

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

A monthly report from your councillor, who's been working to improve road safety for our island children.

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The first 20mph speed-limit signs are appearing in the Isles! It is satisfying to see my Notice of Motion of 7th Dec 2021, and the desire of island communities for many years, at last becoming a physical reality. Thankfully, I was able to counter the attempt last summer to jeopardise the project (which I wouldn't have been able to do, had the folk of the North Isles not re-elected me in May 2022!). Hopefully, all of Orkney's island schools will have their 20mph limits in place by this summer, raising the standard of road safety for island schoolchildren to the level long enjoyed by those on the Orkney Mainland, and representing the norm almost everywhere else in the country.

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A hiatus in council meetings conveniently coincided with the fortnight around the celebration of my father-in-law's 90th birthday in Germany. He was presented with flowers by the Bürgermeisterin (a role I've performed myself from time to time in Orkney). I attended the meetings of the Ferry Services Transport Forum and Air Services Transport Forum from Germany by "Teams", and the Internet link was better than I've experienced from Sanday!

Heavy snow stopped some members and officers from attending the meeting of the Education, Leisure & Housing Committee in person, but I was there. I asked if we could have a full Island Communities Impact Assessment next time early learning and childcare (ELC) is reported, as currently these services are limited on some islands (in terms of suitable accommodation and workforce), and councillors need more details.

At the meeting of the Monitoring & Audit Committee, the head teacher of Eday School was praised for her hard work implementing the improvements "required to enhance the effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control." I visited the school last May, where I saw the good work being done by the staff there.

OIC's new chief executive, Oliver Reid is working his way around Orkney and getting to know the county. Ute and I gave him a brief tour of Sanday between planes. We introduced him to various people, showed him some of the island's facilities, and discussed community concerns. I believe the next island on his list is Eday.

At the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, my amendment was successful to retain the second-home council tax discount exception of 50% (that I instigated 5 years ago) which applies *where a person's sole or main residence in Orkney is separated from their place of work by a body of water, the transport provision over which does not permit daily commuting between their sole or main residence and their place of work, and where they occupy a second home in Orkney to enable them to maintain that employment.* This will protect those eligible from a quadrupling of the council tax on that second home, and keep viable their work arrangements that make it possible for them to stay in the Isles and contribute to the sustainability of the communities there. I am grateful to Cllr Kristopher Leask for seconding my amendment and to the other seven councillors who voted for it.

Other meetings I've attended at School Place include a budget seminar and a confidential members' briefing.

This month we have said "Gudbuy T' James" and "Hello Heather" as Leader of Orkney Islands Council.

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

