

Assurances over heating scheme

ORKNEY MSP Liam McArthur recently met Scottish Gas representatives to discuss the way in which the free Central Heating Programme, introduced in 2001 by the previous Scottish Executive, is being delivered in Orkney.

Following concerns raised by a number of constituents about delays in assessments being made and in installations taking place, Mr McArthur invited Scottish Gas to meet him, along with local stakeholders such as Keep Orkney Warm, to discuss the situation.

After the recent meeting in Kirkwall, Mr McArthur said, "Scottish Gas has come in for criticism in recent months because of delays in carrying out much needed work to install central heating systems in the homes of older people in each of the main island areas. The company has accepted this criticism and has committed to delivering 300 installations in the islands by the end of the year.

"I welcome this commitment and the willingness of Scottish Gas representatives to travel to Orkney to meet me and others with a key interest in the free central heating programme. It was encouraging to hear that all those eligible under the scheme, and who have been waiting for over six months for an installation, will have their new system in place before the end of the year. I am particularly pleased to hear that steps have been taken to ensure that local installers will be able to carry out the work in future, as this can only help to avoid further delays.

"I pressed Scottish Gas on the problems that many people have faced having to put up with multiple assessments being carried out on their properties, assessments that often reached different conclusions about whether or not they were entitled to a new heating system. I have been assured that a more streamlined system is now in place and also that previous difficulties with payments for work already carried out have also been dealt with.

"The new system of working with Keep Orkney Warm shows signs of delivering positive results. However, I will continue to monitor the situation carefully and would encourage constituents to raise with me any concerns that they have about the operation of the free Central Heating Programme.

"Only time will tell if the delivery of the Central Heating Programme has been improved. However, with the onset of winter, it is clear that older people living in Orkney can ill afford the sort of delays and confusion we have seen of late."

Unveiled: The new look Dil Se

by JOHN ROSS SCOTT

THE Dil Se Indian Restaurant, in Kirkwall, which has undergone a major transformation in recent weeks, will be officially relaunched tonight (Thursday).

Owner, 25-year-old Anwar Hussain explained: "When running any type of establishment you need to keep the public interested in it and give them something new. If things are static there is no buzz.

"Spending what we have over the past few weeks on the Dil Se is our way of giving something back to our customers who have been so loyal to us over the past three years."

The rebranding is total, with every aspect of the interior being upgraded, from the crockery, cutlery, cotton napkins, through to the satin-backed menus and interior design.

Including the private dining area upstairs, the restaurant now has a seating capacity of 100.

"It is a huge investment and it is built on quality, ambience and fine cuisine. We want what we provide here to be the same as in the top Indian Restaurants in London. That is one of the reasons why we hired a London design agency to supervise us on the changes."

Everyone will have already noticed the bright new Fuchsia Pink exterior of the premises. This is mirrored in parts within. "Pink is our brand colour and the restaurant is themed throughout in that pink. I believe it adds to the quality setting."

He continued: "Everything I do, I do from the heart. When we cook here it must be from the heart. I am very passionate about my business and I spend a lot of time working to ensure we are Number One. Branding flows all through that. I, myself, even need to look and dress the part when I am out on the street, in order to promote the company."

The new Dil Se interior fittings in the 7 Bridge Street premises, include small deluxe glass panelled heaters which recognise the ambient temperature of the room and control it automatically, and chairs and tables from Italy, while soft mood lights and



A MAJOR TRANSFORMATION has taken place inside Dil Se Indian Restaurant in Kirkwall's Bridge Street.

PICTURES ORKNEY PHOTOGRAPHIC

lampshades replace the former spotlights.

In the drive for perfection, the restaurant only uses local produce, and on health grounds meat dishes have a low salt content and salt will now only be provided at the table on request.

The lamb used is Orkney lamb, and steaks are Orkney beef. Even the vegetables are bought locally.

Anwar told us: "It is all about boosting the Orkney economy. The more local produce bought the better it is for the local company you buy them from. Local people are also happy to know that what they are eating is local food."

The Dil Se, which has been shortlisted twice in the Taste of Orkney awards, is currently one of only two Scottish Indian Restaurants recommended in the prestigious 'Which? Good Food Guide 2008'.

In fact the guide only features

two other Orkney restaurants – The Creel and The Hamnavoe – which highlights the calibre of the Dil Se premises on a UK scale.

Anwar, who was born in Aberdeen, brought up in Orkney and educated in Kirkwall and Dundee, has been in the restaurant trade since the start of his working life.

He sold the franchises to restaurants in Blairgowrie, Crieff and Oban and moved to London to work as a data analyst with Siemens Transport Systems. While there he ate out a lot in restaurants and picked up many tips for when he returned to Orkney and established the Dil Si in June, 2005.

Explaining how he was inspired, he said: "In London, the Indian restaurants are dominating others for ambience, design, decor and good food to the extent that a third of the restaurants taking part in the 'Taste of London Good Food' event were Indian.

"The new-look Dil Si gives you all the best in a top London Restaurant with a price that is 60% less. Many visitors cannot believe the quality of food we provide and the price."

The staff are all fully trained and Anwar insists they are assertive, efficient, well-mannered and helpful.

But it is the food that matters most.

As well as providing top dishes – made from local produce – the Dil Si intends now, on certain days, to serve authentic Indian desserts.

"You really have to try them before they mean anything to you," Anwar told us. "They really are rich and sweet. Among them will be Barfi, which includes ground almonds, sugar, aromatic spices and dairy produce.

"Bearing in mind they take a long time to make and there is limited supply, their appearance will not be an everyday occurrence," he added.

Full of Eastern promise

by JOHN ROSS SCOTT

ON ENTERING the new look Dil Se Restaurant the atmosphere instantly injects you with an air of relaxation.

The surroundings are comfortable and clean and the music is 'background' but loud enough to add to the perfect ambience. Being a music lover, soothing and inspiring Indian music is an essential ingredient to any visit I make to an Indian restaurant.

As for the food? Well, as owner Anwar Hussain puts it: "You are only as good as the last meal you provide."

That is obviously why so much effort is put into not only providing quality service but also in the time spent on preparation and presentation of the dishes, all of which are treated as special.

"Each dish has to be produced perfectly. If it is not right, it is binned," Anwar told us.

It is little surprise, therefore, that a meal in the Dil Si – which

means 'From the Heart' – is one you won't forget.

I visited with my eight-year-old daughter to really test out the establishment. Could they cater for kids?

We were met by Umar, Anwar's brother, who led us to our seat and took our order.

Cobra beer has become a habit of mine which stuck, although I was sorely tempted to try 'Tiger' beer which sponsor the premises. Rosie opted for water.

When it came to the meals, I was tempted by the highly recommended Garlic Chicken, while Rosie, who is rarely adventurous with her food, ordered chips. This was all clearly leading up to an interesting review.

Seeing this Umar, after the customary papadoms and dips which we both ate, ushered in an array of samplers, for us to test while the meal progressed.

Rosie cautiously bit into a piece of Lamb Saag Balti – delicious spinach with Orkney



THE NEWLOOK DIL SE interior creates a relaxed atmosphere for diners to enjoy.

lamb – then promptly scoffed two thirds of it, much to my chagrin.

Meanwhile my taste buds exploded to the pleasure of the Garlic Chicken, marinated in exotic spices and served with pilau rice.

Rosie had, by then, started on the plate of mushroom bhaji, and the aromas from our food was tantalising.

The food – most of which was made from local produce

– was really special and priced so reasonably.

By 7.45pm on a Tuesday night the restaurant was full and with almost every crumb of our Indian meals devoured it was time to leave.

By the way ... Rosie says: "The chairs were nice and comfy and the food was great."

The only thing that we left were her chips, not because there was anything wrong with them, but because she was too full!

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