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**MAVISBANK SAVED: LANDMARK TRUST TO SAVE THE MOST IMPORTANT BUILDING AT RISK IN BRITAIN, THANKS TO NATIONAL HERITAGE MEMORIAL FUND SUPPORT**



**300 years after it was built and 50 years after it almost burnt to the ground, one of the most endangered British buildings is set to be saved for the nation.**

**Campaigners have laboured for decades to save the architectural gem, Mavisbank in Midlothian, Scotland, from collapse following the catastrophic fire. Its terrible condition and its uncertain ownership have left this 'Category A' masterpiece in a derelict and highly perilous state.**

**Now, in a break-through decision, the National Heritage Memorial Fund has awarded a major grant of £5.3m to the Landmark Trust towards the rescue and stabilisation of Mavisbank.**

**This grant unlocks Mavisbank's future, enabling Landmark to safeguard the precious house.**

#### History

Mavisbank House, just outside Edinburgh, was built by celebrated Scottish architect William Adam in 1723. The house was a summer residence for John Clerk of Penicuik, a leading figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, and signatory of the Act of Union (1707), whose European travels provided the inspiration for its design. Mavisbank was a pioneering example of a neo-Classical style which William Adam's son Robert Adam and others would develop for Edinburgh's New Town a generation later. Mavisbank was built by a workforce of outstanding Scottish craftspeople whose names and individual contributions are recorded in remarkable detail in the surviving archive.



In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mavisbank became a ground-breaking mental hospital where reforming Doctor John Batty Tuke developed compassionate approaches to mental illness, including through exercise and gardening. His work to reform the national Lunacy Laws in Parliament helped stop those with poor mental health being regarded as ‘psychological curiosities’ but treated instead as sufferers of illnesses that might be understood and cured.

After the closure of the asylum, Mavisbank was sold and, following a major fire, demolition on safety grounds was ordered by the local authority in the mid-1980s. An emergency round-the-clock vigil was maintained by local volunteers until the decision could be halted. Emergency holding scaffolding was then erected by Historic Scotland but, despite numerous attempts to raise the funds to repair it, all schemes have until now been unsuccessful – until now.

#### Saving Mavisbank

Mavisbank’s beauty and parlous condition has been championed far and wide for five decades. Recognised by architectural experts as a building ‘of European significance’, it also won tens of thousands of public votes and reached the finals of the 2003 BBC2 TV series ‘Restoration’ presented by Griff Rhys Jones.

The Landmark Trust is a historic buildings charity that rescues buildings at risk and generates the income to maintain them through self-catering holidays. It has been working with Midlothian Council, Historic Environment Scotland, the Mavisbank Trust and others to identify a viable solution to Mavisbank’s woes for almost a decade and made the application to the National Heritage Memorial Fund in January 2024 believing the house met the criteria of being of ‘outstanding importance to the national heritage’.

#### Next steps

Thanks to the National Heritage Memorial Fund’s extraordinary support, the Landmark Trust and Midlothian Council will pursue the Compulsory Purchase of Mavisbank, before Landmark embarks on the complete preservation of the standing remains. A second phase is planned to involve the restoration of the house with extensive opportunities for people to learn traditional skills and follow the work in progress. The end use is expected to be a mixture of accommodation for short residential stays and public access, including regular free open days.

#### **Dr Anna Keay OBE, Director of the Landmark Trust says:**

‘This is a once-in-a-lifetime moment. Mavisbank has hung by little more than a thread for so long, with demolition seriously contemplated on more than one occasion. The Landmark Trust is absolutely thrilled that through this grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, and the support and expertise of many others, we can start the process of saving it.’

#### **Anna Eavis, Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund panel adds:**

“Mavisbank House is a building of outstanding importance to Scottish and UK national heritage and the National Heritage Memorial Fund is delighted to make this award to save it from being lost forever. This funding will enable the Landmark Trust to acquire Mavisbank House and safeguard the historic fabric of the Category A building, laying the foundations for a sustainable and brighter future.”



Today's National Heritage Memorial Fund grant of £5.3m is the major enabler in a funding package which also includes £1.338m raised to date from various other sources, including the Landmark Trust's own funds. Landmark still seek to fundraise a further £1.162m – the last 15% - to complete the project.

To donate or to find out more, including to read a detailed history of Mavisbank House, visit Landmark's website:

<https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/support-us/projects-and-appeals/saving-mavisbank-house/>

## NOTES

### 1. About the Landmark Trust

The Landmark Trust is a building conservation charity. Founded in 1965, Landmark rescues at-risk historic buildings and restores them into self-catering holiday accommodation welcoming everyone. Today 200 'Landmarks' are located across Britain, on the island of Lundy and in the Channel Islands plus Italy. The lettings income from holidays pays for the maintenance of each building, so safeguarding each site forevermore. The charity relies on fundraising to rescue further buildings.

[www.landmarktrust.org.uk](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk)

### About the National Heritage Memorial Fund

The National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) was set up in 1980 to save the most outstanding parts of our national heritage, in memory of those who have given their lives for the UK. NHMF receives annual grant-in-aid of £5 million from the UK government to help save some of our most-loved treasures such as paintings, natural heritage, maritime and industrial vessels, and historic houses, from being lost forever. Any funds remaining from NHMF's annual allocation at the end of the financial year remain available to NHMF to award grants to exceptional heritage treasures such as the Portrait of Mai (Omai), The Artist Rooms, Titian's Diana and Acteon, the Honresfield Library, Tyntesfield Estate and Wentworth Woodhouse.

[www.nhmf.org.uk](http://www.nhmf.org.uk)

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2. The new 2024 edition of *The Buildings of Scotland: Lothian* in Yale University Press's Pevsner Architectural Guides series states 'the Landmark Trust are right to say that this may be 'the most important building at risk case in the country.''

3. For media enquires please contact Amy Taylor at Landmark on [ataylor@landmarktrust.org.uk](mailto:ataylor@landmarktrust.org.uk)