

Minutes of 28 May 2025 Caerlaverock Community Association meeting

Present: David Gilbert (chair), Fred Trigg (Committee Member), Ian Brown (Committee Member), Rona Carson (Committee Member), Ronnie Clark (Committee Member), Cllr Malcolm Johnstone, Cllr John Campbell, Cllr David Slater, Oliver Wagner (Caerlaverock Estate), Peter Bryden (Chair, Nith Inshore Rescue), Mrs Karen Scriven (Caerlaverock Primary Head Teacher), Rosie Thorp (Historic Environment Scotland) and 17 Caerlaverock residents.

Apologies: Chris Jackson (Treasurer), Chris Woodness (Ward Officer, Nith), Cllr Keith Walters, Suzanne McIntyre (NatureScot), Dave Pickett (WWT), PC Haley Elliot (Police), Anna Austin (Caerlaverock Estate Manager), Alice Wilson (Barbour Hall), Shirley Little, Rob Wells.

Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the 26 February 2025 meeting were accepted.

Financial Position

Income £4,489.66 (all from motorhomes), expenditure £6,320.18. The only major item was the Bankend Bus Stop (£5,301.90). Other items: septic tank emptying, paint for the bridges, motorhome donation envelopes, CCA insurance renewal (covering both public liability and any actions against individuals), new notice board at Bankend, and minor expenditure relating to tidying up the Hutton Hall area. We still await invoices for signage and sub-base at the Castle Corner campsite which will total £3,030. This leaves us with a healthy balance of about £26,000, plus allotments c. £2,000, so plenty to spend on community projects. The accounts will be published on the website.

GENERAL REPORTS

Community Police

Did not attend the meeting and sent a generic report.

Current "Take Five to Stop Fraud" campaign encourages people to:

STOP – taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

CHALLENGE – could it be fake? It's OK to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

PROTECT – contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam, and report it to Police Scotland.

D&G Police social media handles/links have recently changed:

Follow **@PSOSDandG** on Twitter for updates on crime trends.

Follow Police Facebook page '**Police Scotland Dumfries & Galloway**' for updates on crimes.

The Police are looking for help with the following:

- Anti-crime patrols are always ongoing, to prevent and detect crime particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour, youth disorder and under-age drinking. Please report any suspicious incidents at the time.
- Intelligence sought in relation to drink drivers.
- Intelligence sought in relation to drug dealers/cannabis cultivation.
- Report any bogus caller type incidents.

The Police have noted our concerns about a) youths congregating at Castle Corner and sometimes Glencaple Quay, b) speeding and c) Castle Corner honesty box being tampered with.

Finally, if there are any events in the local area such as coffee mornings that we would like PC Elliot to attend, please get in touch. DG suggested inviting them to our Soup Socials.

D&G Council

David Slater, following an approach from a constituent from our area, and has again looked at the state of the roads from Bankend – WWT – Glencaple – Kingholm Quay. The issue of the missing footpath from the new houses into Glencaple is ongoing. The developer needs to obtain a Road Opening Permit and it is hoped this will be done soon. Cllr Slater has learned there is also an issue with drainage from the new site. Tom Brown commented that the Road Opening Permit was brought up at the last meeting and the process is taking too long. DG asked that the council officer in charge send us a formal explanation of what's going on and the timescale for action.

Rosie Thorp said recent road closures have led to a lot of angry visitors and they would like to be kept informed. DG does receive notification of roadworks throughout D&G and always checks Nith Ward. It appears that recent closures may have been last-minute, undertaken without notification to affected businesses. Cllr Slater says the Council do issue reports. DG asked him to make sure we get them. Billy Little asked what is being done about potholes in Glencaple village. He suggested councillors try riding a pushbike and see how dangerous it is. Surely it's time to put a moratorium on further improvements (eg recent works at the top of Pleasance Avenue) and maintain what we already have?

NatureScot

Nothing to report except closure of the path at Hollands end to protect a rare nesting species.

WWT

Nothing major to report. Several projects are underway.

Historic Environment Scotland

Rosie Thorp reported 40,000 visitors in the year to end March 2025, the biggest number ever, with just over 7,000 visitors since then. Two events coming up: the finale of the Creative Caerlaverock project on Saturday 31 May, and jousting on the last weekend in July.

Caerlaverock Estate

Oliver Wagner, new Project Manager for Caerlaverock Estate, updated the meeting on plans for the next 12 months. Following the creation of ponds and wildlife corridors to enhance biodiversity, we are now in the development phase of the project and Oliver's job will involve planning, engaging with community and landowners, putting together costings and seeking grant funding to enhance the biodiversity of the area and make us more climate-resilient. The delivery phase begins next year. They are looking for members to join a steering group. Other topics: the Estate would like to thank the community for use of the land at the end of The Boathouse. We will be investing in some benches for all to use. Be aware of increased tractor and trailer traffic as the silage season progresses, also increased traffic during improvements to some properties. DG returned to the topic of the grassed area beyond The Boathouse, repeating that he and Anna have agreed that benches in that area will be for everyone to use.

Fred Trigg spoke about an email CCA received about the core path up Ward Law. Someone slipped on the way down as the steps had fallen down. Oliver will follow up the complaint with Anna and Sam.

Caerlaverock School

Sports Day took place this afternoon. A number of parents brought children in prams so this bodes well for future intake. Probationary teacher Mrs McCubbin is leaving as the teacher currently on

maternity leave returns. Mrs Thomson and Mrs Caprani remain as the other teachers. School roll currently 23. Three P7 pupils are leaving this summer and 5 P1s joining so the school roll will be 25 next session. In recent school inspections, Browhall was awarded two "Very Good" grades. Caerlaverock and Brownhall schools joined forces for visits to Caerlaverock Castle and the Devil's Porridge. P6 and P7 pupils had their Lockerbie residential. Mrs McCubbin has been involved in a great many out-of-school activities. Recent events include / have included: netball tournament next week, sprint event at the David Keswick centre on 14 May, a golf taster session at Crichton Golf Club and a football event for small schools on 7th May in Gretna. There's also a cooking club on Monday afternoons. A school trip to Cocoabeen (Twynholm) is planned for the end of term. And lastly, the P7 awards ceremony takes place on 5 July. All welcome.

Barbour Hall

Trustee Lynda Anderson gave an update. Toilets all replaced. New kitchen. Storage room where gents was. Next big thing is a major exterior renovation. Fundraising is going well, with a £280,000 funding package agreed, 80% from UK government (Community Ownership Fund) and 20% from DGC (Coastal Benefit Fund), plus £2,000 community-based money raised by recent events. The recent Ladies' Night raised almost £1,000; thanks to all who attended. All these small pots of money, when put together, help us obtain match funding. £2,000 from CCA will be put towards new chairs (currently getting quotes). The major external renovation will include a new insulated, profile sheeting roof, external insulation on all the walls which will then be rendered, three new windows in the main hall which, along with the completed mezzanine, will improve lighting, and improved disabled access ramps to all entrances and the fire escape. The committee are working with McGowan Miller on the tendering process. Five companies have tendered (final negotiations in progress with the chosen company). The project will start mid-June for 18 weeks. The contractor will be responsible for health and safety so during the project there will be no access to the hall car park (eg for allotment-holders). The contractor will be asked to keep the Post Office open, perhaps moving it to the new front room.

Allotments

All plots taken and crops growing well despite late frosts. Our attempt to convert plot 6 into a community pumpkin plot, however, is proving challenging because of the number of rushes. So regarding the planned community pumpkin patch – watch this space, but don't hold your breath. Ian Brown said Roundup would get rid of the rushes but DG reminded him that the site is organic.

Nith Inshore Rescue

Peter Bryden apologised for recent non-attendance (various reasons); will try to make at least two CCA meetings a year. Running the lifeboat means 15-20 hrs' work a week for committee members. Please send the minutes and invitations to future meeting to chair@nithrescue.org.uk. Fundraising is taking up a lot of time at present. Not something we enjoy doing. Cynics see our equipment and vehicles and think we have plenty of money - but money for eg new vehicles comes from grants which can only be used for that purpose. The cost of actually running the boat comes solely from donations: from local businesses, members of public and charities. A donation from a recent event at The Ship Inn allowed us to fund a whole kit for one crew member. We are always looking at ways to save money on lighting and so on: solar panels on the roof could be a possibility at some point. A reminder that, as an independent lifeboat, we don't receive anything from RNLI. As part of the local community we have received several kind donations recently. However, recent grant applications have not been successful. An application to the Coastal Communities Fund was refused on the basis that they could not see how it would benefit the local community.

Call-outs have been relatively low but included a particularly stressful call to the Brow Well. We have a lot of support from NHS colleagues. There is, as ever, much training going on. This takes place

every Sunday and every second Monday. We have been enhancing our First Aid training. Eight crew are now trained in First Responder Emergency Care. Powerboat training continues, as do ongoing maintenance and inspections (a newly-recruited crew member is contributing 18-20 hrs/wk purely on this). Apologies for not getting round to the community first aid training. Peter hopes this will take place soon and would like the community to suggest a couple of suitable dates. We now have a doctor, a nurse, an advanced nurse practitioner and a first-aid instructor on the crew. Community first aid training would probably focus on the absolute basics of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, Airway-Breathing-Circulation and Recovery Position – but can offer defibrillator training too.

Events: on 19 July, six crew members are undertaking a 432-mile trek on motor bikes to all the independent lifeboats in the south of Scotland. Departing Glencaple 0600 and hoping to return by 1900. Open Day planned for Aug 16th (would like to tie in with other Caerlaverock events but possibly too late for this year. Perhaps 2026). Crew member Jamie Milligan will attempt four ascents of Criffel per day on four consecutive days starting on 23 September, so 16 ascents. Anyone interested in accompanying Jamie on any of the ascents please get in touch. Last year's Land Rover pull will be repeated later this year. Social media will be used to publicise these events. Finally, Nith Inshore Rescue get a lot of requests to attend events and regret that, with so many calls on their time already, they just cannot attend them all, particularly if a long way away. However, preferential consideration will always be given to local events.

Caerlaverock Kirk

No report received.

Hutton Hall

DG gave a big "thank you" to Kelly Green, who has stood down as chair of Hutton Hall after nine years. He thanked Kelly for all that she has done, both for the Hall and for the community. This drew a spontaneous round of applause. Fred Trigg, Kelly's replacement, repeated how much Kelly's work has been appreciated and that they were difficult shoes to fill. Firstly, Hutton Hall needs to find funding. Thanks to Alan Leech's magnificent efforts we have already been successful in obtaining a National Lottery grant which will pay for toilet refurbishments. Other funding applications are in. The Community Payback scheme were brilliant in tidying up the green and removing unwanted vegetation. The fence will be stripped and painted. Thank you to the Nith Estuary Haaf Net Fishers Association for their donation of £500 to the Hall which will go towards further refurbishment. The community bbq has been rescheduled for 12 July (stalls are available for local businesses and crafters - small donation requested for table). There are 10 bags of kindlers left – will store in shed till autumn.

Junior Football

No report received.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Community Website

Nothing to report

Community Projects Update

All three bridges have been painted. Quay End: the basket burner has been dropped off at the blacksmiths. Once finished and galvanised, it will be bolted to concrete at the quay end.

We are working with the Estate on signage at Castle Corner to direct visitors to the PayPal site and promote local businesses (WWT, Nith Hotel, The Boathouse etc). Cost will be c. £400.

Scottish Water and Tank Improvements

History: a planning application was put in last July by Scottish Water but was withdrawn following local opposition, and also on technical grounds. Scottish Water then carried out a community consultation. After the last CCA meeting, DG wrote a letter expressing our concerns: detrimental impact, ugly rock armour, vent pipe, concerns over habitat restoration, guard rails, access to the shore, tanker lay-by, tank capacity, marine habitat, other systems for dealing with sewage, vent pipe odour, timing, historic slip, water quality, alternative site locations, timescales and investment costs.

Scottish Water have now submitted a new planning application, reference 25/0783. Objections have to be with the Council by 4 June. DG asked for the meeting's views. Objections voiced included:

- Granite rock armour. There is no granite in this area. Granite is alien to this side of the river. Sandstone is the natural rock and the rock used in the construction of the quay and village buildings. Granite, though cheaper, would be at variance with the National Scenic Area and Local Plan.
- Vent pipe still not disguised.
- Scottish Water have not produced elevation drawings to show how the new layout will actually look. The taller vent pipe will probably be taller than The Boathouse, visually affecting a beautiful spot.

Discussion followed as to whether the effluent outflow will continue to go direct into the river. DG said that, as far as he is aware, there will be no outflow into the river. All the sewage will be pumped into tankers and taken away. Others disagreed, believing there will still be outflow into the river as now. It would not be allowed if you installed a new septic tank in your domestic property. You have to install a soakaway.

Both meeting attendees and Cllr Johnstone are appalled that neither Scottish Water nor SEPA have information on water quality in this stretch of the river. Loch Ryan was quoted as an example of poor water quality having to be improved by installing a whole new water treatment works for an entire area, so much so that they now have an oyster festival. Cllr Johnstone did try, with Solway Firth Partnership, to investigate water quality in the Caerlaverock area and he will raise it again with the Partnership.

DG had produced a detailed response covering all these points. This will go on the website. Cllr Johnstone urged everyone to submit their objections (need a minimum of six) by the 4 June deadline. Even if you objected before, you need to resubmit it for this latest application. As well as DG's CCA response, individuals are encouraged to submit their own objections.

Speeding, limits, roads

Rona Carson mentioned a 2016 meeting and a 2017 petition about roads and speeding but still nothing has been done. She passed handouts to all the councillors and requested they take action. DG asked if we have the speed data yet from the Council. We do not. He will put in a Freedom of Information request.

Hutton Trust

No change. Money still available for local people on apprenticeships.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

Date and place of next meeting: 7:30 pm, 27 August 2025, Hutton Hall