Malvern Hills Trust

Ordinary Meeting of Land Management Committee
Malvern Hills Hotel, Wynds Point, Malvern WR13 6DW
Thursday 26 March 2026 at 6.00 pm

Present: Felicity Robinson (Chair), David Baldwin, Mark Driscoll, Chris McSweeny (arrived 6.10 pm), Peter Rogers, Chris Rouse.

In attendance: CEO, Secretary to the Board, Conservation Manager, Operations Manager, Conservation Officer.

Absent: David Mead, Cynthia Palmer, David Reynolds.

1. **Apologies for Absence**
   Richard Bartholomew, David Core (non-voting), John Michael, John Stock.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   None.

3. **Chair's Communications**
   - Unfortunately despite receiving 70 applications it had not been possible to appoint to both Ranger vacancies and it would be necessary to readvertise. However, the one appointment that had been made was going very well. The new Ranger Team Leader, Tracy Sutton, would be taking up her position on 3 August. She had worked for the Trust as a Ranger before.
   - The Chair thanked those trustees who had taken part in the recent Land Management Plan (LMP) 'meet and greet' sessions, which had all gone well. The next LMP workshop was planned for Tuesday 14 July at 7 pm in the Lyttelton Rooms, Malvern. It would focus on the Vision and overall strategy, and all trustees were warmly invited to attend.
   - There was to be a demonstration of the remote controlled mower, as requested by trustees, on the morning of Wednesday 5 August. This was to be part of a 'Discovery Morning' for Malvern in Bloom; Malvern had reached the national finals in the large town category.

4. **Public Comments**
   None, no members of the public being present.

5. **Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026**
   None.

6. New Land Management Plan

6.1. Consultation feedback and workshop progress

The Committee received a paper from the Conservation Manager, to which he spoke. He explained that the Trust was about half way through the planning stage for the new Plan, which was due to go live on 1 April 2027. There were three stages to the planning: consultation; evidence, and; drafting.

6.1.1 Consultation

This was going well. This had begun with the first trustee workshop in June 2025. Over 100 people had attended the 'meet and greet' sessions held at various locations across the area; a report of these was attached to the paper. The Trust had now moved on to 'one-to-one' informal meetings with organisations to discuss their particular areas of interest relating to MHT land and ways in which the Trust could collaborate with them in future.

6.1.2 Evidence gathering

Trustees' attention was drawn to a 'traffic light' table showing what information was being gathered. It was noted that there were 10 'greens', eight 'ambers' and eight 'reds'. All evidence was to be in and complete by early August.

Chris McSweeny arrived at 6.10 pm

6.1.3 Drafting

Once all the evidence was in, the Trust would move to drafting the Plan. Trustees had asked for a six page summary as well as the full document. The trustee workshop would pull all this together.

6.1.4. Questions from trustees

- The Chair asked whether staff would be in receipt of all the evidence they needed by August. The CM said that some of the 'reds' would not happen at all, such as assessments of SSSIs by Natural England; these would be replaced by rapid assessments undertaken by MHT staff, currently shown as amber.
- A trustee said that they had attended one of the 'meet and greets' and had appreciated the opportunity to have more detailed conversations. They wanted to know whether any information had emerged that had surprised the Trust or changed its thinking. The CM said that around ¾ of comments from the public concerned issues of which the Trust was aware. There had been some surprise about resistance to the fencing off of Gullet Quarry. The CEO said that the Trust needed to update the 10 year old guidance from RoSPA on the dangers of swimming in quarries. The Trust had been featured in recent press discussing this. The CEO observed that the Trust needed to communicate better *why* it took the action it did. She

added that the consultations were helping to inform wider Trust communications, because they offered good intelligence on what the public wanted. There was a paper on KPIs going to Board; while SSSI condition surveys could not be ignored, there were always secondaries sitting under those KPIs and Land Management Committee was well ahead on this.

- A trustee asked whether a sufficient number of trustees would be attending the workshop on 14 July. The Secretary to the Board said she was not in a position to give a view on this, due to some trustees not having responded either way. The CEO suggested that it would be a good idea to ask trustees how they wished to engage; if the workshop format did not work for them, what might? Another trustee observed that although few trustees had attended the previous workshop in June, those who had been present had done a lot of work and there had been positive outcomes.

7. Land Management updates

7.1. Field Team

The Operations Manager (OM) provided an update of works undertaken since the last meeting, which included:

- Discussions with the National Trust about erosion control, in relation to British Camp hill fort;
- Tree safety work, including ash removal from the railway embankment;
- Quarry fence checks and repairs;
- Mowing as per the schedule, with a conscious policy to strim and mow round wild flower patches. In answer to a trustee question, the OM confirmed that the team had completed two cuts in total to date, but he had noticed growth tailing off due to the recent heat.
- Becoming familiar with the new tractors and the robot mower. The CEO commented that the Health and Safety Advisor had noted with approval the improvements made. The team was well-equipped and professional and Top Shed was clear and well-organised. She noted that that there was a tension between the public wanting work done and the health and safety of Trust staff, particularly during the red weather warning that had been in place the week before this meeting.

The OM confirmed that the next priorities for the team would be hill paths, fitting gates for grazing projects and then tree works. There had been additional pressure on the team due to low Ranger numbers. The Chair recorded the Committee's thanks to the whole team.

7.2. Conservation Team

Nothing further to report.

7.3. Rangers

The CEO provided an update on Ranger activities since the last meeting, which included:

- Dealing with barbecues and camp fires, especially over the May bank holiday, and the ground fire on 2 May;
- Persuading people to stop swimming in Gullet Quarry and helping them out safely. The police were patrolling the area twice a day.
- Dealing with stray animals on the highway and a bullock trapped in a water trough, reported by a member of the public.

Forthcoming activity included:

- A trial of three large bins on Malvern Common, where there had been high levels of manual handling of waste. A two person lift was the best option for such areas, but there weren't always two people available and so there would have to be some use of machinery.
- Installing a new card reading option for parking machines. The existing machines had been losing hundreds of tickets and income was reduced further by the closure of the A449 at British Camp. A trustee asked whether the Trust planned to change all the machines, but the CEO said that this would require a full review and new procurement process, for which the Trust did not currently have capacity.

8. Graziers' Report

A written report was received from Matt Gardner. The Committee noted with concern that water bowsers on the northern and central hills had been interfered with repeatedly.

9. Urgent Business

None

10. Date of next meeting

Thursday 3 December at 6.30 pm at the Park View Community Room, Victoria Park Road.

11. Confidential

The meeting moved into confidential session. There was no resolution, since no members of the public were present.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm

The Summer Stroll took place immediately following the meeting. Trustees viewed the two parcels of land newly acquired by the Trust at Little Malvern.