Stephen Clackson's Letter from School Place

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



I was in Glasgow for a meeting of the Scottish Councils' Committee on Radioactive Substances (SCCORS) on which I represent OIC. Since May 2025 these meetings have been held in the opulent City Chambers on George Square (named after King George III), which during this time has been boarded up for renovation. Now the work is nearing completion, allowing me to capture this view (see above) of the City Chambers across the square. Also appearing in the picture are the Glasgow Cenotaph, Sir Walter Scott atop a column (the first public monument dedicated to him) and an equestrian statue of the young Queen Victoria (one of only two equestrian statues of her and the first equestrian statue of a woman in Britain). Just to remind everybody, if you discover something suspected to be radioactive, for example on the beach or in a deceased relative's attic, please leave it alone and contact OIC's Environmental Health team, who will be able to alert the appropriate agency. Telephone 01856-873535 and ask for Environmental Health, or e-mail environmental.health@orkney.gov.uk .

At the Monitoring & Audit Committee meeting we learnt that in the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026, OIC received 140 complaints (7% fewer than in the previous year) and 315 compliments. That is 2¼ times as many compliments as complaints! Given that people are more likely to register a complaint than to go to the trouble of making a compliment, I think we can be reassured that the Council is fulfilling its role to the satisfaction of most people in Orkney. One disturbing aspect, however, is that there has been a notable increase in the receipt of complaints which appear to have utilised AI assistance in their generation. Such complaints are often voluminous, not always clear as to the outcome sought by the complainant and contain multiple associated issues ancillary to the main focus of the complaint, which just wastes everybody's time and effort in trying to decipher and interpret them. If you wish to complain about any council service, please write it yourself in your own words.

Other meetings I attended before the councillors' autumn recess included a meeting of the Housing Market Partnership, a Special Policy & Resources Committee meeting dedicated to transport services, and a General Meeting.

Looking ahead, there will be ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Training) courses taking place in Kirkwall from 2nd to 3rd November and next year from 9th to 10th February (the latter being specifically for the agricultural community). Anyone can attend the training. It is particularly useful for people who support others, whether through their work, volunteering, or personal relationships. As these are 2-day courses lasting full working days, financial assistance is being offered towards accommodation and travel for participants from the outer isles. Find out more by e-mailing admin@somaslight.co.uk .

Isles' community council transport reps will be circulating proposals for inter-island air timetables utilising the new third plane. Do please engage with them and make your views known so that the best balance can be struck between all requirements.

I spent the councillors' autumn recess in Germany. Below is a picture of me dressed as a member of the ill-fated Roman XIXth Legion at the Römermuseum in Haltern am See. (Is that Brutus I see behind me?) In my library I have the many volumes of Edward Gibbon's "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". It is probably time I started reading my way through them, as they might help me gain some insight into what is going on in modern-day Scotland. A mere six months before the council elections next year (6th May 2027) and the Scottish Government has decided to confront the world with its radical "Proposal for Reform of Local Governance". To safely navigate Orkney through the ensuing uncertain political waters we are going to need proven councillors with a significant track record. By then, I will have been your councillor for 15 years.



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



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