

**Minutes of the Mavisbank Trust Board Meeting held on  
Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 as an Online Zoom meeting**

**Present**

Rhona Brankin	Trustee and Chairman
Sarah Barron	Trustee
David Harrowes	Trustee
Chris Lewis	Trustee
Ellen McCalman	Trustee
Keith McIntosh	Trustee
Michael Steven	Trustee
Lucy Wood	Trustee
Ian J Young	Trustee

**In Attendance**

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

**1. Apologies**

Charlie Cumming	Trustee
Jeff Stoddart	Trustee

**2. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

Action

2.1 These were agreed as a true record.

**3. Matters Arising**

3.1 Paragraph 2.1 - CL noted that he had lodged the Trust's 2019-20 annual accounts with Companies house and completed the OSCR annual return.

3.3 Paragraph 4.2 – CL said that yet again there had been no response from McCreadies although JS said that the overall project had been of high quality, in particular the archival research carried out by William Kay. RB and PM felt that the completed digital reconstruction data and illustrations would be very useful for the activity plan part of the development phase.

3.4 Paragraph 5.4 – PM indicated that she was unable to pass on details of the survey carried out by the consultants because of data protection issues.

3.5 Paragraph 5.5 – CL said that a meeting had been arranged for the 24<sup>th</sup> March with the project consultants and HES which he, RB and MS would be attending to discuss coordinating social media messaging about Mavisbank.

#### **4. Mavisbank Project Steering Group Update**

4.1 PM advised that Barbara Cummings was due to retire shortly and that Alison Turnbull would be taking over as senior reporting officer for Mavisbank. HES had now put in place an internal project team to take the project forward. The consultants had done an excellent job in completing and submitting the NHLF grant bid by the end of February deadline. Letters of support for the grant application had included ones from NatureScot, Midlothian Council, the Mavisbank Trust, NHS Midlothian, the local MP and MSP.

4.2 Due to pandemic restrictions the NHLF did not intend to make a Mavisbank site visit but had requested a three-minute video by the end of April outlining the main elements of the project plans. It was hoped that this could include input from the local community although it might not be possible unless restrictions were eased.

4.2 PM said that HES's Mavisbank landscape conservation management plan produced by Peter McGowan had finally been posted on the HES website and comments would be most welcome, particularly in relation to the proposed activity plan. IY volunteered to collate the views of trustees and pass them on to HES as one document. It was noted that the landscape plan would be the basis for managing the grounds of Mavisbank whatever the outcome of the NHLF bid.

IY

4.3 JS pointed out that there was a great deal of information on Mavisbank that had been accumulated by the Trust and others over many years which could be used to support the current restoration project. PM said that this would be very much appreciated by HES and the Landmark Trust. CL said that he had copies of most of the Trust's plans and various other material but that it would be good if everything could be gathered together in one place.

4.4 RB enquired as to how all this information could be best managed and wondered if HES had the resources to help. PM suggested that this could be part of the role of the proposed project and community engagement officer who would be employed by the project. JS felt that it might be a suitable research topic for a PhD student and CL pointed out that Loanhead Library also had a collection of Mavisbank material. It was agreed that the gathering of Mavisbank material and oral information should be included as an item on the agenda for next meeting.

All

#### **5. Mavisbank Community Trust Development**

5.1 RB said that the Mavisbank Project Steering Group was very supportive of the Trust's proposal to transition to a community-based trust and PM felt that it was an excellent idea and provided an exciting opportunity. HES had taken a similar approach at other properties and it was a great benefit to have a community trust involved with site activities and fundraising.

5.2 CL said that the Trust's community trust sub-group had met twice since the last board meeting to discuss the proposed evolutionary changes to the Trust's structure. These were outlined in the diagram that had been circulated. It was anticipated that the transition would be completed by the end of December 2021 but it was important that the collective knowledge and skills of the trustees who were due to retire were not lost. Therefore, the intention was to create an advisory group through which they and other with specific skills could continue to be involved whilst a 'Friends of Mavisbank' membership would be established to engage with volunteers and more general supporters.

5.3 RB said that whilst a new board could co-opt new individuals as trustees the key was to get the local community involved and it would be useful to learn how other trusts handled their 'friends of' members. CL said that the Trust wanted to become a focus for community involvement with the Mavisbank project. As an established charitable limited company the Trust's existing articles of association gave its trustees the powers to make the necessary changes to its structure and operation to enable its transition to a community-led organisation.

5.4 JS suggested that it would be valuable to have a number of 'grantees' as patrons of the Trust and PM said that HES/Landmark would be looking to work with such people to assist with project fundraising. RB said that community engagement had to be an integral part of the project as this would open doors to sources of funding. SB thought that the fundraising model used for Dumfries House would be worth looking at as it had been very successful. PM noted that Prince Charles was a patron of the Landmark Trust and CL said that he had previously expressed an interest in Mavisbank at the time of the Trust's previous HLF bid.

## 6. Social Media Update

6.1 MS reiterated his request for interesting Mavisbank stories that could be used on the Trust's website and Facebook pages, especially ones about people and the place rather than the current restoration project. SB suggested featuring gardening history and Mavisbank's female head gardener who was the first female head gardener in Scotland and, possibly, the UK. LW and MS would contact JS and SB for stories and it would also be useful to include a short profile and photo of each trustee on the website.

All

LW/MS

6.2 MS gave an update on the latest Facebook postings. The forthcoming meeting with HES, Landmark and the consultants would help clarify the Trust's role in supporting the Mavisbank project and coordinating messaging. CL pointed out that, in any case, the website would need to be revised and updated soon to reflect the changes to the Trust as it became a community-based organisation.

6.3 MS said that the 'Friends of Mavisbank' website still existed although it was inactive and hadn't been updated since 2003. CL had tried the website contact link recently but there had been no response. PM said that the consultants had discussed the current project with Tim Tuke, one of the original small 'Friends of' group, as part of the community consultation.

MS noted that the Mavisbank entry on Wikipedia was long out of date. It needed substantial editing and he would try to get agreement from the Wikipedia moderator to have the link to the 'Friends of Mavisbank' website removed.

MS

## **7. Financial Update**

7.1 CL updated the Board on the Trust's Income & Expenditure Account to the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021. There had been very little financial activity over the last quarter and the Trust was still effectively 'ticking over' whilst awaiting the outcome of the recently submitted LT/HES project funding application to the NHLF. The account balance stood at £1,244 after taking into account GiftAid yet to be claimed and outstanding creditors (Trust indemnity insurance and website hosting).

## **8. Any Other Business**

8.1 CL said that Midlothian Council was updating its Core Path Strategy and the draft document was currently out for public consultation. Although the Strategy identified the riverside path and East Drive as core paths there was no references to potential new access points or paths that might be developed as part of the Mavisbank project.

8.2 Sam Black from NatureScot had informed CL that there was a new footpath grant scheme available from the Scottish Government for improving access in rural communities. This might be something that could be useful as ELGT, James Kinch and Peter Ranson had been in discussion regarding drainage issues and funding for path works. However, being part of Loanhead, Mavisbank might not be eligible for the new footpath scheme as it was intended for rural areas.

8.3 DH felt that although it might be a long-term objective the revival of the Mavisbank cricket ground should still be considered and RB suggested that this could be included in the project activity plan. DH had spoken to Lasswade Cricket Club and whilst there was interest in the idea of playing at Mavisbank it would not be a viable proposition without a pavilion. CL suggested that staging a one-off event, perhaps a re-run of the 1891 Ladies v Gentlemen of Midlothian match, would create excellent publicity for the Mavisbank project.

## **9. Governance – Trustee Retirement/Appointment - Confidential**

9.1 In relation to Item 5, the board discussed the requirement for a number of trustees to retire as they were approaching the end of their second term of office. It was agreed that it was important to maintain continuity whilst new trustees were appointed to the board and during the proposed changes taking place over the next nine months.

9.2 It was also agreed that the date of the next board meeting should be re-scheduled until after the expected announcement by the NHLF decision as to whether or not the LT/HES Mavisbank project funding bid had been successful.

## **10. Board meeting dates 2021**

2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2<sup>nd</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> December all Thursdays at 2.00pm.