

# ORKNEY FUTURES a handbook

Ed. Alistair Peebles & Laura Watts, Brae Editions, Orkney, September 2009, pbk, 56pp, £7.50

A new collection describing what may lie ahead for Orkney.

From Nobel prizewinner Seamus Heaney to Orkney poet Robert Rendall, OIC Convenor Stephen Hagan to Orcadian Big Brother celebrity Cameron Stout, 49 views of the future to inspire and encourage.

*'Orkney Futures... is a handbook like no other. For a small book, it tackles ambitious themes.'* Ron Ferguson

*'Such books, or public-actions, bridge art and social thinking – a gentler and therefore more penetrating form of thinking seems to emerge, when we look to the future in this designated non-designated space...'* Alec Finlay

*'I'm sure this slim book is one of the most important to be published in Orkney for a long time.'* Howie Firth

*'An excellent production. The quality and variety of contributions is hugely impressive.'* Liam McArthur MSP

## A vision of Orkney's future

### REVIEW

IN ORKNEY we value the past, and use it to enrich the present; and we can be truly proud of so many initiatives.

But what of the future? Traditionally, Orcadians were quick off the mark. Any change in the world outside, and we took advantage. Now, in a changing world, we need to seek a course through uncharted waters. To do it right, we must go deep, and ask questions about who we are.

It's urgent to make a start. So it's tremendous to see Orkney Futures. Alistair Peebles and Laura Watts have gathered a wide range of people from Orkney and the world outside, each with a vision of Orkney's future.

"A self-sufficient island group, reliant on no one in this volatile world" is Erland Johnston's summary.

"An environment where ideas through skill and application create a bright drift of enlightened speculations," says Neil Gillespie.

"Where we produce what we need in the fertile island soil, and harvest only what we need in our surrounding waters," says Sam Marcus.

Sandy Kerr looks to a future of marine energy exports through the Flotta terminal, of Orkney agriculture expanding to meet global food demand, and where in 2049 "Hoy has over 1,200 inhabitants, many living in the small eco-town of Lyness."

Neil Kermodé looks back from the year 2059: "Once Orkney-H became the leading hydrogen fuel brand in Scotland, the renewables revolution finally took hold."

Colin Kirkpatrick sees marine energy enabling salmon farming to come ashore into close containment systems. He looks ahead to Orkney farming developing a prairie-like mix of wild grasses enabling cattle to over-winter on pasture.

"And for us as individuals," says William Caithness, "the priority in that world of scarce resources will be to live within our means - just as our ancestors knew how to do."

Mary Bichan imagines what might happen if the changes bring us round full circle:

"People will enjoy their leisure time to make personal social contact. I imagine they will tire of communicating through images and printed language and enjoy again pleasures such as going visiting on foot on a bonny moonlit night and sharing at first hand experiences sad, funny and joyful."

Others look at strengths of the past, hoping we can build a better future from them. Neil Leask highlights the qualities of traditional house styles.

"I'm well aware of the disadvantages of old houses, but the new eco-build techniques could solve them in a way that's still in keeping with the landscape," he says.

Some express themselves in poems, others - such as Len Wilson and Morag MacInnes - with great humour. Each is worth reading several times over.

And this is the key. What really matters with this book is what we do with it. That's why the editors call it a handbook. You might take a page a day and think whether you agree or disagree with each contributor.

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