

Minutes 26 Aug 2026 CCA meeting

Present: David Gilbert (Chair), Rona Carson (Committee Member), Helen Clark (Committee Member), Ronnie Clark (Committee Member), Alice Wilson (Barbour Hall), Karen Scriven (Head Teacher, Caerlaverock School), Cllr David Slater, Cllr Keith Walters, Cllr Malcolm Johnstone, Rosie Thorp (Caerlaverock Castle), Anna Austin (Caerlaverock Estate Manager) and 14 Caerlaverock residents.

Apologies: Fred Trigg (Vice Chair), Chris Jackson (Treasurer), Suzanne McIntyre (NatureScot), Dave Pickett (WWT), Chris Woodness (D&G Council), Moira Haggarty.

Minutes of last mtg were accepted.

Financial position

Income from motor-homes £7421.03, almost exactly £2,000 more than the same period last year. Expenditure £1,650.35 comprising four septic-tank emptyings £540, donation to Bankend bowling green project £500, Bankend bus-stop board £172.80, two Bankend mower repairs £153.86; also Quay End bench repairs, mower fuel, Caerlaverock BBQ raffle prize, replacement honesty box leaflet holders, room hire for last meeting, bank charges and IT costs (amounts on the website). Balance at May meeting £25,303.98, balance now £31,074.66 but Barbour Hall donation has to come out of this. Allotments income 81.99 (plot rents, two veg stalls and Open Day profits). Allotments expenditure £426.77 creating raised beds. Allotments balance now £2,166.01.

Funding requests

Gerry Donnelly suggested we buy a community bbq for use at local events. Ballpark figure £700 but if we wait till the end of the summer they'll be a lot cheaper. The meeting agreed. For safety reasons it will be stored in the Hutton Hall storage area which is separate from the Hall itself.

General Reports

Community Police

DG received the Police's August report after the meeting (see attachment). What we need, though, is information specific to our area, not these monthly generic reports. DG commented that this problem with the Police seems to be the same throughout D&G. The only relevant part of the August report would seem to be ***"Calls for Glencaple: A call was received from a concerned resident in Wellington Street, reporting persons in their garden on 23/08/2026, nothing was damaged or stolen. Extra patrols will be carried out."***

D&G Council (including Resilience Planning and Roads)

All who spoke expressed their exasperation about the imminent closure of the B725 and lack of information from D&G Council (DGC). All we've been told is that the road is closing from 1 September (ie in four days' time) for five months. These dates have been known for months but there has still been no specific local information, eg where and when do we catch local buses, suggested alternative routes, what about access for emergency vehicles. DGC have assured the Councillors that "a bus service will be provided" – but no details. The Councillors share our frustration. Cllr Johnstone asked someone from DGC Roads dept to come to this meeting (evidently without success). Cllr Johnstone will take it up with the Director tomorrow morning. Alice commented that the Quay Hill is not a safe alternative given the dangerous state of the road edges and given the number of agricultural vehicles using the road. Another speaker commented that another cut of silage is to be taken in two weeks' time and this will mean anything up to 30 silage trailers using the Quay Hill.

The reason for the closure: all the electricity cabling is being taken off the telegraph poles between Glencaple and Kelton and a totally new electricity supply installed underground. The entire road has

to remain closed, including to emergency vehicles, for the whole five months. As the work is so extensive it simply would not be possible to reinstate the road temporarily overnight.

DG commented that again DGC is failing to communicate with this community, with potentially serious consequences if there were an incident. Gerry said this points to a systemic issue within DGC: how can they not act upon so many requests for the same information? There are three businesses in the village on whom the road closure will have a massive impact.

More discussion ensued about this issue eg Mrs Scriven about dangers to children on a busier Quay Hill and no information about bus routes. DG said at least we can all communicate with each other using the “Caerlaverock Neighbours” facebook group, so if anyone has any useful information (eg about an imminent silage operation) please post it there for the benefit of us all.

On another subject, work on the new footpath from the new houses into Glencaple has been halted because the land is a SSS (more on this under “Caerlaverock Estate”, below). DG commented that the contractors have been pulled off site but the border of concrete blocks narrows the road to the extent that it's worse than it was before, a danger on dark nights particularly to pedestrians.

NatureScot

Suzanne sent this report. It has been a relatively trouble-free summer season: a few bits of graffiti and litter, some camping in odd places, but mostly OK. A greenhouse-gas flux tower has been installed on the merse. It's a yellow scaffolding tower with monitoring equipment on top, powered by a solar panel located next to it. Suzanne attached a document which gave the following explanation. “The flux tower will measure patterns of carbon dioxide (CO₂) release and absorption at Scotland's largest saltmarsh site. This will support the case for protecting and restoring degraded saltmarshes. The tower has been installed in partnership by NatureScot, Scottish Government, the UK Centre for Hydrology and Ecology (UKCEH) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and achieves one of the actions from Scotland's Blue Carbon Action Plan. Caerlaverock is now the most northerly site in the UK's saltmarsh flux tower network and will play an important role in understanding the regional differences in the CO₂ balance across UK saltmarshes.”

Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

Dave Pickett sent his report: the main news is that we have reopened to the public on 2 July after being closed for 6 months. We now have a new, smaller team in place and for the summer have been opening 3 days a week with plenty of visitors coming down. Visitor interest in the site was boosted with 2 glossy ibis staying on site for nearly 2 months. These are rare visitors from down south. Unfortunately they have now moved on, principally because, with the dry weather, most of our ponds have dried up. From late September, when the geese and swans start to return for the winter, we are aiming to be open from 5 days a week and look forward to welcoming people down for their annual fix of Barnacle Geese.

Historic Environment Scotland

Rosie Thorp reported castle visitor numbers (since 1st April 2026): 25,343.

Works:

- Ongoing pothole repairs to the road in front of the visitor centre.
- High level masonry inspection has just begun, taking place until 1st October from Mondays to Thursdays. They will be using rope access, ladders and a moveable scaffolding tower. They will be inspecting the castle masonry as part of a new programme where all sites are inspected at least once every five years. We are not expecting this to interfere with the

visitor experience significantly, unless an issue is identified, and will be doing a lot of this before the castle opening time.

Events:

- Jousting event end July – just over 3,000 visitors. Thanks to all who attended.
- BioBlitz event (to record and identify wildlife) is in its final week, with its last day on Monday. On Saturday there will be a number of external wildlife experts on the site as the ongoing series comes to an end.
- Dark Skies event taking place at the Castle as part of the Regional South of Scotland Dark Sky Festival 8th-18th October.
- We are celebrating the 750th anniversary of the move from the old castle to the 'new' castle next year and are developing a year-long programme of events for this. We are focusing this around three core themes: history, culture and nature. If anyone wants to get involved, or has ideas for events, please let me know.

Although this is a castle event, DG asked anyone with ideas to get in touch with Rosie.

Caerlaverock Estate

Anna returned to the subject of the path from the new houses. The footpath is on SSSI land and consent was not obtained. That consent is now being sought retrospectively, the whole thing further complicated by the presence of Japanese Knotweed. Anna said this should all have been discussed and a solution found before the path construction even started. DG says frustration lies not with the Estate but with planners who gave consent.

A site has been agreed for new waste bins at the Castle Corner motor-home area. They'll be in a small lay-by just out of sight of the road to discourage passers-by from using them. Ready for final sign-off and just waiting for DGC to get back to Anna. Councillors to chase this up.

The Glencaple noticeboard on the end of The Boathouse has been removed as it was unsafe. The Estate joiner has been asked for a quote to replace it.

Anna commented on The Boathouse's new restrictions on when Nith Inshore Rescue tote participants may pay their weekly tote. If this gave the impression that the Estate no longer support the lifeboat tote, it is not the case.

The Estate are keen to play their part in the Castle's 750th anniversary celebrations in 2027.

Izaak Reeder introduced himself. He has taken over from Oliver as the Nature Project Manager for the delivery phase of the nature restoration project: wildlife corridors, more ponds, the wildflower meadow and woodland creation. He'll employ a contractor to get rid of the Estate's Japanese Knotweed. Next year Izaak would like to involve the community in ridding the area of Himalayan Balsam. Anyone interested in joining the team to pull this week, please get in touch with Izaak@caerlaverock.com.

DG mentioned that an opportunity has arisen for someone in the community to take over the liaison role with the Estate. The previous incumbent is moving back to France.

Caerlaverock School

The B725 road closure, and lack of information about it, is a big worry. More and more children have started cycling to school but in light of the increased traffic they may be asked not to. The school roll has dropped to 21 but there will still be two classes and three teachers. A school trip is being

organised to Horrible Histories in Carlisle and the school hope to play a part in the castle's 750th anniversary celebrations in 2027.

Barbour Hall

Work is starting on installing Wi-Fi, internal fire doors and a new fire alarm system. Painting probably not till the start of 2027 and fencing once the Scottish Power work is completed. These works are partly funded by the CCA and it's good to see this progressing.

- A Scottish Power cable has been laid in the car park and they created a drain at the same time. The drain, as well as helping the Hall, should also help the neighbouring property affected by water running down the Quay Hill
- We have been successful in our bid for Kers funding for the new air-source heating system and it should be completed in the next couple of months. Kers funding is contributing 80% and D&G Community-Led Local Development fund 20%.
- They also received money from Nithsdale Small Grants scheme (DGC) which has helped with the Hall utility bills.
- We are very grateful to Conheath Nurseries who gifted us the planters (see them outside the Hall), also supplying the flowers for nothing and planting them up for us.

Upcoming events

- AGM on 9th September at 6.30
- Quiz night fundraiser on 26th September
- We have contacted George Leslie, who are doing the septic tank work along the front and are keen to do work for the community while they're here. George Leslie have asked for a wish list. There's a problem with water running underneath the Hall and Alice has suggested a drain along the back of the hall beside the allotments. A question was raised about obtaining a generator for the Hall if the electricity went off. Enquiries have been made via the D&G Community Resilience Team but Scottish Power are not funding this type of thing.

Allotments

Gerry: we have had three allotment produce stalls. The community have also contributed their own produce. The next Allotments Open Day is on Saturday 29 August: bbq, refreshments, moths and music (bring an instrument if you can play one). We have a marquee and the use of BMH back hall. A fundraising race night is being organised for November.

Nith Inshore Rescue

No report received.

Caerlaverock Kirk

DG is meeting the new Minister this week to chat about how they integrate into the community, and to ensure their events get into the online diary. Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday 6 September.

Hutton Hall

June's Caerlaverock BBQ was a great success despite the chilly wind. Bits and pieces of funding are coming in. Good progress has been made on the old bowling green. The Community Payback Team painted the Hall (no choice of colour; it's what was donated). Could not paint the top parts as it would have meant working at height.

Canine Rescue Centre

No report received.

AOB

Community Website

Fred is to modernise the website as it's looking a bit dated.

Community Projects

Bench

A new bench has been installed at the Quay End. It is identical to the one in front of The Boathouse. Still no word from the family who offered to donate towards it.

Quay End

DG met the Harbourmaster who was very supportive of DG's suggestions. He suggests we join with Solway Firth Partnership and put forward a joint application for funds to carry out improvements. Plans could include a general tidy-up, Tarmacing the motorhome end of the quay, new white lines, new signage, getting rid of old crane davits and the steel stubs where the railings used to be. The Harbourmaster sees it as an amenity, not a working quay, and does not wish to see large vessels mooring but small boats would be fine. A handrail is required for the steps (Nith Inshore Rescue would use the steps in an emergency to transfer casualties to emergency vehicles on the quay). DG spoke to George Leslie, who have offered to make improvements to the existing hard surface eg filling potholes.

Scottish Water and Contractor

Nothing more to report. Work continuing.

Hutton Trust

Nothing to report. A small amount of money is still available.

Remembrance Sunday

DG is away so Fred Trigg is running it. Any suggestions or offers of help please see Fred.

AOB

DG and Sue's annual Macmillan Cancer Support fundraiser takes place 26 September 2 pm – 4 pm in the Barbour Hall.

Gerry asked about noticeboards for putting up posters. DG said Fred deals with the Bankend noticeboard. The Kelton noticeboard has a key kept on the right-hand side so you can just let yourself in. The Glencaple noticeboard is out of action pending replacement. Gerry reported an issue with the backing board of the Kelton one. DG will investigate.

Date and place of next meeting: Wednesday 25 November 2026 at the Barbour Hall