

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

A report from your councillor on his exploits both within Orkney and without.



Whilst in Eday to attend a meeting of their community council, I got the opportunity to see the trophies on display at the island's heritage centre won by the Eday war memorial (see photograph above) in Royal British Legion Scotland's Best Kept War Memorial Competition. Thanks to the dedication of Moira Byers, it won both the New Entrant Award and Champion of Champions! (There was an article published about the win last year on page 3 of the 2nd October issue of *The Orcadian*.) Let this be an encouragement to other islands to smarten up their memorials and enter them for the competition.

Other meetings I attended in the Isles this month included those of Westray Community Council and Sanday Parent Council. The police held a surgery on Sanday, and I called in to thank them for coming out and to speak to them about the recruitment of special constables in the Isles. Also held on Sanday was the Fifth Annual Show of the North Isles Dance Academy, and Charlotte Hoque has been doing an amazing job training up dancers of all ages and abilities from the community and ensuring the Academy lives up to its geographical name. On North Isles Sports day, I'd been invited to Rousay School to help count votes at the AGM of the Rousay, Egilsay & Wyre Development Trust, where I got to see the displays showcasing community activities and projects and enjoyed catching up with ward constituents, plus I got a tour of their impressive school garden.

At the meeting of the Education, Communities & Housing Committee, I congratulated Dr Petra McLay and her staff on the good evaluation report Stronsay School received from HMIE inspectors when they visited in March. Other meetings I've been to in Kirkwall include those of the Monitoring & Audit Committee, and a National Emergency Board "People's Emergency" briefing, and I participated in the Public Service Reform Orkney Leadership Gathering event (see photo below) attended by members and officers of OIC, the Integration Joint Board and NHS Orkney. The oft spoken about "Single Authority Model" is not one I am comfortable with, as I don't want councillors to be finding themselves in the impossible position at budget-setting time of having to decide how to allocate resources between, for example, pothole repair and palliative care. And I do not want to see our National Health Service becoming fragmented and Orkney receiving a second-class "Local Health Service".

Not ideally for Isles residents, Orbital Marine Power's Westray tidal array public consultation event was held on an afternoon and evening in Kirkwall. As I had an early ferry to catch, I went along before the event started in order to explain our concerns about the proposal's potential effects on shipping along a key route for our lifeline ferry services. I believe they got the message, and they also understand the need to get out to the Isles to speak to people. To put our concerns in context, the site is situated in the Westray Firth between Egilsay and Eday right on the route for ferries sailing to Westray, Papay and North Ronaldsay, and also a route used in bad weather by ferries serving Eday, Sanday and Stronsay. Details can be found via the website <https://www.orbitalmarine.com/westray-tidal-array-public-consultation-event/>. Comments can be sent by post to: Orbital Marine Power, Innovation Centre – Orkney, Hatston Pier Road, Kirkwall, KW15 1ZL; by telephoning 01856-851641; or by e-mail to: westray@orbitalmarine.com. There is a **deadline of 13th July 2026**.

Outwith Orkney, I've travelled to Glasgow for a meeting of the Scottish Councils' Committee on Radioactive Substances (on which I represent OIC) and to Lerwick for a meeting of the Orkney & Shetland Valuation Joint Board.

I would like to remind North Isles residents that many are entitled to a Smartcard for local concessionary ferry travel, for instance when they turn 65. (Residents of North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray can also receive concessionary entitlement for inter-island air travel.) For further information write to: Transportation Service, Marine Services & Transportation, Enterprise & Sustainable Regeneration, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall KW15 1NY; telephone: (01856) 873535; or e-mail: ferryvouchers@orkney.gov.uk. You can also find details on the Council's website, www.orkney.gov.uk

Stephen

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

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

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

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