

**Minutes of The Mavisbank Trust Board Meeting**  
**held online on**  
**Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**Present**

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
Lucy Wood	Trustee

**In attendance**

Grant Ballantine Midlothian Council  
Pauline Megson Historic Environment Scotland

**1. Apologies**

Rhona Brankin and James Simpson sent their apologies.

**2. Minutes of the Board Meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020**

2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 were approved as a true record.

**3. Matters arising**

3.1 Paragraph 4.5 – CL said that he had compiled a list of all the different local organisations and stakeholders that the Trust had engaged with previously and passed it on to the Mavisbank consultants. They intended to begin contacting people shortly to seek their views on developing an activity plan for the future use of the grounds.

3.2 Paragraphs 4.9/5.1 – Prior to the meeting, RB had communicated that owing to Covid-19 lockdown there had not been much discussion at the Project Board regarding communications and media profile or the development of a more unified approach to the presentation of information. PM provided a brief update on the February 2021 funding bid and how this might relate to the Trust supporting the objectives of Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and the Landmark Trust (LT), including SB's interest in Landscape History.

3.4 Paragraph 5.6 – The Trustees welcomed Lucy Wood to the Board as a new Trustee.

3.5 Paragraph 7.2 – CL confirmed that HMRC had accepted the Trust’s VAT de-registration as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and noted that it would no longer be able to reclaim VAT on its purchases.

3.6 Paragraph 8.3 – CL and MS provided an update on the Trust’s social media presence. Various accounts had been set up over the years and login information for some of them lost which had hindered progress somewhat. However, it was agreed that CL, MS, and LW should meet to discuss rationalising the social media accounts and begin updating the Mavisbank Trust website.

CL, LW,  
MS

3.7 Paragraph 9.3 – PM advised that Peter McGowan’s landscape management plan update for HES had been delayed as Peter Ranson had been furloughed for three months. PM suggested that due to the Covid-19 situation HES’s focus at present was on the re-opening of sites but that staff were aware of the on-going issues at Mavisbank and the various outbreaks of vandalism.

#### **4. Steering Group Update**

4.1 PM reported that the Project Board meetings with the consultants, Ingham Pinnock, were now taking place on a monthly basis with a focus in the first instance on developing a model for future project delivery. The NHLF grant application deadline had now been postponed until February 2021. At present, advice was being sought on operational matters such as procurement, VAT recovery, legal procedures and service delivery although these were dependent on the delivery model chosen.

4.2 PM said that HES and the consultants were developing a draft activity plan for Mavisbank which included areas such as skills training, health and wellbeing and potential delivery partners. A research visit had been made to the Ridge Project in Dunbar.

4.3 PM advised that work on community engagement had been paused for a while due to the pandemic and data protection issues but they were now ready to start gathering information from community groups. GB said that Midlothian Council was still awaiting information from the consultants but he would liaise with them and arrange a meeting including PM. The Trustees agreed that there was a need to establish a mechanism to improve on-going dialogue between the partners and their communications teams.

4.4 CC said that the consultants had still to contact ELGT despite the fact that as a local organisation they had a long-established focus on health and wellbeing, together with significant experience and expertise in engaging with local communities. The Trust was already working on health and social care projects in 4.5 Midlothian such as GP referral schemes. PM suggested that she would set up a meeting between the consultants and ELGT and CC agreed.

PM

- 4.5 SB asked if it was possible to see HES's draft Mavisbank conservation management plan and PM said that work on it had been paused but it would be made available at some point.
- 4.6 GB said that the Mavisbank Conservation Area Character Appraisal was being revised and combined into one document with the management plan. This was likely to go out to public consultation later in the year. IY, having produced the previous document, asked if the new one was an update or a complete re-appraisal. GB confirmed that it was the former.
- 4.7 CL noted that, due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, times were financially difficult for HES and LT at the moment, as well as for the National Lottery. This might well have an impact on the availability of funding for grant programmes, the pace of project development and the overall project budget.
- 4.8 CC asked whether there was anything that was required of the Trust at present or whether there was still a pre-application hiatus. PM assured him that community engagement would be able to begin soon and this was where the Trust would be able to become involved. PM suggested that another way that the Trust could help at present was to collate all the research and information that it held on the site. This collective archive would be an extremely valuable resource and contribution from the Trust.
- 4.9 DH asked for an update regarding access to Mavisbank. PM stated that this was part of an on-going discussion concerning possible delivery models. CL pointed out that strong resistance from the residents to public access via the south drive and the dangers of increasing traffic on the narrow roads to Polton were still significant issues. PM said that access options and which routes eventually chosen also depended upon the outcome of legal advice.

## **5. Finances**

- 5.1 CL outlined the Trust's income and expenditure account to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 and noted that there had been very little activity since the last board meeting. However, with a balance of £400, reserves were running low and the Trust needed to secure additional funds in the near future to cover its overheads for the next twelve months (c. £1,600).
- 5.2 Whilst HES and LT were putting together their development plans and the NHLF grant application it was difficult for the Trust to identify and secure funding for smaller projects and attract general donations. CL said that any ideas from trustees for potential income-generating projects and fundraising would be most welcome. PM suggested that it would be easier for the Trust to raise funds once its purpose and role in the Mavisbank project had been clarified.

## **6. Any Other Business**

- 6.1 KM suggested that there was no better way of encouraging community interest in Mavisbank than opening up the site. EM and SB noted that the site had been busy during lockdown and they had seen many people who weren't previously regular users.
- 6.2 All agreed that this was an encouraging sign and PM said that it would be great to capture this sort of engagement in any way possible. CC pointed out that whilst this increase in use by local people was important it did not provide any evidence about those people who were not able to use the space precisely because their access requirements were not being met.
- 6.3 IY asked if the proposed compulsorily purchased of the house by Midlothian Council was still being progressed and GB confirmed that this was still the case.
- 6.4 CL enquired if the planned Digital Doors Open Day was still going ahead. PM said that it would now take the form of a live Q and A session online on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September and that it would include Mavisbank.
- 6.5 CC asked if there was any further progress with the Trust's Mavisbank digital reconstruction project and CL said that the visualisations still needed final tweaks. The question was raised as to whether the long delay was an issue of funding or whether there was no-one available to complete the work. CL said that the technical difficulties and workload had been greater than expected but the professional team had continued on a voluntary basis as this was an exemplar project. However, other paid work had then taken priority.
- 6.6 It was agreed that, as well as completing the digital visualisations of the house and grounds, the Trust should look at how it could further utilise the digital data it held on Mavisbank and other potential sources of funding such as HES. PM said that the Project Board would need to consider the timing of the release of any material produced so as to maximise its impact.

## **7. Date of Next Board Meeting**

Friday, 11th December 2020 (online Zoom meeting)