

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

Regularly reporting on the exploits of your councillor in Kirkwall, the North Isles, and beyond.

I have now succumbed to Covid-19, having avoided becoming infected since the beginning of The Pandemic. It was on a trip to accompany my younger son, Dunstan to the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award Celebration at Holyrood Palace. I must have picked it up from all the public transport I was travelling on. Given the number of cases around, it's getting harder to avoid.

Also at the DofE Award Celebration was Meri Robinson (née Beale), another alum of the Sanday Duke of Edinburgh Open Award Group, which has been steering Sanday's young people through the DofE Award Scheme for nearly three decades (see my *Letter* issue 110). The Scheme not only has a positive impact on the lives of its participants, but it also engages the wider community and, through its volunteering section, helps support community facilities. I would heartily encourage communities on other islands to follow Sanday's example and to set up their own DofE open award groups.



Dunstan stays in Glasgow. So while I was there with him, we took the opportunity to visit Sighthill Cemetery and seek out the name of a possible rebel relative of ours, one William Clackson, on the *1820 Martyrs' Monument*. William was sentenced to death for his part in the "Radical War" (which sought to force the government to enact Luddite protective restrictions) but this was subsequently commuted to transportation to New South Wales, and 15 years later he was granted an absolute pardon.

At the first meeting of the new Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board, I was honoured to be appointed (unopposed) its Vice-Convener. This recognises my long experience as a member of the Board and my principled approach. I look forward to working together with the new Convener, SIC Councillor Stephen Leask, to move the Board on from the dark place it was in.

Close to the start of our summer recess, other meetings I have attended (some by "Teams" on account of my having Covid) are: a confidential members' session; a follow-up discussion on Isles' primary medical care cover (involving, among others, Liam McArthur MSP, the Chief Executive of NHS Orkney, and representatives from the Scottish Ambulance Service); and the final General Meeting of all councillors before the start of the next "council year". Unfortunately, my Covid infection prevented me from attending the reception with the elected members who retired in May. During the recess, I attended the inaugural meeting of the newly-formed First Responder (Isles) Group, which brings together OIC, NHS, SAS, Police, and Fire & Rescue.

Few of us are satisfied with the level of our ferry services. As a result of a public petition, The Scottish Parliament is now undertaking a major enquiry into current and future ferry provision in Scotland and is calling for YOUR views. These should be submitted at <https://yourviews.parliament.scot/nzet/modern-sustainable-ferry-services/> by the deadline of the 26th August. It is crucial that we make OUR views known, so that it's not only the Scottish-Government-supported services that get considered.

A legacy from our "caretaker" Prime Minister, Boris Johnson is the chance to reinstate our indigenous imperial units, and there is a consultation on this at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/choice-on-units-of-measurement-markings-and-sales> (deadline also 26th August). Modifying a quotation from Anthony Burgess: "This beautiful and venerable mensural complex should not be abolished in favour of a demented abstraction that is a remnant of the French revolutionary nightmare." Called by Peter Hitchens "Jacobin toe-counting units", the metric system works well for chemistry but it is cumbersome for cookery.

Have a good summer,

Cllr Dr Stephen Clackson
 Member for the North Isles Ward
 Vice-Convener Orkney & Shetland VJB
 West Manse, Sanday
stephen.clackson@orkney.gov.uk

Letter from School Place is also available on-line at clackson.info

