

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

A regular report from your councillor, who supports 20mph speed limits for our schoolchildren's safety.

As I step out of my front door at this time of year, I am reminded of *The Garden of Flowers*, the second of the *Sanday Revival Hymns*, published in Edinburgh in 1861 for “the members and adherents of the Sanday Free Church Station by one of their deacons”—assumed to be the folklorist Walter Traill Dennison (1825-1894). Here is the first of its six verses:

*O ye saints of the Blessed, no longer be dumb,
As a garden of flowers has our island become;
Where the bud and the blossom are rich in their bloom,
And it scenteth the air with a balmy perfume;
Let the prayer to the Father of mercy be ours,
That it may not be only a garden of flowers.*

The park around the West Manse (formerly the manse to the Free Kirk, the epicentre of the Sanday Revival) is annually carpeted with daisies, buttercups, orchids, cowslips, and many other blooms, although the cowslips would not have been there in Dennison's time, having been introduced from the banks of the River Clyde by the Rev Walter Forrest in the 1920s or '30s.

Our final General Meeting before the recess was probably the longest on record, the business taking a total of 1 hour and 41 minutes. Of course, the big item was the Council Leader's notice of motion that had been making international news, to seek alternative governance arrangements for Orkney. Fearing this was beginning to enter the realms of an *Ealing Comedy* (“*Passport to Pierowall*”...?) and heeding the warnings voiced by my wise and experienced colleague, former OIC Convener and current Vice-President of CoSLA, Cllr Dr Steven Heddle, I voted with Cllr Rev David Dawson's amendment against the motion, but we lost 6 votes to 15. A subsequent further amendment by Cllr Heddle was incorporated into the motion, which will help inject some sobriety. I seconded a notice of motion by Cllr John Ross Scott concerning “vapes”, and this was passed.



As reported in *The Orcadian* 29th June, at a special meeting of the Development & Infrastructure (D&I) Committee (of which I'm not a member), rather than endorsing the recommendations to approve the traffic order to install **20mph speed limits around Isles schools**, the Committee approved an amendment to reject the traffic order and re-allocate the funds designated for it to projects unspecified. This undoes over two decades of lobbying by some communities which had culminated in my unanimously-passed notice of motion of the 21st December 2021: “*To 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 does not have one*” (see [Issue 107 of my Letter](#)). Following my pre-notified amendment to the General Meeting (see *The Orcadian* 13th July), Cllr Dawson, Chairman of the D&I Committee agreed to take the item back for reconsideration. This will take place at the D&I Committee meeting of the **5th September**. The other members of the D&I committee are Councillors Bevan, Hall, Leask, Manson, Peace, Skuse (Vice Chair), Stockan, Thomson, Tierney, Tullock, & Woodbridge, **should you wish to lobby them** in advance of that meeting.



Shortly before the start of our councillor recess (7th July to 20th August) we welcomed our Shetland colleagues to Orkney for a meeting of the Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board. Our next meeting will be after the recess in Shetland.

Congratulations to Eday Primary School on its recent inspection report, and well done to its staff.

On 6th July, I accompanied my younger daughter, Frideswide to Holyrood Palace to attend a celebration event for those who have achieved their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. There were four other recipients present who had also been members of the Sanday DofE Open Award Group: Kacey Brown, Ethan Lennon, Cameron McPhail, and Jasmine Walker. Also with us was Rosemary Newton MBE, joint founder and 30-year stalwart of the Group (see [Issue 110 of my Letter](#)). We were lucky to catch a brief audience with the new Duke of Edinburgh (HRH Prince Edward), who knew all about the planning done around Rosemary's kitchen table. The five recipients at this one ceremony represent 1% of the population of Sanday. The Duke told us that only 0.1% of the entire UK population has ever received a Gold Award, which just shows how exceptional our islands can be! (The photograph below shows me, Rosemary and Frideswide with one of the High Constables of Holyroodhouse.) The following day I was at Glasgow University, a proud father at the graduation of my younger son, Dunstan.

Now it's time for me to make the most of our councillor recess and get all those jobs done at home which, in the hurly-burly of council business, I never manage to find the time for.

Stephen

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

