

**Minutes of the Mavisbank Trust Board Meeting  
held on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 3PM as an Online 'Zoom' meeting**

**Present**

Rhona Brankin – Chairman  
Sarah Barron - Trustee  
Sam Black - Trustee  
Charlie Cumming - Trustee  
Chris Lewis - Trustee  
Ellen McCalman - Trustee  
Michael Steven - Trustee

**In Attendance**

Grant Ballantine – Midlothian Council  
James Simpson – Project Advisor

**1. Apologies**

Lucy Wood – Trustee  
Pauline Megson - HES

**2. Minutes of Board Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021**

2.1 The minutes were agreed as a true record.

**3. Matters Arising**

Item 4.4 - PM had reported that the guided walks at Mavisbank for 'Doors Open Day' on the 11th September were all fully booked.

Item 5.4 - CL said that he had visited Bannockburn House the previous day and now had the correct contact to set up a visit for board members.

Item 8.2 - CL said that as ELGT's finance manager was on long-term sick leave the Trust needed another trustee to replace her as a signatory for online banking purposes. EKM volunteered to do so and it was agreed that CL and CC should make the necessary arrangements to add her as a signatory to the online bank account.

Items 9.2 + 9.3 - CL to forward list of organisations and cricket contact to MS.

**4. Minutes of Community Trust Sub-group meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

4.1 The minutes were agreed as a true record.

4.2 MS said that Braeside Road access had now been closed off with a new fence and signage by the owners but that Midlothian Council were currently investigating.

**5. HES/Landmark Trust NHLF Application Feedback and Potential Options**

5.1 SB reported that she and PM had a very productive meeting on-site at Mavisbank with Owen Thompson MP. He was keen to support the project and was willing to promote a Westminster adjournment debate in the next few weeks and raise the matter with Oliver Dowden, the Secretary of State.

5.2 Feedback from the NHLF suggested that their view of the Mavisbank application

was generally positive. However, competition had been fierce and the successful applications had all been backed by well-established partnerships that were heavily involved with the development of their projects and clearly demonstrate grassroots support. HES has received many letters of support for the project including one from Rory Stewart, MP.

5.3 HES were now looking at the possibility of a smaller project and a Scottish NHLF funding bid of around £1-2M although they were still concerned about the stability of the house structure. Also, they were keen to progress proposals from their recently produced Mavisbank Landscape Management Plan and to promote the sites potential for activities for schools and local groups, open air theatre, allotments, healthy living, etc. Grants might be available from HES for smaller projects such as signage and information boards. The grounds were already being well used with over 20,000 visitors recorded this year prior to the people counter being vandalised.

5.4 RB said that there was good support for the Mavisbank project from both the Holyrood and Westminster parliaments, as well as from Colin Beattie, MSP, and it might be worth contacting the local MSP to raise the issue at Holyrood again. She had been in talks with Alison Turnbull (HES) and Anna Keay (Landmark Trust) and both organisations were still committed to Mavisbank and keen to have the Mavisbank Trust involved in any future project. All potential funding avenues were being looked at and it was possible that Landmark might choose to go ahead with the house on their own. A bid to the Scottish NHLF (up to £5M) might be an option.

5.5 EKM felt that the Trust was being left in limbo whilst HES/Landmark deliberated although RB felt that the Trust would not want to cut across any decisions they made. SB said that although the grounds and house were intrinsically linked it was the restoration of the house that was the major cost. CC felt that in the current circumstances there were two main objectives for the site – community involvement/activities and ‘rescuing the ruin’. However, in order to move forward, the Trust needed to know what timescale HES/Landmark were working on as there might be different potential sources of funding that could be accessed for project work in the meantime. RB noted that both HES and Landmark were in the process of appointing new board chairs and this might delay prompt decision-making.

5.6 JS said that he was hugely supportive of the proposals for access and community use of the grounds. However, if progressing the project was to become a problem for HES and Landmark, there might be an option for the Trust to take forward an interim stage that would consolidate the shell of the house and protect it from any further deterioration. RB said that Landmark were exploring other funding sources besides NHLF and could decide to restore the house independently from the grounds. CC felt that there were different objectives and audiences for the house and grounds so making progress on plans for the grounds was the greater priority.

5.7 EKM noted that it was important to concentrate on things that the Trust could do something about and that there was plenty of work that could be developed in the

grounds now. CL said that this could be carried out in parallel with the transition to a community trust. If other options emerged in the meantime that would be a bonus.

## **6. Mavisbank Community Trust Development**

6.1 Trustees discussed the proposals and timeline of the Mavisbank Trust's transition to a community trust and CL said that the first priority was to safeguard the existing trust. The intention was to adapt its structure and operation so it was not necessary to create a new organisation. The Mavisbank Trust's current articles of association gave the trustees the powers to make the required changes, including the creation of a 'Friends of Mavisbank' support group and a change of name to become the Mavisbank Community Trust. The rationale behind the proposals was to pass 'ownership' of the Trust to the local community.

6.2 RB said that a new action plan was needed for the next few years and funding identified to cover the administration and operation of the Trust. JS felt that due to wide support for the principle of Mavisbank's restoration funding might be available from non-public sources. CC said that whilst there may be plenty of potential projects and funding sources the Trust needed sufficient staffing resources to allow it to develop and carry out projects if it was going to move forward.

6.3 CL had circulate a summary outlining the main management and administrative functions and activities that the Trust needed to be covered during the transition period particularly as several trustees were approaching retirement. These were not especially onerous tasks but trustees needed to identify those areas which they would be willing to take the lead on to support the board and operation of the Trust.

## **7. Development and Funding of Mavisbank Trust Project Work**

7.1 RB said that developing small projects and activities at Mavisbank would be vital in building up local community support and to attract volunteers. Trustees discussed the idea of establishing a Mavisbank archive and possible sources of funding. JS thought that this could be located at the national archives at HES/RCHAMS. SB suggested that bringing together all the archive material might be work that a PhD student could take on. GB said Midlothian Council Libraries might store archival material although it would depend on the amount of space required.

## **8. Social Media Update**

8.1 MS and LW had been in contact with SB regarding photos for a Mavisbank article she had written which could be published as a blog. SB would source some images and pass them on to MS.

8.2 MS has been in contact with a number of people regarding information about cricket at Mavisbank which could be posted on social media. CL said he would pass on the details of a cricket writer who had been in contact with the Trust previously.

8.3 MS noted that the number of Trust followers on Twitter and Facebook had increased. 'Doors Open Day' had not been advertised prominently due to some confusion but this was not an issue as it was fully booked.

8.4 MS said that he and CL were in the process of switching online donations to Just Giving as Virgin Giving was closing down its service at the end of November.

## **9. Financial Update**

9.1 CL presented the Trust's income & expenditure account to the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 which showed a closing balance of £756. There had been very little financial activity since the last meetings except for a number of small donations and the receipt of Gift Aid on ones that had been received previously.

9.2 The trustees considered a draft of the Trust's 2022-21 Annual Accounts which were now complete except for an update of the last section of the trustee's report. CL said that he would circulate the final accounts for approval before the next board meeting. He noted that he had negotiated a 50% discount on the usual fee for the preparation of the accounts by AH&Co., the Trust's accountants, which was very generous and much appreciated.

## **10. Any Other Business**

10.1 GB said that Midlothian Council had approved the Mavisbank Conservation Area Appraisal and this was now available on the Council's website.

10.2 CL had been contacted by BBC Scotland's 'Scotland from the Sky' production company about the possible use of Mavisbank images and the Trust's digital visualisations in a programme which was likely to be broadcast in October. The Trust would be able to negotiate a licencing fee if any images it owned were used.

10.3 SB asked if the Trust had a plan showing the current ownership of land surrounding Mavisbank as there has been rumours of developers contacting local landowners. CL said there was an older map from the 1950's when the hospital company was liquidated and references in deeds from the 1980's but nothing more recent. He had been contacted by developers with various propositions over the years but none seemed economically viable or permissible under planning policy. In addition, HES had employed property consultants a few years ago to seek a buyer to restore the house as a private dwelling but none could be found.

## **11. Governance – Trustee Retirement/Appointments - Confidential**

11.1 The Trustees discussed an application to join the board but the applicant wanted to check with their place of work whether there might be a conflict of interest should they become a trustee. However, it was agreed that the person was an excellent candidate and would be welcome as a trustee subject to the matter being resolved satisfactorily.

11.2 CL noted that another candidate who had been keen to submit an application had yet to do so but might be more suitable as a member of a 'Friends of' group.

**12. Date of next meeting:** - 2.00pm on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021.