

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

Reporting back on the exploits of your councillor both at home and abroad.

The SNP Scottish Government's former *Business Ambassador for Scotland*, erstwhile member of the *Global/Scot* business network, and recipient of an honorary doctorate from Robert Gordon University has won a second term as President of the United States of America. This bizarre scenario (far stranger than fiction) puts me in mind of the title of the 1926 novel* by Orcadian author Joseph Storer Clouston (1870 – 1944)! I am so thankful I live in a monarchy.



Luggage lockers in Germany. Orkney should have them too.

During our "mini-recess" coinciding with the school October holidays, I went to a family gathering in Germany. (The photo below was taken at the Rock*Pop Museum in Gronau in Westfalen.) It is instructive as a councillor to compare local services abroad with ours at home. For example, railway stations in Germany have luggage lockers (see photograph above) which would suit our ferry waiting rooms at Kirkwall perfectly. These ones were manufactured by Locktec (www.locktec.com/en).

At the meeting of the Education, Leisure & Housing Committee, we learnt that North Ronaldsay School received a satisfactory report from His Majesty's Inspectorate. I congratulated Mrs Mackenzie at the meeting, and say well done to everyone else involved. Following a parent's representation to me, I enquired whether Pickaquoy Centre facilities are made available to pupils staying at the Papdale Halls. The Committee was told this is currently being looked into.

At the Monitoring and Audit Committee meeting, we were informed that in the year 2023/24 OIC received 329 compliments compared to 192 complaints. These figures demonstrate that we must be doing more right than wrong, which is reassuring.

Councillors were treated to several seminars this month, on topics as diverse as the Community Development Fund, harbour infrastructure, and SSEN's interconnector project. We also had a joint finance presentation from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and the Improvement Service at which "islandness" was a significant theme. I also dropped into a drop-in session on the Orkney Community Wind Farm Project, which included a poster on the proposed Faray turbines.

Other meetings I have attended since my last [Letter](#) include: an Orkney Health & Care briefing session; a catch-up with the Council Leader; confidential members' briefings with the Chief Executive; a First Responders meeting (you may have seen my comments on the policy of the Scottish Ambulance Service in *The Orcadian*, 24th October); and meetings of the Constitutional Reform Consultative Group and the UHI Orkney (formerly Orkney College) Stakeholder Group.

Although fog nearly thwarted my attempt to fly to Papa Westray to attend their community council meeting, this time it did not succeed.

I wish all readers of my *Letter* a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Stephen

Cllr Dr Stephen Clackson
Member for the North Isles Ward,
Depute Convener Orkney & Shetland VJB

West Manse, Sanday
stephen.clackson@orkney.gov.uk

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available on-line at clackson.info



Photo credits: Stephen Clackson & Dunstan Clackson

* "The Lunatic in Charge"

