



**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND**

**MINUTE OF HES BOARD MEETING HELD ON 20 JULY 2021**

**VIA TEAMS CONFERENCE CALL**

**Present:**

Jane Ryder, Chair  
Ian Brennan  
Janet Brennan  
Andrew Davis  
Emma Herd  
Terry Levinthal  
Fiona McLean  
Paul Stollard  
Jane Williamson

**In attendance:**

Alex Paterson, Chief Executive  
Stephen Duncan, Director of Commercial and Tourism  
Gary Love, Director of Corporate Services  
Elly McCrone, Director of Heritage  
David Mitchell, Director of Conservation  
Donella Steel, Director of Finance  
Alison Turnbull, Director of Development and Partnership  
Paul Kelly, Director of Audit and Assurance, Azets  
Jules Davidson-Welch, Board Secretariat

**Introduction and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted from Ian Robertson and Lindsey Ross.

**Minute of 17 May Board Meeting**

2. The Board approved the Minute of the June Board meeting.

**Chair's Update**

3. The Chair gave her update, covering a number of items including:
  - Since the last Board meeting, the National Lottery Heritage Fund have confirmed that the HES/Landmark Trust-led application for funding to transform Mavisbank has been unsuccessful. The Chair congratulated the Cairngorms National Park Authority on their successful bid. While this is disappointing news, HES will look to consider

next steps for Mavisbank, and ensure that the appropriate lessons from the unsuccessful bid are learned.

- The High-Level Inspection Liaison Group had met as agreed and progress was reported later in the meeting.
- Following discussion at the last meeting and subsequent feedback provided, the draft advice to Ministers on Knockando Woolmill has been revised and will be submitted in due course.

**The main business items of the meeting were proceeded by a strategy discussion session of the Board, Senior Management Team, and members of the Scottish Government Policy team.**

### **Orkney Gateway Project Update**

4. The Chief Executive introduced the item, reminding the Board of previous briefings, namely in October 2018, when they were presented with a feasibility report outlining a number of options in and around the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, and subsequently in 2019 noting the signing of an MOU between HES, Orkney Islands Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to progress the Gateway Programme. Following confirmation in principle earlier this year of Scottish and UK Government funding under the Islands Deal, an Outline Business Case is currently being prepared by external consultants, due for completion in October. A public consultation is due to be held on the possible options commencing late August, particularly around locations for the proposed orientation centre.
5. In discussion:
  - It was noted that securing Islands Deal funding was a significant step in helping deliver the Gateway Project and in helping to address many shared challenges on Orkney.
  - The Board noted the current programme governance arrangements and that appropriate provisions will be put in place for individual projects in due course.
  - While the development of Skara Brae visitor centre is out with the scope of the Islands Deal funding package, HES will consider this separately. As with other aspects of the Gateway Project, the requirements will need to be revisited in light of COVID impacts on tourism.
  - The Board noted the potentially modest level of match-funding required from HES over a number of years under this project relative to the significant anticipated benefits, though observing that if projects are delayed into the latter part of the Islands Deal, the costs would need to be reconfirmed..
  - The Director of Commercial and Tourism was asked to ensure that appropriate equalities assessments are being carried out as part of the business case preparation.
  - The Memorandum of Understanding between HES and the principal partners of the project will be circulated to the Board for information.
  - It was agreed that as the consultation would primarily focus on location options, it was not necessary for the Board to formally approve this before issue. However the Outline Business Case is to be considered by the Board.

**ACTION:** Chief Executive/Director of  
Commercial and Tourism

## Update on High Level Inspection Programme

6. The Director of Conservation provided an update on the ongoing inspection programme. Work is progressing as previously outlined, with site inspections of sample areas starting in late July and concluding in mid-September. Training of staff involved in inspections is under way, and work is progressing to develop suitable guidance for owners of historic assets. Discussions between the Head of Estates and members of the liaison group are taking place to organise an appropriate modified peer review panel for the programme. The Chief Executive has met with the Health and Safety Executive regional director to ensure engagement at the highest levels.
7. The Board discussed the update, including:
  - Members noted the importance of careful consideration of how this work ties into the longer-term strategy for PICs.
  - Noting the anticipated challenging decisions that will be required after the completion of inspections in phase one, reflection is required on how and by whom these should be made. The Board also noted that decision-making for individual sites may be required prior to the conclusion of all inspections.
  - The Chief Executive and Director of Conservation will consider further and discuss with the Liaison Group at their next meeting.
  - The establishment of a Peer Review Group is in hand, with the first meeting to take place in August.
8. The Chair thanked the Director of Conservation for the update, commending the progress made.

*Paul Kelly of Azets joined the meeting*

## Mavisbank Reflections

9. The Chief Executive summarised reflections following the announcement by NLHF that the Mavisbank project had not been granted funding under the Heritage Horizons programme. A separate “Lessons Learned” exercise is underway by Azets, which will consider the management of the project application.
10. Follow up discussion with NLFH indicated that the Mavisbank application was of a high standard, but that other applications may have been preferred due to their strong emphasis on landscape and biodiversity impacts, and more formalised partnerships already in place.

Both HES and Landmark Trust have posted a statement on our websites noting the outcome of the funding application, and to date media interest and comment have been limited. HES has indicated that we will reflect on the decision, and without committing to any particular course of action, remain open to discussion on how the future of the site may now be taken forward. Members agreed that there should be no precipitate action.

11. Paul Kelly, Director of Audit and Assurance at Azets, briefed the Board on the approach for the lessons-learned report, and the main themes. The completed report will be submitted to the next ARAC meeting on 28 July for consideration ahead of the August Board meeting.

## **Forward Look and Action Tracker**

12. Board Members considered the Action Tracker and noted updates on outstanding entries, in light of the foregoing discussions including:

- The Chief Executive updated the Board on the status of the potential grant application for Paisley museum. It was noted that work had started on this Project, and HES are in ongoing discussions with Renfrewshire Council regarding potential grant support.
- It was noted that the consultation on the grants refresh would go live on 26 July.
- An update on Dallas Dhu will be considered by the HESe Board
- The Chief Executive confirmed that some actions in the current Operating Plan have been deprioritised in light of current pressing considerations, particularly the High-Level inspections while the timescale for others have been adjusted.

13. Turning to the forward look, members noted significant levels of business due to be considered over the coming months and reprioritisation of Board agendas in light of foregoing discussion. Options will be prepared for an in-person meeting in August, and a one-day visit for September, to incorporate a meeting.

**There followed a closed session of the Board and Chief Executive**