

A New & Exciting Era for Mavisbank?!

A new beginning could be in store for Mavisbank House and its grounds following the recent successful 'Expression of Interest' application to the National Heritage Memorial Fund by the Landmark Trust.

The NHMF exists as a funder of last resort in order to help save some of the UK's greatest treasures but even though it is one of the most important historic houses in Scotland and has an international reputation Mavisbank is also one of its most endangered.

Since a disastrous fire in 1973 the house has remained a ruined shell whilst its designed landscape and grounds have been largely neglected with public access to them difficult.

Over the past twenty years several attempts have been made by the Mavisbank Trust and its partners to secure the necessary funding for a major restoration project. However, plans have always been thwarted by issues such as the unknown ownership of the house and very limited access via its three drives which are in private hands.

Having submitted its 'Expression of Interest' to the NHMF the Landmark Trust which has a long record of rescuing historic buildings has now been invited to make a full grant application to secure funding for an initial phase of building restoration work.



Digital reconstruction of Mavisbank circa 1750

A grant of up to £5M can be made which would then enable Landmark to carry out vital repairs and conservation work to stabilise the fabric of this historic structure as well as providing public access and training opportunities such as masonry apprenticeships.

Following the successful completion of Phase 1 and after a further round of fundraising a potential second phase would provide a sustainable future for the house as Landmark self-catering holiday accommodation whilst one of the pavilions will be given over to community use.

In addition, as a long-time supporter of the restoration of Mavisbank and on condition that all necessary project funding had been secured, Midlothian Council has recently given approval for its Compulsory Purchase powers to be used to acquire the house after which ownership would then be transferred to the Landmark Trust for a nominal amount.

Although the historic landscape surrounding Mavisbank House was purchased by Historic Environment Scotland in 1995 in the current difficult financial climate it has very limited resources to maintain or develop the grounds.



As a consequence the Mavisbank Trust now intends to launch a 'Friends of Mavisbank' group which will allow the local community, volunteers and other supporters to join together to take an active role in protecting and enhancing the grounds of Mavisbank whilst helping create a wonderful community greenspace for future generations to come.

The Trust's Friends group will work with HES, Midlothian Council, other local organisations and community volunteers, to develop and support projects



within the grounds. Projects could include improvements to public access, interpretation and biodiversity, repairs to boundary walls and fences, the removal of invasive plant species and the organisation of programmes of events and guided walks to highlight the important history of this amazing estate.

In the longer term there is also the possibility of exploring the potential for bringing Mavisbank's grounds into community ownership by, for example, the community buyout process which has been used successfully elsewhere in Scotland.

For further information on the Landmark Trust's current Mavisbank project please visit their website at [Mavisbank House | The Landmark Trust](#)

If you think you may have some spare time and would like to get involved to help the Mavisbank Trust set up the 'Friends of Mavisbank' group please email us at friends@mavisbank.org.uk