

# Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

*A report from your councillor in the month the MV Golden Mariana retires after 50 years of service.*

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I was invited to attend the meeting of the Development & Infrastructure Committee (of which I am not a member) for the item on 20mph speed limits at Isles schools. This was the item I had referred back to them for reconsideration at our last General Meeting ([Letter issue 126](#)). Barely 11 weeks after their decision to reject the traffic order, this time the committee approved it unanimously! I put this down, not only to the responses from the island community councils, but also to lobbying from parents and members of the public. This demonstrates the power of public persuasion in local politics. Well done to everyone who engaged—it worked! The 11-week hiatus has caused delay, but installation of the mandatory variable 20mph speed limits around the island schools should, hopefully, be completed not too long after the deadline specified in my original notice of motion ([Letter issue 107](#)), i.e. the end of this year. I am aware that communities want more control over the times that the variable speed limits are in force, and I fully support this. However, this may require an additional traffic order. Nevertheless, the current traffic order will get the infrastructure in place, and modifications can be made in due course.

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The House Working Group met to decide on the placement of the official portrait of The King when it arrives. This may seem a little esoteric, but it is pertinent, as citizenship ceremonies are held in the council chamber.

The new Health & Wellbeing Member/Officer Working Group met for the first time. The purpose of this group is to consider how best to monitor the health and wellbeing of Orkney's children, particularly with respect to the correct questions to ask them in order to obtain the necessary information.

The Constitutional Reform Consultative Group has met at last—15 months after the start of the new council. I wish we had been convened well before the 4<sup>th</sup> July General Meeting ([Letter issue 126](#)) and the lodging of that Notice of Motion by Cllrs Stockan & Woodbridge calling for alternative models of governance for Orkney. This included, among other things, investigating possible Nordic connections, a suggestion subsequently embarrassingly rebuffed by Norway. The notice of motion was picked up by the world's media, and this has provoked dubious "offers of help." Someone recently contacted councillors proffering assistance in exchange for our making him "King of Orkney"! The Constitutional Reform Consultative Group was set up in order to keep our ambitions for constitutional reform within the bounds of reality. It is regrettable it was disrespected and bypassed.

At a meeting of the Education, Leisure & Housing (ELH) Committee, I was pleased to be able to congratulate publicly the acting head teacher on the good HM Inspectors' report received by Eday Primary School & Nursery Class. I visited the school in May ([Letter issue 124](#)), and I saw the good work being done by the staff there. Although at ELH I brought up the problems of damp at an island school, there is a good piece of news I can impart about our school buildings, namely that RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete), which has led to emergency closures of schools throughout the UK, has not been used in any council building in Orkney.

Along with a good many island transport reps, I attended the Inter-Isles Ferry Services Consultative Forum and Inter-Isles Air Services Consultative Forum at School Place. New transport reps may not be aware that they are entitled to reimbursement of their travel costs to attend these meetings, and that claim forms are available at the meetings. Just make sure you retain some proof (e.g. the tickets or receipts) of what you spent on your travel.

Other Council meetings I've attended this month include 2 meetings of the Monitoring & Audit Committee, a long meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, and a confidential members' meeting with the chief executive.

I've been doing a virtual tour of the North Isles, attending meetings virtually (not my favourite way of doing it) of the community councils of Rousay, Egilsay, Wyre & Gairsay; Westray; Shapinsay, and a meeting of Westray Parent Council. I've even virtually been to Thurso to attend a meeting of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group.

The summer is ended, and we are not saved.  
(What did Jeremiah mean by this?)



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

