Malvern Hills Trust

The Malvern Hills and Commons
Land Management Plan– Strategic Summary
April 2027- March 2032 DRAFT



'The long narrow ridge rising majestically from the plain and presenting a skyline unique in Britain'. The Royal Commission on Common Land, 1958.









1 FOREWORD & INTRODUCTION

1.1 Foreword from the Chair

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1.2 Introduction

The Malvern Hills and Commons are a much-cherished landscape of England. In the late 19th century, to protect the Hills and Commons from damage, local residents campaigned for government protection. Their efforts succeeded with the passing of the Malvern Hills Act in 1884. This Act, and subsequent Acts, gave protection to the Hills and Commons, established a right of access for the public and created a statutory body, the Malvern Hills Conservators, with the remit of preserving the natural aspect and keeping the land as open spaces for the recreation and enjoyment of the public.

Over 140 years later, this work continues by the Conservators under the working name of 'Malvern Hills Trust'.

Both the landscape and the organisation have seen much change over that time, but protection of the land and public access remain the twin purposes.

1.3 What's Special about the Malvern Hills and Commons

The Hills and Commons are amazing. They boast a variety of special qualities and important features including:

- A unique and varied landscape, one that has inspired poets, painters and naturalists over centuries;
- An ancient geology that provides a window to look back 680 million years into Earth's history;
- A rich tapestry of nationally important habitats and wildlife;
- Free open access for all to explore one of the largest greenspaces in the region;
- A wealth of historic cultural heritage spanning over 3000 years including British Camp Iron Age hill fort;
- World-famous Malvern Water that issues from the hillsides and is enjoyed by people from far and wide;

- A wealth of public benefits including fresh air, inspiration, improvement to people's mental and physical health, a sense of wildness and escapism, plus far-reaching panoramic views voted the best in Britain.

1.4 Context

Looking after this 1200 hectare (3000 acre) estate is a big challenge, especially for a small organisation of just 21.5 staff. The Trust maintains a range of access infrastructure for the visiting public and to allow the estate to be managed. The Hills and Commons attract over a million visits per year.

Many of the Hills and Commons' special qualities and important features, listed above, would not persist on their own and active, practical management is required to conserve them into the future. Without this, the character and diversity of the landscape would quickly be lost to encroaching, commonplace vegetation. Open habitats such as wildflower meadows, views and open spaces would deteriorate and the value to the public would greatly diminish.

The type of land management undertaken across the Hills and Commons is controlled by many factors. In addition to our governing Acts, the Hills and Commons are subject to multiple legal designations and these, together with national laws, shape how the land needs to be managed. As an example, most of the Hills are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and, as a result, our work must conserve certain nationally important habitats, species and geology. Ensuring visitor and staff safety also requires regular works including cutting roadside vegetation.
Infographic showing a few statistics:

Although protected, the Hills and their management are affected by changes in the wider world. Rising fuel prices and an increase in tree diseases have both led to recent higher expenditure on our tree safety work. Increasing visitor numbers put more pressure on our visitor services and on the Hills themselves, especially the ridgeline. Higher visitor numbers also mean increasing expense on collection, transport and disposal of litter and waste.

Care of the Hills and Commons presents a real challenge in balancing the conservation of a fragile place with ensuring it is open to the public. This is being further complicated by a rapidly changing world with climate change being a critical issue. This challenge is met through careful planning, a precautionary approach, reconciliation and use of the Sandford Principle. Adaptation and resilience are also becoming increasingly important.

2 ABOUT THE PLAN

Land management on the Hills and Commons is carefully carried out by staff, volunteers, contractors and partners under the guidance of the Land Management Plan (LMP). We also acknowledge the work of many local people who spend time litter-picking and undertaking other beneficial activities.

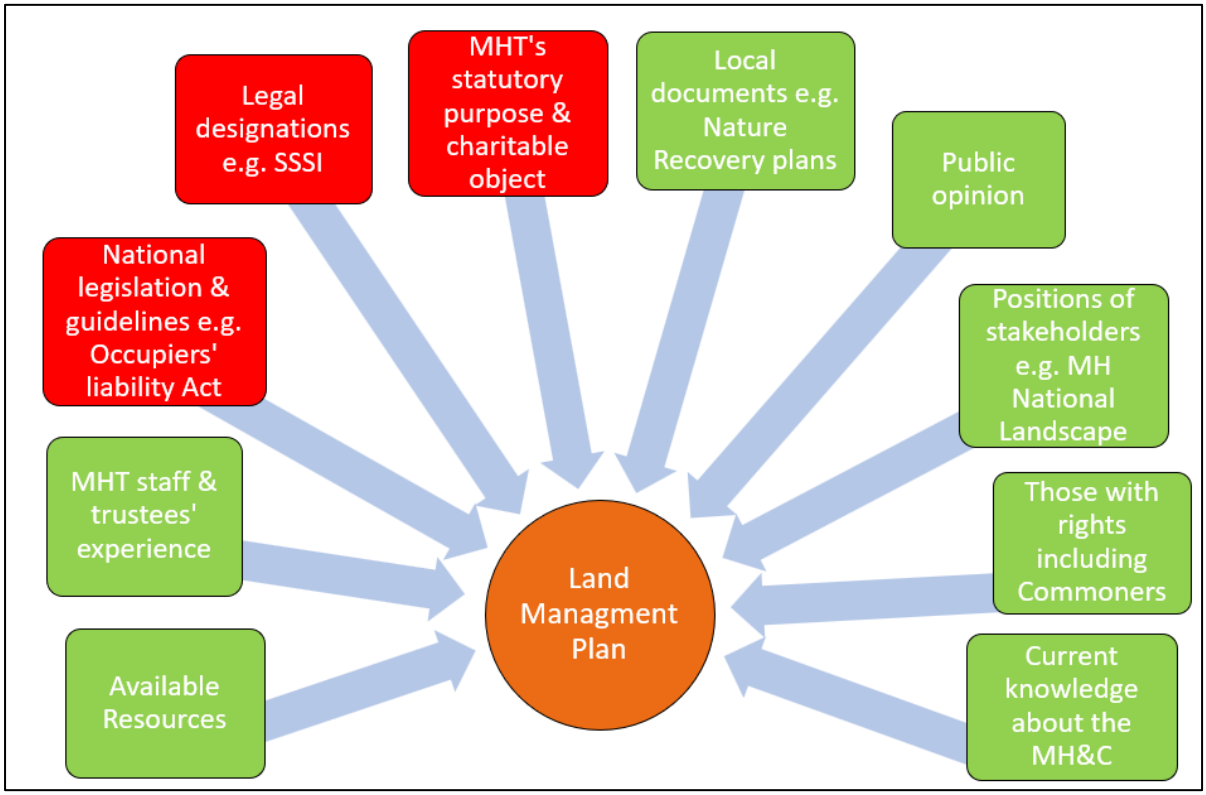
This LMP covers the 5-year period: 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032.

It has been informed by multiple stakeholder consultation exercises run in 2025 and 2026. A variety of consultation formats gathered useful feedback from hundreds of people plus organisations, such as Natural England. This feedback has been shared, reviewed and helps shape this plan. The top issues flagged to the Trust were: climate change and visitor pressure. The Trust will continue to listen to and reflect on feedback from all stakeholders.



There are two versions of the LMP. The Strategic Version (this document) provides a summary, and the Full Version is a comprehensive account of the site, our evidence base, rumination and evaluation, objectives and an operational work programme. A series of policies and procedures sit alongside the plan, providing further detail on topics such as health & safety.

The LMP must take into account a wide range of factors that influence our work to some extent. The main ones are shown in the table below. The legal drivers (things we must do) are shown in red and other factors are in green.



3 VISION, MISSION & STRATEGIC AIMS

Our Vision, Mission and Aims are a way of communicating what it is that the Trust wishes to achieve for the Hills and Commons.

3.1 Our Vision:

A vision statement looks to the future and sets out what we want the estate to be like. The Trust's Vision is that:

The Malvern Hills and Commons will be a stunning, unique, welcoming and inspiring landscape. A rich tapestry of distinctive and climate resilient nature-rich habitats, ancient geology and diverse cultural heritage clothes the land. Visitors and local communities will enjoy good open access, natural water, a sense of wildness, tranquillity and panoramic views.

3.2 Our Strategic Aims:
The Vision is expanded into integrated aims to dictate better the Trust's work and provide headers to report on. All of our land management activities will deliver one or more of the following aims. Colours relate to parts of the Vision.

Aim 1: Landscape. To conserve and enhance the Hills and Commons' unique and diverse landscape character and natural aspect. To create a strong sense of place, one befitting a National Landscape.

Aim 2: Public Access and the Visitor Experience. To provide a welcoming, safe place for visitors to enjoy and residents to live in. This large greenspace is open to all, offering a high-quality visitor experience, one with inspirational walks, a chance for escapism, tranquillity and panoramic views beloved by all. A sound, site-appropriate access infrastructure supports this aim and dovetails with the sensitive conservation of the landscape.

Aim 3: Nature. To ensure that wild nature thrives for its own sake; to enhance the visitor experience; and to deliver wider environmental gains. Priority habitats and species will be in good condition, well-connected to a broader ecological network and fare better than the baseline of 2026. All Trust land will be managed in a nature-friendly way wherever possible.
Geological features will be sound with key features easily visible and accessible to those who wish to study them.

Aim 4: Cultural Heritage. To preserve the full range of historical features that help tell Malvern's story, from British Camp hillfort to Malvern Water springs and spouts. Cultural assets, including listed structures, will be in good condition and easily interpreted by the public.

Aim 5: Climate Resilience. To increase greatly the Hills and Commons' resilience to the multitude of effects from climate change, including an increased storage of CO2, diversified woodlands and a better ability to cope with flood and drought/wildfire. Our outdoor activities must continue to lessen the Trust's dependence on fossil fuels.

Aim 6: Property and Assets. To maintain the Trust's holding and expand it where this achieves better protection for the Hills and Commons or the Trust's stewardship of them.

To safeguard, review and improve our built structures, including those legacy assets, such as quarries. This will help ensure the infrastructure and equipment required to deliver our land management are apt and that health & safety requirements are met for staff and the public.

Aim 7: Our Approach. To provide a professional and exemplary service. One that uses an evidence-based approach to inform our land management, drawing on science and best practice guidance.
To engage actively with local people and visitors to spread a better understanding and respect for the landscape. Collaboration with stakeholders, partners, nearby landowners, and statutory agencies will deliver wider, greater achievement.

To manage and improve our performance, we will measure and monitor our delivery and impacts. Measures of success will be reported to Board, stakeholders and local people.

3.3 Our Mission

A mission statement focuses on the present, identifying what current actions the Trust must undertake to achieve our Vision. The mission statement is:

> *The Trust will care for the Malvern Hills and Commons through responsible stewardship, practical land management, evidence-based decision-making, proactive engagement with the public and partners and, ensuring this unique landscape continues to inspire and benefit present and future generations.*

4 Your help

As a small organisation with a big job to do, we acknowledge and thank all those people who kindly give to the Trust their time or their money whether it be through paying the levy, making a donation or bequeathment. We couldn't do it without you.

If you interested in supporting the Trust to look after the Hills and Commons, please get in touch. Thank you.

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