

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place (actually from West Manse)

Keeping the folk of the North Isles ward informed — with Orkney's only councillor newsletter

Success! Albeit I had to concede a year's extension to my deadline, but at the General Meeting on the 7th December, my Notice of Motion, now reading "That the Council install as soon as practicable, but not later than the end of 2023, a 20mph zone or speed limit on the roads in the vicinity of each of those schools in Orkney that still do not have one", received unanimous support. A potential source of finance for the project has been identified within OIC's "Renewable Energy, Redevelopment & Regeneration Fund". I wish to thank my counter-signatories, Councillors Richards, Sankey, Scott, Cowie, Heddle, Craigie and Dawson, and I am grateful for the support I have received from parent councils and from Police Scotland. The lead-up and conclusion was extensively reported on *BBC Radio Orkney* and (not particularly accurately) in *The Orcadian*. If I am re-elected in May, I shall be working to ensure this deadline is met, so that Isles' pupils (North and South) will enjoy the same road-safety standards as are normal elsewhere.



Photograph by Wulfric Clackson

We had a full-on Policy & Resources Committee agenda, necessitating an additional "special" meeting to get through all the business. It was heartening to hear about a proposed new waste facility that "will enable the collection of a greater range of materials from both the Mainland and island communities and assist to moving towards an equitable service to all areas of Orkney". I said I would be keeping an eye on things to ensure that commitment to island communities and an equitable service to all areas of Orkney is not forgotten. I am aware that island recycling facilities are currently not being emptied in a timely manner, and I have been speaking to officials about this. If you see that a unit is about to fill up, please contact the Council on 01856-873535 without delay, or e-mail customerservice@orkney.gov.uk.

I've had a couple of other "behind the scenes meetings" with officials. A meeting was arranged between me and the senior leisure staff to discuss the situation with the Isles' swimming pools, and I've met Kane Davidson, our new Airfield Manager. Kane is appealing to Eday folk to apply to become airfield attendants, because if fewer than 3 trained personnel are available for duty at the airfield, flight operations cannot take place, and extra staff are also needed to cover for sickness and holidays.

I have been to two Christmas-tree lighting events. One was in Sanday and the other in Shapinsay, where the community council had invited me to speak. I told the crowd assembled outdoors about the origin of the Christmas tree, which goes back to AD 723 and the Devonian Saint Boniface, "Apostle to the Germans", who has a church dedicated to him on Papa Westray.

Also "made in Devon" (in AD 1973) is the *Golden Mariana*, which is back doing sterling service while her Norwegian replacement (built AD 2012), *Nordic Sea* undergoes repairs.

At a public ("Teams") meeting of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group, I asked the Stakeholder Manager of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority whether he will be engaging with communities north of the Pentland Firth when it comes to distributing socio-economic benefits. He said he will arrange a meeting with me.

Other meetings I have attended "virtually" this month include a Special Education, Leisure & Housing Committee meeting; a confidential meeting of members and the Chief Executive; and the community council meetings of Shapinsay, Stronsay, Eday, and Papa Westray.

We still have a few more meetings before the Christmas recess, the last being a Special General Meeting on 23rd December. After that, on 12th January, some of us will be gathering ("virtually") with community council transport reps at the Air Forum and Ferry Forum meetings, to set timetables for next winter, to discuss transport service problems, and to try to initiate improvements. I've already mentioned our new Airfield Manager; we also have a new Ferry Services Manager, Helen Inkster.

May I wish everyone in the North Isles a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year!

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