

# CLIMATE CHANGE CASE STUDY

## RESPONSIBLE RETAIL AT CAERLAVEROCK CASTLE



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD  
EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA



Responsible  
Tourism



# INTRODUCTION

At Historic Environment Scotland (HES) we are committed to ensuring that heritage contributes to better places for people to live in and visit while reducing our negative environmental impact across the organisation. As part of this commitment, we have been implementing Responsible Tourism principles through our 'Made in Scotland' retail offer.

Tourism is a major component of Scotland's economy. However, it is also a major contributor to the nation's carbon emissions. In 2018, tourism was responsible for around 8% of all global carbon emissions.<sup>1</sup> In Scotland, consumption of goods, materials and services accounts for around 80% of the carbon footprint.<sup>2</sup> With the majority of our staffed sites featuring gift shops providing visitors with an opportunity to buy goods, we recognise our role in responsible consumption.

As part of the HES Retail Strategy, we identified eight sites where we could focus on a 'Made in Scotland' offer, with the aim that 80% of the products stocked in these locations would be produced in Scotland. We also focused on 'Made in Scotland' offers at our flagship stores, and in March 2022 we refurbished our gift shop at Caerlaverock Castle as our pilot site. Historically, a proportion of goods across the HES estate have been imported from abroad, often with limited connection to surrounding communities. Creating our 'Made in Scotland' offer allows us to reduce emissions from retail, increase local economic benefits and respond to visitor expectations.

This case study looks at the key findings from the move to a more local retail offer at the Caerlaverock Castle shop. It provides an insight into how this type of initiative can benefit our environment as well as our communities.

<sup>1</sup> [Carbon Footprint of Tourism - Sustainable Travel International](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Carbon Cost - Zero Waste Scotland](#)

## Key findings

- Responsible retail can play an important role in lowering our environmental impact through better packaging, more sustainable products and shorter travel miles.
- The changes have strengthened the connection between Caerlaverock Castle and the local community, providing more local economic benefits.
- While visitors found some items slightly more expensive, they also appreciated the higher quality of items and more authentic picture of our communities and culture.
- Since reopening, the Caerlaverock Castle shop has exceeded its financial targets. This proves that a responsible change in retail can be made while remaining commercially viable.

**'It is great to see how HES is recognising the value of locally made products.'**

Clare Dawdry, local supplier

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

According to Visit Scotland, 28% of Scots express concern that tourism offers little benefit to local people.<sup>3</sup> In reality, tourism at heritage sites can and should serve as a central pillar of their surrounding communities. We are dedicated to supporting local businesses and aim to ensure that by 2027, 60% of the products sold in our shops will be made in Scotland and at least 50% of our sites will offer locally produced goods.

### Supplier story

In search of more locally made products, HES sought out makers like Clare Dawdry, who founded We Make Pots in 2004. Having grown up in the area, Clare is now based in Kirkpatrick Durham, where she runs her pottery business.

Clare's products have been stocked in the Caerlaverock Castle shop since the 'Made in Scotland' launch in 2021. With a focus on conveying the local land and seascape through her work, these ceramics offer visitors a perfect example of authentic local storytelling and sense of place.

Our move to more locally sourced products has delivered improvements to the local economy. This is something Clare has started to see through her work being sold in our shop. While not a large number, there have been several people who have gone on to visit the We Make Pots studio after seeing her products at the castle. This more circular approach of people spending more time in one place, fully discovering everything an area has to offer, benefits makers like Clare and the wider community as well.



Fig. 1. Pottery products for sale in the Caerlaverock Castle shop made by the We Make Pots studio.

<sup>3</sup> [Scotland Residents' Views on Responsible Tourism - VisitScotland](#)



# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

## Reducing carbon footprint

A 2017 report from conservation charity WWF found that around half of the UK's true carbon footprint is created abroad from goods which are then imported.<sup>4</sup> With increased globalisation, the buying of non-local products has contributed heavily to our carbon footprint, especially through transportation, with products shipped and flown into Scotland from across the world. We also have little influence on how these products are made or the materials used throughout the process.

Stocking local products in our shop means that HES can reduce the carbon emissions that would come from transport as they no longer need to make this journey. Our local products all travel a much smaller distance from their places of origin to Caerlaverock Castle than many products we previously stocked. For example, the ceramics made by Clare Dawdry are delivered to the Castle shop by either her business or a local courier from Dumfries.

## Reducing packaging

Packaging waste has a large negative environmental impacts. The UK produces around 12.7 million tonnes of packaging each year, of which around 8 million tonnes are recycled.<sup>5</sup> At Caerlaverock Castle, our 'Made in Scotland' offer is helping us to reach our target of a 50% reduction of plastic packaging waste generated by our retail activity.

South West Soaps, a local business, has been supplying the Caerlaverock Castle gift shop since the implementation of 'Made in Scotland'. Their soaps are made locally, with natural ingredients, and do not include palm oil (a product often linked to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and increased greenhouse gas emissions).<sup>6</sup> They are delivered and stocked with zero use of plastic packaging. The HES retail team has led other initiatives across the estate to reduce product packaging or cut down on the use of plastic. The impact of these can also be seen at Caerlaverock Castle. The team worked together closely with our suppliers, who share our ambition to reduce environmental impacts while maintaining high-quality products. As a result, plastic hooks on scarves have been replaced by cardboard ones, our magnets are no longer wrapped in cellophane wrap, and new carrier bags made from sugar cane have been introduced.

4 [Half UK's true carbon footprint created abroad - The Guardian](#)

5 [UK Statistics on Waste - UK Government](#)

6 [Palm oil - WWF](#)



Fig. 2. South West Soaps are displayed with zero plastic packaging.

## WHAT OUR VISITORS THINK

It is an important aspect of responsible tourism to provide visitors with authentic experiences while safeguarding the sense of place that makes somewhere unique and special. At Caerlaverock Castle, we have focused on local products, providing our visitors with a higher quality experience when visiting our gift shops.

By doing so, we are also responding to visitor demand for reducing emissions to help address climate change, and for directing more economic benefits to local communities.<sup>7</sup> Visitors care about helping those in the areas they visit and wish to be more responsible in how they act when travelling. Buying local allows visitors to benefit the communities that they visit, while in return receiving authentic, high-quality products.

Feedback received from Caerlaverock Castle through the visitor survey indicates that the 'Made in Scotland' offer is well received by visitors. From June to December 2023, the higher quality of the items now on offer was often mentioned.

Products from small local businesses tend to be more expensive than mass-produced, imported items. This is due to the higher cost of materials and slower rates of production. Our visitor feedback confirms that this is a concern for some visitors, with the price of items being mentioned alongside the quality. HES employees at Caerlaverock Castle are proactively addressing these concerns by speaking to visitors about the community and environmental benefits associated with these slightly more expensive items. This message is also reinforced by signage within the shop. Staff have noted that this does change visitors' perceptions and makes them more positive and supportive. This underscores the importance of storytelling and personal engagement, offering reassurance to organisations considering similar changes.



Fig. 3. Signs with information about the producers are displayed alongside local products.

**'The items on sale in the gift shop were very apt.'**

Visitor

**'Exactly what I was after.'**

Visitor

<sup>7</sup> [Scotland Residents' Views on Responsible Tourism - VisitScotland](#)

## CONTINUED GROWTH

While it is essential that the changes made by HES benefit both the environment and local communities, it is equally important for the organisation to remain commercially viable. This enables us to reinvest in and protect Scotland's historic built environment. Caerlaverock Castle demonstrates that we can achieve these goals.

During Caerlaverock Castle's first full year of trading after the refurbishment of the retail space in 2022/23, the shop has delivered promising results. Although we are currently working with limited data, early indicators validate the changes HES has made. For the financial year 2023/24 the shop exceeded its financial targets by 28%, and it is on track to increase income by another 12% in 2024/25. Relative to the total sales, we have seen an increase in the proportion of 'Made in Scotland' products being sold, from 36% in 2021/22 to 53% in 2023/24. This 17% increase reflects a significant rise in the popularity of the 'Made in Scotland' offer. Additionally, the successful increase of 'Made in Scotland' product sales highlights that 'going local' is financially viable.

One caveat when comparing data from 2021/22, prior to the retail refurbishment, is to acknowledge the stronger impact of Covid restrictions during that period. These restrictions resulted in fewer visitors and consequently reduced spending within the shop. However, the continued year-on-year increase in the proportion of 'Made in Scotland' products that are sold demonstrates that the new focus has been the right decision for Caerlaverock Castle. This contributes positively to HES's operational income whilst supporting local business.

Currently, 63% of HES retail suppliers are based in Scotland. At Caerlaverock Castle, 57% of the items on sale are part of the 'Made in Scotland' offer, and they form 53% of sales.

### Country origin of products in Caerlaverock Castle shop

- Scotland, ~55%
- Finished in Scotland, ~2%
- Scottish Company, ~18%
- UK Company, ~13%
- Unknown, ~7%
- UK, ~4%
- Finished in UK, ~1%
- World, ~1%

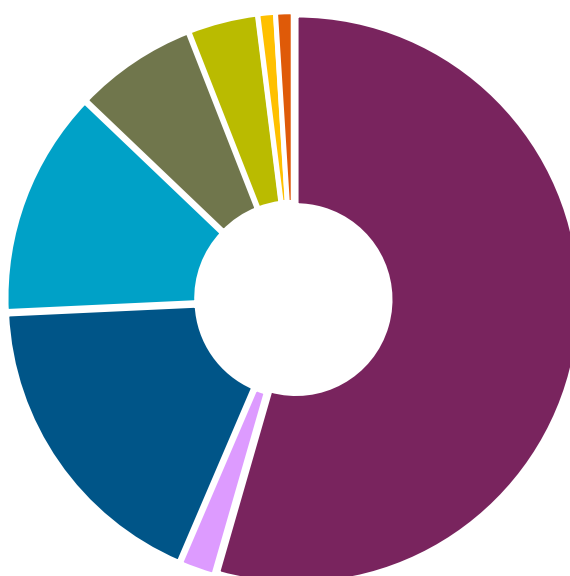


Fig. 4. The percentage of products from different origin countries. The 'Made in Scotland' products include 'Scotland' and 'Finished in Scotland'.

## CONCLUSION

Caerlaverock Castle exemplifies how we are integrating sustainability into our operations while supporting local communities. Through the 'Made in Scotland' offer, retail has contributed to reducing our carbon footprint by cutting down on transportation emissions, sourcing products locally and minimising packaging. These efforts align with the HES Climate Action Plan and demonstrate that responsible tourism can be environmentally and socially beneficial.

Beyond the environmental and social impact, this initiative strengthens local economies by prioritising sustainable procurement practices. It encourages deeper community involvement with heritage sites, reinforcing a sense of place and pride in local history.

As HES continues to roll out the 'Made in Scotland' offer to more of our properties in care, these benefits will expand, helping to achieve our long-term objectives. The initiative serves as a model for other organisations and businesses in Scotland and beyond, promoting sustainable change and the importance of buying locally.

While we have made great progress with the 'Made in Scotland' initiative at Caerlaverock Castle, we remain committed to further reducing plastic waste and minimising our carbon footprint across all our retail stores.

## OUR WORK

The 'Made in Scotland' offer supports our wider organisational objectives outlined in the HES [Climate Action Plan](#), the [Responsible Tourism Framework](#) and the Retail Strategy. These aim to support our organisation in transforming its business model to reflect the principles of responsible tourism. We try to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability are central to everything we do so that tourism's benefits can be enjoyed by all without detriment to communities or the environment.

### About the author

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Former Responsible Tourism Trainee

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Responsible Tourism Coordinator and  
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## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

This case study forms part of a series of Climate Change Case Studies. It is part of our work to reduce our environmental impact as set out in our [Climate Action Plan](#).

Our Climate Action Plan outlines how we intend to work towards making our organisation more prepared for, and resilient to, changes in our climate, while also playing a leading role in supporting the Scottish Government to meet its ambitious climate change targets.

To find out more about this and other Climate Change projects, please contact our team:

E: [climatechange@hes.scot](mailto:climatechange@hes.scot)

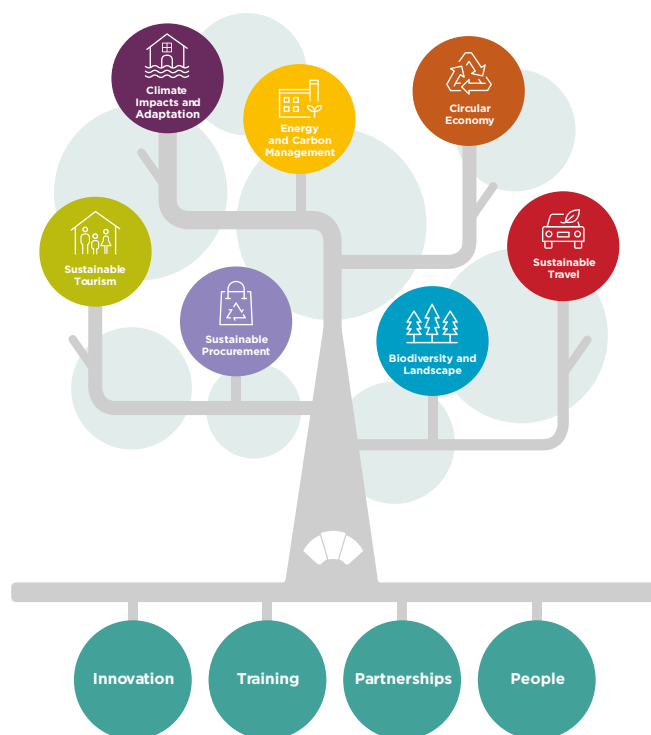


Fig. 5. HES Climate Action Plan themes.

## HES RESOURCES

We have a variety of research, guidance and information covering a range of topics relating to the historic environment. These are all free to download from our website: [Historic Environment Scotland publications](#). They include the following series:

### INFORM Guides

Leaflets giving a brief introduction to over 50 subject areas of historic environment conservation, maintenance and repair.

### Short Guides

Our Short Guides give a more detailed overview of best practice techniques when working with historic buildings. Topics include energy efficiency, repair and maintenance, climate change adaptation and micro-renewables.

### Refurbishment Case Studies

This series details the findings from our on-site work trialling and testing techniques for the repair, maintenance and upgrading of traditionally constructed buildings and components. Topics include energy efficiency works, retrofitting, and techniques and materials.

### Technical Papers

These papers cover the results of technical research carried out or commissioned by HES. They include topics such as thermal performance of traditional windows, U-values and traditional buildings, keeping warm in a cool house, and slim-profile double glazing.





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