



C R E A T I V E  
C A E R L A V E R O C K

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**  
PHASE 1



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA

the stove network



# Creative Caerlaverock

## Community Engagement Report

END OF PHASE 1

## Background

The Stove Network have been working with Historic Environment Scotland, local creatives, and partner organisations, since 2020 towards a new vision for Caerlaverock Castle as a centre of creative learning and inspiration in Dumfries and Galloway. The foundation of this work has been to deepen engagement and experiences for local communities in connection to Caerlaverock Castle and its wider heritage.

In October 2021, The Stove and Northlight Heritage, were tendered to co-develop a programme of creative learning with and for local communities. The resulting Creative Learning Framework (published Aug 2022) mapped out opportunities for deeper community involvement and creative learning experiences inspired by castle and its wider heritage with a particular focus on inclusion and widening engagement for those who have been traditionally underrepresented within heritage. [Creative Caerlaverock](#), delivered by The Stove Network and The Imaginarium, started in August 2022 as a programme of engagement activity that would test and pilot ideas and listen to what local communities and priority audiences (those traditionally underrepresented) wanted to see and experience.

***Creative Caerlaverock is an innovative approach to creative learning, heritage and community arts working to realise and inspire new possibilities in working with the region's historic locations. Through gatherings, activities, groups and residencies, this co-created project is seeking new relationships, understandings and links to our past so as to understand and connect with our future.***

Engaging and co-creating with local communities and those historically under-represented in heritage initiatives, Creative Caerlaverock is uncovering new connections and stories from the roots of its grounds, to its closest village, to the centre of the town it sits only 8 miles south of and in building connections with other heritage sites across the region.

## Introduction & Context

This report outlines the outcomes and outputs of community engagement for Creative Caerlaverock from August 2022-April 2023 (here-in referred to as Phase1); the approach used in the consultation / engagement process; the recommendations and possibilities for future collaborations with priority audiences, local community groups, and key local stakeholders.

The Creative Learning Framework (2022), and associated purpose and process of community engagement were designed to:

- Widen participation through exploring and supporting creative learning opportunities inspired by the castle
- Diversify use of Caerlaverock and its wider landscape, exploring the potential creation of a Creative Learning Hub to become more inclusive and relevant to a wider demographic / audience base
- Create opportunities to allow local creative practitioners to apply their practice in the heritage sector
- Identify interest and collaborative opportunities with priority audiences, communities, and key stakeholders
- Co-create, test, and explore creative responses to the castle with and for priority audiences, communities, and key stakeholders
- Trial the use of creative engagement and collaborative learning to explore individual and community connections to heritage with learners and participants, to create greater understanding of potential future activity and development of the site
- Build cross discipline capacity and understanding to deliver the above

## Overview of Desired Outcomes

- a) Implement a sustainable, robust community engagement programme that allows for true co-creation / co-design across priority audiences, community groups, stakeholders and disciplines that directly influences decision making around developments of Creative Caerlaverock project.
- b) Grow an overall vision for Creative Learning in connection to Caerlaverock Castle that begins to develop shared systems of co-creation / co-design, documentation and consultation with groups, participants, and partners.
- c) Widen diversity in the audiences regularly attracted to Caerlaverock.
- d) Increase use / relevance of the castle and surrounding landscape as creative heritage learning opportunities.
- e) Increase use / relevance of the castle and surrounding landscape in general.
- f) Increase diversity and accessibility of activities and events held at the castle / surrounding landscape.
- g) Co-create a regular year-round activity programme that reflects the interests / involvement of more diverse communities across the region (communities of interest / geography).
- h) Support more regular and relevant opportunities which engage arts based / creative placemaking practice within heritage context.
- I) Widen knowledge and understanding of the heritage associated with Caerlaverock, MacLellans Castle and of Dumfries and Galloway more broadly.
- j) Explore options for the creation of a sustainable Creative Learning Hub at the castle.

## Approach / Process

A variety of community engagement methodologies and approaches were incorporated into the delivery of Phase1 engagement.

Methods included community meetings, outreach activities, interactive themed focus groups (Ancestral Suppers), taster / trial activities, physical and digital surveys, and online engagement.

The Phase1 engagement process allowed Creative Caerlaverock to collaborate, communicate, consult, and involve a diverse array of local community members and stakeholders in developing ideas. A focus was on the collection of views from those whose voices are generally underrepresented in the local area / who do not access Caerlaverock, those who were defined as key priority audiences in the Caerlaverock Creative Learning Framework.

Methods used included interactive participatory appraisal techniques and a mixture of in-person events with physical and digital outreach activities, using proven creative heritage approaches, to test and showcase activity through a fusion of heritage and creative practice.

The overall experiential, interactive, dialogue-based approach was adopted to exemplify what is possible via Creative Caerlaverock and offer a process that allowed for more informed and less passive engagement and decision making in relation to learning experiences.

The engagement exercise was brought to life via a series of co-created micro commissions working directly with a variety of established local creative practitioners and emerging young practitioners who were introduced and supported to utilise heritage to inspire their practice. This provided an opportunity for young practitioners to work alongside local community members and experienced heritage practitioners and co-design content for Creative Caerlaverock engagement. Commissioning these local creative practitioners provided examples and opportunities for locals to experience creative methods of communicating and exploring the histories associated with Caerlaverock Castle, through music, living history/re-enactment, traditional crafts, outdoor learning, storytelling, theatre, live action role play / gaming and food.

A system was designed using participatory appraisal prioritisation to offer target audiences a choice of different genres of creative heritage engagement approaches that could be further developed and delivered both on site at Caerlaverock and its surrounding area. Target audiences were invited to three individual Ancestral Supper events to discuss and vote for what type of creative practices / events / activities they would most like to see developed further and that they felt would attract more diverse audiences.

These exercises delivered a standardised yet flexible and varied approach, appropriate for engaging a cross section of the community.

The results of this exercise were slightly skewed on the last evening with our local Ukrainian community whose teenagers focused participants' votes on the creation of an Escape Room. Taking this into account Living History / Re-enactment received the largest proportion of votes across all 3 Ancestral Suppers.



Postcards were also distributed around a variety of locations and events targeting spaces that were most likely to pick up responses from a cross section of our communities and gather stories and ideas for Caerlaverock Castle and its surrounding areas.



#### Examples of Responses received via Postcards:

- Castle is atmospheric but don't make the most of it
- Try to provide transport to events
- Build fascination and curiosity
- A balance needs to be met so it's not a hotbed of activity and makes our sanctuary disappear
- How can Caerlaverock be a place that tells all of our stories?
- Why are you a triangle?
- Were there glass windows?
- What kind of food did the family eat? How was it cooked?
- What stories would the women of this castle tell?
- Did the castle get bombed?
- Growing culture for change > past > radical futures
- Let us consider Caerlaverock as a performance space! Shakespeare in the round, small intimate music venue and art installations
- Could we have a haunted night or a murder mystery?
- Having an art and activity centre is my idea
- Guided/self-guided tours on who came here and what it was used for

### Phase 1 Progress on Creative Learning Framework Desired Outcomes

a) An Engagement Methodology and Delivery Plan for Creative Caerlaverock was created to provide solid foundations for Creative Caerlaverock delivery. This framework ensures **the implementation of a sustainable, robust community engagement programme that allows for true co-creation / co-design across priority audiences, community groups and stakeholders** allowing them to directly influence decision making processes regarding the development / delivery of Creative Caerlaverock. This formed the framework for initial engagement of key local priority audiences, community groups and stakeholders as defined in the Creative Learning Framework for Phase1.

All desired priority audiences were reached during Phase1. Co-creation was initiated with a wide variety of groups and individuals including Young people (within formal education, youth work and employability support programmes), local Ukrainian community (new Scots), local creative practitioners, key local stakeholders, representatives from local areas of deprivation, the LGBTQ+ community, neurodivergent individuals, women's groups, disabled people, and those from the immediate local geographic communities. Initial connections were made with community group representatives from Climate Kitchen, Nith Life and Cycle Dumfries.

Participants were engaged in a variety of ways which allowed for informative, preparatory, and decision-making participation, through a mixture of soft and hard engagement approaches that were appropriate to circumstances and opportunities available. This included the provision of complimentary tickets for various priority audiences and transport support which allowed representative groups to attend the annual Jousting event at Caerlaverock; a Heritage ReMixers programme for emerging young practitioners; themed interactive focus groups 'Ancestral Suppers'; light touch outreach activities; and piloting of onsite creative learning events and activities such as the creation of a Time Travelling Forest School, traditional crafts workshops, and live action role play with a local Dungeons and Dragons group.

**b) An overall vision for Creative Learning is being grown in connection with Caerlaverock Castle through initial engagement** and co-creation with priority audiences and local stakeholders. An Activity Plan for 2023-24 has been drafted based on the outcomes of this initial engagement. The next phase (Phase2) of Creative Caerlaverock will see the development and delivery of this Activity Plan in collaboration with priority audiences, partner organisations and local stakeholders. Launching the process of **developing shared systems of co-creation / co-design, documentation and consultation** by:

- Onboarding and engaging priority audiences, community groups, creative practitioners, expert advisors and prospective partners
- Introducing co-design delivery
- Creating a foundation of shared understanding, shared outcomes, shared language and co-creation to inform the direction of travel for the project

**c) + e) Creative Caerlaverock has widened the diversity of audiences engaged with the castle and increased its use and relevance.** Key targeted audiences have reported taking more of an interest in the castle and have been engaging with its surrounding area and heritage outwith their time participating in Creative Caerlaverock activities. Organising family, friend and group visits to the castle, having picnics and using it for regular dog walks have been reported from varied members of our priority audiences, the majority of whom had not previously visited the site before engagement with Creative Caerlaverock.

**d) + e)** In addition to the above, Creative Caerlaverock has begun to **increase the use and relevance of the castle and surrounding landscape through its creative heritage learning opportunities** for and with local communities. This can be evidenced by the programme of creative heritage learning activities already piloted in Phase1 which have attracted community members who would not usually access the site. By sparking their imagination and showcasing what's possible, participants now wish to continue to engage with the site through Creative Caerlaverock's ongoing programme which they have helped envisage. This has resulted in them feeling more involved and connected with the castle and its heritage, increasing its significance in their lives, and has enhanced their wellbeing.

Various other local groups, organisations, heritage, and creative practitioners have been significantly inspired by Phase1 engagements. This has resulted in opportunities for gathering and

relaying Caerlaverock related stories through interactive experiences, extended reality, audio and visual work, creative wayfaring, music, performing arts, guided tours, and publications.

For example, activity so far has inspired a local young sound artist to begin the creation of a time travelling soundscape that will allow people to engage with the history of Caerlaverock through time via an audio experience.

e) **Increased use / relevance of the castle and surrounding landscape in general:** In addition to above, throughout Phase1 the main castle buildings have been closed for conservation. This has enabled Creative Caerlaverock activity to make creative use of the grounds and as a result there has been a strong focus on outdoor learning.

f) In addition to the above activities and events with diverse local priority audiences and key stakeholders Creative Caerlaverock is proactively working towards **increasing the diversity and accessibility of activities and events held at the castle and surrounding landscape**. An Accessibility Report for the castle was commissioned and produced by Heather Molloy of PAMIS (Promoting a more Inclusive Society), which ensures the programme is better informed to ensure the site and related events and activities are accessible.

Transport grants and complimentary tickets for Jousting events at Caerlaverock from Historic Environment Scotland subsidised travel costs for school groups and helped to alleviate some of the pay wall barriers associated with accessing the castle.

Translators were recruited to allow the Creative Caerlaverock programme to effectively engage with the local Ukrainian community, working with them to ensure appropriateness of the content to best suit their needs.

A significant factor to note is that the current closure of the castle means there is currently no cost associated with accessing the site. It is worth being mindful that once the site re-opens to the public, this will reinstate an additional paywall barrier. However, organised learning groups either visiting in a self-led capacity or participating in Creative Caerlaverock projects and activities will continue to benefit from the FREE Learning Visits scheme offered by Historic Environment Scotland.

g) Based on feedback from activities piloted and results of engagement exercises during Phase1 Creative Caerlaverock has **co-created a regular year-round activity programme that reflects the interests and involvement of more diverse communities (communities of interest and geography)**. The pilot programme of Phase2 will trial recommendations received from representatives from key priority audiences such as New Scots, LGBTQ+ community, Women's Groups, and Young People. This will help broaden the appeal of the castle and its surrounding landscape and establish connections to local programmes, priorities and the specific learning needs of the groups taking part.

h) The creation of **more regular and relevant opportunities which engage arts based and creative placemaking practice within heritage context** has been activated during this initial engagement phase. The delivery of Phase1 of Creative Caerlaverock enabled 28 new commissions and opportunities for local creative and heritage practitioners.

i) **Increased knowledge and understanding of the heritage associated with Caerlaverock, MacLellans Castle and of Dumfries and Galloway more broadly** was reported back from many of those engaged with via Phase1 activities and exercises. Creative activities like Ancestral Suppers and Forest Schools have allowed for creative and practical ways for local communities to both share their own knowledge and also learn from others about Caerlaverock and its surrounding areas.

j) **Interest has been gauged** and the potential for the **Creation of a sustainable Creative Learning Hub at the castle** by including this option as part of our participatory appraisal exercises. The option has also been included in conversations at appropriate junctures during group meetings and focus groups.

There was a strong response across participants that this would be an important and relevant development for the castle. This information has been passed to the economic impact consultants engaged by Historic Environment Scotland who are progressing the longer-term development of Caerlaverock site. There is an opportunity here for these developments to engage more closely with the Creative Caerlaverock programme in the future.

## Outcomes / Outputs

This community engagement exercise resulted in:

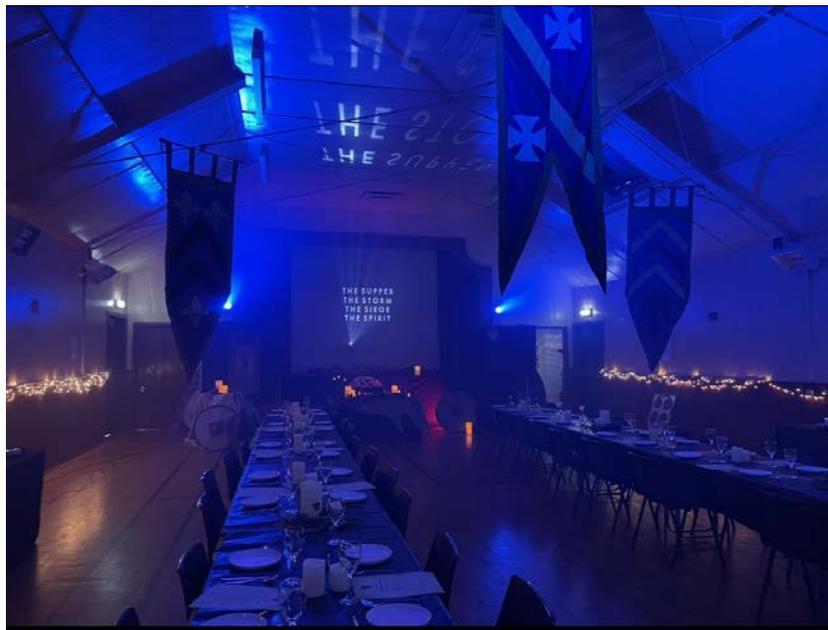
- 1,128 direct interactions with individuals during Phase1 of Creative Caerlaverock delivery (does not include online or passive engagements via postcards etc.)
- Valuable insight and key recommendations from priority audiences and key local stakeholders who have identified ways to achieve the desired outcomes of Creative Caerlaverock, which will be progressed through Creative Caerlaverock Phase2 Activity Plan.
- The commissioning of:
  - 4 x local Emerging Young Practitioners (Heritage ReMixers)
  - 16 x local Creative Practitioners
  - 5 x local Heritage & Creative Community Development Practitioners
- 5 new pieces of creative content inspired by the local heritage associated with Caerlaverock Castle.
- 1371 Online engagements with the [Creative Caerlaverock Projects](#) Page; 498 total sessions with 330 individual users, 218 that were new to The Stove. Additional to this video content views were 122 for The Ancestral Supper and 367 for Earth Tae Sky videos
- Established foundation/platform, network/relationships, and opportunities for ongoing community engagement with priority audiences, community groups and key stakeholders into the next phases of Creative Caerlaverock.

The Creative Caerlaverock team accessed the help of local Historic Environment Scotland staff based at Caerlaverock Castle as Expert Advisors to support the research and integration phase of the consultation. They generously and enthusiastically shared their knowledge and skills while working with the young Heritage ReMixers, who then shared their learning and informed the direction of travel with local creative practitioners resulting in the creative heritage projects trialled in Phase1.

The engagement process of Phase1 resulted in the co-design, production and delivery of the following activities:

- A new 4-week Time Travelling Forest School's programming co-created with local living history expert Simon Lidwell (Wordsmith Crafts), local Freelance Forest Ranger Elizabeth Tindel, Heritage ReMixers and Caerlaverock Primary School.
- A live action role play Dungeons and Dragons adventure which integrated the history lying within the landscape around Caerlaverock Castle. This was co-created with a local Dungeons and Dragons youth group based in Northwest Dumfries as part of a collaboration with LIFT D+G (Lochside is Families Together) and local living history experts Wordsmith Crafts, Medieval Bruce Trust, Wildlings o Galloway/The Gallovidian Way.

- A series of Time Travelling Tarot Cards utilised as engagement tools during focus group sessions.
- Delivery of 3 x Ancestral Suppers which were based upon an unique interactive immersive community engagement model created by The Imaginarium as part of Hidden Histories of Dumfries & Galloway / The Gallovidian Way projects. Using the concept of a Medieval Feast stakeholders and priority audience members were invited to a time travelling immersive focus group with themed interactive participatory appraisal exercises.
- The soundtrack to the Ancestral Suppers was created by one of the Heritage ReMixers team, a young local emerging sound artist Liam Russell.
- The production of a video '[Creative Caerlaverock: The Ancestral Suppers](#)' in collaboration with a videographer Patrick Rooney, to help share the purpose and process of Creative Caerlaverock. This provided digital content that could be utilised as an online engagement tool, raising awareness of the consultation and the wider project.



## Young People's Engagement

### Heritage ReMixers

One of the target audiences for this project is young people and in particular those with no prior experience of heritage or who would not otherwise have the opportunity to take part. Creative Caerlaverock offers huge potential to ensure young people's voices, skills for life and work, wellbeing opportunities and using heritage to support local programmes and priorities such as youth employability are embedded throughout.

Young people in formal education, youth work, employability support programmes, and from an area of deprivation were engaged in this phase of the project. Further to this, 4 local emerging young practitioners from varied backgrounds and disciplines, were integrated into the core project team as part of the young people strand of engagement as 'Heritage ReMixers'. These young people become advisors and content creators for Creative Caerlaverock activity co-designing engagement and consultation in collaboration with the project team at The Stove Network.

As a core part of the delivery team the Heritage Remixers inspired new ideas and approaches and undertook research and development with local creatives and heritage experts.

They co-created the communication strategy and social media presence and consultation methodology. They were also responsible for creating soundtracks to events, the content of promotional videos, researching in the archives, and assisting in the management and delivery of events and activities, as well as helping to compile results for this report.

This offered a wide set of work experiences exemplifying possible employability pathways in the heritage sector, opportunities for integrating and embedding creativity and heritage into their career development. Inspiring consideration of how their skill set could be utilised in the heritage sector, and a better understanding of the breadth of opportunities that lie within heritage.

*“Creative Caerlaverock provided me with an insane amount of opportunities that will benefit my career currently, reignited some old flames in terms of passion, and made me realise that I’m exactly where I’m supposed to be.” - Morgan Love, Heritage ReMixer*



*“It has been a massive progression for me to have been involved with this project, both personally and as a creative professional, to see the sites I know and love come to life through another great passion in my life, sound.*

*I do believe we have only seen the tip of the iceberg in terms of what a creative team can achieve when let loose to paint a new picture of history through a multi-disciplinary approach.”*  
- Liam Russell, Heritage ReMixer

## Caerlaverock Primary School

Creative Caerlaverock’s ‘Time Travelling Forest School’ was co-created with the Heritage ReMixers group, a local forest school ranger, a local living history practitioner, Caerlaverock estate manager, and local primary school teachers from Caerlaverock Primary.

The 4-week interactive programme enabled pupils and participants to explore the site and history of Caerlaverock, how people would have lived with and off the land, and how that has changed over time, due to climate and cultural changes.

Participants learned some basic survival skills, arts and crafts, and gained the knowledge of how to live off and with the land that our ancestors possessed. They explored the sciences associated with these practices such as natural dying, shelter building, clay making, fire starting, sling and trebuchet skills, willow weaving, knot making, and hosting their own mediaeval feast including the learning of mediaeval songs and dances.

After 3 days of delivery to P4-P7 groups Creative Caerlaverock delivered a day of sessions which engaged the full school. Feedback was complimentary around how engaging these sessions were and how there was enough variety of examples presented experientially to connect to different interests of pupils. The teachers expressed how much they had enjoyed the classes personally and how impressed they were at the effective ways of communicating and connecting pupils with their local history the project presented. Teachers particularly liked the crossover of science and art into history and how that worked across curricular activity offering up a variety of different learning outcomes for their classes.

Pupils and teachers reflected that they felt that their close geographic proximity to the castle brought a deeper connection to the history. Stories being shared made it feel more tangible for them and left lots of them expressing desires to find out more and take part in further sessions.



## Dungeons and Dragons Youth Group

Conversations at The Ancestral Suppers uncovered the opportunity for delivery of a co-created Dungeons and Dragons live action role play event. This consisted of a historical and fantasy themed quest around Caerlaverock Castle and woods with interactive activities and challenges bringing the history of the castle to life for local young gamers aged 14-25 from NW Dumfries.

Working alongside local heritage experts and re-enactors (Wordsmith Crafts, Medieval Brice Trust, Wildings O Galloway/The Gallovidian Way) an interactive storyline with themed activities was co-created with the Dungeons and Dragons youth group. These activities included challenges around the use of sling shot and trebuchets; mediaeval combat and defence skills, and interactive engagement with historical characters associated with the castle.

By weaving the history into the mechanisms and challenges involved in delivery of this adventure, activities and interactions enabled participants to experience the history and stories of the castle first hand and bring it to life for participants through immersive learning experiences. The majority of attendees at the event had never visited Caerlaverock before.

Numbers were deliberately kept low as most of the young participants were neurodivergent and felt more comfortable to trial this concept with their own familiar, regular Dungeon and Dragons group of friends. The concept has received many requests to be repeated and expanded, which needs to be explored further with the Dungeons and Dragons group leaders to ensure it is within their comfort zones.

*'Dungeons and Dragons was a wonderful opportunity to share the castle with a group of people who may not have necessarily come into contact with it, despite living close to it. It was also really nice to see them bring their own passion and make the grounds relevant to them. They had a very unique opportunity to bring their imagination and their passion to life with a significant backdrop of the castle, and it feels like just the beginning of what is possible in terms of Caerlaverock and gameplay' - Morgan Love, Heritage ReMixer.*



## Ancestral Suppers (*focus groups*)

Based upon a community engagement concept (The Gallovidian Gatherings) developed by The Imaginarium as part of their work on Hidden Histories of Dumfries and Galloway, the core Creative Caerlaverock team including Heritage Remixers delivered a series of 3 themed focus groups under the title of 'Ancestral Suppers'.

Combining food, music, and live performance, the Ancestral Suppers were themed interactive events (held at Barbour Memorial Hall, Glencaple) and provided a chance for local priority audiences, targeted community members, and key stakeholders to come together to:

- Cast their votes on our participatory appraisal 'Bean Counter' exercise,
- Predict the future of Caerlaverock through our bespoke Tarot Card game
- Discuss issues related to the development of Caerlaverock Castle
- Experience and explore options and opportunities for delivery of Creative Caerlaverock
- Co-create next steps for the project, ensuring robust engagement whereby local community members, stakeholders and key priority audiences were actively co-creating next steps in the projects' delivery.

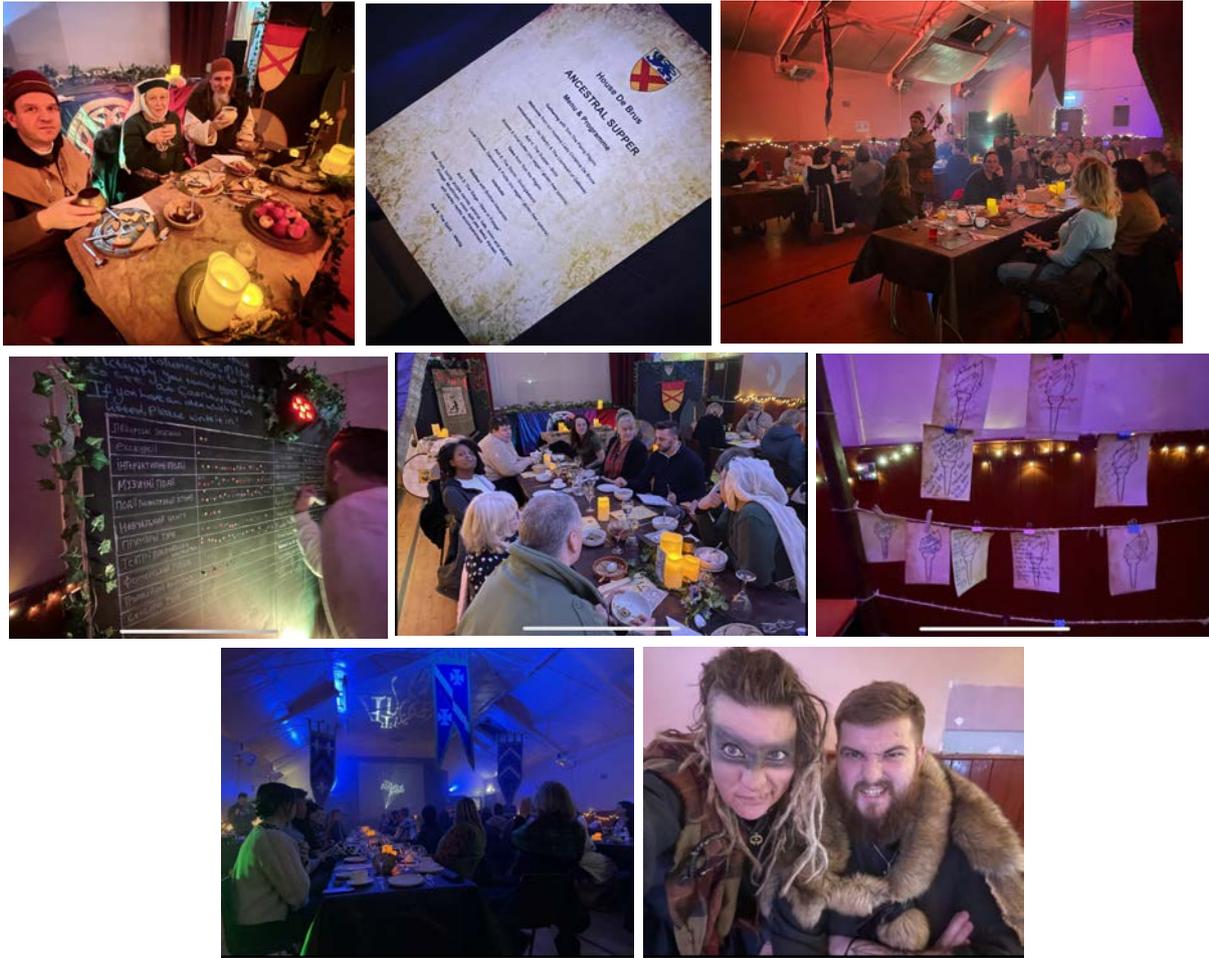
The Ancestral Suppers were immersive time travelling focus groups, which utilised various creative approaches (theatre, living history, re-enactment, themed food, storytelling and music) in the guise of a mediaeval feast. This allowed a range of representatives from priority audiences, key stakeholders, targeted community groups to come together to share food, reflections and discuss their experiences of Caerlaverock, how to maximise its potential, and how to make it more relevant to local diverse communities and stakeholders.

Fusing these creative approaches under the theme of a Mediaeval feast, the team delivered an interactive and engaging set of action research and participatory appraisal methodologies, whilst exemplifying the kind of creative learning mechanisms that could be utilised at Caerlaverock/

In collaboration with chef Marcus Rafferty the core Creative Caerlaverock team co-created a mediaeval tasting menu using historically accurate and local ingredients. Tom Hughes (History to Life), the evenings travelling troubadour, played his ancient pipes and told old stories. Sweetheart Abbey monk, Brother Alexander (Simon Lidwell Wordsmith Crafts), imbued participants with ancient wisdom via the art of riddling and Liz West (The Medieval Bruce Trust) as Lady Christina Da Bruce presented some of the local histories from her time associated with Caerlaverock. Master of ceremonies, Sir Martin of The Stove, joined this band of time travelling Wildlings O Galloway led by The Lionheart of Galloway across each of the 3 Ancestral Suppers.

Across the gatherings (focus groups) a 124 priority audience, community members and stakeholders, attended and honed in on a variety of key themes, concerns and recommendations regarding the future development of Caerlaverock Castle, and its surrounding sites. Participants discussed how best to address barriers and roll out opportunities for increasing the relevance of Caerlaverock in their communities through creative events and activities. This provides a great foundation and platform for delivering Phase2 of Creative Caerlaverock community engagement activities to widen participation from these priority audiences.

An overall conclusion across participants was that living history tours and events (re-enactments, themed immersive events, theatre, music, traditional crafts) were the top option for engaging other members of diverse priority audiences. It was felt that this allows for creative practices to be utilised, is attractive and engaging across different demographics and interests, and is therefore most likely to successfully reach different community members. Priority audiences could be attracted if content of activities were aligned with relevant storytelling such as lesser known, underrepresented histories (LGBTQ+ history, Folklore, Myths and Legends, Migration, BIPOC histories)



**Quotes from Ancestral Supper participants:**

- 'I've never been to anything as engaging as this'
- 'It was so engaging and so clever, such an inspired concept'
- 'That was incredible!'
- 'I didn't know what to expect, but it was amazing. I can't wait to get more involved & help make all this happen'
- 'This research methodology deserves to be researched, it's innovative and impactful - it's brilliant!'
- 'I have to attend A LOT of consultation events, this was by far the best one ever'
- 'WOW! It was amazing'
- 'I had people nearly knocking me over desperate to talk to me about the Ancestral Supper and how great it was. Congratulations!'
- 'You knocked it right out the park'
- 'A triumph!'

**Key Recommendations**

The key themes and associated recommendations that came out strongest across engagement activities with priority audiences during Phase1 were related to the desire for the following types of events and activities and changes to the site. While some of these (particularly in relation to capital works and on-site interpretation, transport, and wayfaring) are out with the specific scope of this project they provide valuable insights that can be fed into wider projects and development:

## 1. Living History: Guided Tours, Storytelling, Traditional Craft Activities, Immersive Experiences

There was a strong desire for living history events and activities as they were felt to provide a range of activities which will ensure the project reaches a good cross section of individuals and communities, especially if they highlight under-represented stories, and everyday life.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The creation and implementation of a year-round programme of living history activities and immersive events, tailored for the projects target audiences which bring in projection, music, theatre etc.
- Themed guided tours with key themes such as After Dark and Dark Tourism related. Suggestions included ghosts, witches, Merlin, myths and legends, dark skies. Other favoured guided tours included foraging, different time periods, historic characters, aligning with seasonal natural heritage such as geese, Tenants Tours, and lesser-known or underrepresented histories associated with the site such as The Covenanters. Suggestions were also received that thematic tours could be targeted at specific groups using relatable, relevant historic content such as young mothers and children and LGBTQ+

## 2. Upgrades / Additions to Onsite Provision

There were frequent requests for the upgrading or addition of improved transport to the site, wayfaring, and under-cover outdoor spaces onsite at Caerlaverock.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The creation of some large communal multi-functional covered spaces or shelters (to get out of rain, support picnicking, workshops ) with additional seating introduced around the site (seating was felt to be sparse)
- Improved wayfaring across entire Caerlaverock Peninsula including Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Caerlaverock Estate, Historic Environment Scotland, as current signage was not felt to be effective
- New interactive wayfaring system created with integrated technology to allow location specific audio tours for example - *\*this is being explored as a result of these Phase1 Creative Caerlaverock conversations in collaboration with Caerlaverock Estate.*
- There is a need for better transport links such as improved cycle routes, more frequent buses, or the creation of an additional 'heritage bus' provision to service the site more frequently.

## 3. Interactive Audio and Visual and Extended Reality experiences

It was felt that this could add a significant layer to learning experiences, particularly if done to a high standard and representative of diverse stories and histories

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Interactive multi-channel Audio Trail with various themed choices of trails such as witches, myths legends, nature, historic events and characters (self-guided tours and soundscapes)
- Integrated audio trail into new wayfaring signs in collaboration with Caerlaverock Estate
- Boost connectivity to allow greater ability to roll out AV / XR provision
- Projection and 3D Mapping on the Castle as backdrop to music or theatre events
- Immersive interactive events

## 4. Costs / Paywall / Accessibility

Given Creative Caerlaverock's priority audiences access to the site and its events and activities can be a barrier for low-income families. Accessibility could include ensuring subsidised transport is available to the site to ensure that costs do not prohibit those who could benefit from it as a space of sanctuary. Many Creative Caerlaverock participants had never been to the castle before due to the barriers associated with lack of transport and costs. It should be noted though that learning groups and those taking part in Creative Caerlaverock projects and activities will continue to benefit from the Historic Environment Free Learning Visits Scheme but that this requires a local group or organisation to organise.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Utilise transport grants and make more available
- Make complimentary jousting tickets available to appropriate groups in the long term and ensure that local groups and communities are made aware of these
- Ensure there is a good programme of free and low cost or pay it forward activities
- Try to provide or put on additional transport to events
- Continue discussions relating to new cycleways and other options for additional bus timetabling (Heritage Bus)
- Support site visits for target groups

### 5. Better Promotion / Marketing

Participants reflected that poor marketing, and irrelevant interpretation on site were key areas for improvement. The current interpretation is framed around dates, military history, and is aimed at tourists and not local communities or interests. Local communities have shown to prefer interpretation which allowed them to connect with the human everyday stories and folklore associated with the castle.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Work with local community groups and partners to co-create a refreshed new approach to how Caerlaverock could be promoted.
- Work with creative practitioners to tell and make visible more diverse stories of Caerlaverock. A writer (potentially in residence) for example and graphic designer could co-create content and produce an array of Creative Caerlaverock products such as zines, guides, maps, wayfaring that would be more appealing to priority audiences.

### 6. Annual Calendar of events

There was repeated need expressed for an annual calendar of activities that would allow people to plan visits for family and friends and allow for local people to get familiar with and feel ownership of a local cultural programme of events and activities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a full calendar of all open access community events relating to the castle and its surrounding area (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Caerlaverock Estate) and make better use of local partnership events such as Wild Goose Festival. Trial and test activities that allow community members to directly influence provision of activities and events that could widen participation from other members of priority audiences
- The Opportunities section of this report proposes a potential programme of events and activities that would be attractive and engaging for priority audiences.

## Opportunities

Creative Caerlaverock Phase1 identified, initiated, and investigated opportunities for possible future collaborations with priority audiences, local schools, community organisations, creative/heritage practitioners and local stakeholders. This has created a foundation, platform, and an initial programme for ongoing community engagement with our priority audiences.

Key opportunities on offer:

- Integration with redevelopment plans currently underway with Caerlaverock Estate which will help address the infrastructure and wayfaring issues raised by local community members
- Co-creation of a varied programme of events and activities which has been offered support from a wide range of local groups and organisations such as Mostly Ghostly, Dark Skies Ranger and Wildings O Galloway
- Opportunity to co-create audio visual work based around projections and mapping with local sound artists
- Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival are keen to utilise Caerlaverock as a space and venue for delivering some of their performing arts that fit with the themes associated with Creative Caerlaverock.
- Upland would be interested in the creation of an Artist in Residence at Caerlaverock.
- A group of multi-timeframe local re-enactors collectively represented as 'The Wildlings O Galloway' via 'The Gallovidian Way' are eager to offer guided tours and interactive, immersive experiences on various themes, times, and historical focuses associated with Caerlaverock.
- Cycle Dumfries are keen to offer support and collaborate to improve some of the access and transportation issues associated with Caerlaverock Castle
- Caerlaverock Primary School are keen, and open to further collaborations, which can also be shared with their sister Primary School, Brownhall.
- Dungeons and Dragons Youth Group (part of LIFT D+G) are keen to be involved going forward, and to evolve and extend their pilot event
- Local women's groups are keen to explore ideas during Creative Caerlaverock in two ways.
  - 'Tenants Tour' hosting a casual 'shared walking tour' that involves present and former tenants, current on-site staff, other current users of the space (dog walkers, etc), and Creative Caerlaverock staff to share stories and re-vision the site. The goal of this would be to 'reframe' the site through the eyes of those who have lived there, and to attempt to change the visioning of the site from something that is all about the past to something that is used and lived in.
  - They are also keen to develop a project which involves co-creation and use of textiles as part of a performative work, alongside more historical investigations where participants could learn about the history broadly, some info about textile weaving and dying, and specifically the pottery shard/s that have been found on site .
- Local community members in Caerlaverock geographic area are keen to evolve a local oral history project relating to traditional crafts, huff netting, biodiversification and changes in land use such as country skills, farmers skills, local women's stories, local myths and legends and capturing stories associated with the landscape directly around the castle. This is also of interest to Caerlaverock Estate who are in a key position to be a conduit for this part of the project
- The creative learning and engagement activity undertaken so far has uncovered multiple opportunities for learning experiences and audience engagement at the castle which could feed into and influence development plans. This includes building the case for Castle Cottage to become a hub for Creative Learning and ongoing collaborative activity as a

resource for local community-led programming. Further exploration of this could be incorporated into future Creative Caerlaverock activity and help to influence other projects focused on castle infrastructure.

## Conclusion

Phase1 of Creative Caerlaverock activity has successfully begun to engage priority audiences and key local stakeholders. It has allowed the project to identify common themes and desires across diverse local audiences and provided the foundation for the creation and roll out of an activity programme for the next stage, Phase2, of Creative Caerlaverock. Phase2 will help widen opportunities for participation and address barriers for priority audiences further as well as continuing to implement an ongoing community engagement strategy which will ensure the relevance, co-creation and co-design of Creative Caerlaverock as it evolves.

The Phase1 engagement process demonstrated the types of activities and partnership projects that are possible in connection to Caerlaverock Castle and its surrounding area. It has built opportunities for future collaborations with local priority audiences, community organisations, creative practitioners, expert heritage advisors, key local stakeholders, and schools, and created the right environment for strong cross sectoral partnerships to emerge.

The process taken, and its positive outcomes, emphasises the potential and benefits of utilising varied creative practices to share heritage and using it as a source of inspiration for creativity and links to contemporary themes important to our target audiences. It has engaged a cross section of people, particularly reaching those who do not usually engage with their local history, and highlights the importance of integrating a supported community engagement element into the delivery.

*'I was going to retire but all this has got me so excited I now want to stay on to be part of it.'* - Ancestral Supper Participant

*'This work is needed across the entire region's heritage sector.'* - Ancestral Supper Participant

## Next Steps for Creative Caerlaverock

- Revisit engaged groups, potential partners and associated community groups, and identify a programme of projects and activities that demonstrate a diverse approach across priority audiences tailored to their specific learning needs and ensures their ongoing engagement
- Ensure Activity Plan for Phase2 is delivered in alignment with Creative Caerlaverock Engagement Methodology
- Continuation of the establishment of co-creation processes which include ongoing Ancestral Suppers feedback sessions with representatives from key priority audiences
- Explore and expand engagement opportunities that can be delivered in collaboration with key local partners such as Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival, Caerlaverock Estate and Upland
- Explore the potential for engagement around creative learning resources and capacity within the wider castle grounds and estate, engaging shared destination partners within the Caerlaverock peninsula

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