

By IAN SUTHERLAND

THE discovery that, as a member of one of the 481 community councils within Strathclyde region's boundaries, you may soon be called upon to undertake a controversial aspect of public service far removed from pressing elected members about holes in the road, unlit street lamps, or the local Tufty Club's annual grant, can come in mysterious ways.

Jim Perman, an occasionally colourful and often outspoken member of the 10-person Largs community council, learned that he, or someone nominated by his council, might become an integral part of Scotland's civil defence system, via a chance meeting with a constituent in the local pub.

His informant, it seems, had noticed a job ad from Strathclyde's emergency planning department, became interested, went down to the library, and found a copy of the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Scotland Regulations, 1983. A bemused Mr Perman spent the rest of the evening warding off bad jokes about bunkers and whether he'd abuse his emergency powers (ITV's Rules of Engagement was showing at the time).

When Mr Perman finally read the regulations as they pertain to community councils, his reaction wasn't untypical of public attitudes to civil defence in general. "I thought for a second that someone had dreamed this up and put it in the reference library for a stunt."

The 1983 regulations are, of course, not a joke. The document freely admits that loss of life in a nuclear attack will be massive. It places clear duties on Scottish local



Community councillor Jim Perman prepared for action, with a little help from West Kilbride Museum: "The Government can phone me when the Russians reach the edge of town."

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