

## Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place ("blended" from West Manse)

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



At our last Monitoring & Audit Committee meeting, we scrutinised the latest Council internal audit report. It contained the illuminating paragraph: "Data published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), within its document entitled "Local Government Finance: Budget 2021-22 and provisional allocations to local authorities", showed the provisional Revenue allocation for Orkney to be £3,712 per head. This being £532 less than Shetland's settlement and £91 less than Eilean Siar (Western Isles) per head. Adjusting for differences in how ferry funding is carried out, the Council estimates that it receives around £673 per head lower than the Western Isles. Stated in another way, if Orkney was funded in the same way as the Western Isles, it would receive around £14.9 million more each year to deliver Council Services." Definite discrimination!

The Scottish Funding Council has said the UHI cannot continue to exist in its current form, comprising 13 distinct entities. At the Orkney College Management Council briefing meeting, we were presented with a thought-provoking options appraisal for the UHI and a strategic review for the College. (My thoughts on the UHI's future appeared in *The Orcadian Postbag*, 7<sup>th</sup> Oct.)

The Scottish Government's "Islands Team" gave us a seminar on the Scottish Government's "Island Bond" (about which I made comment in my August *Letter*), and I did not hesitate to make my views known to the "Team". There is an unfairness in their proposed scheme, and the potential to generate disharmony and cause division in communities came across strongly.

Our General Meeting was the first since March 2020 to be audiocast live—a step back to normality. We approved the appointment of the Rev Fraser Macnaughton (the Church of Scotland's nomination) to our Education, Leisure & Housing Committee. Under statute, there are places for 2 further religious representatives on the ELH Committee. OIC advertises for these periodically, but for as long as I have served on ELH, through lack of applicants, these positions have never been filled.

I had to attend the meeting of the Rousay, Egilsay, Wyre & Gairsay Community Council "virtually", but I was able to go to the meeting of the Stronsay School Parent Council in person. Among the topics discussed was the desire for a 20mph zone around Stronsay School. Also, I asked about plans for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, which will take place from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June next year. At our last Policy & Resources Committee meeting, we agreed to shift the 2022 May Day holiday to the 2<sup>nd</sup> June for the Jubilee. (I remarked that Orkney is stingy with only 10 annual public holidays compared to Glasgow's 12.) The Platinum Jubilee will be a truly historic event, as no British monarch has ever had one before. I don't know if the French King Louis XIV had one, or King Rama IX of Thailand, or Fürst Johann II of Liechtenstein, but they all reigned long enough.

In the wake of the fatal stabbing of MP Sir David Amess, councillors have been contacted by COSLA, Police Scotland, and directly by the Chief Constable about our personal security when in contact with the public, including a checklist from the Counter Terrorism Intelligence Unit. Fortunately, in my over 9 years of being your representative at School Place, I have (with one solitary exception) always been treated by every member of the North Isles' public with the greatest courtesy and respect, and I have reciprocated by always doing my utmost to address their concerns. Long may this state of affairs continue.

I was honoured to be asked to represent OIC at two events commemorating the sinking of HMS Royal Oak 82 years ago, in which my Uncle Ronny was a casualty. The first was the dedication of a new clapper and tassel for the ship's bell in Kirkwall Cathedral (photograph above). See the film at: <https://www.facebook.com/TheOrcadian/videos/579597216613418/?t=13> The second was the laying of wreaths on 14<sup>th</sup> Oct at the memorial at Scapa and in the sea at the buoy marking the wreck in Scapa Flow. It was a very rough morning, making the handling of the wreaths devilishly difficult. On the way back from the buoy, I was allowed to take the helm of our new pilot vessel *Scapa Pathfinder*. (Photo credits: *The Orcadian* and James Budge.)

*Stephen*

CLlr Dr Stephen Clackson,  
West Manse, Sanday  
[stephen.clackson@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.clackson@orkney.gov.uk)

You can download *Letter from School Place* from [ifsp.pbworks.com](http://ifsp.pbworks.com)



CLlr Clackson at the helm of the pilot vessel *Scapa Pathfinder*