

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

Reporting on the exploits and observations of your councillor during the summer recess.



Luggage lockers at Edinburgh Bus Station. Orkney should have them too.

During the recess I visited Edinburgh. It is instructive as a councillor to compare local services elsewhere with ours at home. For example, Edinburgh City Council provides luggage lockers at Edinburgh Bus Station (see photograph above). Such lockers as these would suit our ferry waiting rooms at Kirkwall and our travel centres perfectly. If Edinburgh City Council can do it, I'm sure Orkney Islands Council can do it too. I also like the way Edinburgh City Council runs its own buses. You may remember the very similar lockers I spotted at German railway stations last autumn (see [Issue 142 of my Letter](#)).

I'd like to remind residents of the outer North Isles that they are entitled to free parking at Kirkwall Airport. You can get an application form from the airport or by e-mailing info@hial.co.uk, and you will need to provide a copy of your vehicle's V5 document. Once processed, your vehicle registration (one per household) will be added to the airport's automatic number plate recognition system, allowing free parking when travelling inter-island. Very useful if you commute by air.

I've lost track of for how long we've been asking for a third aircraft, so I am delighted that one now appears to be in the offing at last. If utilised wisely and timetabled intelligently, a third aircraft could make a major contribution to improved connectivity in the North Isles. For example, it could permit more inter-island links, and it could also enable sensible flight connections with external aviation services (e.g. for islanders with NHS appointments south). How the third aircraft is to be deployed definitely needs to be fully discussed with the island residents and their community council transport representatives.

Twenty-four days before the Sanday Show, the ban on gatherings of Galliformes was lifted, so chickens (including some of ours) were on display in the poultry section. Sadly, the ban remained in place for Anseriformes, so there were no ducks or geese at the Show. I'm pleased to say our black cock "Satan" won 1st *Light Breed Cock/Cockerel*.

It happened again! Thirteen months after the last pilot whale mass stranding on Sanday (see [Issue 138](#)), another 23 were found beached and dead, this time at Roo Beach. I visited the site (see photograph below) with the Council officer tasked with assessing the situation and met the Chairman of Sanday Community Council. We all agreed that this time the least disruptive and most effective solution would be to leave them *in situ* and let nature take its course. This approach was endorsed by the statutory agencies and other relevant bodies. The public is urged to stay away from the area in the meantime. Based on what is distressingly becoming our extensive experience, and working with organisations such as SEPA, NatureScot, BDMLR and SMASS, OIC is developing a comprehensive cetacean stranding protocol and guidance document. It'll be the first document of its kind developed by any council in Scotland, marking a significant step forward in coordinated stranding responses.

Throughout the recess I have remained an active councillor: keeping up with casework, answering e-mails, and also attending some council-related meetings. I ended the recess by joining fellow Sanday senior citizens on an outing to Caithness and Sutherland (on Highland Council's patch).

Stephen

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



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