

Minutes of the Mavisbank Trust Board Meeting
held on Thursday, 1st July, 2021 as an online ZOOM meeting

Present

Sarah Barron	Trustee, Meeting Chair
Sam Black	Trustee
David Harrowes	Trustee
Chris Lewis	Trustee
Ellen McCalman	Trustee
Keith McIntosh	Trustee
Michael Steven	Trustee
Jeff Stoddart	Trustee
Lucy Wood	Trustee

In Attendance

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

1. Apologies

Rhona Brankin, Ian Young and Charlie Cumming

2. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 4th March 2021

2.1 These were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Para 4.2 CL thanked IY for collating the trustees' views on HES's draft Mavisbank landscape conservation management plan which he had now been passed on.

4. HES/Landmark Trust NHLF Application and Mavisbank Project Steering Group Update

4.1 PM reported that the results of the funding bid were embargoed by NHLF but were likely to be made public around mid-July. However, any announcements would be guided by the NHLF's communications plan and if HES/LT's application was successful then communications would be shared. Due to pandemic restrictions the NHLF had not made any site visits but a short film presentation of Mavisbank and the project had been prepared and submitted to them in lieu.

4.2 HES had already put a consultancy contract for the management and coordination of the Mavisbank project during the development phase out to tender and an appointment would be made if the NHLF funding bid was successful. Also, HES were currently scenario

planning as they would still need to plan for the future of the site whatever the outcome of the funding bid. The future involvement of the Trust was seen by all as very important.

4.3 PM advised that Peter Ranson had now retired from HES. Clive Cruickshank had been appointed as the district architect and day-to-day issues at Mavisbank, such as maintenance and access, were his responsibility.

4.4 PM said that BBC Scotland had been filming with drones at Mavisbank for their 'Scotland from the Sky' series and the programme was expected to be broadcast in October. In addition, HES and Midlothian Council were working together to arrange a series of guided walks at Mavisbank on September 11th as part of 'Doors Open Day 2021'.

5. Mavisbank Community Trust Development

5.1 CL pointed out that, whatever the outcome of the NHLF bid, the Trust now needed to make rapid progress with its plans to become a community-based organisation based on the process discussed and previously agreed. It was important that the Trust evolved to become fully representative of the local community and reflected their views and aspirations for Mavisbank. Establishing a 'Friends of Mavisbank' group would help bring in general support as well as allowing previous trustees and people closely involved with the Mavisbank project to still play a part.

5.2 CL said that as RB would be retiring as chair of the board in December. In the interests of continuity and, as there were potentially a number of important meetings over the next few months that would require Trust representation, it would be very helpful to appoint a vice-chair. Trustees discussed the matter before it was proposed and agreed that Sarah Barron should become Vice Chair of the Trust.

5.3 CL outlined a summary of the various management and administrative activities of the Trust, e.g. financial, legal and secretarial, whose operation needed to be transferred from trustees retiring in December to existing and new board members and volunteers over the next six months to ensure a smooth handover. After discussion, it was agreed that the sub-group should meet again and report back to the next board meeting on the matter.

5.4 LW said that it would be good to learn from other community trust's experiences and SB noted that a visit to the Bannockburn Trust in Stirling had been suggested previously. CL said that he had tried to make contact several times but had no response so would try again. JS pointed out that there was a community trust association who could provide help with establishing a new trust but CL said that the Mavisbank Trust already had all the necessary powers it required in its existing constitution to make the necessary changes.

CL

6. Development of a Mavisbank Information and Oral History Archive

6.1 The trustees discussed the idea of establishing a Mavisbank archive as a huge amount of historical and project development information had been accumulated over many years. JS said there were many good examples in existence elsewhere and expertise now available. SB said that a coordinator was needed to bring all the material together as much of it was held by different bodies and in different locations. The Trust would need to

work with HES and she asked if there any scope for funding from them. PM said that HES had a Historic Environment Support Fund whose aims included sharing knowledge and involving people.

6.2 JS suggested that with permission from Robert Clerk such an archive could have access to the information held by Penicuik Estate and, possibly, from William Kay the historian who had carried out the research for the Trust's digital reconstruction project. GB said he would find out if Midlothian Council's Local History Centre might be able to assist.

6.3 It was agreed that the concept was worth pursuing and that issues such as funding, archive location and resources should be explored further.

6.4 JS said there was to be a meeting soon to discuss his proposed book of Mavisbank essays titled 'By Eskes Flowery Bank'. Although production was still at an early stage the intention was there would be twelve essays by different authors and it would be published by the Birlinn Press in 2023 to mark the 300th anniversary of the design of Mavisbank.

7. Social Media Update

7.1 MS said the latest data showed that the Trust had 488 followers and 536 likes on Facebook, 2/3rd of whom were women, the largest age group 35-54 year-olds and 4291 users having been reached. This would be useful information when targeting the local community. The post of female head gardener, Mary Burton, during National Gardening Week had the most hits. The intention was to set up an Instagram account as well so as to allow cross-posting with Twitter and Facebook.

MS

7.2 LW said that the Trust's blog hadn't much information with JS, SB and LW the only writers as yet but more interest would come if the NHLF grant application was successful. SB had written article on the history of the grounds and MS had high quality photos that could be used if the owners were credited. LW suggested that the right moment needed to be chosen to launch the community trust online (Facebook, Twitter, Blogging and Website) to gain the greatest impact.

7.3 MS said that the website had been updated and requested that everyone visit it and pass on any comments about what was being presented. It would also be useful to know from HES if access to the area around the Doocot should be promoted or discouraged by the Trust on its website. CL pointed out that HES were responsible for on-site health & safety and risk assessment and PM said that she would liaise with Clive Cruickshank on the matter.

PM

8. Financial Update

8.1 CL outlined the Trust's income & expenditure account to 30th June 2021. There had been very little activity over the last quarter and the Trust was essentially treading water whilst awaiting the result of the HES/LT application. In this mode the Trust required around £1,500 p.a. to cover its overheads with preparation and examination of the annual accounts being by far the largest item. To reduce costs it would be very useful if

the Trust could secure the services of an accountant on a voluntary basis whilst activity was currently low key.

8.2 CL said that Angela Houlston had been appointed as ELGT's new finance manager and she needed to be added as a signatory on the Trust's bank account and this was approved by the board.

CL

9. Any Other Business

9.1 JS noted that the Trust had raised £23,000 from the Dunard Fund and HES for its digital reconstruction project, in addition to using its own funds and considerable in-kind support. This had been a hugely successful exercise and included the creation of digital visualisations of Mavisbank house, the grounds and several rooms, as they would have appeared in 1750. The images were still to be finalise and required some minor amendments but were probably 97% complete.

9.2 MS said that there was a need to revise and update the Trust's contact database and he would be happy to do so. CL said he had recently passed on a list of organisations that the Trust had consulted during its previous community consultations to HES and he would send this to MS.

CL

9.3 DH had spoken to Penicuik Cricket Club some time ago about interest in the restoration of the Mavisbank cricket ground. However, they felt that it would be very difficult to get funding for this and a new pavilion would be essential. CL had been contacted separately by the Club when they were looking at the possibility of staging a match at Mavisbank to celebrate their 150th anniversary in 2019 but it had proved impractical. SB asked if there was sufficient information available to write a website article on cricket at Mavisbank and CL said he would pass on his Penicuik club contact to MS as he had written articles on Scottish cricket.

CL

10. Governance – Trustee Retirement/Appointment - Confidential

10.1 SB said that sadly the Trust was saying goodbye to David Harrowes, Keith McIntosh, Ian Young and Jeff Stoddart who were retiring as trustees. She expressed the Trust's gratitude for all their hard work, input and expertise over the years. However, it was a farewell rather than a final goodbye as it was hoped that they would be able to remain involved and supportive through the proposed 'Friends of Mavisbank' group. Both DH and KM wished to do so and said it had been a pleasure to be involved and requested to be kept updated on future of the site.

10.2 The trustees discussed various ideas for the recruitment of new trustees over the next six months and, in particular, how that could be achieved in order to meet the Trust's objective of becoming a community-based organisation with local representation.

11. Board meeting dates 2021 - 2nd September and 2nd December both at 2pm

(2nd September meeting changed to 9th September)