

Minutes of the Mavisbank Trust Board Meeting
held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 3rd March 2020 at ELGT's offices, Swanston

Present

Rhona Brankin	Trustee and Chairman
Sarah Barron	Trustee
David Harrowes	Trustee
Keith McIntosh	Trustee
Charlie Cumming	Trustee
Chris Lewis	Trustee
Ellen McCalman	Trustee
Jeff Stoddart	Trustee
Ian Young	Trustee
Michael Steven	Trustee

In Attendance

James Simpson	Project Advisor
Grant Ballantine	Midlothian Council
Pauline Megson	Historic Environment Scotland

Welcome - Rhona welcomed Sarah Barron to her first board meeting as a new trustee.		
Item		Action
1.0	Apologies	
1.1	There were no apologies.	
2.0	Minutes of the Minutes of the Board Meeting of 5th December 2019	
2.1	The minutes of the Board meeting held on the 5 th December 2019 were approved as a true record.	
3.0	Matters Arising	
3.1	Paragraph 2.1 - Chris confirmed that the Trust's 2018-19 annual accounts had been lodged with Companies House and that the 2019 annual return had been completed and accepted by OSCR.	
3.2	Paragraph 3.3 – Michael said that there was a 3-D printing facility available at Edinburgh University although there was a relatively small limit on the size of the model produced. James noted that all the necessary data required could be easily transferred to either the University for a student project or to Historic Environment Scotland (HES).	
3.3	Para 3.11 – It was pointed out that the problems caused by horses was getting worse. The wooden 'sleeper' bridge at the eastern entry into Mavisbank had collapsed and was blocking the old mill lade, causing flooding of the path during heavy rain. Pauline said the Peter Ranson was aware of the matter.	

4.0	Mavisbank Project Steering Group Update	
4.1	<p>Pauline reported that HES & Midlothian Council (MC) had posted statements on their websites that their National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) grant application for the Mavisbank project had successfully reached the final selection round. From the original 180 applications, 12 projects would now compete for a share of the £50M available and it was likely that about 6 would be given grants.</p>	
4.2	<p>A presentation by the Landmark Trust (LT) and HES had been well received by the NHLF committee who were very enthusiastic about the project. A NHLF project mentor had appointed to work with the partners and a project workshop was to be arranged to develop plans for the next stage.</p>	
4.3	<p>LT, HES and their consultants, Ingham Pinnock (IP), were developing the application further and considering aspects such as project governance, management, procurement, resourcing, ownership and the compulsory purchase of the site by Midlothian Council in greater detail. It had been agreed that the lead grant applicant would be HES and Simpson and Brown had been commissioned to prepare architectural drawings to support the application.</p> <p><i>(N.B. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the final round NLHF grant application closing date has been postponed from November 2019 until February 2021.)</i></p>	
4.4	<p>Pauline said an early intention was to set up a Local Community Consultative Group for the project to engage with representatives from different local organisations and stakeholders to help develop an activity plan for the future use of the grounds. The Mavisbank Trust would have an important role to play in the Consultative Group. Grant advised that there had already been an initial meeting held with some groups and that Poltonhall, Loanhead and Bonnyrigg and Lasswade CCs had been contacted. Catherine Dunn, Midlothian Council's Community Officer, was keen to be involved as well.</p>	
4.5	<p>Rhona suggested that Alan McLaren, the organiser of the annual Loanhead Gala Day, would be an excellent invitee but it was also important that smaller local grassroots groups and less well known stakeholders were involved in the process. Chris would pass on lists he already had of potential invitees from previous consultations and Lucy Wood had produced an up-to-date contact list during her role as Mavisbank Community Engagement Officer.</p>	CL
4.6	<p>RB advised that Ross Ingham (IP) was coming up to Edinburgh in advance of the next project steering group meeting to meet with Chris, Pauline, Charlie and herself to discuss the setting up of the Community Consultative Group.</p> <p><i>(N.B. This meeting was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but took place as a virtual meeting online on 3rd April).</i></p>	
4.7	<p>Pauline said that Landscape Architect Peter McGowan was currently working on updating the landscape management plan for Mavisbank. Although the</p>	

	<p>main house was to be used by LT for holiday lets it was envisaged that there would be an HES skills training workshop established in one of the Mavisbank pavilions and that the second pavilion would be available to create a community activity hub.</p>	
4.8	<p>James highlighted the importance of solving the longstanding access issues and Pauline said that significant funding was needed to unlock the problems. There was likely be a variety of different access points needed, including for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians, as well as parking in the field adjoining Wadingburn Road.</p>	
4.9	<p>With regard to communications and media profile, the project partners now wanted to become more proactive and develop a unified approach to the presentation of information on their websites over the next 9 months. The trustees agreed that it would be very helpful if HES and LT could give an indication as to how they perceived the Trust's role and involvement in supporting these objectives.</p>	PM/RB
5.0	Trust Governance Matters	
5.1	<p>The Trustees discussed possible options for the Trust's longer-term role in the project and involvement in the subsequent management of the policies and the development of community engagement and activity plans. In the current circumstances it was likely that this would differ significantly from the Trust's original intention of being the lead body in the restoration of Mavisbank House and policies. It was important that HES and LT made clear their thoughts on the Trust's potential role as soon as possible so as to enable it to adapt and evolve its structure and operation accordingly.</p>	PM/RB
5.2	<p>There were many good examples of voluntary bodies taking on the management of historic properties and/or the delivery of specific services and activities e.g. Bannockburn House near Stirling and Amisfield House walled garden in East Lothian. One possibility was that the Trust could take on discrete projects e.g. the restoration of an individual element within the policies such as fund raising for and repairing the doocot.</p>	
5.3	<p>Rhona said that the two recent retirements would allow the Trust to recruit additional trustees so as to bring new skills and expertise onto the board. Chris suggested that this was now a relatively urgent matter in order to support the ongoing management and evolution of the Trust as neither he nor Rhona intended to be trustees in perpetuity.</p>	
5.4	<p>Rhona supported the establishment of a Mavisbank volunteer bank to undertake work in the policies and Pauline said that outside bodies could also be invited to help providing activities. James said that he was hopeful that he would be able to facilitate contacts with potential funders to support Mavisbank projects.</p>	

5.5	Chris said that, following discussion with Rhona and at the last board meeting, he had approached Lucy Wood (the former Mavisbank Community Engagement Officer) with a view to inviting her to become a trustee.	
5.6	Lucy was currently working as an Adult Learning Coordinator at Holyrood Palace and had indicated that she would be delighted to join the board. All agreed that she was an excellent candidate and that she should be appointed as a Mavisbank Trust trustee. Chris was authorised to make the necessary arrangements and register her appointment as a director with Companies House.	CL
6.0	Financial Update	
6.1	Chris outlined the main points of the Mavisbank Trust's 2019-20 Income and Expenditure Account as at the 29 th February 2020 which had been circulated previously. There had been relatively little movement over the last quarter and, after taking into account outstanding creditors and debtors, there was a closing balance of £1,346.	
6.2	A number of donations had been received over the last few months and sufficient funds were now available to cover the Trust's anticipated overheads for the next 12 months. However, additional funds would be required if the Trust wanted to undertake any further project work.	
7.0	Trust VAT Registration Status	
7.1	Chris said that he had discussed the Trust's VAT registration status with the accountants. As it was now apparent that the Landmark Trust would be taking on the restoration and operation of Mavisbank House, rather than the Mavisbank Trust itself, it was clear that the current 'Option to Tax' arrangement with HMRC was no longer appropriate.	
7.2	Whilst the Trust had always operated in good faith since registering for VAT it was now necessary for it to de-register. The Trust's recent and expected turnover for the next 12 months was, in any case, below the 2020 VAT registration threshold (£85K). However, registration could easily be reinstated if turnover increased sufficiently in the future. After discussion, it was agreed by the trustees that Chris should make the necessary arrangements to de-register the Mavisbank Trust for VAT purposes with effect from 31/03/20. <i>(N.B. The Trust's VAT de-registration was accepted by HMRC as of 31/03/20)</i>	CL
8.0	Updating Trust's Online Media Presence	
8.1	Michael had reviewed the Trust's online media presence and gave a short visual presentation as to the current situation and how it might be improved. He said that it was apparent that it had evolved over time with several bursts of activity interspersed with long periods in between with little happening.	

	There were two live Twitter accounts @MavisbankHouse (2014) and @MavisbankC (Community) (2018) in addition to a dormant @Mavisbank1 account and a Facebook account @MavisbankHouseandPolicies from 2012.	
8.2	Chris said that it was proving difficult to access some of the accounts as login details had been lost or changed over time by several different people using them. Much of the social media was focussed on the house itself rather than the policies whereas both aspects should be covered.	
8.3	Michael suggested that the social media should be rationalised into one Twitter and one Facebook account and these were best placed to submit regular updates on what was happening. Chris said that he and Michael had revised some of the information on the website but that it required a significant overhaul. There was a substantial amount of new information that could be included but it needed a volunteer to manage the process, edit material and keep the site up to date.	MS
8.4	It was agreed that to create uniformity all media accounts should be branded as 'Mavisbank Trust' rather than the house, policies or other separate elements. Links to HES and LT should be added to the Trust's website and the Trust's recent digital reconstruction project given prominence. Pauline said that there should be closer liaison between the Trust and the communication teams at Landmark and HES. Chris asked that all trustees should view the current website and help provide updates and changes.	All
9.0	Any Other Business	
9.1	David said that the Esk Valleys Heritage Group (through John Oldham, Chairman of the Esk Valley Trust), had applied to The Coasts and Waters Community Fund for a grant to produce a publication on the Esk valleys. <i>(N.B. In the event this application was unsuccessful.)</i>	
9.2	James noted that he was working on an outline for a book on Mavisbank which he hoped would be published by the end of 2022 in time for the 300 th anniversary of the design of Mavisbank by Sir John Clerk and William Adam. A publisher had expressed interest and he had hopes that a number of people could be persuaded to contribute chapters.	
9.3	Ellen agreed to e-mail Peter Ranson at HES regarding the ongoing drainage issues.	EM
10.0	Dates of Future Board Meetings	
	Remaining dates for 2020: 2.00pm on Tuesday 8th September and Thursday 3rd December to be held at ELGT's offices at Swanston.	

