



Speaking for Scotland's Buildings

12 December 2023

Caroline Stanford
The Landmark Trust
Shottesbrooke
Maidenhead
Berkshire SL6 3SW



AHSS
THE ARCHITECTURAL
HERITAGE SOCIETY
OF SCOTLAND

Dear Caroline,

Mavisbank

The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland would like to express its whole-hearted support for the Landmark Trust's ambitious project to save Mavisbank.

The society has long been concerned about the plight of William Adam's Palladian country villa, a work of European significance that merits six pages in the new Lothian volume of the Buildings of Scotland Pevsner guides, which will be published next month. For half a century, it has been a precarious ruin, rightly regarded as Scotland's most important building at risk. Back in 1975, when the Scottish Georgian Society (as the AHSS then was) initiated a survey of the shell and its superb stone carving, the chairman Colin McWilliam described it as 'possibly the finest, certainly the most touching representative of the genius of early Georgian Scotland'. He went on to express widespread opinion that 'it would be shameful to write it off as a hopeless case, or indeed to leave any possibility of its survival unexplored'.

Nearly 50 years later, that sentiment remains unchanged. Blighted by unsympathetic use, fire and mining subsidence, steadily being reclaimed by Nature, Mavisbank has been a *cause celebre* on the Buildings at Risk Register since it was set up in 1990 and is undisputedly the most important house to feature in SAVE's 1990 book *Scotland's Endangered Houses*. As various unsatisfactory proposals have come and gone, the ruin's ongoing deterioration has continued to dismay anybody who cares about Scotland's heritage.

A measure of public interest in Mavisbank is reflected in the fact that, on 12 February 2024, AHSS members will gather to hear a lecture by William Kay entitled 'Phoenix Rising? A Reconstruction of Mavisbank with a View to Restoration'. He will show how forensic archival research and analysis has enabled him to create a full reconstruction of the architecture, interiors, collections and designed landscape as they were during Sir John Clerk's tenure in 1723–1755.

Given all the research and knowledge of this building and the Landmark Trust's impressive track record and expertise, the AHSS feels optimistic that there is at least a real prospect of seeing this internationally important place rescued from oblivion, its structure consolidated, its fabric re-instated and its future secured with a sympathetic new use. Your organisation is one of the few charitable bodies in a position to tackle a project of this scale and we trust that the National Heritage Memorial Fund will support Phase 1 of the plans so that it will be possible to pursue a full restoration.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Miers

Mary Miers,
President of the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland

AHSS National Office | 15 Rutland Square, Edinburgh EH1 2BE
0131 557 0019 | nationaloffice@ahss.org.uk | www.ahss.org.uk

The Architectural Heritage Society (AHSS) is a registered charity: SC007554REG. The Society is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee: SC356726
President: Mary Miers MA Hon FRIAS.