

Welcome to Caerlaverock National Nature Reserve, managed by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Mudflats stretch away under wide skies, shifting with each tide. Along the shore, plants that can stand the wash of sea water build a fringe of saltmarsh. Wading birds delve for food in the mud in autumn and winter. In summer flowers and glasswort contrast with the blue and grey tones of the Nith Estuary National Scenic Area. Caerlaverock is a place of constant change, and part of an international conservation success story.



Glasswort

Photographs by Iain Gill/SNH, Nick Geddes/SNH, Annelise Cleburn/SNH, James Conner. Map by Ashworth Maps and Interpretation.

Getting there

Caerlaverock NNR is on the north shore of the Solway Firth, south-east of Dumfries. Take the B725 south from Dumfries to Glencaple/Bankend, following the east bank of the River Nith. From Annan-Gretna, turn left along the A75 towards Clarencefield then right onto the B725 before Ruthwell. The car parks at Hollands (DG1 4RS) and Castle Corner (DG1 4RU) are signposted Caerlaverock NNR and both have cycle racks.

Need to know

Permitted wildfowling takes place within the designated area shown on the map at dawn and dusk from Monday to Saturday between 1 October and 20 February each year. No wildfowling takes place on Sundays during this period. Please keep dogs under control at all times, particularly between March and August during the bird breeding season, and don't forget to clean up after them. Avoid any cattle you see on the merse: they are unused to people and can be dangerous. All paths are liable to flooding during the highest tides of the year so please check the local tide tables also displayed on the Reserve.

For more information please contact:

Scottish Natural Heritage, Greystone Park,
55/57 Moffat Road, Dumfries DG1 1NP.
Tel: 0300 067 3200.

Support this NNR at www.nature.scot/donate-nnr

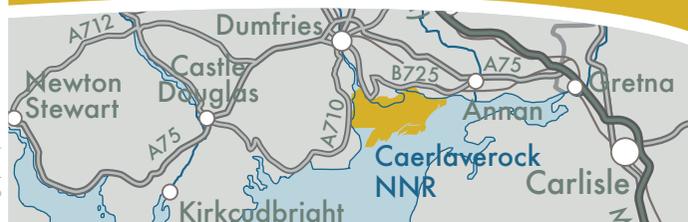
www.nnr.scot



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
nature.scot



Scotland's National
Nature Reserves



Scottish Natural Heritage
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba
nature.scot

Caerlaverock

National Nature Reserve



VISIT



Scotland's
National Nature
Reserves

Leaflet © SNH 2017. ISBN: 978-1-78391-302-2.

All Scotland's National Nature Reserves change with the seasons. At Caerlaverock, a dramatic transformation happens twice a day: 90% of the Reserve is flooded at high tide. Its shifting mud banks are full of shellfish and worms, providing food for nearly 140,000 wintering birds like pintail, shelduck and oystercatcher.



Geese on the wing

Closer to the shore the fragile stems of glasswort, or samphire, glow green against the dull silt. The roots of this pioneer plant bind the mud together so that other species can grow to form the full assortment of saltmarsh plants locally called 'merse'. This plant community is established around the landward edge of the estuary and is best seen between Castle Corner and the Hollands merse close to the mud.

From late September to early May, huge numbers of barnacle geese spend the winter on the Reserve as it gets too cold in their summer home of Svalbard, north of Norway, in the Arctic Circle. Together with pink-footed geese from Iceland, they roost on the mudflats during night time before commuting to feed on nearby fields at first light.

During the summer months a variety of ponds, pools and open water habitats provide ideal conditions for invertebrates and amphibians. On a warm summer evening, if you are lucky, you may hear a croaking natterjack toad in the distance or catch a glimpse of a prehistoric tadpole shrimp in the murky saltmarsh pools.



Visitors at Castle Corner viewing platform

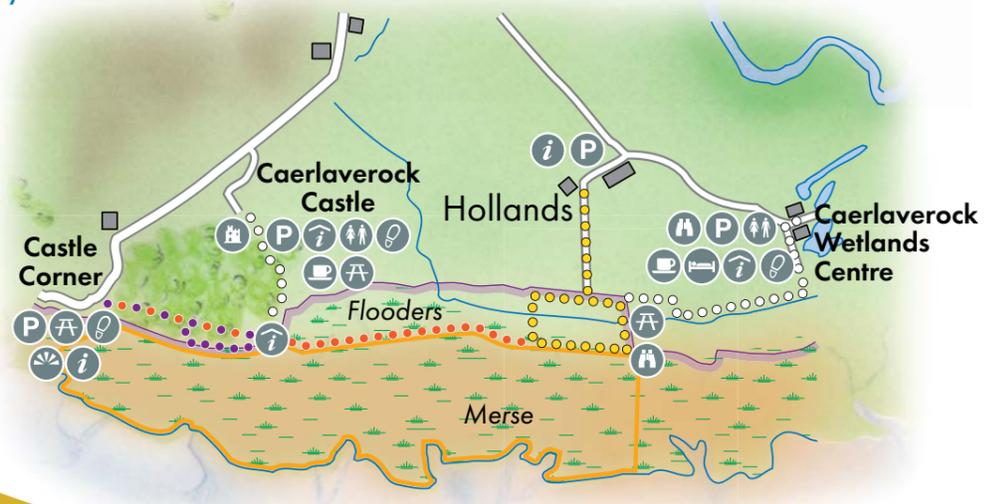
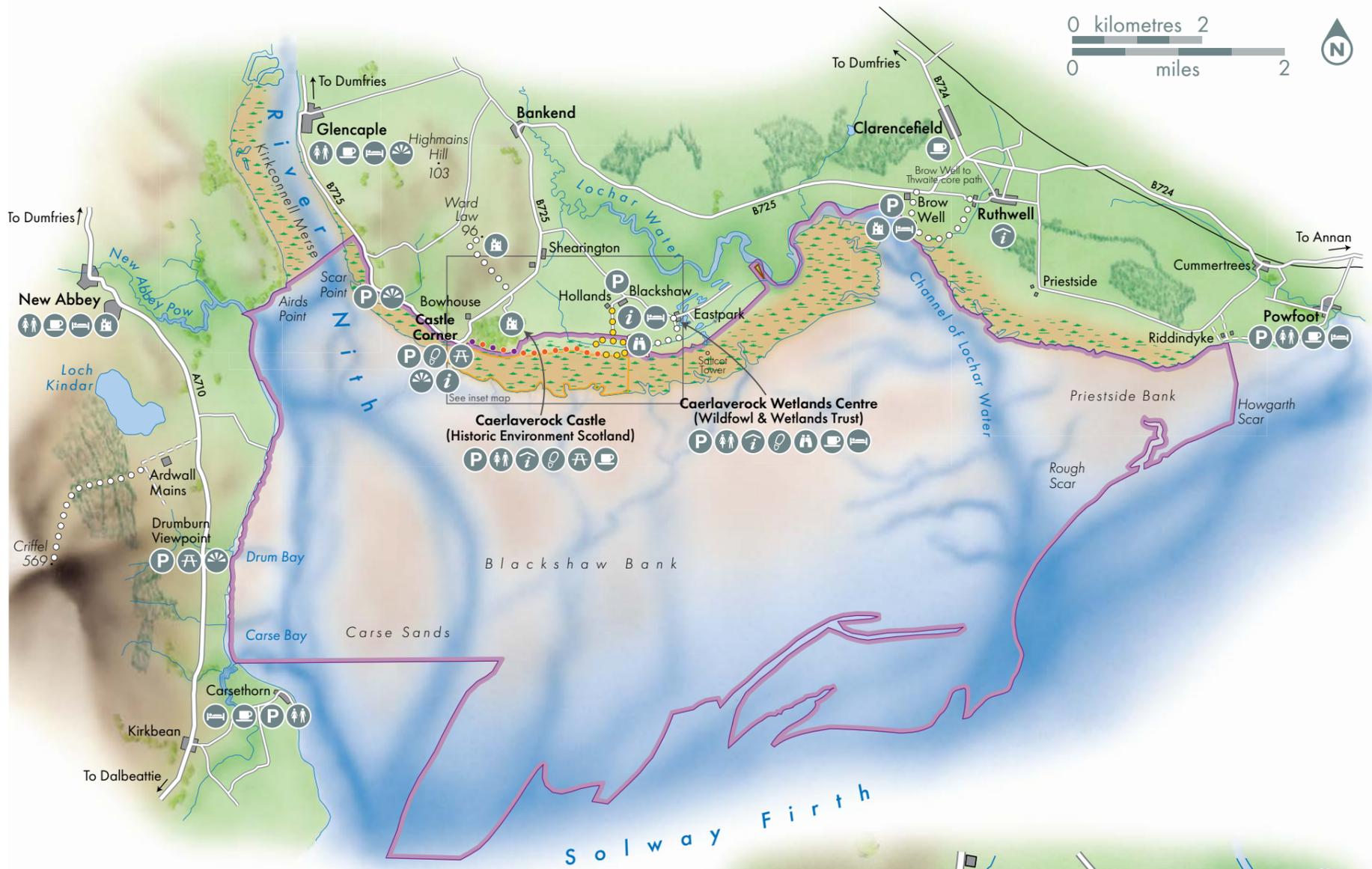
The shifting mud banks of Caerlaverock are driven by the estuarine tides of the numerous channels of the Lochar Water and Nith Estuary. This dynamic landscape is also influenced by people through a unique combination of land uses.

The Duke of Norfolk, who owned the land and set up the Reserve in 1957, was ahead of his time in recognising the need for conservation, farming, fishing and wildfowling to work together in a sustainable and harmonious way. Continuing the Duke's vision, cattle still graze the merse in the summer months to keep the grass short for the geese and toads. Fishermen known as 'haaf netters' still wade into the River Nith on the falling tide to catch salmon and other fish. This traditional way of fishing was brought over by Viking settlers along the Solway Firth. Wildfowling also comes to the Reserve by dawn and dusk in the autumn and winter to enjoy the benefits of the Caerlaverock NNR Wildfowling Permit Scheme.

Iconic Belted Galloway cattle at Fishers' Bush (near Scar Point)



Although other visitors may find this range of activities contradictory it has proven to be a successful mix. The 1,000 barnacle geese that arrived on the Solway in winter in the 1950s are now protected and have increased over time to almost 40,000 individuals.



Way to go

○○○ Redbed Ramble

Follow the signs through the farmyard to reach this circuit. The boardwalk there will take you through reedbeds to the edge of the merse. Watch and listen for warblers that flit through the reeds in the summer. The bird hide on the south-east corner of the walk overlooks the merse where thousands of wading birds feed and roost during the winter high tides.

A flat path with sections on firm gravel that is grassy and uneven in places and can be wet, boardwalk and rough boggy grassland where the path is narrow. Two short steep slopes over a hummock to access the merse.



1¼ miles /
2 km
Allow
1 hr

●●● Woodland Wander

Castle Corner is a great place to watch the sunset over the estuary of the river Nith, with the granite mass of Criffel hill in the background. Take a walk to the hexagonal shelter of Caerlaverock Estate and have a rest by the edge of the Reserve. On the way you will find nice views through the trees and bushes of the merse and mudflats. The path through Castle Wood will lead you to the Caerlaverock Castle path.

A mostly wide, occasionally narrow, firm gravel path. Generally flat with a couple of short fairly steep slopes. A little muddy in places. Several big tree roots sticking through the path surface which are slippery when wet.



1 mile /
1.7 km
Allow
½ hr

●●● Merse March

Try this longer route that links Castle Corner with the Redbed Ramble walk to get a real feel for wilderness. It follows the sea wall between the Flooders and the Merse. The route can be very wet at times, and even submerged during exceptional winter tides. Wellington boots are recommended.

A grassy, rough, boggy and wet, narrow path.



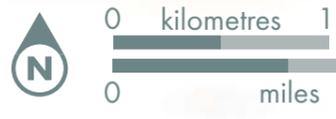
1¼ miles /
2 km each
way
Allow 1 hr
each way

Caerlaverock Castle

Caerlaverock Castle and Grounds are managed by Historic Environment Scotland (HES). The dramatic moated castle, visitor centre and café can be reached on foot from the Woodland Wander trail. Open daily 9am to 5.30pm, admission fees apply, free to HES members.

Caerlaverock Wetlands Centre

Caerlaverock Wetlands Centre is a nature reserve run by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT). It has a visitor centre, café, shop, toilets and car park. Excellent viewing towers, observatories and hides look out onto the merse and mudflats of the NNR and WWT inland ponds and wet grasslands. You can reach the centre from the link path from the Flooders. Open daily 10am to 5pm, admission fees apply, free to WWT members.



- Reserve boundary
- Parking
- Toilets
- Information centre
- Walks
- Picnic area
- Bird hide
- Historic structure
- Refreshments
- Accommodation
- Viewpoint
- Information point
- Redbed Ramble
- Merse March
- Woodland Wander
- Other path
- Permitted wildfowling area (Sept-Feb)
- A road
- B road
- Minor road
- Track
- Railway
- Merse
- Wetland
- Mudflats
- Mixed woodland
- Conifer plantation
- 569 Height in metres

© Ashworth Maps and Interpretation Ltd 2012. Based on Ordnance Survey mapping. © Crown copyright and database right 2012. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number SNH 100017908.

KNOW THE CODE BEFORE YOU GO
SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE outdooraccess-scotland.scot