

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

A monthly report from your councillor—the grit in the Orkney Islands Council oyster.

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I am pleased to be able to report that contracts have now been awarded for the installation of the 20mph speed limit signs around all of the schools in the Isles, north and south, inner and outer. Unfortunately, as I warned, the shenanigans at the Development & Infrastructure Committee this summer (see *issues 126 & 128*) have delayed completion of most of them beyond the deadline of the end of this year specified in my original notice of motion (*issue 107*). It is expected that the first will be completed on time and the last by next summer.

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Some of you might have heard of *The Register of Persons Holding a Controlled Interest in Land* (RCI), which was established by *The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016*, but many won't have, as it's been notoriously badly publicised. Launched on the 1st April 2022, it requires all persons with controlling interests in land to be recorded. These include individuals subject to contractual or other arrangements, partnerships (e.g. farms and even firms of solicitors), trusts, and incorporated bodies (e.g. clubs and associations). The deadline for registration was extended, and now the 1st April 2024 is the date from which it will be a criminal offence punishable with a fine of up to £5000 not to register if required to. I am currently, through OIC, investigating where community councils owning property stand regarding registration, and I urge development trusts, community associations, and other voluntary organisations to look into their respective situations, as I wouldn't want their board members and trustees unwittingly falling foul of the law. Guidance can be found online at <https://kb.ros.gov.uk/>.

Rubbing salt into the wound of my cancelled flight last month (reported in *issue 129*), Loganair has received a second award: *Domestic Airline of the Year* by the Scottish Passenger Agents' Association (SPAA)! Much more serious than the wound of my inconvenience, however, is the fact that NHS flights have been affected, both those for taking Orkney patients down to Aberdeen for scans and treatment, and those bringing consultants up to Orkney. This is totally unacceptable, so if you have missed an appointment on account of a cancelled flight, do not hesitate to complain to Loganair, even if it was the NHS that was paying for the flight.

At the Education, Leisure & Housing Committee meeting, my request was approved to formally include in the updated "Allocations Policy for Papdale Halls of Residence" arrangements for Isles' pupils to reside (when capacity permits) at the Papdale Halls in order to attend school-linked educational events such as the annual intensive courses offered by the OIC Instrumental Music Service. The Care Inspectorate's rules govern who may stay at the Papdale Halls, and they're very prescriptive and restrictive, which I know can be extremely frustrating.

On the wider issue of accommodation on the Orkney Mainland for Isles college students, trainees, apprentices, and others, I'd like to throw down a challenge to all the Isles development trusts to collaborate on establishing an "Isles Hostel" in Kirkwall to provide reasonably-priced, basic, overnight lodgings for Isles residents. I will be happy to write letters of support for this (as I have done for many other island development trust projects).

Other meetings I have attended at School Place this month include: confidential members' meetings; a meeting of the UHI Orkney Stakeholder Group (successor to the Orkney College Management Council); a seminar and pre-meeting on exploring alternative models of government; a budget seminar; a meeting of the Monitoring & Audit Committee; and a seminar on the Islands Growth Deal.

I have also been to meetings of Sanday Community Council and Stronsay Community Council in person, and I shall be returning to Stronsay for their Parent Council meeting. As I have said before, I am not an enthusiastic "Teams" player, and I prefer to be physically present at meetings rather than on a screen. Therefore, I shall be endeavouring to get back into the habit of travelling out to Isles meetings, particularly as the weather improves.

Many of you will already be using the Orkney Ferries Telegram channel to receive ferry disruption and cancellation messages. If not, you can use this link to join the channel: <https://t.me/+zT0CUIAaYLtjNzA8>. Hot off the press: OIC has introduced a new service to allow folk to receive updates on the Churchill Barriers via Telegram (useful if you're taking Banks's cat south). You can link to it using this URL: https://t.me/oic_roads.

Christmas is coming, and I hope your geese (or turkeys) are getting fat.

Cllr Dr Stephen Clackson

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