



Malvern Hills Trust

Ordinary Meeting of Staffing Committee

Thursday 9 October 2025 at 4.30 pm

Beacon Meeting Room

Colwall Park Hotel

Malvern, WR13 6QG

Meeting of the Staffing Committee

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Thursday 9 October 2025 at 4.30 pm

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

1. Apologies for absence
2. Chair's announcements
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Public comments
5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 15 July 2025
 - a. Staff survey – feedback from workshop with senior managers
6. Staffing Matters
 - a. Staff Well-being
7. Changes to Staff Handbook
8. Volunteering Paper A
9. Policies
 - a. Health and Safety Statement and Policy - *to note that this is under review with the Health and Safety Working Group pending presentation to Board*
10. Health and Safety Update Paper B
11. Training update
12. Urgent Business
13. Date of next meeting – January 2026

Staffing Committee

Volunteering
9th October 2025

Introduction

The Trust has many enthusiastic volunteers who help in many different ways to keep the Hills and Commons special. This currently includes conservation volunteering and Patrol Wardens and litter pickers. One-off projects also provide short-term volunteer opportunities.

The contribution of all volunteers, including the trustees, is gratefully acknowledged. The focus of this report, and associated presentation, is on practical conservation, wardening, litter picking, office and project volunteers.

The estimated volunteer contribution during the financial year to March 2025 was the equivalent of 349 (2023/24; 378) working days (of 7.5 hours per day) spent on the Hills and Commons and 2 (2023/24; 24) working days on office work.

The input from volunteers continues to be lower than pre-pandemic levels and the Trust looks forward to recruiting more volunteer patrol wardens, office volunteers and project volunteers in particular.

There are social activities organised in the programme, which include a Christmas social and, instigated in January 2025, a Wassail event, which was to thank volunteers for their work restoring Morgan's Orchard at Golden Valley.

We also liaise with other organisations to host their work volunteer parties. For example, volunteers for the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust have several sessions every year maintaining the geological exposures.

Practical Conservation Volunteers

Conservation days are guided by the Land Management Plan. They are held up to six times a month and form a significant part of the Rangers' and Conservation Officer's roles. The quarterly programme is approved by the Conservation Manager and aims to provide a varied, multi-topic schedule involving access, archaeology, geology and wildlife. It also takes into consideration constraints, e.g. wildlife lifecycles, parking and access, gradient, variation of locations for the volunteers etc.

Activities may include coppicing, clearing public rights of way and tree planting, pond clearance, removing bracken and bramble shading wild flowers, small tree and scrub clearance. This is especially beneficial in hard to reach places and where machinery cannot be used.

Volunteers are provided with a risk assessment relevant to their role by a suitable member of staff upon appointment and the Trust keeps a record of signed risk assessments. For each volunteer event, a day sheet is prepared with all relevant details of the site and risks that may be encountered and how they will be managed. Safe operation talks are given before an activity commences and well-maintained tools and PPE are provided.

Examples of practical conservation days in 2024/25 have included:

- Clearing scrub and/or unwanted tree regeneration in locations including margins of the ramparts of British Camp, Worcestershire Beacon (Firs Valley), Raggedstone Hill, Old Hills, Black Hill, Pinnacle Hill, Hollybed Common, Swinyard Hill (to benefit reptiles), De Walden Ridge on North Hill, Gullett Quarry West Bank, Castlemorton Common (near Hancocks Lane ford) and Hurst Bank (near Morton Green).
- Clearing a fence line at Lodge Field ahead of contractors installing a new fence.
- Planting and managing trees in the avenue on Ladies Mile on Upper Malvern Common.
- Coppicing at Park Wood.
- Managing the Community Woodland on Townsend Way to thin small trees and dense scrub.
- Traditional orchard management at Morgan's or Millpond Orchard in Golden Valley.
- Path clearance to open up an old bridleway (Malvern Trail/Mountain biking Association).
- Clearance of scrub to open up areas of geological importance with Earth Heritage Trust at Brockhill Quarry.

Volunteer Site Wardens

Site or Patrol Wardens adopt a patch or a special wildlife area where they focus their efforts on litter picking, habitat management or simply keeping a close eye on it and reporting any issues to the Trust.

Wildlife Advisory Panel and Recreation Advisory Panel

These two long-standing groups are made up of local volunteers who have expertise in their field or represent certain user groups on the Hills & Commons. At present, 24 volunteers sit on these panels. Their valuable contribution gives MHT staff a sounding board and improves our plans through their knowledge. Joint projects have also resulted from these relationships.

Project volunteers & Citizen Science

We undertake one-off projects which offer new volunteer opportunities. For example, we were delighted to welcome a volunteer over winter 2024/25 who brought knowledge of archival best practice and the public engagement opportunities of archives. She helped the Trust to understand how the role of rangers has evolved in our organisation, which is over 140 years old.

There are several different types of project volunteers in 2025:

1 Social media volunteers

The aim of this project is to help gather inspiring stories from across the Hills and Commons for our online engagement (social media mainly). This volunteer placement comes at a key moment as we develop our online communications. With a growing portfolio of content, we are seeking to diversify our output and more effectively engage the public. Through regular blog posts, photos, and videos, we aim to educate our audiences on who we are, what we do,

and showcase the spectacular habitats and species across the Malvern Hills and Commons. The social media volunteer would capture footage and photos of the Hills and Commons, as well as organising to meet staff, trustees and volunteers, to capture stories. We are still advertising this position.

2 Memorial Bench volunteers

We advertised an opportunity on our website and social media for a digital mapping/GIS volunteer to help us with our memorial bench survey for 2025 (due after a 10-year review). We recruited a team of 7, assigning each a 'patch' of the Hills and Commons to survey. They started in July/August and are on track to complete early October. We are still waiting for one volunteer to finish their survey, but in total, 303 benches were included on this list.

The main aims of the survey were to gather data on bench location (updating GPS information) and condition (identifying a priority list for replacements), as well as potential new spots for benches for accessibility.

3 Drop-in sessions

In summer 2025, several volunteers provided a presence at the Trust's drop-in events, to talk about volunteering opportunities as part of the wider events, which are about meeting the MHT team and answering questions on the Malvern Hills Bill.

4 Corporate volunteers

Corporate volunteer activities may be blended with existing tasks or else additional to the task programme. Examples of corporate volunteering days in 2024/25 have included:

- A corporate group litter picking around British Camp.
- Bracken clearance by corporate volunteers (INDRA) as part of a conservation day at Black Hill.
- Tree planting by corporate volunteers (Speller Metcalfe) along Peachfield Road (Malvern Common).

5 Citizen Science

Occasionally we can identify larger research projects that lend themselves well to a citizen science approach. In 2015 for example, sixteen volunteers were all armed with bat detectors and helped record the flight routes of the rare lesser horseshoe bats. This information feeds directly into our land management works.

Next steps

- Trustees are invited to join in a celebratory Wassail event with staff and volunteers in January 2026. Date to be confirmed.
- New links made with Community Action Malvern & District to be followed up on by the staff team, to assist with volunteer recruitment.
- To consider asking corporate volunteer parties to make donations to the Trust, since many companies have a dedicated budget for this.

- New advice received is that designated volunteer leaders consider the operational health and safety of 'key volunteers' on our volunteer record. An example would be having an accompanied walk with a Patrol Warden to point out potential hazards.
- Opportunity to expand our use of volunteers by training up volunteer leaders to run extra volunteer sessions and/or provide presentations on the Trust about who we are and what we do.

Deborah Fox, CEO

Jonathan Bills, Conservation Manager

Marie Dipple Community and Conservation Manager

Rich Vale, Ranger

30th September 2025

Staffing Committee Health and Safety Report 9th October 2025

Introduction

In this period, new PPE was issued for roadside working. Sets will be purchased for volunteer litter pickers.

Staff have been advised to check whether their Tetanus vaccination is current from their GP and, if not, to have it updated.

The bin emptying review continues. The board approved the purchase of a Suzuki Carry in September, which will reduce use of panel vans for containing waste and avoid manual carrying of tools to less accessible places. The staff team is reviewing bin locations and design, in reaction to ongoing manual handling concerns.

Following numerous unauthorised encampments in the summer, some of which included horses and dogs, the staff team will work on a procedure for applying the byelaws that is rapid and safe for all involved.

The alarm arrangements for Top Shed are under review.

Training and Monitoring

1. Health and Safety Incidents in the period 1 April 2025-30 June 2025:

Notifiable Accidents in last 12 months:	1
Reported Incidents and Accidents in the period:	5
Reported Incidents	9 [2 visitor-related, 6 staff-related, 1 volunteer-related]
Near Miss reports	4
Safety observations	0

2. Accidents and incidents

- a. On 2 May, 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. A volunteer had a trip and fall in May and sustained a cut to the eyebrow and cheek and bruises to the head.
- c. During the summer, a member of the public was abusive at the Trust offices and approached members of staff in person and by phone and when Rangers were on call. The range of contact is recorded as one incident caused by a visitor. The member of the public was advised of the Trust's zero tolerance policy to abuse.
- d. In late July and in August, there were separate instances of two staff members receiving multiple wasp stings after unwittingly disturbing nests in the ground.
- e. In August, a staff member fell into brambles and sustained numerous bramble punctures and scratches.
- f. In September, there were separate instances of two staff members coming into contact with liquid bin waste, which led to brief sickness absences.

- g. In September, a Ranger was asked to transport a walker to safety during the Malvern Hills Challenge. The walker had inappropriate footwear on and other walkers reportedly had no waterproofs and were soaked to the skin as a result of stormy conditions.
- h. In September, there were numerous unauthorised encampments on Trust land at Malvern Common, Link Common, Townsend Way and Hall Green. These were written up in an incident form for the record.

3. Near miss reports and safety observations

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

- a. In August, on implementing the bracken management schedule, the model of tractor available to do the task was deemed unsuitable for steep bank work.
- b. In August a member of staff stepped into an open manhole whilst mowing grass but was not injured.
- c. In August, a robot mower machine hit a quarry fence at Summer Hill.
- d. In August, a Ranger prevented an incident from escalating between a person being transported and their care assistant.

In each case, consideration is given as to how to avoid these hazards in future. For example, in the bracken management, the alternative solution was to use the robot mower, which the Trust has on hire. Recent training and practice will improve competency in operating this new machinery.

New advice received is that designated volunteer leaders consider the operational health and safety of 'key volunteers' on our volunteer record. Specialist volunteers e.g. Patrol Wardens not directly managed as staff (not registered to MHT roles) and autonomous volunteer groups will need to have their competency, training and experience recorded by the relevant 'Responsible Person'. An example of how to test competency would be an accompanied walk with a Patrol Warden to point out potential hazards.

4. Training

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

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| • Operation of remote control mowers by Field Staff | 4 |
| • Chainsaw refresher | 1 |
| • Brush cutter | 4 |
| • Emergency First Aid at Work | 4 (+Forestry 2) |
| • Power pole pruning certification | 4 |

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

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| • Trailer towing | This financial year |
| • HAVS and audiometry for all field and wardens | In autumn |
| • Assisted Felling | As needs basis |
| • Wind Blown Trees | As needs basis |
| • Tractor Driving on slopes | As needs basis |
| • Off Road ATV driving | As needs basis |

- Mandatory certification for new Ranger
- Mental health first aid.

As needs basis
October

Recommendations:

A continuation of that which was presented previously:

- For the board to adopt a new MHT Health & Safety statement and policy when presented by the Health and Safety Working Group.
- For the HSWG to make a report to the Board, on a plan for addressing H&S and fire risk non-compliance and opportunities for improvement.
- For the CEO to gain legal advice on the Trust's liabilities in relation to contractors using PPE (in progress).

Not yet progressed:

With the appointment of the Land and Property Manager and new Operations Manager, plans can now be reinstated for staff welfare facilities.

Deborah Fox
CEO
30th September 2025