

Mavisbank House - Update on proposed restoration by Landmark Trust**Report by Kevin Anderson, Executive Director Place****Report for Information****1 Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Council notes:

- i) The Landmark Trust are pursuing the restoration of Mavisbank House as a two stage process, beginning with the purchase of the House and carrying out of works to secure the building as a “consolidated ruin”;
- ii) this Landmark Trust project is considered viable in terms of the May 2012 Mavisbank Concordat, therefore the Council will use its compulsory purchase powers as set out in the Concordat if The Landmark Trust can secure the necessary funding;
- iii) costs incurred by the Council in carrying out the compulsory purchase process will be covered by The Landmark Trust; and
- iv) the Council will continue to supply no financial support to The Landmark Trust restoration project at Mavisbank House.

2 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Council on progress with the proposed restoration of Mavisbank House by The Landmark Trust.

21 February 2023**Report Contact:**Grant Ballantine grant.ballantine@midlothian.gov.uk

3 Background

- 3.1** A Mavisbank Concordat (copy contained in Appendix B of this report) was signed jointly between Historic Scotland (now Historic Environment Scotland), Mavisbank Trust, Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust and Midlothian Council in May 2012. It sets out the commitments of the signatory bodies to the restoration of Mavisbank House and grounds (Appendix B contains a plan showing the location of Mavisbank House and grounds). The Council's commitments in the Concordat are to:
- a) Support the work of the Mavisbank Trust to restore the House and Policies (Mavisbank House and grounds), to develop the community value of the Policies and improve access; and
 - b) Take forward Compulsory Purchase Order procedures for the House once a viable funding package is in place and confirmed.
- 3.2** At its 17 December 2019 meeting Council was updated through report about progress with a partnership formed between The Landmark Trust and Historic Environment Scotland to restore Mavisbank House and Grounds. Funding was sought from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project which would result in the restored house being available as a holiday let, the pavilion wings of the house being made available for public access and community use, improved access to the grounds and training and education programmes occurring in the grounds.
- 3.3** That previous bid for funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund was unsuccessful. Following this decision The Landmark Trust remains committed to the restoration of Mavisbank House, and are now pursuing alternative funding sources and amending their project plan. Historic Environment Scotland are not directly involved in the project moving forward, but as owners of the Policies (grounds) of the house will have continued involvement in the future of Mavisbank. The project that is the subject of this report focuses on the acquisition of the House and its future consolidation and restoration. It does not directly relate to the grounds of the house. Any work on the grounds is the responsibility of Historic Environment Scotland, who own the Policies.
- 3.4** The revised Landmark Trust project has two distinct stages. The first stage being the purchase of the House and consolidation of the ruin to make it safe and to prevent further deterioration leading to the complete loss of this building of national cultural and historical significance. The second stage will be the restoration of the House for use as holiday accommodation.
- 3.5** The Landmark Trust is applying to the National Heritage Memorial Fund for the financial support required to purchase Mavisbank House and undertake emergency repairs to prevent irreparable damage to the ruin (this would be a consolidation of the ruin). An Expression of Interest to the fund was successful in February 2023. The Landmark Trust intends to submit the full application for funding to the National Heritage Memorial Fund by the end of 2023.

- 3.6** In keeping with the commitments made by the Council in the May 2012 Mavisbank Concordat, and reaffirmed at Council's 17 December 2019 meeting, The Landmark Trust is likely to need Midlothian Council to utilise its compulsory purchase powers. The current ownership of the House is uncertain, despite previous attempts by interested parties to identify the owners. Compulsory purchase is therefore the only available route to securing ownership. The Council will only commence pursuing a Compulsory Purchase Order if:
- a) a viable funding package has been secured and confirmed by The Landmark Trust;
 - b) the Council's costs in carrying out the compulsory purchase are fully covered by The Landmark Trust; and
 - c) legal guarantees are in place to ensure that the ownership of Mavisbank House is immediately transferred from the Council to The Landmark Trust following completion of a compulsory purchase process.
- 3.7** The Council commitments made in the May 2012 Mavisbank Concordat, and also set out in the 17 December 2019 report, still stand and have not been amended or removed. The Council would not be providing any financial support to The Landmark Trust's restoration project. Any costs incurred by the Council in undertaking a compulsory purchase of Mavisbank House would be met by The Landmark Trust. However, officer time from existing budgets of the Legal and Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Service sections will be required to assist with a compulsory purchase order.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

Whilst the Council is not providing direct financial support for the project. Council officer staff time, from the Legal and Planning, Sustainable Growth and Investment Service sections, is needed to support the project and to fulfil the Council's commitments in the 2012 Mavisbank Concordat of undertaking a compulsory purchase order. Officer time will come from existing budgeted resources.

4.2 Digital

None

4.3 Risk

Not supporting the project by providing staff time to pursue the compulsory purchase order may create reputational damage to the Council if it is perceived to not be following through on its commitments in the 2012 Mavisbank Concordat.

It is considered very unlikely other opportunities exist for the restoration or consolidation of the nationally important, historically and culturally, Mavisbank House. If the current project fails there is a strong possibility that the house will be left to further deteriorate and potentially collapse.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

None

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background information/Links

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The restoration of Mavisbank House represents potential employment opportunities and to provide a visitor destination in Midlothian.

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Mavisbank House is of national cultural and historical significance. The Council's involvement via use of compulsory purchase powers is an existing commitment. It is considered very unlikely other opportunities exist for the restoration or consolidation of Mavisbank House. If the current project fails there is a strong possibility that the house will be left to further deteriorate and potentially collapse. It is also a unique opportunity to attract this investment to Midlothian. If the project does not go ahead, the investment will be made elsewhere in the UK. It cannot be diverted to other activities in Midlothian.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Public engagement has been undertaken by The Landmark Trust and Historic Environment Scotland in the local area as part of the prior unsuccessful grant application.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The Council's position on the compulsory purchase order was agreed by Cabinet on 10 January 2012. The Council will only use the compulsory purchase order powers vested in it to acquire Mavisbank House once a viable funding package for the restoration of the House has been secured by The Landmark Trust and that the Council's costs in carrying out the compulsory purchase order are covered by The Landmark Trust.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Investment in Mavisbank House will prevent further decay of this building of national importance. Investment would be expected to provide opportunities for skills development through training and education opportunities.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

The restoration of Mavisbank House offers opportunities for skills and training development in conservation. These are contributors to a sustainable economic and physical environment.

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource Links

Mavisbank Concordat May 2012 and Plan showing location of Mavisbank House and Policies.