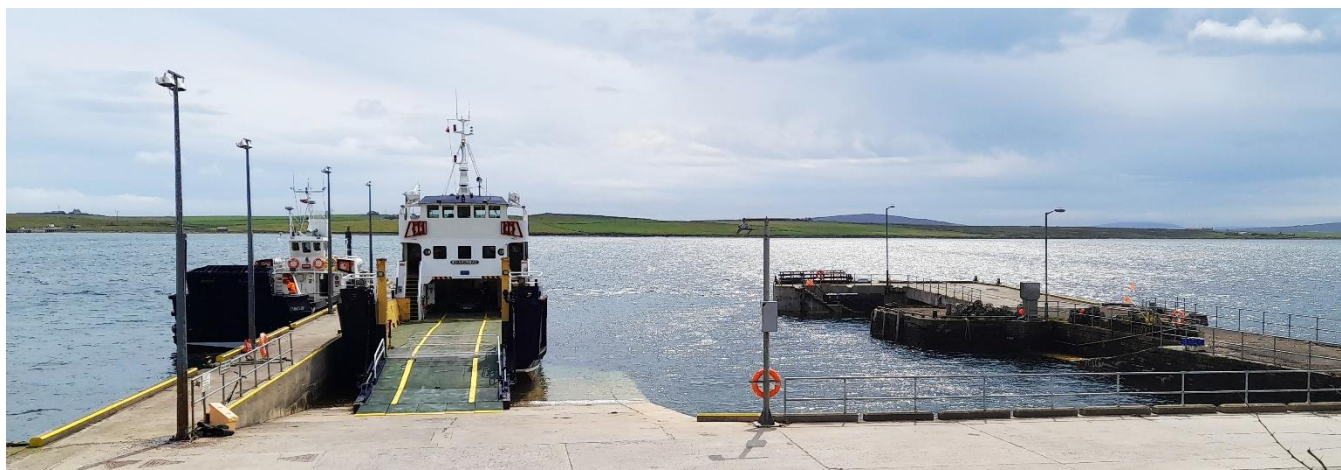


Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

— *Isles-based with an international outlook.*



MV Eynhallow and MV Shapinsay at Brinian

I spent a great Saturday morning in Rousay taking up an invitation to attend the AGM of the Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre Development Trust, and I very much enjoyed looking round the information displays showcasing organisations active on the islands and conversing with ward constituents. I was kindly invited to a preview of the new heritage display at the recently renovated Pier Store, and I am the first to sign its visitors' book, just ahead of Liam McArthur MSP, who was also there.



At the Orkney schools' in-service day, I undertook (as a registered teacher) some training on "Keeping the Promise". "The Promise" refers to a commitment to ensure that all care-experienced children and young people (i.e. those in care, or who have been in care) in Scotland grow up loved, safe, and respected. It arose from the 2020 *Independent Care Review* recommendations. I passed the test with full marks and duly received my "Keeping the Promise Award" (shown left). Other councillors later got the chance to undertake this training too, as it is important in our role as corporate parents. Well done to Sanday Community School for being the first school in Orkney to qualify for the "We Promise Award".

Our all-day Policy & Resources Committee meeting was a long one, requiring suspension of standing orders so it could continue after 5 pm. Details of our budget show that we are needing to draw £18.4 million from our reserves to balance our total general fund revenue budget of £118.2 million for the forthcoming financial year. (Council tax accounts for £13 million of this total.) We agreed an increase in the money allocated to ongoing maintenance of our Isles linkspans, although at present this does not include the fabric of the huts. On the item to do with OIC's international engagement, I suggested we involve the public in order to make it more relevant and meaningful to ordinary people, with, for example, twinning arrangements at the community level. One that I have long had an aspiration to see arranged is between Sanday and the Faroe island of Sandøy. During the performance monitoring item, I brought up childcare and our "grant and subsidy" approach for child-minders in hard to sustain locations (such as the Isles). We were told the uptake had been low and that funds are still available, so I urge anyone considering registering as a childminder in the Isles to get in touch with OIC. Towards the end of the meeting, I grasped the opportunity to congratulate the staff at Kalisgarth for their very positive Care Inspectorate inspection evaluation.

Other meetings I've attended this month include: a confidential members' briefing; budget-setting and planning seminars; a virtual meeting of the UHI Foundation (on which I serve as OIC's rep), Housing Market Partnership meeting; meetings of the Education, Leisure & Housing Committee and the Monitoring & Audit Committee: and, as a guest, a special meeting of the Development & Infrastructure Committee dedicated to the "Evidence Base Report for Review of Orkney Local Plan."

Stephen

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

Photo credits: Stephen Clackson & John Ross Scott.



Cllrs Clackson and Tierney discussing boats

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