

Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

Serving a group of diverse communities separated from each other by sea.

There can be no other local authority subdivision in the country like Orkney's North Isles ward. Thirteen inhabited islands are served by eight community councils representing a wide diversity of communities. No two are alike.



I had the honour to be invited to attend an event of great significance to one of the smaller communities in my ward, The Sons of The Most Holy Redeemer on Papa Stronsay. As Councillor, I represented local secular authority at the Episcopal Consecration of the Most Reverend Father Michael Mary, their Rector Major, a ceremony that elevated his ecclesiastical rank to that of Bishop. It was the first such consecration to take place in Orkney for circa 976 years and was a splendid and moving occasion well befitting its historical status.

Elsewhere in the Isles: I went to a meeting of Shapinsay Community Council (followed by a tour of all the rough bits of road on the island); and at home on Sanday, I attended a meeting of the community council and managed to participate in some of the Sanday Foy (Inter-islands Ecoscapes Gathering & Conference) events and discussions. I travelled to North Ronaldsay to be at a meeting of their community council. Flying there and back gave me an aerial view of about half of the North Isles ward. Unfortunately, having to get back to Kirkwall the next morning for OIC's General Meeting meant I could not stay on the island for as long as I would have wished.

Following our last General Meeting before the summer recess, I visited the Orkney Community Vertical Farm project based at Orkney College's Agronomy & Agriculture Institute (see photograph below). It deploys a hydroponic system, which is a soil-free method of cultivating plants by delivering mineral nutrient solutions directly to the roots via water. This means the crop, when harvested, is very clean. The vertical aspect is the way this is carried out using an arrangement of "towers". When I visited, the fruit had already been harvested, but there were still some exotic vegetables growing. This horticultural technique could easily be adapted to the home polytunnel, Polycrub®, greenhouse or geodesic dome.

Thankfully, since my May [Letter](#), fuel prices have dropped sufficiently that the suggested surcharge on our ferry fares of 10%, due to come in (if required) on 1st July, was not necessary.

Stephen

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



Photo credits: Stephen Clackson, Heather Woodbridge

