

Minutes of the Mavisbank Trust Board Meeting

held at 2 pm on Thursday 15 September 2016 at Swanston

Present

Rhona Brankin	Trustee and Acting Chairman in the chair
Duncan Campbell	Trustee
Charlie Cumming	Trustee
David Harrowes	Trustee
Chris Lewis	Trustee
Keith McIntosh	Trustee
Richard Prenter	Trustee
Ian Young	Trustee

Apologies

Bob Constable	Trustee
Willie Macnair	Trustee and Chairman
James Simpson	Project Adviser
Jeff Stoddart	Trustee

Minutes of the Meeting

Action

Previous Minutes

- 1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 July 2016 were approved.

Matters Arising from the Minutes of 19 July 2016

- 2 **Digital Model** Clarification would be sought from Historic Environment Scotland at the next meeting of the Steering Group as to whether it intended to provide a digital model of Mavisbank.
- 3 **Annual General Meeting** It was now intended to hold the Annual General Meeting of the trust in December 2016. The date was yet to be determined.

Rhona

Date of the AGM to be determined

Governance

- 4 A paper on a skills audit of trust members had been circulated. Eight out of the 12 trust members had responded to the questionnaire requesting that their skills should be noted. While generally healthy, the audit had revealed certain weaknesses in the composition of the trust. The private sector was not represented and the areas of Communications, Fundraising, IT, Property Management, Legal, Human Resources and Training and Event Management were represented by only a few individuals. The trust should now seek to appoint several new trustees with the required missing skills.
- 5 The maximum number of trustees should probably remain at 12 not including the chairman. A view was expressed that 12 might be too many for a comparatively small project. However, should it proceed, the restoration project could be of considerable size. Should the three local authority member places be discontinued three places would be freed up to allow appropriate skills to be sought. As Midlothian Council was now directly engaged through its membership of the Steering Group there was less necessity for its representation on the board. This would not exclude local Council Members remaining board members in their own right. It was possible too that other members might step down.

6 It was agreed that a small working group should be set up to consider the recruitment of new and appropriate members. This would be with a view to appointing new trustees by January 2017. A trustee recruitment pack should be prepared. Consideration might also be given to appointment of a new chairman. Trustees might serve a term of three years. Retiring trustees could become members of an advisory group.

A working group to consider the appointment of new trustees

7 The trust should put in place a strategy together with suitable policies. The Memorandum and Articles should be revised. The Memorandum and Articles should be non-specific enough to allow the trust sufficient scope to pursue its aims. The trust's solicitors and OSCR would be consulted in the course of revision.

Chris

8 It might be worth meeting with the trust's patron, the Duke of Gloucester, to seek support.

Historic Environment Scotland Meetings and Paper

9 Concern was expressed at the recent Historic Environment Scotland paper which had been circulated with the agenda for this meeting. The paper contained notes of three meetings that had been held between Historic Environment Scotland, the Landmark Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Prince's Regeneration Trust. At a meeting between Historic Environment Scotland and the Landmark Trust four possible options for advancing the Mavisbank project had been set out. None of those included a role for the Mavisbank Trust. It was noted that there had been no specific intention on the part of Historic Environment Scotland and the other players to exclude the trust but the feeling remained that the trust had been slightly sidelined and there was some requirement for it to be more proactive if it was to remain the project leader. Despite the current discussions the future of the project still remained far from clear in the absence of a firm commitment from the Landmark Trust. It was possible that the trust might be only a minor player. In any event the trust should still improve its governance arrangements if it was to be in a position to contribute to the project in whatever way.

10 The paper's Options 2 and 4 had been discounted by the Landmark Trust and Heritage Environment Scotland. Option 1 was their preferred option. This envisaged a joint Landmark Trust and Historic Environment Scotland project. The second best option (Option 3) proposed that the Landmark Trust should restore the house with another trust owning the policies. Although not noted in the paper this could possibly be the Mavisbank Trust. Adequate funding would have to be found for both the improvement and the management of the policies before the trust could consider undertaking this.

11 An alternative arrangement could be for a community trust to repair and manage the policies. Whatever arrangement was adopted it was desirable that local people were closely involved with the planning, restoration and management of the policies. The repair and public use of the grounds would be key to obtaining funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

12 In view of the uncertainty that the Landmark Trust would restore the house a "plan B" should be given some thought.

Community Engagement

13 The aims of the Community Engagement Working Group remained as the facilitation of small, managed events both within and outwith the Mavisbank policies. A list of events and projects was being compiled. This would include an

outline programme of events to be received from James Kinch at Midlothian Council. An interpretative leaflet could be a useful project. A Small Grant Fund might be applied for from Historic Environment Scotland. Pauline Megson who had a good knowledge of the funding available from Historic Environment Scotland would be consulted. A proper access to the site still remained the main impediment to projects taking place within the grounds. Only small groups were able to access the site at present.

- 14 Could, say, three projects be developed? Would it be feasible to commission Sarah Bronsdon to select and develop these? The Dunard Fund might provide some funding. James had been in touch with the fund.

De-Scheduling

- 15 The Mavisbank Trust had written to Historic Environment Scotland requesting the de-scheduling of the Mavisbank site currently designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 16 Historic Environment Scotland had now considered this request within the scope of a nationwide project to review such dual designations. Historic Environment Scotland had decided that the most appropriate designation, that of listing, was the one that should be retained and had requested the views of the trust on the proposal to de-designate together with the proposal to retain the listing status. It was agreed to welcome the proposed de-scheduling because the trust believed there had been no compelling reason for this and was in agreement with the reasons given in Historic Environment Scotland's Report on Handling. It was also felt that if the house and policies were to remain scheduled this would prevent Midlothian Council from compulsorily purchasing the house which was a key aspect to its restoration by the trust and its partners.
- 17 It was further felt that the Category A Listed Building designations, the protection afforded by the inclusion of the house and policies in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes provided appropriate and sufficient protection to the site. This protection would be allied to the house and grounds being within an Area of Great Landscape Value and being designated a Conservation Area.

Ian to inform HES that the de-scheduling of the Mavisbank site was welcomed

Financial Statement

- 18 A financial statement was tabled. This showed a closing balance of £13,224.

Updated Diagram

- 19 An updated diagram showing a draft Mavisbank project management structure was tabled.

Appreciation

- 20 Rhona, as Chairman, expressed her appreciation of the support of the trustees during what had been a slightly unsettling period for the trust due some uncertainty of its future role.

Date of Next Meeting

- 21 Thursday 8 December 2016.

