Malvern Hills Trust

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee

Thursday 29 October 2026 at 4.00 pm

Guesten Suite
Lyttelton Well
Church Street
Malvern WR13 2AY

Meeting of the Staffing Committee

Guesten Suite, Lyttelton Well, Church Street, Malvern WR14 2AY
Thursday 29 October 2026 at 4 pm

Members: Frances Victory (Chair), Simon Baggaley, David Baldwin, Richard Bartholomew, David Core (non-voting), Lucy Hodgson, John Michael (non-voting), John Raine, John Stock.

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chair's announcements
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Public comments
5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 16 April 2026
6. Staffing Matters — Paper A
7. Changes to Staff Handbook
8. Health and Safety Update — Paper B
9. Staffing Risk Register *(for information)*
10. Policy Review — Paper C
    a. Policies in the Staff Handbook – *none for this meeting*
    b. Other Policies and Procedures
        i. Safeguarding
        ii. Prevention of Bullying and Harassment
        iii. CEO Appraisal
11. Staff training update
12. Urgent Business
13. Date of next meeting – 14 January 2027 *(provisional)*

Paper A
For information

Staffing Committee

Staffing Matters

29th October 2026

Ongoing delivery of employee engagement actions

Staff feedback is being responded to on an ongoing basis and actions achieved in this period include:

- We joined together with the family of Martin Cottrell in memorial events and staff marked a year after his passing, in April and May.
- Two members of staff benefited from a free half day training in mental health awareness in May, which was delivered by Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) England.

There were opportunities for positive staff and trustee interactions (see pictures at Annex 1):

- The Summer Stroll with Land Management Committee on 2nd July 2026.
- The refresh of the Land Management Plan including public engagement sessions and a workshop on Tuesday 14th July, in which trustees focused on creating a vision and mission for our land management activities.
- Health and Safety Working Group was given a tour of Top Shed on 7th September.
- Trustee points of contact are invited to every other All Staff meeting including 2nd October.

Less positive interactions have been noted in staff appraisals and at staff meetings. Some trustees have spoken in public against the Malvern Hills Bill, which has a direct effect on staff and also their interactions with the public. These activities have significantly impacted staff morale.

The previously agreed staff survey will be conducted in house for cost reasons.

All staff met on 8th July and 14th October and some highlights on progress were shared, including the following most recent updates:

- The Conservation Team has taken on board a lot of feedback on the draft strategic Land Management Plan document and is now taking final comments from trustees. There will be a further public consultation after then.
- The Field Team provided a demonstration of the remote-control mower on a tour of partners and stakeholders of the Malvern Hills National Landscape on 2nd October.
- The new Ranger Team Leader is getting the volunteer task programme back up and running.

Staffing provision

A new member of the Field Team started in post on 20th October. A vacancy in the Ranger team is on hold while the Ranger Team leader beds in.

In consultation with HR Dept, our external HR advisor, two key performance indicators are being tracked on employee turnover rate, staff retention rate and sickness absence rate.

Exit interviews

None to report in this period.

Next steps

- Plan and implement the staff survey and continue to act on staff feedback.

Deborah Fox, CEO

29th October 2026

Annex 1 – Pictures of positive informal contact between trustees and staff in this period

1. The Land Management Committee Summer Stroll in July



2. Health and Safety Working Group tour of Top Shed in September



3. Trustee point of contact David Core at the All Staff meeting in October



Staffing Committee
Health and Safety Report
29th October 2026

Introduction

The prolonged dry spell and six distinct heatwaves between May and August 2026 proved both challenging in terms of maintaining our operations and preventing fires in the open. Senior staff members met with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue on 17th August and their conclusion is that the land management we are doing is working, including the livestock grazing, since there haven't been any major fires in recent years. Senior staff joined an online Met Office wildfire course on 27th August and have been invited onto West Mercia Wildfire Partnership. The Trust won a bid to host the Forestry Commission's Lantra module in production of wildfire management plans early in 2027. Learning from this will inform the Trust's Land Management Plan.

The Health and Safety Working Group of trustees met on 7th September and considered a range of business including previous near miss and incident reports. They considered an annual summary on Tree Safety from the Conservation Manager.

The Trust's external health and safety advisor made a general site visit and review on 7th April, which included direct observation and demonstration of processes at Top Shed and The Manor House and an information session for trustees. There was also discussion on risk assessment and health and safety procedures with senior staff. The advisor noted that the activity risk assessment process is under review with a view to move to one based upon the 'areas of H&S concern' already identified and addressing the expectation set out in the Procedures. This is expected to take at least 12 months. The reason for this change in the risk assessment process is to create a clearer and more cohesive health and safety management system. The external advisor also visited on 14th September, during which senior staff undertook an emergency scenario to aid preparedness.

The external advisor has suggested a key performance indicator of RIDDORs or reportable incidents submitted, with none made per year being desirable.

Fire risk assessments were carried out at Top Shed and Manor House in September. The Trust has made vast improvements and that was reflected in the reports from the assessor. Particular highlights were that staff at Top Shed demonstrated a good practical understanding of the risks associated with their activities. At Manor House, the overall fire load (of paper) has been substantially reduced since the previous assessment. The CEO cascaded a new fire emergency plan to all staff on 21st September.

Employers in the UK have a legal duty to protect employees from the risk of work-related stress, treating psychological wellbeing with the same seriousness as physical health and safety. There is useful guidance on this in HSE's Talking Toolkits and from sources like the Working Minds Campaign. A draft Staff Stress Management and Wellbeing Policy is provided for consideration separate to this report. **F**or an organisation of this size, it is also appropriate to produce a risk assessment for work-related stress and to record its findings.

The bin emptying review continues. Mechanical emptying at Link Common and Peachfield Common by an external provider was trialled in summer months, which relates to a suggestion by Staffing Committee in April.

John Deere provided a signed handover of mowing equipment involving 6 staff on 28th July.

On 2nd October, there was a routine Fire Alarms & Intruder Alarms service at Manor House. The internal sprinkler system was replaced at the same time.

To maintain basic hygiene and health standards, Manor House was closed on 19th October after a complete loss of water supply for over three hours due to a burst water main on Albert Road South in Malvern.

Training and Monitoring

1. **Health and Safety Incidents in the period 8th April to 19th October 2026:**

Notifiable Accidents in last 12 months:	2
Reported Incidents and Accidents in the period:	
Reported Incidents	19 [2 visitor-related, 14 staff-related, 3 property-related]
Near Miss reports	7
Safety observations	0

2. Accidents and incidents
    a. On 2nd May 2025, there was a serious incident on the Hills at Clutters Cave, which involved an abandoned vehicle. We are continuing to work with regulators in their investigations.
    b. There was a retrospective report of sickness absence due to work-related stress on 11th June 2025.
    c. There was a retrospective report of sickness absence on 9th October 2025 due to work-related stress.
    d. On 2nd November 2025, a staff member reported a back injury purportedly arising from bin operation and had a period of absence over 7 days, prompting the raising of a RIDDOR.
    e. On 30th April 2026 a Ranger raised a concern about bin weights at Peachfield Common.
    f. On 2nd May a member of the public reported a large fire on the Hills. HWFRS confirmed that staff did not need to attend the operation at Happy Valley to put it out. About a hectare of land was burned.
    g. On 4th May a Ranger received an abusive phone call while on call.
    h. On 5th May the Field Team was strimming on Newland Common and the leaf blower was stolen from the back of the truck. It was reported to the police.
    i. On 18th May a Ranger came across a suspicious vehicle with a man inside unconscious. The police arrived quite quickly and arrested the occupant who was subsequently charged with Class A drug offences.
    j. On 26th May the Field Team was strimming Wasp Bank and both operators decided that due to the extremely hot weather it was not suitable to continue.

k. On various dates from 1 May through the summer, water bowsers for livestock were being turned off and vandalised.
l. On 21st June the Field Team drove into a post marking a drain, which was obscured by long grass on Peachfield Common.
m. On 6th July a Ranger suffered from heat stress and this caused a sickness absence.
n. On 6th July a Ranger was informed that a visitor was injured on the path from Westminster Bank to North Hill and assisted them to their car.
o. On 10th July there was a sickness absence due to work-related stress.
p. On 26th July a Ranger found human waste in a bin causing them to vomit.
q. On 30th July a Field Team member was cutting bracken on a slope and the Robocutter went over a large tree stump, which lifted the machine and it rolled downhill. The operative immediately pressed the emergency stop button on the controller, which cut the ignition on the machine and then turned the ignition off. Three of the team winched the mower back to safety.
r. On 28th August a member of the public sent in a video of a mountain biker that had forced them into a bramble bush and was abusive.
s. On 8th October there was a sickness absence due to work-related stress.

3. Near miss reports and safety observations

Seven near misses were reported in this period and no safety observations:

a. On 1st April a Ranger noticed a large shard of glass sticking out of the bin liner as they lifted the bag into the back of the truck.
b. On 26th June an operator raised a concern about adequate protection from mowing with the side arm flail on the cab-less mower. Tasks of this nature for the machine were postponed until adequate guarding was in place.
c. On 26th June an operator postponed a mowing task as the temperature in the tractor cab was over 29 degrees.
d. Also, on 26th June, an operator of another tractor postponed a mowing task as the aircon struggled to cool the cab. The radiator was also cleaned twice to prevent overheating.
e. On 2nd July an operator was driving uphill to the depot on Wyche Road and a car driver travelling downhill decided to overtake causing the operator to brake sharply whilst being mindful of traffic to their rear.
f. On 3rd July there was a small fire caused when lithium batteries in the warning beacon on the Massey Ferguson Tractor were damaged. It was quickly controlled and extinguished.
g. On 16th October the Land Rover lost traction off-road whilst towing at Worcestershire Beacon Saddle and became stuck. Weather conditions meant the ground was slippery. Vehicle recovery was needed to allow it to proceed safely with banksmen provided by the Trust.

In each case, consideration is given as to how to avoid these hazards in in future. As reflected in the reports above, the 2026 heatwaves caused issues. At times work was postponed when it was deemed to be unsafe for risk of causing a fire. The CEO issued instructions to staff in consultation with the external health and safety advisor. For example, advising managers and staff to reassess activities covered by our ‘normal’

procedures or activity risk assessments when temperatures exceeded 25c or there was a Yellow/ Amber MET office warning. Also, when to cancel outdoor activities 30c+ or there was a Red MET office warning.

4. Training

Training has been undertaken in this period in the following areas:

- Brushcutter/ Trimmer 3
- Remote control mower/ Flail mower 2
- Basic Tree Survey 10
- Tractor Driving on Slopes 6
- First Aid + Forestry 4
- First Aid + Forestry re-qualification 2 (+2 forestry only)

Additional training and compliance is either required or else being considered in the coming months on the following topics:

- Use of ladders and steps As needs basis
- Forestry Commission's Lantra module in production of wildfire management plans Early in 2027

Next steps:

- For staff to develop procedures to sit under the health and safety policy with advice from the external health and safety advisor.
- For staff to implement operational improvements highlighted in reports from the external health and safety advisor and the fire risk assessor.
- To define a risk assessment to protect workers from stress at work.
- Actions arising from the Health and Safety Working Group on 7th September and Special Board Meeting on 8th October 2026.

Deborah Fox, CEO 20th October 2026

NATURE OF RISK	CURRENT CONTROLS	REQUIRED CONTROLS	RESPONSIBILITY Board/Committee	RESPONSIBILITY CEO/Manager(s)	LIKELIHOOD (1-5)	IMPACT (1-5)	PROPOSEDRISK SCORE NOV 2026	CHANGE	COMMENTS FOR EDITS
	Charity employs suitably qualified and experienced staff to provide relevant knowledge and support.	Retention of a chartered surveyor.	Staffing Committee	CEO	1	4	8	NC	Land and Property Manager commenced in post in February 2025. Note this is not a change in risk level, the score was incorrectly stated as 4 in 2025.
	A new Staff and Trustee Protocol was adopted by the Board in May 2024. The Protocol was updated in 2026.	The Protocol Working Group to continue to monitor application of the Protocol.	Staffing Committee	Protocol Working Group	1	3	6	NC	Scheme of delegation regularly updated. .
	Trustees given training to help identify what information they require and are able to request clarification and additional information.	Health and safety training for trustees to be provided regularly.	Staffing Committee	CEO	1	3	6	NC	In 205/26 H&S training was provided in-person in April 2026. Training slides on the role of the employer in creating a working environment that is free from bullying and harassment to trustees were placed in the members area of the website in 2026.
	HR Dept provides workshops on the role of the employer in creating a working environment that is free from bullying and harassment.	Presentation on how to create a working environment that is free from bullying and harassment is in the Members' area of the website. Further training to be scheduled.	Staffing Committee						
1.8. Potential for ultra vires	Governance Handbook, Code of Conduct and Charity Commission guidance set out	~~Governance and Staffing Committee to~~ The Protocol Working Group to continue to monitor application of the Protocol. Now that a new H&S policy is in place, over next 12 months, define new procedures and systematically update risk assessments.	Governance	CEO	2	4	12	NC	The Board resolved in 2026 not
1.9 Internal Disputes			Staffing Committee	Protocol Working Group	4	4	20	C	The Board updated the Trustee and Staff Protocol in 2026.
2.6. Breach of H&S legislation	External H&S advisor appointed to monitor compliance with Health and Safety procedures, check appropriate policies are in place and advise of changes in legislation.		Staffing Committee	CEO / staff that are supervising / All Staff	2	4	12	NC	The new Health and Safety Statement and Policy was approved by Board in January 2026.
3.4. Impact of Government policy, changes in legislation and regulations	Update Staff training in employment law, health and safety, Equalities Act etc.		Staffing Committee	CEO	2	4	12	NC	
	Updated Electrical Certification for all buildings.		Staffing Committee	L&P	2	3	9	NC	This is part of health and safety considerations.
4.4. Employment issues	Human Resource advice available through HR consultant who provide regular updates in newsletters. Additional advice taken from others e.g. ACAS when required.	Changes to Staff Handbook are reviewed by Staffing Committee prior to adoption.	Staffing Committee	CEO / FAM	1	3	~~6~~	NC	Employee engagement survey undertaken in 2025 and a plan of action is in place, including reflecting staff ideas in improvements.
Breaches of employment law	Staff Handbook reviewed on regular basis. Staff notified of any changes to Handbook.		Staffing Committee	CEO and All Managers					
Adequacy of staff training	Training budget maintained and training plans produced for all staff, reviewed at annual appraisals.		Staffing Committee						
Disputes	Clear disciplinary and grievance procedure within Staff Handbook.	Trustee Disciplinary Policy to be updated in 2026. HR Dept to provide workshops on the role of the employer in creating a working environment that is free from bullying and harassment.	Governance Committee / Staffing Committee	CEO and all Managers					
4.5. Loss of key staff	Exit interviews are undertaken with feedback where relevant to Staffing Committee/Board.	Full review of organisations skills need required.	Staffing Committee	Senior staff	3	4	16	NC	
4.6. Volunteers:	Role descriptions in place for volunteers.		Staffing Committee	CEO / CM	1	3	6	NC	
4.7.1 Health Safety	External H & S consultant engaged to review and advise on H & S processes and policies.	Maintain ongoing review and update of H & S systems to include:	Staffing Committee	CEO	2	3	9	NC	Health and Safety advisor appointed in spring 2024 provides a regular newsletter
	Safeguarding Policy reviewed 2025.	Review and update safeguarding policy regularly ~~for 2025~~.	Staffing Committee	CEO & responsible persons identified in H&S policy					Updated committee responsibility.
	Appropriate numbers and proportions of staff trained in First Aid. Certification dates are monitored, and training updated as required.	MHT has extended level of First Aid at Work trained staff among Field Staff team.	Staffing Committee						Most recent training in Oct 2026.
4.8. Wider Safety: public, property, and environment	Hill-fire risks are identified and taken into account in habitat and access management.	Refresh of Land Management Plan to include a Fire Plan.	LMC / Staffing Committee	CEO / CM	3	3	12	NC	No change in likelihood due to proactive operational adjustments and liaison with fire and rescue services.
	Tree safety inspection policy and monitoring carried out in accordance with that policy.	An annual update will be supplied to the Health and Safety Working Group.	Staffing Committee	CM	3	3	12	NC	Update provided to HSWG in Sept 2026.

Paper C
For Decision

Ordinary meeting of Staffing Committee

Policy Review
29 October 2026

New Policy – Stress and Wellbeing

Members of Staffing Committee will be well aware of the Trust's obligation to address work-related stress and to promote the wellbeing of employees at work. The Trust does not currently have a policy that specifically deals with these obligations, although they do form part of health and safety and the Health and Safety Policy and associated procedures therefore apply. However, the Trust has seen recent work-related stress absences and it is clear that more needs to be done.

The new policy has been drafted by the Secretary to the Board, who is also the Trust's Mental Health First Aider, and shared with the Senior Management Team. A stress risk assessment will be added to the policy, if approved, as appendix 2, but this is still to be developed.

Revision of Existing Policies

The following policies are due for review at this meeting:

Safeguarding

First introduced and approved in September 2025. Officer recommendation is that this should be re-approved unchanged. The policy is available here: safeguarding-policy-final-september-2025.pdf

Prevention of Bullying and Harassment

Also last approved in September 2025. The Employment Rights Act 2025 has introduced new duties for employers, which come into force on 30 October 2026:

- The employer may now be liable for harassment of staff by third parties, unless the employer has taken ***all reasonable steps*** to prevent it.
- An employer is currently obliged to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment. From 30 October, the employer must take ***all*** reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment.

Officer recommendation is that sexual harassment is already well covered in the policy and that in any case it is clear the Trust will resist ***all f***orms of harassment in the strongest terms. Amendments have been made to the third page under 'Responsibilities' to reinforce the commitment to take *all reasonable steps*.

The current version of the policy does not include references to statutory guidance and MHT policies and procedures. These have now been added.

All proposed changes to the policy are highlighted in the attached draft.

Paper C
For Decision

CEO Appraisal

Review of this procedure is well overdue, but we are not yet ready to present a new version to the Committee. Feedback has been invited from those who have been involved in this year's process and a revised procedure **will** be presented for approval in January for use in the 2027 appraisal process.

Recommendations:

1. That Staffing Committee consider the new Stress and Wellbeing Policy, make any appropriate amendments and recommend a final version to the Board for approval;
2. That Staffing Committee recommend that the Board approve the Safeguarding Policy unchanged; and
3. That Staffing Committee recommend that the Board approve the amended Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Alison Marlow
Secretary to the Board and Mental Health First Aider
22 October 2026