

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

A monthly report on the exploits of your councillor in Kirkwall, the North Isles, and beyond ...

This month started with a trip to the recently-opened Life Sciences Innovation Centre in Inverness to attend a meeting of the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI) Foundation, on which I serve as OIC's representative. One of the presentations given was on the health research currently underway at the UHI. "One health" is a theme—a triad combining healthy people, healthy animals and a healthy environment, particularly with respect to water quality. Quite apart from agriculture and aquaculture being major users of steroids and antimicrobials, pharmaceuticals and their metabolites enter the environment through human excretion. The accumulation of pharmaceuticals in water is having an impact on aquatic life, for example oestrogens causing sex-change in fishes. Ibuprofen is turning up in the food chain (ominously reminiscent of the ecological accretion of DDT described in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*). Aside from the obvious health implications, water purity is important for the Scottish economy, because it is promoted as a selling-point by both distilleries and breweries.



I have also (privately) been down this month to view the Glasgow School of Art (GSA) Degree Show, at which work was being exhibited by my younger son, Dunstan (on the far right of the above photograph of me and my four children). Entirely coincidentally to the aforementioned presentation at the UHI Foundation meeting, a student of communication design at the GSA had been working on branding to counter the frivolous attitude to wastewater release. I reproduce one of their stickers below, for which the inspiration is fairly obvious.

Continuing on the tertiary education theme, our meeting of the Education, Leisure & Housing Committee was heavily focused on Orkney College, its governance arrangements going forward, proposed operating principles, strategic plan, and its academic partnership with, and position (as Scotland's last local-authority-owned college) within, the UHI.

I attended a seminar on support for learning. I am a great supporter of support for learning, and some of you may remember my victory on May Day 2018, when, at the General Meeting, I succeeded in reversing an OIC budget cut of £65,000 affecting additional support for learning. As well as in the newspapers and on telly, it was reported in the [May 2018 issue of my Letter](#).

Other meetings I've attended lately include: Monitoring & Audit, Policy & Resources, and the Backaskail Car Park opening.

It is good that enough folk stepped forward to ensure that all our North Isles community councils are now back at full strength.

I had a grand day out at the North Isles Sports in Stronsay. This was a golden opportunity for me to catch up with constituents from a large part of my ward all congregated at the same location. Contestants came from all of the Outer North Isles (maybe I could use the term "aeroplane-linked isles") with the exception of Eday. Well done to Westray for winning the Millennium Cup and School Football, Sanday for winning the Senior Football and Senior Netball, and Stronsay for winning the School Netball and Tug o' War, and congratulations to Millie Dennison (*Best Girl*), Ruari Towrie (*Best Boy*), Grace Muir (*Best Woman*), and Connor Marcus (*Best Man & Best Adult*). A huge thanks is owed to all those in Stronsay who made the day possible and to Orkney Ferries for overcoming the breakdown challenges to get everyone there and back again.

Congratulations are also due to Council Leader James Stockan for being appointed an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours List for his services to local government. Anybody may nominate someone to be considered for such an award in recognition of their service and commitment to their community. Details on how to do this can be found on the following webpages: www.gov.uk/honours and www.orkneylieutenancy.org.uk/honours. The important thing is that the nomination has to be submitted while the nominee is still actively involved in what you are nominating them for. I suspect quite a few deserving cases have slipped through the honours net because folk only think about nominating them after they have retired.

The answer to last month's arithmetic question is *£54 3s 2d and 1 farthing* (which you will note corresponded to a ratio of 1:7). I blame decimalisation and metrication for our national decline in arithmetic ability.

Our councillor recess begins soon. Here's wishing everyone a good summer,

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

Credits: Family photograph by Holly Leslie; sticker by Dycha Lo.

