

Minutes of 28 February 2024 Caerlaverock Community Association meeting

Present: David Gilbert (DG, Chair), Ian Brown (Committee Member), Fred Trigg (Committee Member), Helen Clark (Committee Member), Ronnie Clark (Committee Member), Rona Carson (Committee Member), Chris Woodness (Nith Ward Officer, D&G Council), Keith Walters (DG Nith Councillor), Councillor John Campbell, Anna Austin (Estate Manager, Caerlaverock Estate), Mrs Scriven (Head Teacher, Caerlaverock School), Rosie Thorp (Historic Environment Scotland) and 16 Caerlaverock residents.

Apologies: Chris Jackson, Douglas Anderson, PC Elliott (Police Scotland), Dave Pickett (WWT), Peter Bryden and Laurie Irving (Nith Inshore Rescue), Claire Clarke.

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

2. Financial Position

Balance (including allotments) on 23 November 2023 £21,556.00

Balance (including allotments) on 23 February 2024 £23,591.97

Detail

Non-allotment balance 23 Nov 2023: £19,886.48

Non-allotment income (all from Motorhomes) £2,376.30

Non-allotment expenditure £360.33: Castle Corner septic tank emptying £260, seat bench replacement (Big Rock) £30, weather app for website £28.33, Hall hire last meeting £12, Xmas flowers for residents £30.

Non-allotment balance 23 Feb 2024: £21,902.45

Allotments balance 23 Nov 2023 £1,669.52

Allotments income (cook books) £20

Allotments Expenditure nil

Allotments balance 27 August £1,689.52

We are in a healthy position financially.

3. General Reports

Community Police

A travelling gang of shoplifters from London were arrested. Cannabis cultivation was discovered in Eaglesfield (2 males arrested) and Dumfries (enquiries ongoing). Trying to get on top of burgeoning fraud incidents: just stop and think before you divulge any sensitive information. The Police are doing more on social media so keep an eye on Facebook "Police Scotland Dumfries & Galloway". Police are seeking intelligence on drunk drivers and drug dealers (cannabis cultivation). Please also pass on any further info re burglaries. PC Elliott would like to attend any events in our area such as coffee mornings.

D&G Council

Cllr John Campbell: 3 points from the last meeting: Hutton Hall oil spillage where oil was running down the road: he has been in touch with the relevant authority who will arrange for the oil tank to be secured. School buses not running: this was caused by a driver ringing in sick at the start of his shift. There were no spare drivers at such short notice. Kelly Green said this

is an ongoing issue. Cllr Campbell will follow it up. Bankend bus shelter: has to go through a scoring matrix in order to be prioritised. DG commented that the local community built the present shelter, as was the case with the one at Kelton, so it may come back to us funding a replacement. But we will keep asking DGC.

Closing date for applications for D&G Coastal Benefit Fund money is midday on 8 March. Two funding streams are available for small community-led projects for 3rd sector organisations: small projects up to £10k, large projects up to £80k. Chris Woodness said advice is available on the application process, scoring process etc. The money can be awarded for diverse projects such as improvements and repairs to toilets as well as projects enhancing tourism.

Cllr John Campbell spoke about potholes. DG commented that the whole road surface in the centre of Glencaple has deteriorated totally. The top surface is away and poses a danger to both traffic and pedestrians (we have no footpaths), added to which there are no white lines. The situation is a disgrace and Cllr Campbell agreed, especially as the road is a National Cycle Route. It's the same all over the region and DGC are trying to prioritise. He will keep pushing. Anna commented that the road near the Canine Rescue Centre is all but impassable now with treacherous potholes. It's a particular risk to cyclists who don't know the area.

DG brought up the subject of roads being closed recently, with no prior warning and no diversions posted, to allow DGC to remove dangerous trees. Stonehouse Loaning had to be used for two-way traffic. Is this not what the contingency scheme is for? Cllr Campbell to follow it up. Cllr Keith Walters said no-one in the Council had been able to explain to him the lack of communication.

Last year's UCI cycling event: the full report was published at the beginning of February. The event brought in £1.8m to the region.

Rona Carson commented on cars, possibly carers' cars visiting nearby homes, parked too close to the Kingholm Quay mini roundabout. DG will pass it on to PC Elliott.

Chris Woodness gave advance notice of a forthcoming engagement programme regarding the next Local Development Plan, LDP3. Staff from Planning will be touring the region to canvass opinions. A key area they will be looking at is tourism impact and Chris suggested we may wish to have our say on this.

DG gave statistics taken from the motorhome donations envelopes at Castle Corner and the Quay End. Since 16 May 2021, when we first started using the envelopes, just under 952 vans have overnighted at the Quay End and 984 at Castle Corner making a total of nearly 2,000 vans in 3 yrs. 413 patronised the Nith Hotel, 424 The Boathouse café, 799 Caerlaverock Castle, 334 WWT and 73 Vintage on the Nith. Assuming two people per van, that's 4,000 people visiting and spending money here. We are trying to manage it and encourage better behaviour.

NatureScot

Wildfowling has ended for the year. It has been a quiet year. Still looking into putting a structure at Castle Corner but seeking funding. Things are going well on the reserve and comments from motorhomes have been positive.

WWT

The reserve was battered by the winter storms but the only damage was a few small trees blown down and slight damage to buildings. No recorded deaths from bird flu; indeed,

Barnacle Goose counts suggest the species is bouncing back and next year may surpass its pre bird flu total. A walk up Ward Law (joint event with NatureScot) is planned at Easter to mark the end of the goose season.

Historic Environment Scotland

- Caerlaverock Castle has had 20,725 visitors since the castle reopened in July 2023.
- Numerous repairs are underway (roads, cottages & visitor centre, clearing the moat, repairs to castle chimneys).
- Reminder that you only pay to enter the castle; entry to the grounds is free. The car park is for visitors to the castle itself rather than visitors to the grounds.
- HES are one of the main sponsors of a 6-month programme of events celebrating the Robert the Bruce D&G 750th anniversary.
- A Creative Caerlaverock project meeting was held on 17 February. HES will continue to be involved but delivery is now with the Stove Network.
- Over the winter, a “Medieval Bootcamp” was delivered with the Summerhill Youth Programme.
- Staff members are keen for more public engagement. A staff member delivered a talk on “The History of Caerlaverock and the Maxwells, and other wider history” to Lochmaben Probus Club.
- HES are expecting one or two vacancies at the castle in the coming weeks.

Caerlaverock Estate [39.55]

Ditching and draining work is underway from Chapelhill down into the village, with further works planned for Chapelhill farm road where existing drainage cannot cope with the amounts of water we have had recently; it flows down the road instead of into the ditches. Any other areas needing improvement please contact Anna.

Tree surveys are being carried out and the Estate now have a long list of trees by roads, properties, footpaths and children’s playing areas that are either dead or needing limbs removed. The job is out to tender with a view to getting the work done before the breeding season. Unfortunately, traffic management will be needed along the main road; the Estate will let everyone know when they have the dates. If you know of a tree issue, please tell the Estate.

Fly-tipping in the form of grass clippings being deposited beside the Shore road: the Estate are trying to dissuade people from doing this. Also please do not tip garden waste over your garden boundary into an adjacent field.

Ronnie Clark asked about the new ponds created in the fields. Anna said these are a mixture of general wildlife ponds and natterjack-specific ponds, created on wet, marshy land - inferior agricultural land - with the future in mind when the merse will come further inland. David Smith commented that it is a fine line between deciding what is good agricultural land and what isn’t. Anna reassured him that she has no plans to rewild the whole Estate, indeed it is not something she would be in favour of.

Anna mentioned the Estate’s herd of Belties and four Highland Cows which will be arriving soon. The latter will be located near the castle for tourists to enjoy.

DG and Anna continue to work together on new information boards for the Quay End and Castle Corner. Looking for a designer to help them: suggestions to Anna, please. Website

wording about motorhomes will also be changed to include QR codes and what3words location descriptions. Hope to have all this done by Easter.

Caerlaverock School

Mrs Scriven commented how much they are looking forward to the Robert the Bruce celebrations. Lady Clare Kerr visited at Christmas. PC Elliot visited for Safer Internet Day in February.

Spent full day at North West Community Campus when pupils took part in the Scots poetry competition.

A team from the school are attending a schools gymnastics competition this Sunday.

Today they met the Quality Improvement Officer to review joint working with Brownhall School. Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport continues.

Pupils took part in a day of Scottish country dancing at a St Joseph's College.

The school have brought in volunteers to teach new sports.

Regarding the school roll, 7 will be leaving at the end of the year. 3 have enrolled.

This term the school is learning about the Egyptians. The whole school + Brownhall will be visiting the National Museum of Scotland.

Barbour hall

Alice Wilson reported that the new fire doors are in place. Some windows are already in, with more to come. New kitchen will be installed by end of April. Open event planned soon for local residents to say what improvements they would like to see next and what would make them use the hall. The Barbour Hall committee are working on a funding bid from the Coastal Benefit Fund to redo the roof, reinsert sky lights, add insulation & render on the outside of the building and add disabled access ramps. If we get the money, all this will be done by end March 2025. In May there will be a fundraising ladies' night. It is hoped to start a women's dance exercise class in March.

Allotments

A quiet time of year, nothing to report.

Nith Inshore Rescue

- The new Ineos Grenadier vehicle was officially handed over at a public launch event – during which they crew received a call-out so the assembled delegates were able to see the Grenadier in action. It has been used on 6 call-outs so far including getting the crew to the Whitesands in time to rescue a person in significant danger.
- The St John, our big boat, has undergone a major refurbishment that should make it future-proof for the next 10 years.
- Crew training schedule has been busy including Water Rescue, Advanced Powerboat and Advanced First Aid amongst other things. HES are one of the main sponsors of a 6-month programme of events celebrating the Robert the Bruce D&G 750th anniversary.
- The crew are looking for a new launch vehicle so if anyone knows of a suitable vehicle, for example a sturdy tractor, please get in touch (light tractors cannot cope with the weight of boat + trailer on the slipway).
- The 2024 Open Day is scheduled for Saturday 25 May.

Caerlaverock Kirk – no report

Hutton Hall

A meeting was held on 9 Dec to discuss the future of the hall. Outcome: people still want to have a hall. On 30 Jan a meeting was held to plan the next move. Lots of ideas to keep it open including a games afternoon, bingo night, continuing with the existing autumn fair and private hires. They don't want to apply for funding – it's a difficult process and there's not always a good outcome, added to which they need money now. The hall does not have charitable status.

Hutton Hall have put a proposal to CCA, which DG read out. The background: Hutton Hall committee are responsible for the internal part of the hall, DGC for services and the external part. If the hall ceases being used for public use it will have to close. Last year's theft of £1,000-worth of oil put a massive strain on funds and this is the reason the Hall is in dire financial straits now. It costs £1,700-£1,800 per year to run the Hall; income, if all goes well, is around £1,200 per year. They desperately need £800 to maintain the hall in community use and get them through the next 12 months. DG's opinion was that the community should try to keep it open and he proposed that we give Hutton Hall £800 of CCA money. Alice said she was 100% behind the proposal, saying there is a place for 2 halls, each with its own unique character. The proposal was carried unanimously.

AOB

Community Website: Fred Trigg, our new webmaster, said that since the donations page was revamped with QR codes the number of PayPal donations has gone up dramatically. The website had many more hits in January (15,025) than in December (467 fewer). A lot are from the Greater London area, thought to be potential visitors. The vast majority of people visiting the website are tourists. Fred has arranged for the Barbour Hall and WWT to input events into the website's calendar themselves. Fred hopes to get Hutton Hall on there, too, if there's information suitable for tourists, likewise the castle, always bearing in mind the target tourist audience. Finally, Fred issued a plea for news. Anything you think would interest others, please let Fred know. Mrs Scriven asked if school events could be shared on the CCA site and Fred agreed. Kelly commented that it'd be good for people moving into the new houses. Please send news items to info@caerlaverock.org.uk.

Grass-cutting and Community Projects: DG is hopeful that Dick will continue cutting the grass.

Benches: DG met George Moffat (in charge of Community Service) from DGC re what we could get done at cost in the way of benches. George may provide kindlers for the whole community for free next year (previously only elderly and disadvantaged). DG also asked if they could do any work towards providing us with a new beacon. DG is also in private conversation with a family regarding a new bench at the Quay End to replace the old concrete one that was removed last year.

Speeding, limits and roads: DG said more stone is needed at the Quay End to fill the holes, probably 5-6 bags. DG will try to arrange it in the next week or so.

Terry Harrop again mentioned the problem of speeding through Glencaple and repeated his request for lights that give a smiling face if driver within limit, sad face if not. DG asked the Councillors to find out the cost for three of these. Cllr Campbell thought the cost was about £9,000 each, and that was about five years ago. DG suggested we put a speed reminder on the community website in the meantime.

Hutton Trust: young local apprentices are not applying for grants to help fund tools. They must be in this area so if anyone knows of 16/17-year-old apprentices please encourage them to apply (contact DG) as the money is there to be spent.

Other: Terry Harrop repeated his concerns re the disgusting amount of dog faeces around the village.