

# Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

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

A combined effort by North Isles' & South Isles' community councillors, North Isles' & South Isles' OIC councillors, and local people with medical training has succeeded in convincing Orkney Health & Care to drop for the time being its plan to exclusively use the NHS24 telephone service for out-of-hours medical cover. I've been involved in a follow-up meeting on this and another meeting of the First Responders (Isles) Group. In Orkney Health & Care's *Annual Performance Report 2021/22*, it is interesting to note that 92% of people in the Isles are recorded as having a positive experience of care at their GP practice (compared to 88% for Orkney as a whole, and a Scottish average of only 67%). Long may it remain this way, or even improve!

There has been no let-up in meetings in the approach to Christmas. I went to Destination Orkney's tourism conference and attended a seminar on tourism in Orkney; took part in a procurement session, a confidential members' briefing, a seminar on the Council's capital programme, a General Meeting, and a Special General Meeting (following a special meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee). The Orkney NFU treated us councillors to a very informative presentation on Orkney agriculture.



In the week before the big snow up there, I spent two days in Shetland with the Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board (O&SVJB), attending meetings and a training session. The Orkney members were kindly given a tour by our hosts of *Mareel*, a multi-purpose entertainment venue and arts centre. Being a member of the O&SVJB gives a few, lucky OIC councillors the opportunity to engage with our counterparts in Orkney's parallel universe. The formal Board meeting was held in SIC's new chamber in the former St Ringan's Church in Lerwick. It is dominated by a massive table (see photo above) that would surely make Vladimir Putin envious. Too long to be practical, in my opinion. If it wasn't for the webcasting set-up, people at one end of the table would have to shout or use a megaphone to be heard by those at the other end! In the photo below, you can see the two Stephens who now lead the Valuation Joint Board: me (Depute Convener) and Shetland's Stephen Leask (Convener).

In the Isles I have attended a meeting of Shapinsay Community Council, Westray Community Council, and delivered a speech at the lighting of Sanday's Christmas tree.

Let's see what 2023 will bring.

*Stephen*

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**Letter from School Place** is also available on-line at [clackson.info](http://clackson.info)

(Photo credits: John Ross Scott)

