New free winter carnival to light up Dumfries and Galloway

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Major expansion of Dumfries & Galloway Carnival announced for January 2027

A spectacular free winter celebration featuring large-scale light installations, music, street entertainment, food, family activities and a major town-centre parade will return to Dumfries in January 2027 as Dumfries & Galloway Carnival enters an exciting new chapter.

Building on several years of successful community carnival projects and the Northern Lights programme, the event is set to become one of Scotland's largest free winter celebrations, bringing together thousands of people from across the region in a vibrant showcase of creativity, community and culture.

Running from 29–31 January 2027, Dumfries & Galloway Carnival will feature a spectacular carnival parade through the heart of Dumfries alongside immersive light experiences, live performance, music, food and family activities. The event will involve 26 schools from across the region as well as community groups, artists, volunteers and performers from every corner of Dumfries and Galloway.

Schools throughout Dumfries and Galloway, including Sanquhar, Moffat, Annan, Castle Douglas and Newton Stewart, will begin rehearsals and creative workshops in September as part of a five-month build-up to the event.

The announcement comes as organisers confirm that Big Burns Supper has completed its remarkable 15-year journey, allowing the organisation to focus its energy on a growing programme of large-scale, community-led cultural activity.

Founder and Producer Graham Main said:

"*Big Burns Supper achieved more than we ever imagined and we are incredibly proud of the impact it had on Dumfries and Galloway over the past fifteen years. What excites us now is the future.*

Over the last few years, we have seen extraordinary growth in our carnival projects and Northern Lights programme. Thousands of people have become directly involved in creating, performing and participating in these events. The response from communities across the region has been phenomenal.

Dumfries & Galloway Carnival represents a new kind of cultural celebration. It is free, accessible and built by the people who take part in it. From school pupils and community groups to artists, volunteers and visitors, everyone has a role to play.

We want Dumfries & Galloway Carnival to become a winter tradition that belongs to the whole region."

Alongside the carnival procession, visitors will experience the Northern Lights Dumfries trail, featuring large-scale light installations and immersive experiences throughout the town centre, helping transform Dumfries into a winter destination for residents and visitors alike.

Organisers believe the expanded carnival model will increase participation, strengthen community ownership and create new opportunities for people of all ages to engage with culture and creativity.

Justin Hyslop, Chair of the Board of Trustees said:

“Some people may see the end of Big Burns Supper as the end of something. We see it as the beginning of a new chapter. The organisation is continuing, and many of the programmes that people know and value will continue to thrive, including Dumfries Community Choir, Producers of the Future, Northern Lights and Dumfries & Galloway Carnival.

What is changing is not our commitment to culture, creativity and community, but how we deliver it. This transition allows us to build on everything we have achieved over the past fifteen years while creating a sustainable future that enables more people across Dumfries and Galloway to take part, contribute and benefit."

While Big Burns Supper has reached its final curtain, the organisation behind it is continuing its work with renewed focus, developing year-round creative programmes and investing in ambitious community-led events that celebrate the talent, diversity and imagination of Dumfries and Galloway.

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Over its 15-year history, Big Burns Supper welcomed artists including KT Tunstall, Donovan, Deacon Blue, Morcheeba, Keb' Mo', Nicola Benedetti, Bill Bailey and Ed Byrne. Festival favourites such as Skerryvore, Eddi Reader and Camille O'Sullivan became regular highlights, while the organisation's award-winning production *Le Haggis* became one of its most celebrated creations, reaching thousands of audience members each year.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisation successfully pivoted to digital delivery, sustaining Burns Night celebrations at a time when live events were impossible. Major online programmes included *Janey Godley's Big Burns Supper*, which attracted more than 330,000 viewers worldwide and helped create what is believed to have been the largest Burns Night celebration in history.

Dumfries & Galloway Carnival will run from 29–31 January 2027, with the Carnival Parade taking place through Dumfries town centre on Saturday 30 January at 5pm.

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