and 1 member of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr B Pilcher. Mr C Rouse and Mr J Roskams offered apologies although not on this Committee.

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rev'd C Attwood thanked the Director for attending during his annual leave.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 31st JANUARY 2013

Rev'd C Attwood stated that at the last Board meeting, Mr R Hall-Jones raised an issue about the process for adopting the minutes. A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- The minutes could be circulated prior to going out with the papers for the next Board meeting to verify that the minutes are accurate before the Board is asked to adopt them.
- This could be examined in the review of Standing Orders.
- The draft minutes are on the website for perusal prior to the papers going out for the next Board meeting.
- Current practice is that the draft minutes are sent to the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the respective Committee or Board meeting asking for any amendments. Once the amendments have been made the draft minutes are uploaded onto the website under the Board or Committee to which they relate. The draft minutes are included in the papers for the next Board meeting.
- It was suggested that the Secretary inform Members when the minutes are available on the website.
- Mr R Hall-Jones had stated that in the past when the minutes of Committees went to the Board that it was the practice that the Chairman of that Committee rose to present the report and went through the items and that matters or decisions were noted and any recommendations approved. Once this had been done, the Chairman of the Board proposed that the draft minutes be adopted by the Board.

- Currently the Chairman of the Committee asks the Members of the Committee to confirm that the minutes are a true and accurate record and once that is done the minutes are adopted by the Board.
- There is a danger that proposals are put to the Board on minutes that have not yet been ratified.
- It was suggested that the Chairman of the Committee could present the minutes to the Committee who would then ratify the minutes. Then the Board could discuss and ratify decisions.
- If a Member wishes to discuss an item in the minutes at a meeting that the Member advise officers a week beforehand so that officers and Board Members have time to think about the issues.
- As soon as the minutes are available any amendments should be brought to the attention of the Chairman of the Committee who will raise the issue with the Secretary.
- The Chairman of the Board should lead the discussion of the Board once the minutes have been presented by the Chairman of the Committee and ratified as a true record by the Committee and then adopted by the Board.

The Governance Committee will suggest that papers from Committee that will be presented to the Board will be available on the website for Members of the Committee to peruse. The Secretary will be informed of any typing errors but any other amendments should be brought to the attention of the Chairman of the Committee. At the Board meeting the Chairman of the Committee will propose that the Committee ratifies the minutes as a true and correct record. The Chairman of the Board will then decide who will propose that the Board adopts the minutes of the Committee, either the Chairman of the Board or the Chairman of the Committee.

5. CHARITABLE STATUS

Rev'd C Attwood thanked the Members of the Working Party for their work. Mr S Ginn thanked Mr T Musgrove for producing the paper.

Mr T Musgrove stated that under the 2006 Act it is clear that MHC is a charity. Unless there is a change to the organisation's charitable purpose that would disqualify MHC as a charity, it shall remain a charity. It is not a decision for the Board.

It was noted that the archives and information systems need to be improved. The Director stated that an undergraduate studying archives or records management will be sought over the summer to assist the Deputy Director in sorting out the archives.

Mr R Cousins introduced new Board Member, Mrs S Young and Rev'd C Attwood apologised to Mrs S Young for the change in the start time to the meeting.

The Director noted that the issue of charitable status was first raised in September and went before the Committee in November therefore it has taken 6 months to resolve. This should have been a clear cut issue and should have been dealt with more quickly. A better process is needed for dealing with issues.

A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- The Committee structure needs to be used intelligently.
- Issues could be discussed or put through the Chairman so that the issue can be explored before it is presented to the Committee.
- This issue is fundamental to the organisation therefore more time was spent on it. Other issues will not have as much time spent on it.
- If 75% of the Board or Committee are happy with an issue, then those who are not will have to abide by the majority decision. There must be consensus.
- If someone has a query it should be listened to and acted upon.
- The Chairman and Vice Chairman meet with the Director and the Deputy Director every Tuesday to discuss issues. If Board Members have an issue let the Chairman know so that it can be dealt with in the appropriate manner.
- The issue of charitable status was given weight as it came at the beginning of the Governance Committee and the review of the organisation.
- There needs to be an improved induction process and information should be provided in documents for Board Members.
- As a charity the Board should strive to reach a consensus and only rely on a percentage of the vote as a last resort.
- Votes need to be properly minuted.
- The role of the Chairman is to allow debate but also keep control, direct the discussion and summarise the main points. When the debate is reaching a consensus the Chairman can ask for a show of hands.
- Any changes to the Acts that allowed something that is not a charitable purpose or would not be in the public benefit would affect the charitable status of the organisation.

6. ROLE OF TREASURER

The Director presented the paper and stated that the role and terms of reference of the Finance, Administration and Resources Committee needed to be clarified as did the role of the Chairman of the Committee.

Some of the items suggested for the role of a Treasurer could be incorporated into the role of the Chairman or Committee.

A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- The granting of easements is an issue for the Land Management Committee however there is a financial aspect and a system is in place to calculate the uplift so that finances do not influence the Committee's decision.
- Land purchase needs to be incorporated so that the financial implications of land acquisition are assessed.
- The Chairman of the Committee should liaise with the Chairman of the Board, Director and Deputy Director to draft agendas.
- Random checks on expenditure need to be carried out by the Chairman of the Committee.
- The Auditors will look at the financial controls the Board has in place. Risk assessments and greater controls will assist the Auditors.
- There are internal financial procedures and checks in place including the prevention of fraud and these procedures are implemented and monitored.
- The Governance Committee could undertake an annual audit to support the Chairman of the FAR Committee. A checklist could be drafted from the bullet points listed in the paper.
- New Auditors will raise issues but there should be internal checks as well.
- There needs to be documentation of the financial controls.
- Experience on the Board should be taken into account.
- A review of contracts is a specialised undertaking and all contracts should be reviewed.
- The designation of funds should be checked.
- The Chairman could delegate tasks to other Board Members with specialist knowledge.
- There is not the specialised skill set among staff to look at Charity Law and SORP or to review contracts and the Financial Consultant has a particular task so does not look at this from the same perspective therefore there is a gap.
- Perhaps there should be a check list to ensure that financial checks are being undertaken.
- The terms of reference of the Committees needs to be reviewed and a strategic overview should be part of the roles of the chairs of the Committees and this should be advertised on the website.
- Auditors could be used to assist in the governance review.
- Cheque signatories could include the Chairman of FAR.
- Procedures could be developed by the Chairman of FAR and the staff.

- The Governance Committee will act as a body to analyse and scrutinise the FAR and Land Management Committees.
- The expertise on the Board should be utilised as there is a different perspective and skill set to that of the officers.
- A matrix showing tasks, current procedures and possible changes would be useful. The Charity Commission has a matrix that could be adopted.
- The Chairman should propose policy on investment and reserves plans with the assistance of the relevant staff.

These recommendations, once amended, will be put to the Board.

7. DUAL STATUS – HOW OTHER ORGANISATIONS WORK

Rev'd C Attwood stated that other organisations are both a creature of statute and a charity and MHC will be visiting similar organisations to see how they work. The Director stated that 2 visits will be organised but dates are yet to be confirmed. The National Trust could also be approached and the Director will investigate this. Wimbledon and Putney Common Conservators and Epping Forest are comparable with MHC.

8. COMMITTEE STRUCTURES AND CHAIRMAN'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

Rev'd C Attwood stated that this will be developed once MHC have looked at how other organisations work.

9. SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES

9.1 Skills Audit. Rev'd C Attwood suggested that the Governance Committee could draft an annual checklist for the Board. Mrs S Adeney suggested that the skills audit could be used to select which Committee a Member sits on. Currently Members choose which Committee they join. The Chairman of the Committee could look at the skills and invite people to sit on that Committee.

A discussion ensued and the following points were made:

- 14 completed skills audits have been received.
- The Chairman of the Board and the Director will talk to people to help identify skills.
- There could be a difference in the skills that people are perceived to have and the reality of what skills that person actually has. Modesty may be factor.
- Members may not realise what type of skills are needed. Experience and enthusiasm should also factor in the audit.
- The term 'skills' may be perceived as frightening, there should also be emphasis on interest and the willingness to learn.

- The audit should be 'Skills and Experience'.
- When the Board does not know what talent there is on the Board it is a waste of talent.
- Once gaps in the Board's expertise have been identified MHC could encourage people with those skills to stand for election onto the Board.
- Board Members with particular skills such as accountants and lawyers should be consulted before Board papers go out to ensure that there are no other issues that officers should be aware of. Technicalities regarding the SORP could be captured in advance.
- The Charity Commission expects trustees to act as a prudent man of business and that if a Board Member has skills then those skills are utilised by the Board. Board Members will particular professional expertise can provide guidance as a Member of the Board but not in a professional capacity.

9.2 Training Programme for Board Members. Rev'd C Attwood stated that the Chairman of the Board will oversee the training programme for Board Members but the Governance Committee will monitor the scope of the training. The Director stated that the training due to be provided by the Auditors will be conducted over one day. Two dates in May have been suggested. The Director confirmed that an Induction Pack has been produced for the new Conservation Officer and this will be adapted for new Board Members. New Members could have a mentor to help them. It was noted that some Members may wish to be trained in new areas of expertise rather than staying within their current experience.

Mrs H Stace invited Board Members to contact the Director if they wished to undertake any particular training.

Papers containing governance review exercises were circulated to Members.

10. LONG TERM OBJECTIVES

The Director stated that the long term objectives needed to be timetabled. A draft timetable will be produced for the next Governance Committee meeting.

11. FUTURE WORK

11.1 Attendance Records. Mrs H Stace stated that in the past the attendance at Administration and Resources Committee was lower than the attendance at Land Management Committee however this situation had recently improved. It was noted that councils publish attendance records on the internet and that this may help councils to nominate people with good attendance. However it was stated that if meetings conflict with normal working hours that this could affect attendance. Daytime meetings are difficult for working Board Members to attend. A paragraph explaining absences could be added. Attendance records may make joining the Board less attractive to the public. Most seats are not contested and this may deter people from standing for election.

It was agreed that this issue was not a priority and it will be deferred until later.

11.2 Expenses. Mrs H Stace stated that currently there is no provision for the payment of expenses to Board Members. Not reimbursing expenses could be seen as discriminatory. If expenses were paid to Board Members and then donated back to the organisation this would be beneficial as MHC could claim Gift Aid.
The community does not know what the operation of the organisation is actually costing. Travelling and child care expenses are most common costs. Care needs to be taken that costs do not include attendance allowance.

The Director will produce a paper for the next Governance Committee meeting to explore the issue of expenses and how best these costs can be met.

Rev'd C Attwood expressed surprise that Mrs H Stace was not receiving a reimbursement of expenses accrued in the role as Chairman of the Board. Expenses will show what it actually costs to be a Board Member. Volunteers working on the hills would be entitled to expenses and the Board are also volunteers. The legality of this will be explored.

11.3 Discipline. Mrs H Stace stated that at present there were no problems that would attract discipline but there are no procedures for disciplining a Board Member should the occasion arise. At present a meeting can be suspended or a Board Member asked to leave a meeting but no other disciplinary procedures have been set out. It was suggested that the Board looked to the council's Standards Board or it may be that sanctions could form part of Standing Orders. Induction and training should inform Board Members of the expected standards of behaviour and that this should be done soon as there are currently no disciplinary issues. Communication and skills for chairing meetings could also form part of the Board's training programme.

The Director will produce a paper for the next Committee meeting.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Rev'd C Attwood asked Members if there was any other business and thanked Mrs S Young for attending her first Committee meeting.

The next meeting will be held on 30th May 2013.

The meeting closed at 7:19 pm.

A discussion ensued about presenting the minutes from Committee meetings to the Board and concerns were raised that the Board was asked to vote on a report that the Committee had not yet agreed was accurate. The Committee should agree the minutes are a true and accurate record before the Board votes to adopt the report.

Rev'd C Attwood presented the agreed minutes to the Board and proposed its **ADOPTION**. This was seconded by Mrs S Adeney and was **CARRIED** with 2 abstentions.

Matters Arising

7.1.1 9.1 Skills Audit. The Director stated that the Charity Commission Governance Conference stated that a skills audit is of benefit to charities and confirmed that 15 forms had been returned to date. The Director and the Chairman of the Board will talk with Members to discover what skills people have as modesty may be playing a part in Members not returning their forms.

7.1.2 6. Role of Treasurer. The Director provided a background introduction to this issue and explained that some Members had been in favour of creating the role of Treasurer whilst other Members were against. It had been suggested that a separate Finance Committee be set up, but this was considered too onerous therefore the Administration and Resources Committee had been altered to the Finance, Administration and Resources (FAR) Committee. The FAR Committee will take on some of the duties of a Treasurer and the Chairman of the FAR Committee will also take on some of the duties of a Treasurer. A role description for the FAR Committee and the Chairman of the FAR Committee was provided to Members. It was noted that the Chairman of the FAR Committee may delegate tasks to other Members with suitable skills.

Mrs H Stace stated that similar role descriptions will be drawn up for the Chairman of the other Committees.

7.1.3 11.2 Expenses. Mr P Tuthill raised concerns regarding the payment of expenses to Board Members as it could be viewed as an attendance allowance. Rev'd C Attwood stated that there was not a full understanding of what expenses were legitimate and that this should be investigated. Expenses such as travel should be known so that the full costs of the organisation can be determined. A Paper to Committee will explore this issue. Any expenses could be Gift Aided back to the organisation at the discretion of Members.

It was **NOTED** that the minutes reflect a record of the discussion, but not all the points raised in discussion were reflected in the decision. The decisions made by the Committee are set out in the proposals, amendments and votes.

After a debate about the content of the minutes, Mrs H Stace proposed that the Board **AGREE** to accept the minutes. This was seconded by Mr R Cousins and was **CARRIED** with 1 against and 1 abstention.

The Director presented Paper A.

A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- The paper did not contain an appropriate reference to the Auditors and the effectiveness of internal financial controls.
- The Board needs an overview of the financial controls and the Board should not rely on the Auditors for financial checks.
- The Auditors will test if there is a framework for financial controls. Financial checks test the system not a specific expense.
- Review of contracts needs to be included

Mr T Musgrove proposed that the recommendation in Paper A be amended to include the following bullet point for the role of the Chairman of the FAR Committee:

- *Review all key contracts*

This was seconded by Mrs H Stace and was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**.

The Director confirmed that there is a requirement for the organisation to have policies on fraud and bribery.

The discussion continued and the following points were raised:

- The Chairman of the FAR Committee could be a cheque signatory.
- Most payments made by the organisation are done via BACS electronic transfer.
- Some cheques require the signature of the Chairman of the Board.
- Some invoices are due on 7 days' terms and the requirement for the Chairman of FAR Committee to be a cheque signatory would lengthen the payment process.
- All payments are checked on three separate occasions; when the invoice is approved for payment, when the expenditure is authorised and when the BACS transfer is completed. BACS transfer requires two staff members to authorise the bank transfer.

- A division of duties is required to check the payment runs. The Financial Consultant undertakes this role and is independent from the payments as she is not a signatory on the account. A Board Member should also undertake independent checks.

If these points need to be discussed further they could be raised at the next Committee meeting.

On the proposal of Mrs H Stace, seconded by Mr R Cousins the amended recommendation was **CARRIED** with 1 abstention.

7.2 LAND MANAGEMENT MEETING HELD ON 4th APRIL 2013

Mr C Rouse presented the report and proposed that the minutes be agreed by the Committee as a **TRUE** and **ACCURATE** record. This was seconded by Mr R Cousins and was **CARRIED**.

MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS
LAND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern
Thursday 4th April 2013, 4:00 pm

Present: Mr D Baldwin, Mr R Chamings, Mr R Cousins (ex-officio), Mr D Hawkins, Mr P Hughes (Vice-Chairman), Mr B Pilcher, Mrs G Rees, Mr C Rouse (Chairman), Mrs H Stace (ex-officio), Mr T Yapp, Mrs S Young.

In attendance: Director, Deputy Director, Mr T Musgrove, Mr P Watson.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr J Plant, Mr J Tretheway. Mr D Street and Mr P Tuthill offered apologies although not on this Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr C Rouse declared a personal interest in the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 Malvern Branch of Butterfly Conservation. The Director stated that the Malvern Branch of Butterfly Conservation has written to thank MHC for their work on the Hills which has benefited butterfly populations. Their appreciation was **NOTED**.

3.2 New Board Member. Mr C Rouse welcomed Mrs S Young who is a newly appointed Board Member nominated by MHDC.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE 7th FEBRUARY 2013

4.1 4.1 Townsend Way. The Director stated that 2 service easements have been agreed and that the deeds of grant are being drawn up.

4.2 4.3 Sculpture on the Hills. The local paper provided good coverage of the artwork and featured it on the front page.

4.3 4.4 10 Evendine Corner. The work has yet to start.

4.4 4.5 Bench at Colwall. The work has yet to start due to bad weather. Astons Coaches have been contacted and their drivers have been made aware of the problem of driving on the Common.

4.5 4.6 Skylark Survey. A date is yet to be confirmed.

4.6 6. Old Hills and HLS. The agreement has been received.

4.7 8. Playground on the Common. The Director stated that the Acts do not allow for MHC to provide a playground as the Board cannot fence an area for this purpose. However MHC may be able to provide some natural items such as boulders and this could be discussed with the Parish Council. If any items were provided the Parish Council would have to provide liability insurance. The Director agreed to discuss options with the Parish Council but will be mindful of what MHC can legally provide. This will be on the agenda for the next appropriate Land Management meeting.

4.8 9. Role of Treasurer. The Director stated that the Finance, Administration and Resources Committee was examined in the last meeting of the Governance Committee. This item will be placed before the next Board Meeting.

5. ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING

The Director informed the Committee that in the week starting 22nd April Severn Trent will be undertaking maintenance work at North Quarry which will require the car park to be closed for 3 days. Severn Trent will be compensating MHC for loss of car park revenue.

The next item was brought forward on the agenda.

8. EASEMENT AT THE LYDES, CASTLEMORTON

The Director stated that the owners of the property were present at the meeting therefore this item was moved up the agenda.

The Director stated that in 2011 planning consent had been given to put a detached garage in the garden of the property. At the time written permission had been given by the then Director that the owners may move the existing easement to a new location to the side of the house.

This was never acted upon. The new owners now request to move the existing easement several metres to the left at the front of the property. The existing easement will be closed off and a hedge will be planted. Moving the easement will create an easier access as the existing easement requires a sharp turn into the property. Impact on the ecology and the common would be minimal.

Mr B Pilcher proposed the recommendation to grant the alteration to the easement subject to the owners rescinding the previous 2011 agreement to alter the location of the access. This was seconded by Mrs H Stace and was **CARRIED** with 1 abstention.

The owners of the property asked if it was permissible to have a pedestrian access to the property where the existing easement is in addition to a vehicular access in the new location. This was **AGREED** on condition that the verge is restored to its original condition as common land and that any gates open onto their own land.

The owners were informed that they will incur fees to cover the Board's legal and professional costs.

6. THE FUTURE OF GRAZING REPORT

The Director presented the Cumulus Report and stated that previously Cumulus had produced a document on Managing Risk and the Future of Grazing. That report contained some recommendations for the Board to consider. One of the recommendations was to produce a second report on the future of grazing to examine the areas already highlighted that would require further consideration:

- Managing and Monitoring the grazing project
- Sheep Worrying
- Communication
- Business and Grazing Support for the graziers

In addition the report looks at temporary fencing and fencing on the Hills in general, improving the scrub management on the Hills and the future of grazing and funding after the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme has finished, and the sustainability of grazing.

Comments on this draft of the report were invited. A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- Semi ancient natural woodland should read '*ancient semi natural woodland*'.
- The statement that grazing cattle are essential to the management of the Hills was questioned as sheep grazing is also effective. MHC is tasked to

maintain the Hills and Commons for the enjoyment of the public and grazing cattle make walking in certain areas difficult as the ground is so uneven.

- Grazing cattle are effective in keeping the scrub down however numbers would need to be increased.
- The issue of stocking levels and payments needs to be addressed.
- The report does not examine whether grazing is needed; there are no pros and cons to the grazing project. There was an assumption that grazing was essential.
- Some areas could be managed mechanically.
- Developing the meat industry is not an issue for the Board, but the graziers could undertake this if they wished.
- If the Hills were ring-fenced a lot more people with grazing rights would turn animals out.
- Fencing compartments allows concentrated cattle grazing to get rid of scrub.
- If areas were ring fenced cattle grids may be needed that might require funding from grants.
- A five year management plan would provide direction.
- Each section of the report has a list of recommendations, some the Board will agree with while others the Board may disagree with. The recommendations will be examined in detail at a future meeting.
- Ring fencing will exclude people from the Hills but the issues about fencing need to be carefully examined. Fencing may help keep the scrub down so that the Hills remain as open spaces. MHC can fence for certain purposes. The Board had previously obtained permission from the Secretary of State to put up temporary fencing that must be moved every 28 days.
- There is a conflict between fencing for the maintenance of the Hills and for free access for the pleasure of people visiting the Hills. The report states that 85% of people do not mind the existing arrangements.
- Cumulus will be discussing the issue of cattle grids with AONB and will include the findings in the final draft of the report.
- Communication and co-operation between graziers could be improved.
- The Director will arrange a meeting with the Open Spaces Society.
- A survey was undertaken in 1996 to see how many people with commoners' rights would take up grazing. Many properties have since been sold to professional people who may not wish to graze stock.
- The rate of scrub growth needs to be monitored.
- Woodland on the lower slopes may be destroyed if fences are going through those areas. Established woodland could be retained, but this is a subject for the new Management Plan. The purpose of scrub clearance is to restore grassland and to push back the secondary woodland.

- It may not be possible to clear all areas to restore the acidic grassland within a sustainable budget. The areas with the best views or with SSSI status should be given priority.
- MHC needs to improve the monitoring of the number of stock in grazing compartments and the success of the scrub management.
- If the HLS scheme finished MHC will look at other ways to graze the Hills.
- Communication between MHC and the graziers and also communication between graziers needs to be improved.
- Bill Grayson, a farmer who has an interest in ecology could give a talk to the graziers.

Mr B Pilcher proposed that this item be suspended to allow Members to read the report carefully again in light of this discussion and then to hold a Special Meeting to examine the content of the report in detail with Cumulus present.

The discussion continued and the following points were raised:

- It was agreed to continue to examine the report for errors or omissions so that Cumulus can receive feedback from the Committee.
- MHC can change the emphasis of the grazing project without affecting HLS.
- The issue of how MHC deals with graziers that do not have the correct number of animals grazing should be included in the report. Cumulus have produced a monitoring form to address this issue.
- The graziers were appointed after a competitive selection exercise. Some of the stock is owned by the Board.
- The graziers move their stock as they see fit unless directed by MHC to graze a particular area. This will need to be more carefully monitored.
- The graziers' contracts need to be reviewed and monitored.
- Page 36 recommends in point 7. that the payment mechanism could be adjusted.
- Page 49 states that in-bye land is much needed but this is debatable. The graziers comment on page 43.
- Page 23 – a correction should be made to state that bracken rhizomes go down about 6 feet and a path would not be a barrier to them spreading.
- Page 27 – an amendment needs to be made to state that sheep numbers will depend on weather conditions.
- Page 35 – the trialling of a low grazing project would be difficult as Old Hills could not be mechanically managed due to ant hills.
- Page 36 – volunteers should not be expected to do the same thing year after year. A no grazing project on Old Hills would be an interesting exercise.

- Burning could be a possibility. The Fire Brigade is contacted if burning is going on.
- Page 39 – the costings change. An average needs to be used.
- Page 51 – sheep worrying has been a problem since MHC was formed. Taking stock off the Hills would stop sheep worrying. More publicity may help address this problem.

Mr D Baldwin made an amendment to Mr B Pilcher's earlier proposal to include a summary of the recommendations should be provided by Cumulus. Mr B Pilcher altered his proposal to incorporate the amendment to read as follows:
That this item be suspended to allow Members to read the report carefully again in light of this discussion and to ask Cumulus for a summary of all the recommendations and then to hold a Special Meeting to examine the content of the report in detail with Cumulus present.

This was seconded by Mr D Baldwin and was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**.

The Director will contact Cumulus for a summary and will consult the Conservation Officer to decide a date for a Special Meeting.

7. LAND ACQUISITION POLICY

The Director stated that a piece of land that was on the market created differing views within the Board. To clarify what land the Board should consider purchasing the land acquisition policy has been reviewed. The Chairman's Workshop held on 18th March discussed this matter and several amendments to the policy have been incorporated. The Charity Commission offer advice on land acquisition but their list has not been included as this information has been referenced and is available from the Charity Commission. Their advice on ensuring market value prices or rents has been included.

The Director confirmed that the Board can take out a mortgage. The procedures for land acquisition can be dealt with by the Urgent Business Sub-Committee or by the Board. Special Board Meetings can be called with 48 hours notice. Land for sale may be brought to Committee through a variety of means. The Director stated that a flow chart to illustrate the procedures will be produced. The point system is flexible and is supplementary to the other factors in determining whether a piece of land should be purchased. The reference to the District Valuer should be omitted and the general term of valuer be used instead. Land within 9 miles of the Priory can be purchased.

Mr R Cousins proposed that the Committee adopt the policy, with the amendments mentioned above. This was seconded by Mr D Baldwin and was **CARRIED**.

9. INVASIVE AND INJURIOUS WEEDS

The Director stated that last summer there were queries regarding the management of ragwort and thistles. MHC did not have a policy on invasive and injurious weeds.

A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- HLS scheme may be a source of funding.
- Ragwort plants get mixed up with rape so ID cards could be issued to staff.
- Ragwort can travel 400-800 yards and birds also spread seeds so the reference to distance needs to be altered.
- Ground that has been poached is more likely to have germinating ragwort seeds.
- Medium Risk should read 50 – 100 metres.
- Item 1.8 referring to 5 tonnes of ragwort should be taken out and the point to read Follow DEFRA's guidance on the disposal options for common ragwort.
- The spreadsheet stating that ragwort is pulled by hand does not say whether this is for low, medium or high risk areas.
- Item 1.4 states that 5% or less cover is guidance from DEFRA.
- Ragwort does have some ecological benefits as it is the main food plant for the Cinnabar Moth but it is dangerous to livestock and it can affect people as it is toxic.
- The actions should be divided by levels of risk as MHC would have a duty of care to its neighbours. Actions should be for high, medium and low risk areas.
- It is suggested to eradicate invasive weeds but to control injurious. Should injurious plants also be eradicated?
- What is the reference for the Rhododendron management?

Mr B Pilcher proposed the recommendation to adopt the policy, but this failed to find a seconder.

Mr R Cousins proposed that the Deputy Conservation Officer amends the policy taking into consideration the above points and to bring a revised policy to the next Land Management meeting in June. This was seconded by Mr R Chamings and was **CARRIED**.

10. THIRD'S WOOD

The Director stated that a map could not be included in time for the papers to be sent out but a map would be useful for the Committee to make a decision. This issue was first flagged in 2008 so it is overdue to be actioned. However MHC could be criticised for undertaking this work in the bird breeding season when the issue has been known about for the past 5 years. It was suggested that this be deferred until the next meeting so that a map can be included and the work undertaken in early autumn. It is a decision for the Committee as to whether the area is re-planted, and if so what species would be planted. Safety reports should also come to the Committee. Approximately 50 to 100 trees may be affected and a site visit would be beneficial. The Acts state that trees should not obstruct views of distant country.

It was **AGREED** that this issue be placed before the Committee at the next Land Management meeting in June.

11. CROW ACT

The Director stated that this item was for information only. The Countryside Rights of Way Act had been examined to determine the power to control dogs in the bird nesting season. There was some confusion as to whether MHC was covered by the CRoW Act and it was determined that MHC is not covered by CRoW as the organisation has its own Acts that pre-date CRoW. MHC can choose to opt in to the CRoW Act but the implications of doing so are unknown. The access element of CRoW does not affect MHC however the section on SSSI is relevant to MHC. If MHC needs further powers to control dogs it may be possible to amend the byelaws or it may be that MHC opts in to the CRoW Act but the implications need to be examined. The Director will look into this issue.

12. DOG CAMPAIGN

The Director stated that the issue of sheep worrying needs to be addressed.

A discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- If dogs were being shot and wardens were arresting people this would not be a good solution.
- Wardens would need to be trained in collecting evidence. Wardens at Epping Forest have the power of arrest. The Wardens do not want to have the power of arrest.
- Photographs or contact details could be collected. Registration numbers could be passed on to the dog warden.
- The whole issue of prosecuting and the byelaws needs to be addressed.

- What mechanisms do other organisations use to prosecute without incurring great expense?
- The safety of the Wardens must be considered.
- The Wardens repeatedly talk to people who break the byelaws regularly.
- It is difficult for the Wardens to remain friendly and also deal with breaches of the byelaws.
- Cameras could be issued when Wardens are visiting areas where there are repeated cases of byelaw breaches.
- If a dog is worrying sheep people telephone and the graziers either treat the sheep or have to put the sheep down.
- Farmers can shoot dogs on farmland but not on the Hills. The Hills are open access for the public and there is a risk.
- It is in the grazing agreements that the graziers put the byelaws relating to dogs and sheep worrying on the gates into the grazing compartments.

Mrs H Stace proposed that the Policing/Enforcement of Incidents disadvantage box should be amended to read as follows:

This will be considered as one of the general issues of byelaw enforcement.

13. BENCH SURVEY

The Director stated that the bench survey has begun. There are approximately 380 benches. The following are being logged:

- The condition of the bench, if it needs maintenance or if it needs removing if it is unsafe.
- Whether it is a memorial bench.
- Whether the bench was positioned for a view, and whether the view is still there.
- If a bench needs replacing they could be offered as a memorial bench. However this may upset people who have previously requested a memorial bench.
- Any new memorial benches will have a time limit of the lifetime of the bench.
- Where possible the family of the memorial bench will be contacted to see if they wish to replace the bench. If they do not wish to replace the bench it will be offered as a position for a new memorial bench.
- People who are asking about memorial benches are being told that there may be a possibility in the future and their contact details are being kept. Details will also be put on the website.
- The GPS location of each bench is being mapped and each bench is being given a number.
- The cost of a memorial bench will have to cover the cost of the bench, installation, maintenance etc.
- Some areas may benefit from a picnic table.

Meeting closed at 7:04 pm.

Mr R Chamings stated that a bullet point was inaccurate. It was explained that bullet points may be an amalgamation of several comments on the same issue. It was **NOTED** that Mr R Chamings felt this amalgamation did not accurately represent his comment.

Mrs H Stace suggested that the way minutes are recorded will be discussed at a Chairman's Workshop.

Mrs H Stace presented the agreed minutes to the Board and proposed its **ADOPTION**. This was seconded by Mr R Cousins and was **CARRIED** with 2 abstentions.

Matters arising

7.2.1 6. Future of Grazing Report. It was confirmed that the Land Management Committee will be holding a Special Meeting to discuss the recommendations of the Cumulus Report on the future of grazing.

7.2.2 7. Land Acquisition Policy. The Director stated that the Board had diverging views on a parcel of land that was currently on the market. To provide some guidance the Land Acquisition Policy was produced that set out the criteria by which to judge whether a piece of land should be acquired or not. Under the Acts, any land within 9 miles of the Priory could potentially be considered for purchase by the Board, if it met certain criteria, but these criteria were too broad. The Charity Commission also provide criteria for the purchase of land and these also need to be kept in mind. The Director provided an overview of the objectives of the Land Acquisition Policy and the assessment process to decide if a piece of land should be considered for purchase. It was stressed that the scoring system was intended as an aid to decide if a piece of land should be purchased but it is only an indicator and the whole process should inform the decision.

Mrs H Stace confirmed that under the Acts land could be sold if certain criteria were met within a stipulated timeline.

A discussion ensued and the following points were made:

- The scoring system should not be a substitute for common sense.
- Land offered to the Conservators as a donation should be subject to the same criteria and assessment.
- The Director will produce a flow chart to illustrate and clarify how this process will work.

- It was suggested that there may have been a contradiction in recent decisions made by the Board over two pieces of land both of which could potentially be developed. However it was also suggested that stopping development by not granting an access over MHC land was a different scenario to stopping development through the purchase of a piece of land which is not part of the Board's remit.
- Scores could be weighted to ensure the right results. The scoring system was adjusted after several trial attempts undertaken during a Chairman's Workshop.

On the proposal of Mr R Cousins, seconded by Mr D Baldwin it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** to adopt the Land Acquisition Policy.

Rev'd C Attwood thanked the Director for the production of the policy which was echoed by the Board.

7.3 FINANCE ADMINISTRATION & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18th APRIL 2013

Mr P Tuthill presented the report and proposed that the minutes be agreed by the Committee as a **TRUE** and **ACCURATE** record. This was seconded by Mr P Watson and was **AGREED.**

MALVERN HILLS CONSERVATORS
FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern
Thursday 18th April 2013, 7:00pm`

Present: Mr S Ginn, Mr J Roskams, Mr C Smith, Mr D Street (Vice-Chairman), Mr P Tuthill (Chairman), Mr P Watson.

In Attendance: Director, Deputy Director/Secretary to the Board, Financial Consultant, Finance Officer, Mr C Rouse, Mr T Yapp, and 1 member of the public.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
   Mr M Cordey, Mr R Cousins, Mr R Hall-Jones, Mrs B Nielsen, Mrs H Stace, Ms R Massey, Mr T Musgrove.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
   Mr P Watson and Mr D Street declared a personal interest as MHC volunteers.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 New Board Members. Mr P Tuthill welcomed new Board Member, Mr J Roskams. Board Members and staff introduced themselves to Mr J Roskams. The Director stated that there is one other new Board Member, Mrs S Young who has joined the Land Management Committee. A third interested party has been identified from the District Council but to date MHC has not received his or her nomination.

3.2 Staff Appraisals. Director stated that apart from one staff member all appraisals have now been completed using the new system.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON THE 21st FEBRUARY 2013

4.1 Precept Leaflet. The Director stated that previously every year the District Council's council tax letter included a leaflet that explained the tax and any levies raised on taxpayers, and also information about MHC. This year that information was not included. The District Council stated that the law has changed and now there is no obligation to include this information. This means that the public have not received an explanation as to the Conservators levy and how it is spent. Last year the leaflet included a paragraph about MHC. The District Council were asked if MHC produced its own leaflet whether this could be included in the council tax letter, but this request was refused on the grounds that it would lead to an increase in postage costs. MHC needs to communicate to the public why the levy is raised and how it is spent.

Mr P Tuthill stated that the Town Council has a separate leaflet and suggested that the Director write to the District Council to request that this matter be looked into again. This was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**.

4.2 Fire Risk. The Deputy Director stated that Board Member, Mr D Baldwin who is an expert in Health and Safety has looked at the building and has taken away the current Fire Risk Assessment. Mr D Baldwin will be arranging a formal fire inspection that will produce a new Fire Risk Assessment. This document will inform the Board of the best way to proceed.

Mr P Tuthill requested that this document be available for next board meeting.

5. ANY OTHER MATTERS ARISING

None.

6. INVESTMENT POLICY

The Financial Consultant explained that the investment department had ceased to operate so unfortunately the presentation from a Wealth Manager was not able to take place. Alternative speakers were sought but none were able meet the Committee at such short notice. It was confirmed that the first investment had matured and had been placed in a fund but that it should be moved to achieve a better rate of interest. Therefore it was suggested that the Committee set up a working party to examine the investment policy.

Mr D Street and Mr C Smith volunteered to be members of the Working Party. Mr D Street stated that he would approach an absent Committee Member with regard to this matter.

It was noted that the Town Council may have documentation that would assist the Working Party and the District Council has completed some work on managing risk. It was suggested that a Financial Advisor be sought to discuss investment options with the Committee.

The recommendation to form a Working Party was **AGREED** and that Mr D Street, Mr C Smith and one other member form the Working Party. The Director will organise the Working Party's first meeting.

7. MANORIAL RIGHTS

The Deputy Director stated that Whatley Recordon are looking into this matter on behalf of the Board. Mr D Judge has taken away 3 deed packets to examine the manorial rights attached to various parcels of land. The advice from Mr D Judge is that manorial rights to three parcels of land will need to be registered. Manorial rights do not apply to all land owned by MHC.

It was **AGREED** to ask Mr D Judge to progress this matter before the next Committee meeting and to provide the Board with a statement to explain why registering manorial rights on the remaining land owned by MHC is not necessary.

8. SUMMARY OF CUMULUS REPORT

The Director stated that the summary was provided for the Committee Members' information. The report lists various recommendations but not all of these need be adopted. The recommendations will be examined to determine which to adopt or it may be decided to take no action, in which case an explanation will be provided. Once the report has been examined in detail the matter will be referred back to the Land Management Committee and any financial implications will be highlighted.

9. RISK ASSESSMENTS SORP

The Director stated that the Risk Assessment Working Party had examined the organisation's risk assessments to identify the major risks. The Director and the Deputy Director then established what control measures were in place. Now this has been done, the matter will go back to the Risk Assessment Working Party to check that the control measures are sufficient. Once this has been completed, the risk assessments will be presented to the Committee and a statement will be included in the accounts.

Mr C Smith proposed the recommendation for the Working Party to review the draft risk assessments and that the risk assessments are brought to the next Committee meeting. This was seconded by Mr P Watson and was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED**.

10. WORK TO ST ANN'S WELL

The Director stated that work was being undertaken to address the problem of damp at the back of the building. Rudders and Paynes had been contracted to do the work and sub-contractors engaged to do the plastering. Some of the plastering needs to be re-done and Rudders and Paynes are going to address this at no extra charge. The building also needed a new sink unit and sink in the accommodation area and there were problems with the pipe work. The accommodation has electrical problems that have some health and safety issues. Once the work has been completed the interior will need redecorating. The lease states that the decor is the responsibility of the tenant however in this circumstance the need for new decoration has arisen due to the maintenance work therefore it is the responsibility of the landlord. A window also needs replacing as the frame is rotten and would allow water to seep in over the new plasterwork. The work will incur some costs in excess of the original quote.

11. CHARITY COMMISSION UPDATE

The Director stated that MHC is still awaiting the report from the solicitors. The solicitor has apologised for the delay but this was due to the vast amount of paperwork. It has been indicated that the report will be available for the next Board meeting.

12. PENSION FUND

The Deputy Director stated that Worcestershire County Council has not yet produced information on the pension fund.

13. INFORMATION

13.1 56 Wyche Road. The Director stated that concerns had been raised over the building work to this property however upon inspection the building work is well within the property boundary and there is no impact on MHC's land.

The meeting closed at 7:34 pm

Mr P Tuthill presented the agreed minutes to the Board and proposed its **ADOPTION**. This was seconded by Mr P Watson and was **CARRIED**.

Mr P Tuthill stated that there had been a meeting scheduled with a Wealth Manger prior to the FAR Committee meeting but that this did not occur due to the closure of that department of the financial institution.

Matters arising

7.3.1 4.1 Precept Leaflet. Mr P Tuthill declared an interest in the item as a Councillor and asked if there were any updates regarding the inclusion of a MHC leaflet with the Council's tax information. The Director stated that there were no updates at present.

7.3.2 4.2 Fire Risk. The Secretary informed the Board that a new fire risk assessment will shortly be undertaken.

7.3.3 6. Investment Policy. The Secretary stated that Mr M Cordey had approached his employer, Lloyds TSB, to determine if he was able to join the Investment Working Party. Lloyds have confirmed that Mr M Cordey may sit on the Working Party during the initial discussions but that he must then withdraw and must not vote on any issue regarding the investments. Mr C Smith and Mr D Street sit on the Investment Working Party and Mr P Tuthill agreed to volunteer to join them.

7.3.4 7. Manorial Rights. Mrs H Stace requested that the Secretary pursue this matter with the solicitors due to the deadline in October.

7.3.5 10. Work to St Ann's Well. The Director stated that the plasterwork had been completed but the electrical work has not yet been done. Once the electrical work is completed the redecoration can begin.

7.3.6 11. Charity Commission Update. The Director confirmed that the solicitors have now completed their report and are now in discussion with the Charity Commission. Until the Charity Commission have responded the solicitor has stated that the report should be kept confidential. The cost of discussions with the Charity Commission is covered by the insurance policy so there will be no additional costs to MHC. Once the discussions have been completed the solicitor's advice will be communicated to the un-conflicted Members of the Board and then to the full Board.

The Board has paid £2,500 excess and the remainder of the costs of the solicitor's report has been covered by insurance. The total amount to date is approximately £12,000.

Rev'd C Attwood stated that once the process has been completed, that the costs are shown in the report produced by the Inquiry Committee. Once that has been done, Part 1 of the Inquiry Committee's report can be uploaded onto the website.

The Director confirmed that the un-conflicted Board Members are as follows:
Mr R Cousins
Mr D Hawkins
Mr P Hughes
Ms R Massey
Mr T Musgrove
Mrs G Rees
Mr D Street
Mr J Tretheway
Mr T Yapp

8. TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES:

8.1 MALVERN SPA ASSOCIATION

Mr D Street presented the following report:

The MSA committee are to have a guided visit of the Wyche Innovation Centre on the 14th May when they will present a cheque for £500 to Dr Emma Philpott (founder of the Centre together with her husband Dr Adrian Burden).
The official launch of the Centre is scheduled for June.
The MSA AGM will be on the 3rd June at the Lyttleton Rooms.

Details of the wells, spouts, springs and troughs dressed on MHC land during the annual May Day weekend celebrations are given below.

Barnards Green Trough (gold)
Clock Tower
Danzell Spring
Devil's Well (gold)

Dingle Spring
Dripping Well
Ellerslie Fountain
Evendine Spring
Eye Well
Happy Valley Donkey Spout (also upper Happy Valley spring),
Hayslad
Lower Wyche Spout and Trough
North Malvern Tap
St Ann's Well
Stocks Fountain
Temperance Drinking Fountain (gold)
Weaver's Trough (gold)
Westminster Bank (gold)
Willow Spring
Wilson Memorial Spring
Wyche Spring (gold)

There were 22 out of the total 42 sites dressed were on MHC land. MSA now has a Facebook page where all the wells dressed this year are named.

8.2 MALVERN HILLS AONB JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mrs G Rees presented the following report:

I attended, as your representative, the April meeting of the Malvern Hills AONB Joint Advisory Committee.
***Woodland Creation Opportunities** – The Committee received an excellent presentation from Rebecca Lashley on a project to map potential woodland creation areas around Malvern.*
***The Budget and Work Programme 2013 – 2014** was received and discussed to look at work priorities for the year ahead. Budgets will be cut.*
***Local Authority Core Strategies** – Colin Blundell of the Planning Company reported on the current state of play with the development of the South Worcestershire Development Plan and asked the Committee to consider a response to the Herefordshire Council Core Strategy which the Committee then discussed.*
***Major Development Control Cases** – Colin Blundell also reported on applications and outcomes of applications for major developments within the AONB.*
***Future Funding Options** – The Committee received a paper from the Chairman and then discussed the possibility of additional funding support within the AONB. This is an on-going topic.*
***AONB Management Plan Review** – Paul Esrich updated the Committee on the present progress of the Management Plan. The Steering Group will oversee further progress at meetings in May and Autumn 2013.*

***Sustainable Development Fund** – David Armitage reported on projects that have been supported by the Sustainable Development Fund and again requested the Committee to remind organisations of this fund and encourage them to make enquiries regarding it.*
***The AONB Facebook page and Twitter Account** – have been created.*

Draft minutes of this meeting will be available from the AONB office should anyone wish to read a full report of the meeting.

9. INFORMATION

9.1 MANAGEMENT REPORT

DATE: 9th MAY 2013

DIRECTOR

- Reviewed the Land Acquisition Policy and produced a new policy and forms for assessing potential acquisitions.
- Drafted new role description for the Finance, Administration and Resources Committee and for the Chairman of the Committee.
- Undertook annual appraisals for Deputy Director, Operations Manager, Deputy Conservation Officer, Wardens and Field Staff. Produced policy relating to maternity pay and maternity leave – as we previously had no policy covering these matters.
- Interviewed a candidate for the role of minute taker for Board and Committee meetings.
- Began a review of Risk Assessment for the Field Staff. Most of the tasks being undertaken by the Field Staff have been adequately risk assessed – but there are a few gaps which need to be addressed and this will be undertaken by the Operations Manager.
- Undertook review of the organisational Risk Assessment with the Deputy Director. This review focused on identifying control measures that we have in place to mitigate risks identified by the Risk Working Party.
- Met with the Environment Agency for advice on undertaking risk assessments for lakes, ponds and other waterbodies on MHC land. These risk assessments have been requested by our insurers and will be completed in the next month.
- Liaised with the solicitors providing advice in relation to the Charity Commission's request that we obtain legal opinion on the question of a breach of Trustee duty in relation to the St Ann's Well litigation.
- Carried out induction of the new Conservation Officer.
- Produced a new induction process for the new Board members and put together a revised Induction Pack with information about the organisation and the role.

- Met with insurance investigators to discuss a possible claim against our policy following a fall on the Hills. The outcome of the claim is currently uncertain but, if successful, any payment by insurers is likely to be small.
- Attended social media training given by V8 Media.
- Gave a talk following the AGM of Ledbury Civic Society, attended by approximately 45 people - on the subject of the Malvern Hills Conservators and their work.
- Set up Malvern Hills Conservators Facebook page as a means of communicating news, details of events etc.
- Produced press release on sheep worrying following dog attack which resulted in two dead lambs on Castlemorton Common. New signs are also being put out on the Common asking people to keep their dogs under control.
- Attended Malvern in Bloom meeting. This year the judges will be visiting Link Common and we will be showing them the plots where we have been experimenting with hay strewing.
- Met with resident at 107 Guarlford Road regarding repairs to their easement.
- Organised damp work at St Ann's Well. This work is now completed – with the exception of the redecoration. Associated works were required – which included a replacement sink and sink unit, a replacement window, tiling and electrical repairs.
- Held pre-contract meeting with Birch Bros to discuss the dam repair work at Mill Pond. This is currently scheduled to start on May 7th and is expected to take 4 weeks to complete.
- Met with organisers of Macmillan sponsored walk to discuss details of walk to be held on Hollybed Common in October this year.
- Attended MHC Access and Recreation panel meeting.
- Attended Colwall Parish Council meeting and provided Councillors with an update on the work of the Conservators.
- Met with the local representative from the Open Spaces Society to discuss a variety of issues relating to our Acts and powers and Common land law. This included car parks, fencing, gates and play areas.
- Met with police re alleged criminal damage on Hollybed Common.
- Met with Chairman of Malvern Neighbourhood Watch to discuss requests for a footpath to be constructed on Malvern Common in order to prevent the need for pedestrians with e.g. pushchairs to walk in the road and a request for surfacing of a bus top on the common. These may need to go to the Land Management Committee.
- Met with resident of the Purlieu to discuss drainage and erosion problems on the section of track leading past Park Wood. The Operations Manager is currently talking to contractors about potential works to resolve these problems.

- Met with IT consultants to obtain quotes for a replacement server. The current server is now 6 years old and is very slow. Mapping work is becoming increasingly difficult to carry out because of slow speed of the server.
- Visited playgrounds in the Malvern Link area with Paul Tuthill with a view to finding a playground which would meet the needs of Malvern Wells Parish Council – whilst being permissible under our Acts and common land law.
- Acted as a judge for the Malvern Spa Association Annual Well Dressing competition.

CONSERVATION OFFICER

- 8 April started work for MHC
- Completed formal induction with Stephen and Fiona
- Set up meetings and tours with key contacts including other MHC staff,AONB staff, graziers, FC, local experts, commoners and Natural England.
- Visited key sites in our ownership.
- Attended the induction for new board members
- Shadowed Stephen and Nicky in meetings with the public to discuss byelaw issues.
- Gave an interview to the Malvern Gazette.
- Joined in on volunteers' skylark and meadow pipit breeding bird survey.

DEPUTY CONSERVATION OFFICER

- Met Steve Roberts, Illustrator, with Director to finalise the design of the cider mill interpretation panel.
- Checked cider mill repair work with Operations Manager.
- Met Peter Dorling, Herefordshire Archaeology, on site and made comments on the draft Conservation Management Plan for British Camp and Midsummer Hill.
- Attended and organised Recreation Advisory Panel meeting.
- HLS management – submitted claims, successfully applied for additional supplementary options at Castlemorton Common (native breeds at risk and mixed stocking) to cover the reduction in annual payments.
- Sent Events Diary press release to BBC Hereford and Worcester and data inputted all events onto BBC 'Things to Do'. Good press coverage received. Produced generic Risk Assessments, safe working procedures and introductory talk notes for events. Attended 2 events.
- Attended First Aid at Work training course enabling me to act as trained first aider at events.
- Met Peter Garner, local naturalist, with Conservation Officer to search for Meadow Pipits.

- Managed work of Volunteer Conservation Assistant who has produced draft dog walking posters aimed to reduce sheep worrying and disturbance of ground nesting birds to put on the Hills.
- Met 2x member of the public about tree queries – tree management policy followed.
- Carried out preliminary vegetation survey of Park Wood with volunteer team. The project aims to establish what impact coppicing has on the abundance and diversity of wildflowers at Park Wood.
- Met Voluntary Site Warden with Warden to discuss new special management area at North Hill for Grayling butterfly.
- Uploaded Vector Map Local and GIS onto computer.
- Met Operations Manager to discuss Shire Ditch repair.
- Attended and organised meeting of the Wildlife Panel.
- Liaised with dog trainer about sheep safe dog training courses.
- Welcomed Conservation Officer to role.

FIELD STAFF

- Cleared ice and snow from car parks.
- Repaired several paths.
- One member of Field Staff and Operations Manager attended tree safety course.
- Clearing fallen boughs after snow.
- Carried out quarry safety checks and repairs.
- Cleaning and re-oiling benches.
- Replaced fence at bottom of Ballards land.
- Carried out appraisals for all Field Staff

CONTRACTORS

- Carried out repairs to wall at Earnslaw car park.

WARDENS

- 1 Worcestershire Wardens' Partnership meeting attended.
- 1 meeting with Onside Advocacy regarding volunteers from disadvantaged backgrounds and special needs.
- 1 meeting with dog trainer regarding joint promotion of their sponsored walk and our code of conduct.
- First aider at Nigel Hand's pond dipping event.
- Litter picking equipment given to 2 new volunteers to litter pick MHC land.
- Met with Jenny Palmer and one of the VSWs to arrange work plan for the coming year at their site on North Hill.
- Finished the programme of felling at the Dormouse site, Holywell.
- Finalised the details for five volunteer events taking place this year.

Incidents:

• Parking on the Common	13
• Unauthorised Signs	1
• Unauthorised Building Material	1
• Dangerous Occurrence/Hazard	2
• Other Livestock Issue	3
• Fly Tipping	4
• Driving on the Common	5
• Damage to Vehicle	2
• Encroachment	1
• Cycling on footpaths	2
• Attack on livestock	1
• Dog out of control	1

VOLUNTEERS

Conservation Day activities:

- Held 7 conservation days with 129 volunteers in attendance.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR AND ADMINISTRATION STAFF

- Conducted research of ownership of Crown Lea Avenue.
- Objected to one planning application
- Completed 1 easement
- Organised insurance renewal
- Approached auctioneers for valuation of artwork
- Attended Automatic Enrolment Pension webinar
- Completed Year End submissions and financial procedures
- Organised art installation opening and press coverage in conjunction with artist
- Investigated fire escape options (on-going)
- Completed Risk Assessments
- Met with Environment Agency to discuss waterbodies risk assessments
- Attended Charity Governance Conference
- Organised PAT of electrical items
- Completed 1 acknowledgement of prescriptive right
- Attended Employment Law seminar in Birmingham
- Completed RTI preparations and submissions

The Director stated that the contractors, Birch Brothers, started work on the Mill Pond dam on Tuesday morning. It is anticipated that the work will take 4 to 5 weeks to complete. MHC have informed the neighbours, parish council, have issued press releases, put up signage on the site and information is also on the website and Facebook page.

The Director stated that mapping and GIS capabilities have been upgraded but that this has slowed the server which is now 6 year's old. It is becoming difficult to use GIS. An upgrade of the server has not been put into the budget, but the system is not operating as it should.

The Director welcomed Mr J Bills to his first Board Meeting and stated that some objectives have been set for the first 6 months.

The Director formally thanked the Deputy Conservation Officer for doing a fantastic job over the past few months and this was echoed by the Board.

The Events programme is receiving good feedback and over 30 people attended the Dawn Chorus event.

The Director stated that a person tripped on a path at the Wyche Cutting on a small metal rod which has now been removed and the path resurfaced.

The Director stated that a minute taker had been interviewed to assist the Deputy Director / Secretary to the Board, but as this would be a long term financial commitment that this item will be brought before the FAR Committee.

Mrs H Stace stated that there is a grant payment available for grazing native breeds of cattle. In the past this had not been pursued but this is now being done.

The meeting closed at 9:54 pm.

Signed .... 11th July 2013
Chairman