

Minutes of 28 August 2024 Caerlaverock Community Association meeting

Present: David Gilbert (Chair), Chris Jackson (Treasurer), Fred Trigg (Committee Member), Helen Clark (Committee Member), Ronnie Clark (Committee Member), Rona Carson (Committee Member), Chris Woodness (DGC Ward Officer), Cllr Malcolm Johnstone (DG Council), Cllr Keith Walters (DG Council), Cllr David Slater (DG Council), Cllr John Campbell (DG Council), Anna Austin (Caerlaverock Estate Manager), Rosie Thorp (Historic Environment Scotland), Karen Scriven (Head Teacher, Caerlaverock Primary School), Fiona Thomson (Principal Teacher, Caerlaverock Primary School), Alice Wilson (Barbour Hall) and 16 Caerlaverock residents.

Apologies: David Pickett (WWT), Ian Brown (Committee Member)

1. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted. Minutes are on website.

2. Financial Position

Total balance (including allotments) on 25 May 2024 **£26,001.03**

Total balance (including allotments) on 23 August 2024 **£29,737.79**

Non-allotment details

Non-allotment balance 25 May 2024: **£24,276.51**

Non-allotment income (all from Motorhomes) £5,226.83

Non-allotment expenditure £1,571.43 comprising 5 Castle Corner septic tank emptyings @ £130 = £650, Caerlaverock kids' football equipment £416.44, mower repair and service £271.80, purchase of motorhome donation envelopes £160.11, Mower fuel £55.08, Hire of Barbour Hall for last CCA meeting £18

Non-allotment balance 23 August 2024 **£27,931.91**

Allotment details

Allotments balance 23 February 2024 **£1,724.52**

Allotments income (Sunday produce stalls) £81.48

Allotments expenditure £0.12 (rent to Firth Farms)

Allotments balance 23 August 2024 **£1,805.88.**

3. General Reports

Community Police

No report received. Our community officer is on leave and no-one was available to stand in.

D&G Council (DGC)

Potholes have been repaired, with varying reports on whether they have all been done (Shirley Little later referred to a huge one still awaiting attention up the Kelsick). DGC have just issued a query about making the 20mph speed limits permanent. CCA were not notified. The planning application for changes to the Glencaple septic tank area has been

withdrawn, in part because some of the land is owned by Caerlaverock Estate who had not been notified making the application invalid.

Following the last CCA meeting, a request was put in by our Councillors for updated information about drivers' speeds through Kelton. The Council department have done a risk assessment and decided it is would be too dangerous to download the information. Councillors will pursue it. They are still relying on speeding information from 2018.

Proposed reduction of the school week from 5 to 4½ days. Everyone is encouraged to join in the consultation. Find it on the DGC website.

Chris Woodness reported a change of representation within community policing: the new incumbent is Community Sergeant Callum Dalgleish-Little.

DGC are interested in our two aires, Castle Corner and the Quay End, with a view to encouraging similar schemes across the region. At the request of DGC, DG met head of tourism and explained how we manage tourism at the Quay End and Castle Corner for the benefit of the community by a) trying to influence visitor behaviour and b) inviting donations rather than charging. DG passed on the statistics for numbers of motorhomes and places they visited.

The question was raised again about the bins at Castle Corner constantly overflowing. They do not appear to be emptied weekly, as the Council promised (by the normal fortnightly black bin collection and by the Community Services team in the weeks in between). When DG chases, the bins do get emptied. Having two double bins would remedy the situation and if it were just waste from cars there would be no problem. However, because this is where the motorhomes leave their waste it counts as a commercial operation. DGC want us to pay for the bins and for the collections. DGC waive their charges for charities and CCA, though not a charity, is a not-for-profit organisation. However, because the waste is from Castle Corner campsite it counts as commercial waste. This does not seem to fit with DGC wishing to encourage tourism in the area. Discussions are continuing.

NatureScot

No report received.

WWT

Note from David Pickett: lot of machinery on site creating more wildlife habitat before the geese and swans arrive. We are heading for our busy period, in particular the Wild Goose Festival when we will have events almost daily 19-27 October.

Historic Environment Scotland

Rosie Thorp reported 24,000 visitors since April. Various repairs are taking place to the castle, visitor centre and cottage. 3,400 visitors turned up for the jousting at the end of July, 31% more than last year. We are into the next phase of Creative Caerlaverock. A Queer Caerlaverock event (part of Dumfries Pride 2024) takes place 14 September, with a talk at the Barbour Hall and a tour of the castle. Finally, if anyone has a community engagement event that could involve the castle, please get in touch.

Caerlaverock Estate

Anna Austin: getting the planning application removed was a good example of the Estate and the community working together. Forthcoming works include more pond creation and more wildlife corridors (fencing in Nov/Dec, planting in the New Year), particularly around Lantonside and Bowhouse. Wild Goose Festival 18-27 October includes ticketed events featuring an early morning walk followed by breakfast at The Boathouse. Scouts are camping at Bowhouse this week; today Anna had them looking at environmental stuff at the new ponds. Anna would like to do more to get schools and young people onto the Estate to look at what we are doing. We featured on Channel 4's "Amazing Spaces". Expect news of more tv coverage soon. Sam Armstrong is working 5 afternoons a week path-clearing. Trees affected by Ash Dieback will be taken down in the next month or so; these are in the area where the new wildlife corridors will be located. Holiday lets went well this summer. Lantonside has a commercial-grade laundry. Anyone with a holiday let needing help with laundry please let the Estate know.

Caerlaverock School

Karen Scriven: the school has two classes, 13 children in Primary 4-7 and 11 in Primary 1-3, total 24. 7 children have moved on and 3 came in, emphasising the need to continue raising the profile of what this small school has to offer. Parents of pre-school children in the community have been coming in for an informal chat to gauge the vibe of the school. Possibility of an Open Day for the local community. Childcare may be causing some parents to choose schools in town instead of their local school. Lots of publicity in the paper last year. It's important that the school be seen to be working with the community (eg allotments last year) and building relationships eg with Caerlaverock Estate and Historic Scotland. There's a school trip to WWT on 18 September. The ground tidy-up by families during the holidays was a great success, parents taking pride in the school and appreciating what we have to offer, so many thanks to all involved. Karen thanked CCA for their donation which allowed them to buy football kits and equipment. DG encouraged the school to put parent newsletters on the community website, where they should also celebrate any small successes that the children have. Kelly, as a parent, agreed that it's important to inform parents about the range of out-of-school activities the children of this small school still get involved in. Facebook is a good way to do this.

Barbour Hall

Alice Wilson reported that we still have not heard whether we are getting the Community Ownership Fund money (we may not hear till after the budget in October). It is therefore looking less and less likely that we will get the £50k we were awarded from the Coastal Benefit Fund (this money must be used by end March and the Community Ownership Fund money must be in place before we can get it). So we are starting our own fundraising. Forthcoming events (some fundraising, some not): for children, Let's Get Sporty 4-5.30 Friday evenings; 1 September trad music sessions recommence; 11 September at 1830 Barbour Hall AGM; 16 October Soup Socials resume; October (date to be decided) bingo night (4 planned per year - thanks to the Nith hotel whose equipment and caller we will be borrowing); November (poss 15th) Race Night (anyone able to offer sponsorship please speak to Alice or any of the trustees); 7 December Christmas Fair.

Allotments

Rob Wells reported that the wet and windy weather has made it a difficult year. Raised beds look like the answer (climate change may mean we have to plan for this weather in future). Nevertheless, plots have been remarkably productive and the produce stall is now operating on Sundays from 12 noon outside the Barbour Hall, donations going towards maintaining the allotment site.

Nith Inshore Rescue

No report received.

Caerlaverock Kirk

Merger planned but no further news. Future unknown.

Hutton Hall

Kelly Green: AGM took place on 12 August and resulted in new committee members. Kelly is standing down next year. Because of the financial situation it was decided to concentrate on renting the hall out rather than holding events and this has proved very successful. The next games afternoon is on 29 September.

DG read out a letter of thanks from Claire for the donation Hutton Hall received from CCA.

DG drew attention to the overgrown former bowling green beside Hutton Hall. It is an enclosed area with fencing but is not used. If the area were cleared it could be a valuable community space like Powfoot's former bowling green as you enter the village. Kelly Green agreed and commented that the Powfoot area is a lovely community space. The meeting agreed this is a good idea and the area should be brought back into community use.

Junior Football

Kyle Johnstone: as football is no longer taught in the school, a group of parents have started junior football sessions for the children. CCA kindly donated money for kit and equipment (goals, balls, nets). The parents are cutting the playing field regularly to enable football to be played (DGC only cut the grass twice a year). When the Euros were on, a sweepstake was held to raise money for football shirts. However, sponsorship was then secured from local electrician Colin Johnstone (Kyle's father) and he bought the shirts. It is hoped the sweepstake money will instead be used to fund winter football (hall hire, softer footballs, indoor goals etc). Kelly commented that the kids playing football include other children in the community, not just those who attend Caerlaverock School.

Kyle mentioned the actions of the school clean-up team who cut the grass, weeded the grounds and cleared the gutters to improve the image of the school before classes resumed this month. Another clean-up is planned for the October holidays.

Any Other Business

Galloway National Park

Tom Brown raised three items, the third relating to the National Park.

Firstly, the footpath from the centre of Glencaple to the new houses has not yet been built. Also, during house-building the road outside Shore Park was dug up and has not been reinstated, likewise the water pipe there.

Secondly, Tom would like the hedge belonging to the new houses, between the houses and the road, to be cut.

Thirdly, Tom is a member of the “No” campaign and opposes Galloway as the site of Scotland’s third National Park on the grounds of more traffic through our area. He urged everyone to make their feelings known, either online or by writing to the Environment Secretary. Councillors present, and DG, urged everyone to have their say, whether you’re for or against. We do not yet know what form any National Park would take, and NatureScot have been appointed by Ministers as the “Reporter” on the proposal. They begin their consultation in November. Tom asked DG to request that CCA be consulted.

Community website

Fred Trigg reported only 1,800 visits to the website last month, down from 3,500 the previous month; no idea why. 1,100 of 1,800 visits were to the motorhomes page, with most of the others accommodation-related. If anyone knows of holiday-type accommodation, please tell Fred and we can add it. The problem with adding events to the website has been fixed.

Grass Cutting and Community Projects

DG expressed the community’s thanks to Dick McKune for grass cutting around the Quay End. Doug Anderson is still looking for a volunteer to help empty the dog-waste bins.

Thanks were expressed to the Community Payback team for their work on new benches and for refurbishing the anchor outside The Boathouse. Kindlers may be available for everyone this winter (DG to chase). There are other jobs in the pipeline for the Community Payback team, possibly including the beacon.

Community Calendar

DG urged anyone organising an event to get it on the online calendar to avoid clashes.

Speeding, limits and roads

Roads covered above under “D&G Council”. Various speakers pointed out that the 20mph speed limit through the villages is widely ignored, with some drivers doing over 30mph including large agricultural vehicles and a few locals. There is no funding available for speed signs (Kelly pointed out that the Bankend one needs frequent charging). DG will raise the subject again with the Community Police. Lack of white lines is also an issue (Councillors to raise it with Highways), as is the place where a silage trailer went off the road between Bankend and Shearington. A crane was needed to lift the vehicle and there is now a drop of at least 6’ off the road edge into the ditch. Council aware - but no action, not even tape round it. Parking at the Kingholm road end: DG has already raised it with the Police and will again do so again.

Hutton Trust

Funds still available for young apprentices to buy tools.

In Memory

People sometimes do not get to hear sad news about the passing of members of our community. Although not something CCA could take on, bereaved families would be very welcome to place announcements on the website if they wish. Speak to Fred. DG has identified an area of the Caerlaverock graveyard where memorial plaques can be placed. Cllr Slater to find a point of contact in DGC. The subject of memorial benches was raised and DG repeated that we have generally discouraged benches, not wishing to end up like Brighton sea-front.

Airds Point

Following on from the last CCA meeting, material is still being discharged from road tankers straight into the river because the pipeline from Dupont to Airds Point remains out of action. The responses to DG's FOE requests to SEPA and Scottish Water were entirely unsatisfactory. Scottish Water had nothing new to say. They reiterated there is a procedure to be followed in the case of a failure of the pipeline to Airds Point. They did not say this means tankers driving to Airds Point and discharging straight into the river, whatever the state of the tide, and they did not provide any figures for discharges or water-quality testing as DG requested. SEPA have only just responded. Billy Little has looked at their response. We specifically asked them for the data they hold on water-quality tests from just south of Troqueer sewage farm to south of Airds Point. The astonishing response from SEPA – and from Scottish Water – was that they are unable to provide data on water-quality tests because they do not have any data. So they are discharging effluent straight into the river without monitoring water quality before and after. A disgrace. In light of the imminent upgrade to the Glencaple septic tank, we have no baseline data to monitor any effect this will have. Colin Smyth MSP is keen to take up the issue of lack of water-quality testing.

Remembrance Sunday

DG really needs someone to help organise it this year. Involves liaising with the church, organising the lighting of the beacon and getting someone to lay the wreath. CCA can order, and pay for, a wreath for the school if required.

McMillan Coffee Afternoon

Saturday 28 September 2-4pm at Barbour Hall.

Bankend Noticeboard, Bus Shelter and Mower

Kelly asked if Bankend could have a noticeboard and a new bus shelter. DG agreed to both. The Bankend ride-on mower is broken. Kelly to speak to Douglas Anderson, who will advise on where to take it. CCA will pay.

Date and Place of next meeting

Wednesday 30 November, 1930, Barbour Hall.