

Minutes of 26 Feb 2025 Caerlaverock Community Association meeting

Present: David Gilbert (chair), Chris Jackson (Treasurer), Ian Brown (Committee Member), Rona Carson (Committee Member), Cllr Keith Walters, Chris Woodness (Ward Officer, Nith), Cllr John Campbell, Valerie Bennett (Historic Environment Scotland) and 15 Caerlaverock residents.

Apologies: Suzanne McIntyre (NatureScot), Rob Wells, Sue Greig, Fred Trigg, Anna Austin (Caerlaverock Estate Manager), Peter Bryden (Nith Inshore Rescue chair), Mrs Scriven (Head Teacher, Caerlaverock Primary School), Rosie Thorp (Historic Environment Scotland), Cllr Malcolm Johnstone, Douglas Anderson, Alice Wilson (Barbour Hall).

Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the 27 November 2025 meeting were accepted.

Financial Position

A quiet time of year. Income c. £1,300 (all from motorhomes), expenditure just under £6,000 including the new mower for Bankend; four septic tank emptyings at Castle Corner campsite; various items for the Glencaple defibrillator after it was used in an incident; and improvements to the Castle Corner campsite surface (invoice awaited, discussions regarding the amount are ongoing). Overall, we made a loss this 3-month period but still have a balance of £25,000 (plus another c. £2,200 allotments balance) so are in a very good position to carry out community projects. The accounts will be published on the website.

General Reports

Community Police

PC Dickson reported two incidents in our area: on 3 February concerns were raised about a female walking on Glencaple Road, Dumfries, then on 20 February vandalism of a residential property within the grounds of the Crichton Trust. This week is Cyber Awareness Week, with the Police advising businesses and the public how to keep safe from cyber attacks and scams. David Gilbert added two additional current problems: drug-taking at the NNR bird hide and late-night antisocial behaviour at Castle Corner and the Quay End. We'd appreciate it if the Police could keep an eye on both these. PC Dickson said all such incidents should be reported by calling 101 (may be a long wait) or using the online form. People can also get in touch with David Gilbert and he will pass the message on to the Police.

D&G Council

Chris Woodness reported a busy time, with the focus on identifying funding opportunities for Hutton Hall: where are the funds, and how do we get them? D&G Council set their budget tomorrow for the coming year. All the councillors will continue to press their colleagues in Roads Network to identify – and act on – the areas of concern across Bankend, Caerlaverock, Glencaple and all the way to Kingholm Quay. On that subject, Lesley Grieve commented on the huge pothole at end of their drive. She has photographed it and emailed DGC but is getting nowhere. Martin Grieve said the problem is water running off fields getting caught in the gullies, then backing up and undermining the road. It needs proper investigation. Cllr John Campbell asked them to email him with the reference number and he will take it up. More discussion ensued on this and other issues. The roads are left to deteriorate before repairs are done. DG chipped in: since Cllr Slater videoed the B725 potholes 6 months or more ago and took the evidence to the Council, we have had another winter and the roads are now worse than ever, with the whole of Glencaple now needing resurfaced whereas isolated potholes could have been repaired. DG accepts it's a resources issue but DGC need to learn that not maintaining the infrastructure is false economy. Further comments ensued

from residents about the move of the hospital 7 years ago and the effect this has had on the volume of traffic on Bankend Road.

Speeding, limits, roads

DG moved this item up the agenda as we are already on the subject. Rona Carson has still not received the requested speed data from the Kelton Bank cameras. If DGC do not provide the data within the next four weeks, DG will put in a Freedom of Information request, which will cause them a lot more work than providing the information voluntarily. May Curry drew attention to another huge hole, this time in Wellington St which is getting ever wider and deeper and now cannot be driven over. Residents will be stuck in Wellington St if it gets any worse. Wardlaw Drive also has huge potholes. Negotiating these holes is like a chicane. Cllr Campbell asked May to email him with the report ref no. of the Wellington St hole and he will take it up. May further commented that the amount of traffic on the Glencaple road has risen in recent years, as evidenced by the amount of money donated by motorhomes. As water and mud flood off the fields, water often covers the entire road surface and an ever widening band of mud at the side of the road is causing the road to become narrower and narrower. Tom Brown reported seeing a Road Survey van in Glencaple yesterday surveying a hole, so that's one hole at least surveyed. DG asked Cllr Campbell to find out when the roads around here were last surveyed. Cllr Walters followed up on the query from the last meeting about the footpath from the new houses into Glencaple which has still not been built. He has been told that the planning enforcement staff have been in touch with the developer. The meeting confirmed that there have been no developments on the ground, even though it was a planning condition that the footpath would be built.

NatureScot

Nothing major to report, everything going well.

WWT

No report received.

Historic Environment Scotland

The following report was sent:

Caerlaverock Castle update

Visitor numbers to date, from 1st April 2024 until 23rd February 2025: 37,337

Will move to summer opening hours from the 1st April, so 9:30am-5pm (last entry to shop 4:45pm)

Interior closure update

- Closure of interior of castle, which started on the 24th February. We're hoping to reopen in time for the Easter weekend, but there's a number of factors which could affect this, including the weather, so we can't confirm a reopening date just yet – I'll keep the CCA updated when I have a reopening date
- The works involved include installing scaffolding to allow access for fabric inspection, and repair work to the staircase and northwest tower of the castle. The closure is necessary for visitor and staff safety, and for this work to be carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- This is part of the efforts to progress with castle maintenance and repair works, and is a positive step in the right direction.

Despite the castle itself being closed currently, the castle grounds, playpark, exhibition and visitor centre remain open. Site staff have been developing activities for anyone visiting, including:

- Exhibiting archive photos of the castle during previous renovations in the exhibition room
- (If weather permits) we have cyanotype photo prints customers can engage in and take home.
- Paper crafting, with staff showing people how to make paper swallows and geese

Further details can be found on the HES website <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/news/conservation-works-underway-at-caerlaverock-castle/>

Caerlaverock Estate

One major big item to discuss. In summer, customers often have to be turned away from The Boathouse because all the tables are taken. The Estate are seeking CCA agreement to The Boathouse placing additional picnic tables on the grass area adjoining the café, roping it off just as they did during Covid. The Boathouse would keep the area tidy and will be selling more pre-prepared items for consumption in this area. They would keep the area tidy. Rona and John Carson objected to the area being roped off, complaining that it would not then be available to local people. Many others commented that it's only a small area and The Boathouse are a small business facing hard times. DG commented that we do not own the Quay End so cannot give permission; we can merely say whether we are happy with this or not. We could make our agreement dependent upon The Boathouse allowing locals to sit there. A show of hands demonstrated majority support. DG will speak to Anna and raise the point about any roping off.

Caerlaverock School

Mrs Scriven, the Head Teacher, sent the following report:

- **Staffing:**
 - Teaching – Mrs Thomson / Mrs Caprani & Mrs McCubbin – Probationer Teacher
 - Non-teaching – Mrs Spence / Mrs Bonar / Mrs Jackson / Mr McQueen
 - Current School roll – P1-3 = 10 and P4-7 = 14 – Total = 24
 - Enrolments for next session = 5 in (3 out)
 - School roll for Aug 2025 = 25 – we have the safe number for small schools
- **Community working / partnership:**
 - P1-3 have a planned visit to Caerlaverock Castle on Thursday 13th March.
 - We have had 2 successful visits from The Nith Catchment Trust team and Caerlaverock Estate.
 - The children are learning about ecosystems on the river Nith and learning how to take care of endangered species, like salmon, with a fish tank in school. The children are learning how to take care of the eggs and to watch them hatch and grow. They monitor daily progress by gathering their data on a daily recording sheet.
 - Studying and identifying invertebrates was another enjoyable whole school task that the children really found most interesting.
 - We were also shown by the Caerlaverock Estate and WWT team on how to build a mini pond so that we know what to do if we want to build one in school.
 - Our trees that we potted with Nith Catchment Trust will be planted in Drumlanrig Castle grounds when we visit there in May. We will be able to know where our own tree is planted and go back to watch it grow over the years.

Question from Karen – is the CCA doing anything linked to 'Nithraid'? The reason for asking is because the Kingholm Community Council have shared this information with Brownhall and asked if schools want to be involved in the event. Have the organisers, Mark and Robbie, approached anyone in Glencaple?

DG interrupted his reading of the school's report and said no, we have not been approached. Last year, Nithraid did approach us and asked us to organise events. If anyone wishes to help Nithraid this year, DG said please go ahead. Back to Mrs Scriven's report:

- **Learning and Teaching / School events:**

- Burns Poetry Competition – pupils represented the school exceptionally well at this event.
- D&G Schools' Gymnastic Competition – Sunday 9th March – 5 pupils entered from P1-P6
- P6/7 pupil Residential experience – Monday 24th March – Wednesday 26th March at Lockerbie Manor Adventure for 2.5 days participating in 9 activities.

End of report.

Kelly Green said how important it is that the community supports small, local schools like this. Discussion ensued about Council policy on mothballing schools and whether Caerlaverock is at risk. DG said we must do all we can to encourage local parents to use local schools. Kelly to check with Fred that the school provide him with information to go on the Caerlaverock website so that new members of the community know just what a good school we have.

Barbour Hall

- Things have been unexpectedly good since our last update to the CCA
- We have been awarded a total of £277k from the Community Ownership Fund (COF) (A UK Government fund) and the Coastal Benefit Fund (Scottish Government, which is administered by the council); the COF is the one we had been waiting for and thought our chances had 'died' with the delay
- This allows us to carry out the work to replace the roof, add external insulation, render the entire building and to create compliant ramps
- We have had great support from the council to allow us to 'carry forward' the money they awarded us in 2024 and extend the time we had to complete the work, in recognition of the long delay in the COF funding decision.
- We are now in the process of applying for planning permission and working up tenders through our Quantity Surveyor...he is keeping us right on all the requirements and doing most of the work
- Using other funding we got through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, we have been working on our store area (what was the men's toilets) and started work on the new layout for the disabled toilet
- We secured funding from Robin Rigg to bring the disabled toilet up to a compliant level...and to the standard of our other toilets
- We have enough money from the UKSPF to update the lesser hall toilet too
- The money awarded to us from the last CCA meeting will be used, as discussed, to create the mezzanine floor which will allow more natural light into the hall and allow easier access by the addition of a loft ladder. Any money we have left from that £2k will be our chair fund!
- As you can see, we have been very busy fundraising, have been successful and we will be very busy in the coming months with the work happening.
- We are trying to keep the disruption to a minimum and, where we can, continue to run all events. We will keep everyone updated on our social media platforms
- We anticipate that work on the exterior of the building will be starting mid to late April...sooner if we can manage it ... and be complete by the end of August.

Allotments

Nothing to report. Everything going fine.

Nith Inshore Rescue

This year's Shore Clean-up is planned for Sunday 23 March. More information once Solway Firth Partnership confirm the skip.

Caerlaverock Kirk

No report received.

Hutton Hall

Kelly: discussions have taken place regarding funding and things are looking hopeful. A massive thanks to everyone who responded to the Friends of Hutton Hall appeal, which raised £800. DG has asked the Community Team if bags of kindlers could be made available at Hutton Hall, as they are at the Barbour Hall (suggested donation to the Barbour Hall is £1 per bag, honesty box on the adjoining fence). DG asked Kelly to bear in mind the Community Team if there's any inside work needing done such as decorating.

Junior Football

No report received

Any Other Business

Community Website

The Motorhome page remains the most visited, closely followed by the community What's On page then the Where to Stay page. Please continue to contact Fred with any upcoming events so he can get them on the What's On.

Community Projects

- Bankend mower has been bought.
- Bankend bus shelter is finished.
- Beacon: it is with Gibson's the blacksmiths who will repair it and get it galvanised (the galvaniser will do it free of charge as we are a community). The Gibsons will dig a cubic metre hole and fill it with concrete. The grass will be reinstated. An 8 ft section of steel will be anchored to the top of the concrete, with the beacon on top of that. We are awaiting the price.

Douglas Anderson has sorted the dog-poo bin issue. Volunteers have been found.

Voluntary help will be needed for the following. See Community Projects on the website for details.

- Another bench has been ordered for the Quay End. Help will be needed to install another plinth to which the bench will be bolted.
- Caerlaverock bridges: the three road bridges (Glencaple, Bankend and Quay Hill) need repainted black-and-white. Volunteers?
- Help will be required with mowing the grass verges and Quay End this summer.

Scottish Water and tank improvements

Following Scottish Water's 13 February event at the Barbour Hall to explain their plans for upgrading the Glencaple septic tank sewage facility, DG contacted them with various objections. Scottish Water responded on 23 different points, the main ones being these.

- Rock armour: the proposal is for slabs of granite at the front bordering the river. We objected on the grounds that everything else on the Nith is sandstone, including the historic Glencaple Quay built in 1747. DG spoke to the Scottish Water engineer who agreed that sandstone would be

perfectly acceptable. We have objected therefore on the grounds that sandstone would be in keeping with the rest of the village and is also acceptable on engineering grounds.

- Vent pipe at front near The Boathouse. Scottish Water have agreed to disguise it.
- Scottish Water confirm the area will remain a public open space.
- Guard rails: must be in keeping with the character of the village. Sandstone only.
- There will still be access to the shore along the current footpath once work is completed.
- Scottish Water have revised the tanker lay-by so that a tanker can get off the road and onto the site. The contents of the septic tanks are pumped into tankers and taken elsewhere for treatment.
- Marine habitat concerns have been addressed.
- Vent pipe odour – there will be none.
- Timing – they want to do the work this summer. DG said autumn and winter would be better so as not to affect hospitality businesses in this tourist area.
- An architect is looking into the historic patent slip that used to lead from the boatyard (where Neale Lawson's house is now) into the river via the area to be built on.
- Water-quality testing: we pointed out there is no benchmark. Scottish Water said that's SEPA's responsibility. DG repeated that we need a benchmark now, another when the work is completed and another in a year's time.
- Alternative location for the tanks: not possible.
- We have stipulated there no site vehicles may be parked on our roads at the Quay End at any time.
- Scottish Water estimate the whole project will take 6 months and will cost £2m. The cost is irrelevant to us, but if they're spending such a large sum then surely a little more for sandstone would not be unreasonable?

DG sees two views in community. Nobody is saying it shouldn't be done. It has to be done. One view is to just get on with it, don't put obstacles in Scottish Water's way. The second is to object where necessary - future generations will have to live with it - and this is the basis of DG's letter. DG will now go back to Scottish Water after this meeting with the community view. Individuals can also contact Scottish Water with their own views. Residents at the meeting expressed sincere appreciation for the work DG has put into this.

The next stage is for Scottish Water to submit a planning application – so the work definitely won't be done this spring. Thus, we have two chances to make our views known: now, as we are doing, and then again in response to the planning application.

In relation to the rock armour, Scottish Water have already submitted an application to Marine Scotland and we have till 23 March to object. DG will object to the use of granite.

Hutton Trust

Nothing to report. It remains difficult finding local people who can benefit. If you know of anyone in the parish undertaking an apprenticeship and who could use financial help to buy tools, tell DG.

Airds Point

The problem remains of waste being discharged by tankers straight into the River Nith, with no testing of what is being discharged. Rob Wells is looking into this. DG read out a report he received today. "I am getting in touch with you following concerns you raised at the information event held at Glencaple on Thursday 13th February ... I can now explain the situation. A rising main takes water flow from industry (Miller, formerly Dupont) under agreement and licence with SEPA. Flow comes along the mains to our facility at Airds Point and is processed through the outflow at appropriate time and tide. In recent times there have been a number of bursts on the rising main. When these

bursts occur, pumps in the rising main are turned off to isolate the burst. The waste water is then taken by tanker to Airds Point. The tanker then connects with the outflow pipe and processes waste water through the outflow. We work closely with SEPA and, as stated previously, we have the appropriate licence in place.” DG commented that we are no further forward. There is no water testing at Airds Point. SEPA do not test what is going into the Nith; they take Miller’s word for it. The waste water arriving by tanker seems to go straight into the River Nith. Tom Brown agreed: he has many photos (some on Caerlaverock Neighbours facebook page) that show the water coming straight out of the outlet hose at the back of the tanker, running over the gabion basket wall and into the ditch. DG pondered asked what we do about it and suggested all we can do is face them with the evidence, possibly via our MPs/MSPs, saying this is what we’ve been told. Tom commented that we always know when there’s been a burst as tankers start arriving 24/7 for days on end, two tankers at a time. DG is seeing Rob tomorrow and will raise all this with him.

Any Other Business

Slipway

Tom Brown wondered if we could purchase a “Keep Entry Clear” sign for the slipway (next to Nith View, just down from Nith Inshore Rescue). He and a wildfowling friend recently needed access for a vehicle and trailer but a vehicle was parked there. DG suggested having a quiet word with the owner.

Martin Grieve mentioned that Bankend had neither electricity nor water during a recent storms. The problem is that the water supply to Bankend is pumped, but the pumps need electricity to work ... and if the electricity supply is taken out by flooding then there is no water. DG will raise this with Scottish Water.