

Malvern Hills Trust
Covid-19 Contingency Committee
By telephone conference call
Meeting 24 April 2020 4.00pm

Present: Mr R Bartholomew, Dr S Braim, Mr M Cordey, Mr M Davies, Mrs C Palmer, Prof J Raine, Mrs G Rees, Ms S Rouse

In attendance: CEO, Finance and Administration Manager, Conservation Manager, Secretary to the Board

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Apologies for absence**

There were none.

2. **Declarations of interest**

There were none.

3. **Chair's announcements**

There were none. No comments had been received for this meeting.

4. **To approve the minutes of the last meeting**

On the proposal of Prof Raine, seconded by Mrs Rees, it was **RESOLVED** unanimously to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2020.

5. **Summary of actions taken**

The CEO reported that the car parks remained closed. There had been more fly-tipping, including of asbestos which would be removed by a licenced waste carrier. The bluebells were attracting visitors. Grass cutting would start next week. The CEO had spoken to the police. They were continuing to patrol the area. He had been working on the revised tender documents for the drainage from British Camp toilets and had started contingency planning for the time when there was some relaxation of the current constraints. A further Government announcement was expected around 7 May and he was concerned changes might be made at short notice. 8 May was a bank holiday.

The switch to the new Board member E-mail addresses had not taken place. Two or three Board members were either not able to access the new mailboxes or having other problems. The CEO needed to telephone everyone to find out their position and try to obtain remote assistance for some people. It was suggested that those who were able to use the new addresses should start using them. It agreed to send out a test E-mail to check who was ready to change over and then circulate a list of updated addresses to staff and Board members.

6. **Car Parks (item 7)**

The CEO said that if the Government lifted some of the restrictions on travel there could be damage to MHT land with people parking off the road if the car parks

were not open. The Trust needed to be ready to respond at short notice. It was suggested the Committee members should be prepared to have an emergency meeting at 6pm following any Government announcement on 7 May. It was agreed that if the car parks were open, the Trust should charge for parking. The CEO understood it might be possible to set up the ticket machines so that entering the vehicle registration number was not necessary.

7. Financial update (item 6)

The Finance and Administration Manager reported that two Job Retention Scheme claims had been made for March (£467) and April (£4488). In theory, the payments were to be made within about 6 days. She had applied for the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure grant from the District Council and assumed that the council would let the Trust know whether it qualified or not. The primary grant would cover the balance of the business rates on Manor House (£1,639) and there were also cash grants available of between £10 – 25,000.

The Financial Assistant had completed the inputting of bookkeeping data to Sage for the year end and the Finance and Administration Manager would prepare a first draft of the annual accounts over the next 2 weeks.

The auditors had told her that, as a result of additional work required on the issue of “going concern” arising out of the current crisis, the Trust should allow an additional £850 for the audit fee. This additional work would be required for the years 2019/20 and 2020/21 because of the ongoing effects of the pandemic. She had requested a breakdown of the work anticipated and had been told that £850 was a maximum charge. The Trust would be billed for the time spent in carrying out the work. The audit fee would therefore be a maximum of £7,000.

She confirmed that there were no major changes in the Trust’s financial position, including cash flow.

8. Countryside Stewardship (CS) application update

The Conservation Manager reported that the application for Castlemorton Common and the Southern Hills was virtually completed. It would be sent off next week. He had not had any significant queries from Board members in response to his report circulated on 20 April. He felt there was a good chance the Trust would be accepted for the Scheme because of the number of designations on the land. In relation to the issue reported at the meeting on 3 April about part common applications, Natural England had agreed they would accept applications including someone else’s land, but which contained no options for that third party land. He reported that one opportunity which the Trust had missed as a result of the lack of progress with the Charity Commission Scheme was access to funding available within the CS scheme for fencing and cattle grids.

Severn Trent’s plans to decommission the reservoir at British Camp would not affect the application, which did not include the reservoir itself. The Trust had had a telephone conference with Severn Trent and their consultants Mott MacDonald Bentley some weeks ago. The consultants were in the process of preparing information to enable them to make an Environmental Impact Assessment

screening decision application. If all went to plan, and if the necessary consents were in place, they hoped to be on site in late summer 2021.

The Conservation Manager was thanked for all his work in connection with the application for CS.

9. Any other matters for discussion

There were no other matters.

10. Date of next meeting

Next meeting 1 May 2020 at 4.00pm (by telephone conference).

CONFIDENTIAL (Staff)

MINUTES RELEASED

11. Update on staff

The CEO reported no change in relation to staff on furlough or sick leave in the last week. He pointed out that furloughed staff were still accruing holiday entitlement and the effect would be that more staff would be taking leave in the second part of the year (although leave could now be carried forward for 2 years). He was reconsidering the arrangements in relation to office staff depending on what was contained in the next review of the lockdown. He had discussed with the Operations Manager whether it was possible to start the furlough period early for the second member of the field staff, but this would reduce the field staff team to 2 and it would not be possible to carry out the likely workload. The senior staff could not be furloughed at present. The CEO said that he was reviewing the furloughing arrangements and the operational requirements and would bring the matter back to the committee at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 4.55pm