

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

Castlemorton Parish Hall

Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 8.00 pm

Present: Mike Wilkinson (Chair), Phil Birley, Peter Hancock, Matthew Gardner, Janet Hughes, Chris Rouse, Andy Sayers, Barbara Wilkes, Susan Windle.

In attendance:

Ann Brennan

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

Absent: Jeremy Hubbard.

1. Apologies for Absence

Keith Stevens, Simon Yates.

2. Committee membership changes

None.

3. Report of meeting of 27 November 2024

The report of the meeting of 27 November 2024 was approved unanimously,
subject to a surname correction.

5. Public Questions

There were none.

6. Matters Arising

Andy Sayers had been asked to query the status of MHT officers at 4Cs meetings.
It was confirmed that they do not sit as members but attend to support the
committee and are therefore recorded in the minutes as being 'in attendance'.

7. Update on Countryside Stewardship Scheme for Castlemorton

The Conservation Manager (CM) said that payments due under the agreement had
been received and the Delivery Group had met to divide them between MHT and
the graziers. The Group was due to meet next in April. It was noted that the

agreement covered the period until the end of 2030-31 – there was a five year break clause in the agreement.

8. Report from Malvern Hills Trust

The Governance Change Officer (GCO) reported that the Malvern Hills Bill's First Reading had taken place on 22 January. The petitioning period had closed on 6 February. There had been 50 petitions, mainly from individuals, raising many of the same points. Petitions had been received from Worcestershire County Council and Malvern Hills District Council (MHDC) and the Trust hoped that it could reach agreement with both on their points. It would also be meeting with other stakeholder groups, including Natural England. The Trust would probably not respond to all individual petitions but would provide composite responses to common points. The Parliamentary Agent had to consider whether petitioners had 'locus', that is, standing to petition and this would be looked at in due course.

The House of Lords office had advised that the Second Reading was unlikely to take place prior to the Easter recess. Due to the Trust being a charity, there also had to be a report from the Attorney General's Office prior to the Second Reading. It was thought that Select Committee was likely to take place after the summer recess.

Questions were invited, but there were none.

9. Report from the MHT Conservation Manager

- Tree safety works had been completed with a focus on road/trackside ash felling near Pink Cottage and along Hollybush Roughts. The field staff were still doing their tree safety work, felling mainly pathside ash, for safety reasons; they were currently working between Shady Bank Common and British Camp reservoir. Some scrub works had been done on Castlemorton Common, but not as much as the Trust had hoped, due to weather conditions. Staff had made a start on reducing the amount of scrub at Berrow Downs and further off Hancocks Lane. Volunteers had been working on the scrub at Hurst Bank.
- The car park at Welland had been resurfaced; this was a major improvement for the car park itself, but also a head start for the path improvement project that the local council was doing. Peter Hancock recorded thanks to the Trust for completing this work.

Questions were invited, but there were none.

10. Stock casualties

It was thought that there had been one sheep fatality since the last meeting. There had however been issues with dogs worrying livestock, resulting in two sheep being injured. Ann Brennan observed that professional dog walkers with five or six dogs on leads were now a regular occurrence on the Common and asked whether there were any byelaws relating to this. The CM advised that dog walkers were covered by UK legislation requiring them to keep their dogs under control. He added that the Recreation Advisory Panel had just met and had discussed the possibility of licensing professional dog walkers. This had been introduced successfully at Cleeve Common, with 9 out of 10 professional dog walkers there choosing to join the scheme. One of the members of the Recreation Advisory Panel represented dog walkers and she was very much in favour of the scheme. The GCO said that the question of licensing had been raised in the Private Bill consultation, with two professional dog walkers supporting the introduction of a scheme. It was noted that this kind of accreditation was helpful to their businesses.

11. Report from Castlemorton Common Association (CCA)

- The Association's AGM had taken place in January and had included a talk by David Smallwood. There had been some questions about the Bill, which committee members had answered where possible.

12. Reports from other represented bodies

- **Coombe Green**

Susan Windle reported that volunteer numbers had increased, which was very encouraging. Work continued, with volunteers respecting the birds at this time. Coombe Green Group hoped to fund repairs to the bridge.

- **Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council**

Peter Hancock gave an update on the footpaths project. There were two areas that the Parish Council was working on. The first was from Barbary Cottage to the car park, funded by Malvern Hills National Landscape – scrub had been recently cleared from the area by MHT, which was very helpful to the path project. Mick Davies had requested a meeting with the CM regarding choice of stone and permission to do the works; the Council was nearly ready to place an order with the contractor. It was suggested that it would be helpful to erect some large stones to discourage cars – spaced widely enough to allow the quadbike through – particularly since SatNav was sending drivers that way. The CM said he would try to source suitable stones, but they were in short supply.

The second path project was from Rosebud Meadow to the Common. S106 agreement was awaited from MHDC; the Parish Council was sure that it had provided all the required information to secure this funding and hoped to start the project before midsummer.

Peter Hancock had a couple of requests to go into the scrub clearance plan and had emailed the CM about these. This included from Hancocks Lane towards Little Malvern. The CM said that the area had been on the plan for two years, but it needed to be dry to do the work and it was permanently wet, although it wasn't clear where the water was coming from. Access to the ditch was prevented by brambles.

Matt Gardner noted that the Little Malvern Estate was for sale and suggested writing to the conveyancing solicitor to clarify that it the owner of Little Malvern was responsible for the maintenance of the boundary fences; the present tenant did not seem to have been aware of that. The CM said that this would also apply to the field at Welland that was earmarked for development. Andy Sayers added that it would be helpful to have the wording so that new owners of properties bordering the Common could also be alerted to their responsibilities, as had been discussed at the last meeting. It was noted that guidance was available in the Good Neighbours' Guide on the Trust's website¹.

- **Castlemorton Parish Council**

Mike Wilkinson reported, as Parish Council chair, that the Council had an environmental sub-group, which had been concerned about the decline of black poplars away from the Common. Black poplars were one of the distinctive features of the Common, where they were cared for by the Trust. The group had set up a project to distribute 32 black poplars, supplied by MHT and Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, to 12 different locations in Welland and Castlemorton. There had been so much interest in the project that demand had outstripped supply.

The Council had secured a small sum of money to fund a survey for residents of Castlemorton Parish, which would be launched at the Annual Meeting on 22 May.

¹ [mht-good-neighbours-guide-final.pdf](#)

14. Information and Any Other Business

- Chris Rouse reported on potholes requiring attention. The Chair invited him to contact the office directly with details.
- As a short-term measure, MHT had placed some chippings on the ruts near the Mill Pond that had been caused by the farm traffic last autumn. Remedial action would take place when conditions were drier.
- The CCA annual shindig was scheduled for 12 July and all support would be gratefully received.
- Barbara Wilkes was delighted to report that toads seemed to be returning to the Common, having disappeared after the very hot summer of a couple of years ago.
- Susan Windle asked about the duck boards that ran along the cut from the Hollands up to Millpond, which were in disrepair. She had been told that these may have been put in place by the Trust. The CM said he would look into this. It was thought that this was also a public right of way, in which case the County Council would need to be informed prior to any action. Mike Wilkinson noted as Chair of Castlemorton Parish Council that he believed most of the area concerned lay in Birtsmorton Parish and was therefore likely to be outside MHT land.
- The CM encouraged committee members to report issues to MHT's office as and when they when they occurred and not to wait for the next committee meeting.

15. Dates of next meetings

Wednesday 9 July 2025⁴ – summer outdoor meeting. *Committee members were encouraged to suggest ideas to the CM.*

Wednesday 26 November 2025

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm

Signed..... Mike Wilkinson, Chair
26 November 2025