Education and Culture Committee

3rd Report, 2011 (Session 4)

The draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17
Education and Culture Committee

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The draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17

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Education and Culture Committee

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CONTENTS

Remit and membership

Report 1
Introduction 1
The draft National Plan for Gaelic 1
Committee Consideration of the Plan 2
   Home 3
   Education 3
   Community 5
   Workplace 6
   Arts, media and heritage 7
   Corpus planning 7
   Implementation of the Plan 7
   Governance 8

Annexe A: EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE 10

Annexe B: ORAL EVIDENCE AND ASSOCIATED WRITTEN EVIDENCE 11
Education and Culture Committee

Remit and membership

Remit:

The remit of the Committee is to consider and report on further and higher education, lifelong learning, schools, pre-school care, skills and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and matters relating to culture and the arts falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs.

Membership:

Clare Adamson
Claire Baker (Deputy Convener)
Marco Biagi
Jenny Marra
Stewart Maxwell (Convener)
Joan McAlpine
Liam McArthur
Liz Smith
Jean Urquhart

Committee Clerking Team:

Senior Assistant Clerk
Terry Shevlin

Assistant Clerk
Neil Stewart

Committee Assistant
Jonas Rae
The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

INTRODUCTION

1. Under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005\(^1\), the Bòrd na Gàidhlig is required to prepare and submit to Scottish Ministers a national Gaelic language plan, which must include proposals as to the exercise of its functions under that Act. In preparing the plan, the Bòrd is required to consult the Parliament.

2. The draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17\(^2\) was published on 4 October 2011 and is open to consultation until 5 January 2012.

THE DRAFT NATIONAL PLAN FOR GAELIC

3. The Plan aims to carry forward the previous Plan’s vision of a sustainable future for Gaelic as a “healthy, vibrant language, increasingly used, valued and respected in a modern multicultural and multilingual Scotland”\(^3\). The three overarching aims which inform the Plan are—

- “arresting the decline in the overall number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland by increasing the number acquiring the language”;

- “expanding the range of situations in which Gaelic is used, in line with the Gaelic Language Act’s key principle of equal respect for English and Gaelic”; and

- “helping speakers of Gaelic, both learners and native speakers, to develop their competence in the language and their confidence in using it, and ensuring that the language itself continues to be healthy and vibrant”.

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\(^3\) The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17, p6.
4. The Plan’s “headline target” is to attain stability in the number of people speaking Gaelic by raising the rate at which new Gaelic speakers become fluent to “replacement level”, namely the level at which the loss of mostly older Gaelic speakers is balanced by the growth of new speakers.4

5. The Plan’s Executive Summary5 states that the Plan sets out a range of proposals in pursuance of the headline target and aims, including—

- strengthening the passing on of Gaelic from one generation to the next in the home;
- expanding, and developing the effectiveness of Gaelic-medium education (GME), with the aim of doubling the number of children and young people entering GME each year, within the lifetime of the Plan;
- expanding, and developing the effectiveness of, Gaelic-learner education at all levels;
- increasing the use of Gaelic in the home, education, community and workplace;
- developing the Gaelic arts, media and heritage sector;
- enhancing the ability of the language to cope with an increasing range of uses;
- creating the environment and infrastructure needed to support these developments in order to ensure that they become part of normal provision;
- inclusion of these outcomes, as appropriate, in statutory, voluntary and community Gaelic Language Plans and in Single Outcome Agreements.

6. The Plan is broken down into the following six themes—

- Home;
- Education and Learning;
- Community;
- Workplace;
- Arts, media and heritage;
- Corpus planning.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF THE PLAN

7. At its meeting on 6 December 2011, the Committee took evidence from John Angus MacKay, Ceannard (Chief Executive Officer) of Bòrd na Gàidhlig on the Plan, focussing on the six themes. Arthur Cormack, Chair of the Bòrd, was due to give evidence alongside Mr MacKay, but was forced to withdraw due to travel disruption. Mr Cormack subsequently wrote to the Committee to follow up on some of the issues raised in evidence.

8. Overall, the Committee welcomes the publication of the draft Plan, noting that it is ambitious and that its full and effective implementation will require greater focus and coherence along with close partnership working

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4 The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17, p6
5 The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17, p8
between the Bòrd and a number of bodies including COSLA, public authorities that will have to implement the Plan, the Scottish Government, NHS boards and higher and further education bodies. The Committee recognises that the Bòrd and the other bodies that will be required to implement the Plan have limited capacity to do so.

9. The Committee has some concerns that the Plan is so wide-reaching and broadly focussed that it is currently difficult to identify an overall strategy and to determine the most important priorities. The Committee therefore recommends that further thought be given to establishing what the key priorities for the Bòrd are between now and 2017 and how these priorities, along with the targets in the Plan, will be achieved, particularly in the current financial climate.

Home

10. In evidence, Mr MacKay emphasised the importance of promoting Gaelic in the home and noted that—

“Over the decades, the use of Gaelic in the home has begun to decline because parents were told that Gaelic was no use.”

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11. Mr MacKay went on to state that the Bòrd was organising support for its use in homes through home visits. This has led to parents developing their own Gaelic and looking to school their children in GME.

12. The Committee endorses the Bòrd’s commitment to promoting Gaelic in the home.

Education

Gaelic-medium education

13. The Plan recognises the importance of GME as the “principal means by which new Gaelic speakers are created at present” and commits to seeking to increase numbers in GME substantially. The Plan states that the Bòrd plans to investigate with Scottish Ministers the possibility of creating a legal entitlement to GME.

14. When asked for more details about the creation of a legal entitlement and whether this had been costed, Mr MacKay stated—

“It will be difficult to answer your first question until we have had more opportunity to talk to ministers and councils. It is clear that it will give parents greater encouragement to use Gaelic-medium education and to send their children to Gaelic-medium education if that education is sustainable. … We do not know about the costs at this stage. We know that Gaelic-medium education is provided in 60 schools in Scotland. We also know that that is happening because of the support that the councils have received from the

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6 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, Col 547
7 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, Col 547
8 The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17, p14
Government through specific grants. That has improved matters, but we are aware from research that was done by Highland Council last year that when the provision reaches a certain level, it does not cost any more to give a child a Gaelic-medium education than it does to give them an English education".9

15. **The Committee welcomes the Bòrd’s emphasis on the importance of Gaelic-medium education (GME) and notes that discussions are on-going about the option of placing an entitlement to GME on a statutory footing. The Committee would appreciate more detail from the Bòrd on the issue of the proposed legal entitlement and the practical and cost implications of this approach. The Committee acknowledges that local authorities would be required to deliver this.**

16. Mr MacKay advised the Committee that a key aim of the Plan is to double the number of children going into primary 1 in GME. To achieve this, the Bòrd has employed a team to work with parents and create parent-and-child groups to provide an early indication of potential take up year-on-year.10

17. **The Committee notes the Plan’s ambitious aim to double the number of children going into primary 1 in GME and recommends that the Bòrd ensures it has a clear strategy for achieving this. The Committee requests further detail on the practicalities and costs of employing a team to work with parents and create parent-child groups. The Committee also requests information from the Bòrd on the role of Gaelic-medium nurseries.**

**Teachers**

18. In response to a question about whether there was sufficient teacher resource to provide for the doubling of early primary children speaking Gaelic, John Angus MacKay indicated that the Bòrd was satisfied that it had a sufficient number of teachers in the interim, with more GME teachers in training this year than in previous years.11 In respect of the long term, he said that the Bòrd was carrying out research, along with colleges and councils, into where the need would be for new appointments of teaching staff, and looking afresh at the best way to train teachers for these roles.12

19. Mr MacKay indicated that the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) is working with colleges and universities in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, looking at ways in which more training opportunities for teachers could be made available locally, obviating the need to leave the Highlands.13 Mr MacKay also stated that the Bòrd understood that UHI wished to play a bigger part in training GME teachers, but would need to negotiate with funding organisations and the colleges as to how this would be resourced.14

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14 Education and Culture Committee, *Official Report, 6 December 2011*, Col 553
20. In response to a question about whether there was a problem finding specialist teachers in subjects such as physics and mathematics who were also GME teachers, Mr MacKay stated—

“Secondary school teachers who were trained before Gaelic-medium education started probably lack the confidence to teach such subjects in Gaelic. However, we have noticed that teachers who have made the effort, particularly those teaching mathematics, are doing really well.”

21. The Committee is of the view that the Bòrd should work with the Scottish Government, councils and initial teacher education institutions to carry out a detailed mapping exercise to identify the specific geographic and subject areas where there is likely to be a specific need for new GME teachers in future years.

22. The Committee calls on the Bòrd to explore further what role UHI, other relevant further and higher education institutions and the Scottish Funding Council can play in ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of GME teachers to ensure that any increased demand for GME can be met.

Scottish Studies
23. Regarding the possibilities for Gaelic arising from the proposed new strand of Scottish Studies in the curriculum, Mr MacKay stated—

“Our chairman, who is not here today, has been involved in talks with Scottish Government officials who also see that as being necessary. If I remember rightly, 90 per cent of those who responded to the Government’s survey said that there ought in the curriculum to be a new subject connected with Scotland, and we know that some things about Gaelic need to be included in that.”

24. The Committee notes that the Bòrd is continuing its discussions on the inclusion of Gaelic within Scottish Studies, and would welcome further detail from the Chair of the Bòrd on how to achieve this.

Community
25. In response to a question about the practical implications of the Plan on the wider community, Mr MacKay stated—

“Gaelic communities have not had many opportunities until now to use Gaelic in dealing with councils, health services or whatever. My experience is like that of a lot of others who were brought up in Gaelic communities: it was not expected that Gaelic would be used to a great extent in formal dealings with councils, health services and so on, even if someone was more fluent in Gaelic than in English. However, that situation is beginning to change because councils and other public bodies are creating their own Gaelic plans in accordance with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. I believe that

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15 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, col 554-55
16 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, col 564
people will gradually change their way of working and that they will respect
the Gaelic language.”.17

26. On promoting the use of Gaelic by the business community, Mr MacKay said
that the Bòrd had begun discussions with private businesses in the Highlands, in
the tourism and hospitality industry, about the use of Gaelic signs inside their own
buildings. He hoped that discussions would take place with businesses located
near to the planned new GME school in Edinburgh prior to its opening to
investigate the possibility of providing Gaelic signage in that community.18

27. The Committee notes Mr MacKay’s comments that Gaelic communities
have not had many opportunities until now to use Gaelic in dealing with
public bodies and therefore commends the Bòrd on developing an ambitious
plan to ensure that such opportunities are provided where appropriate.

28. The Committee encourages the Bòrd to continue its discussions with
the business community with a view to developing the use of Gaelic by
private companies.

Workplace

29. The Plan provides for the development of an “Investors in Gaelic” scheme in
2013-14. In oral evidence, Mr MacKay provided more detail on what this would
entail, stating—

“...We know about the investors in people scheme, and we feel that we should
be encouraging organisations to do what we have been talking about—to
erect more signs in their buildings and give their workforces more
opportunities to learn and use Gaelic. We will do that in the same way as the
investors in people scheme works—through giving people support, and
through criteria about what is expected and what people should be
competent at doing according to the level at which they start. Over the years,
we would provide signs for organisations that would show that people had
made the effort.”19

30. Mr MacKay further stated that the Bòrd had talked to the Scottish Trades
Union Congress (STUC) about the impact of the scheme on employees. He added
that the Bòrd hoped to have further discussions with the STUC and CBI Scotland
and expected to work with those organisations in the years ahead.20

31. The Committee commends the Bòrd on developing the “Investors in
Gaelic” scheme but notes that no costings have yet been produced on how
this will be delivered.

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17 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, col 556
18 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, col 560
19 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, col 561
20 Education and Culture Committee, Official Report, 6 December 2011, col 562
Arts, media and heritage

32. The Plan states that the Bòrd recognises the importance of the Gaelic arts, media and heritage. In oral evidence, Mr MacKay stated that it would use events of national significance, such as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the Commonwealth Games, to promote Gaelic culture and heritage, and that it was working with Creative Scotland to look at these matters.\(^{21}\) He also noted that the Bòrd needed to do “some work” with VisitScotland to promote the use of Gaelic more generally.\(^{22}\)

33. The Committee asked whether the Ryder Cup at Gleneagles in 2014 would also provide an opportunity to promote art and culture, given the number of golf fans who would come to Scotland who might also wish to spend time exploring their heritage. Mr MacKay indicated that anything that could be done to raise the profile of Gaelic and promote Gaelic culture would be done.\(^{23}\)

34. In a supplementary letter to the Committee Arthur Cormack confirmed that the Bòrd was in discussions with the organisers of the Commonwealth Games to ensure that visitors were advised that Scotland had an official language other than English, and that he would like to see Gaelic being used in the publicity materials for the Ryder Cup and the Edinburgh International Festival. He also stated that Gaelic played a significant part in the 2009 Year of Homecoming and the 2011 Year of Scotland’s Islands, and continued to play an important role in several other national cultural events, such as the Royal National Mòd and Celtic Connections.\(^{24}\)

35. The Committee recommends that the Bòrd should develop a strategic plan to maximise the opportunities to promote and showcase Gaelic heritage and culture provided by events of national significance. The Committee suggests that, in doing so, the Bòrd should seek to work in close partnership with VisitScotland, EventScotland and Creative Scotland.

Corpus planning

36. In oral evidence, Mr MacKay noted that Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig (the organisation charged with co-ordinating the production and distribution of Gaelic educational resources throughout Scotland) would play a key role in implementing the Plan by working along with relevant bodies to create teaching materials for use in schools, and that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (the National Centre for the Gaelic language and culture) was playing a role through the creation of online courses, enabling students from overseas to participate.\(^{25}\)

Implementation of the Plan

37. In respect of the implementation of individual Gaelic plans by a number of councils and other public bodies, Mr MacKay stated that the Bòrd could measure

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\(^{24}\) Arthur Cormack, Chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Supplementary letter to Education and Culture Committee – 7 December 2011

its success by analysing the number of people in the workforce who spoke Gaelic prior to implementation of each local plan and the numbers speaking it year on year after that.\textsuperscript{26} There are currently 19 public bodies with Gaelic plans, and the Bòrd is working with 25 others to develop plans.\textsuperscript{27}

38. Mr MacKay reiterated the Bòrd’s view of the importance of the inclusion of Gaelic in single outcome agreements.\textsuperscript{28} He stressed that the Bòrd had regular discussions with COSLA about implementation of the Plan.

39. In his follow up letter, Mr Cormack stated—

“While Bòrd na Gàidhlig will help deliver this National Gaelic Language Plan within its known budget, all public bodies and local authorities in Scotland can, and should, also play a part in its delivery. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has modest funds to help public bodies and local authorities deliver certain measures within their own Gaelic Language Plans. But in order to ensure Gaelic’s future, authorities will have to mainstream costs which will always be relatively small in the big scheme of things. If it is believed that Gaelic should have a sustainable future, it would be reasonable to invest in ensuring that future and we would like to work cooperatively and co-invest in areas of Gaelic development.”\textsuperscript{29}

40. The Committee encourages the Bòrd to continue its discussions with COSLA and individual local authorities about the implementation of the Plan and to assess whether local authorities and other public bodies have the necessary capacity and resources to implement their plans.

Governance

41. Mr MacKay acknowledged that the Bòrd does not have sufficient resources to give full support to all public bodies that have, or are developing, language plans.\textsuperscript{30} To extend its work further, the Bòrd would require more development officers. To manage its dealings with other organisations, the Bòrd has established a national management group that meets four times a year, and includes representatives of colleges, universities, directors of education, Education Scotland, the SQA and others. The Bòrd is also creating a link with MG Alba in respect of engagement with the arts. Mr MacKay noted that “Bòrd na Gàidhlig is a small organisation that is trying to do a lot.”\textsuperscript{31}

42. In his follow up letter\textsuperscript{32}, Mr Cormack advised that the Bòrd has service level agreements with around 15 Gaelic organisations of different kinds, all of which are delivering elements of the current National Plan for Gaelic. The Bòrd invests

\textsuperscript{26} Education and Culture Committee, \textit{Official Report, 6 December 2011}, col 573  
\textsuperscript{27} Education and Culture Committee, \textit{Official Report, 6 December 2011}, col 573  
\textsuperscript{28} Education and Culture Committee, \textit{Official Report, 6 December 2011}, col 569  
\textsuperscript{29} Arthur Cormack, Chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Supplementary letter to Education and Culture Committee – 7 December 2011  
\textsuperscript{30} Education and Culture Committee, \textit{Official Report, 6 December 2011}, col 577  
\textsuperscript{31} Education and Culture Committee, \textit{Official Report, 6 December 2011}, col 578  
\textsuperscript{32} Arthur Cormack, Chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Supplementary letter to Education and Culture Committee – 7 December 2011
£1.9m in those organisations but the spend by them is in excess of £7m, indicating that others are investing in Gaelic development and progress is being made through partnerships created by the Bòrd and organisations it funds.

43. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the national management group and recommends that it continues to work closely with other organisations to promote Gaelic effectively.
ANNEXE A: EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

10th Meeting, 2011 (Session 4), Tuesday 8 November 2011

The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17 (in private): The Committee agreed its approach to scrutinising the National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17.

14th Meeting, 2011 (Session 4), Tuesday 6 December 2011

The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17: The Committee took evidence from—

John Angus MacKay, Chief Executive, Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17 (in private): The Committee considered the evidence heard.

15th Meeting, 2011 (Session 4), Tuesday 13 December 2011

National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17 (in private): The Committee considered a draft report. Various changes were agreed to, and the report was agreed for publication.
ANNEXE B: ORAL EVIDENCE AND ASSOCIATED WRITTEN EVIDENCE

14th Meeting, 2011 (Session 4), Tuesday 6 December 2011

ORAL EVIDENCE

John Angus MacKay, Chief Executive, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

WRITTEN EVIDENCE

Submission from Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Ten key messages from the draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17

1. Gaelic belongs to the whole of Scotland. It is a significant feature of Scotland’s living heritage and this Plan enables all Scottish public authorities and the wider Scottish public to play their part in securing its future.

2. The Plan aims to create the conditions to meet the aim of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 of securing the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.

3. As a result of co-ordinated action, particularly in Gaelic education, the rate of decline in numbers of Gaelic speakers has slowed significantly over the last two decades. Gaelic, however, remains in a fragile position and more has to be done by individuals and organisations to ensure a sustainable future for the language.

4. To meet this aim the Plan identifies as a basic requirement a doubling in the number of children entering P1 Gaelic medium education by 2017 (from 400 to 800). To meet parental demand, this needs a co-ordinated approach by local authorities, the Scottish Government and other agencies to plan for growth in access to Gaelic medium education across Scotland, through a programme of capital investment and workforce planning.

5. International research has consistently confirmed the benefits of bilingualism in enhancing the life chances of young people. Gaelic medium education is the only widely available opportunity to be educated bilingually in Scotland. We owe it to young people across the Nation to allow more of them to access Gaelic medium education.

6. The Plan calls for a co-ordinated approach to increase awareness of the key link between the home and wider community, in terms of acquiring Gaelic, using Gaelic and passing the language on to future generations.

7. The plan’s strapline – Fàs is Feabhas / Growth and Quality – reflects the need to grow numbers of Gaelic speakers to the level where numbers are sustained, but also for the need to ensure that levels of competence and confidence in speaking, reading and writing Gaelic support a healthy and vibrant community of speakers now and in the future. This entails encouraging its use in the home, the community and the workplace, and in situations which encourage being creative, socialising and being entertained in the language.
8. The Plan makes clear the need to establish more focussed, localised initiatives to support communities where the proportion of Gaelic speakers is still high (20%), and where there are significant numbers in Scottish cities.

9. The Plan attempts to provide a strategic framework for the development of Gaelic across 6 key, inter-related sectors:
   - Home
   - Education and learning
   - Community
   - Workplace
   - Arts, media and heritage
   - Corpus planning (the building blocks of the language – e.g. new terminology, spelling and grammar)

10. The Plan identifies the development areas in which Gaelic supports the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes and refers to the significant economic benefit that Gaelic brings to Scotland.

SUPPLEMENTARY WRITTEN EVIDENCE

Additional submission from Arthur Cormack – Cathraiche (Chair) of Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Introduction
On 6 December 2011, John Angus MacKay, Ceannard (CEO) of Bòrd na Gàidhlig gave evidence to the Education and Culture Committee on the draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17. I was supposed to have been present but could not travel to Edinburgh due to hazardous driving conditions.

The Assistant Clerk to the Education and Culture Committee subsequently advised me that if I had anything to add to the evidence given, he would endeavour to incorporate this into the report. He also advised that the Committee had specifically asked whether I could provide any additional information on discussions I have had around the issue of the teaching of Scottish Studies in schools and building capacity among Gaelic medium teachers of this particular subject area.

By way of general introduction, I would say that with less than 100,000 people in Scotland who have any ability in Gaelic and fewer than 60,000 who speak it, the language is not in good shape. Other countries, however, have successfully revitalised minoritised languages and it can be done for Gaelic in Scotland with a concerted effort on the part of every body that can play a part. We have made progress in the past few years in putting building blocks in place and now we must make best use of the resources at our disposal.

People often ask why Gaelic, and why isn’t there more effort put into learning other European languages, or Mandarin, in Scotland instead. There is, of course, a lot of investment in other languages in Scotland but, unlike Gaelic, they have no official status in Scotland, nor are these languages under threat in their native countries. The future of Gaelic, by contrast, is entirely dependent on the support
of public authorities in Scotland and what we all do in the next few years will
determine whether or not Gaelic has a viable future.

The Scottish public does not want Gaelic to be lost, with 81% in the most recent
survey wanting to ensure Scotland keeps its Gaelic identity and over 70%
believing opportunities to learn Gaelic should be more readily available.

I am happy to supplement some of the answers given by John Angus MacKay in
this paper and will do so in the order in which questions were raised by Committee
members.

Clare Adamson MSP’s question about the proposed legal entitlement to Gaelic
education
Gaelic medium education has come about because of parental demand and the
Education (Scotland) Act 1980 is the main legislation that has allowed its growth.
The Act’s general principle is that pupils are to be educated in accordance with
the wishes of their parents and this principle has allowed parents, over the past 25
years, to ask local authorities to make Gaelic medium provision.

Despite the general principle of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, it is the case
that there is still unmet demand for Gaelic medium education in areas across
Scotland and the growth has been too slow. In order to accelerate growth, Bòrd
na Gàidhlig’s view is that a legal entitlement should seek to strengthen the general
principle of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 by placing a duty on local
authorities to make Gaelic education provision, within parameters yet to be
defined, should parents request such provision.

As John Angus MacKay said in his answer to the Committee, this is the subject of
ongoing discussions with Ministers but the Scottish Government has committed
itself to “… examine how we can introduce an entitlement to Gaelic medium
education where reasonable demand exists.” The aspiration in the draft National
Gaelic Language Plan is in line with this commitment.

What is meant by ‘reasonable demand’ clearly needs to be discussed but, to be
helpful, Bòrd na Gàidhlig does not think it would be reasonable for a local
authority to have to make provision if the parents of one pupil asked for Gaelic
medium education, whereas we might consider it reasonable that provision should
be made if the parents of, say, four pupils made such a request. This would be in
line with the policies already followed by some local authorities in deciding
whether or not to offer Gaelic provision in response to parental demand.

Liz Smith MSP’s question on the supply of teachers required to meet the
ambitions of the draft National Gaelic Language Plan
I would like to endorse what John Angus MacKay said about the ability, in some
instances, to increase numbers of pupils in Gaelic medium education by filling up
classes that currently have capacity. This could be done at no extra cost. It is, as
John Angus MacKay said, encouraging that the largest cohort of students ever will
be graduating as Gaelic teachers next summer.
I would add that it is also the case that there is a considerable number of teachers in Scotland (over 100) qualified to teach through the medium of Gaelic who do not do so at present. There will be various reasons for this, but one of the reasons is that there was no job available to them in Gaelic when they graduated and they opted to teach in English instead to secure a post. It will be our intention to try and get as many of those teachers as possible back into Gaelic teaching at the same time as continuing the work that we do in visiting schools, colleges and universities to encourage pupils and students to consider Gaelic teaching as a career option.

International research has consistently confirmed the benefits of bilingualism in enhancing the life chances of young people. Gaelic medium education is the only widely available opportunity to be educated bilingually in Scotland. It has been proved to be a good education, with Gaelic pupils often outperforming their monolingual peers. Contrary to some of the negative comments about Gaelic, the education of young people in Gaelic medium education is not harmed and, it could be argued, is enhanced by equipping them to learn additional languages more easily.

**Stewart Maxwell MSP’s question on engaging with private businesses**

In his answer, John Angus MacKay referred to discussions with trade unions and representative employment organisations. He also pointed out the schemes that are run to assist private companies who would like to introduce Gaelic signage, for instance.

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 does not give Bòrd na Gàidhlig any locus in the affairs of private businesses. However, this is an example of the importance of the process of requesting and approving Gaelic Language Plans, as defined in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. This is an extremely important policy lever that should allow Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and public authorities, to make significant progress in use and visibility of Gaelic across Scotland.

Through the process of approving Gaelic Language Plans, the Bòrd has the ability to encourage public bodies and local authorities to ask private businesses they contract to use the Gaelic language. Local authorities could ensure, through planning conditions, that Gaelic signage is used on new public buildings. This has been resisted up until now in a few cases, but it is something we would like to explore when the Gaelic Language Plans of certain public bodies are reviewed.

We would look to the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government for additional support, profile and recognition of the potential of Gaelic Language Plans in assisting progress that could, in turn, lead to increased Gaelic usage and visibility in the private sector.

**Joan McAlpine MSP’s question relating to Scottish Studies**

I was invited to be a member of the Scottish Studies Working Group and the Bòrd’s Leasaiche Foghlaim (Head of Education), Mairi MacMillan, has been involved in a workshop to explore the development and direction of ‘Studying Scotland’ organised by Education Scotland.
Bòrd na Gàidhlig sees Scottish Studies as a major opportunity to at least raise awareness of the Gaelic language. It is also an opportunity not just to teach all school pupils in Scotland about Gaelic but for them to learn some Gaelic. There is an expectation that any resources produced for Scottish Studies should also be produced in Gaelic to ensure that Gaelic medium pupils can undertake Scottish Studies in the language in which they are taught everything else.

I will respond here to the point about building capacity among Gaelic medium teachers of this particular subject area.

It will be the case that all teachers delivering Scottish Studies will require guidance and CPD. Capacity building will be needed, as well as confidence building to ensure teachers are comfortable in dealing with the subject matter, but this will be equally true of teachers who do not teach through the medium of Gaelic.

In fact it could be argued that Gaelic medium teachers already deliver a large amount of Scottish Studies in what they do. A lot of what is taught relates to the Gaelic language and culture and they are, of course, using that language as the medium of instruction. A large number of the pupils take part in Gaelic cultural events and learn about the history of their own communities through the medium of Gaelic.

Claire Baker MSP’s question relating to National Events

I would like to add to what John Angus MacKay said in his answer to Clare Baker by explaining that it was as a result of an approach from Bòrd na Gàidhlig that the Glasgow 2014 team produced a Gaelic version of the logo for the Commonwealth Games. The challenge now for the organisers - and for Bòrd na Gàidhlig - is to what extent the Gaelic version of the logo will be used but we would certainly like visitors to the Commonwealth Games to be aware that Scotland does have an official language other than English. This will need to be discussed further with the organisers of the Commonwealth Games but there is some support for this.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig would like all major national events such as the Ryder Cup and the Edinburgh International Festival to use Gaelic in their publicity materials and to use Gaelic titles also. We would like to see Scotland’s national football and rugby teams using ‘Alba’ on their shirts. We like to see Scotland’s national arts companies using Gaelic in their publicity materials.

I would again point to the system of approving the Gaelic Language Plans of public bodies which should assist in making these things possible if they are being delivered fully.

VisitScotland, which is responsible for EventScotland, now has an agreed Gaelic Language Plan. Many of the funders of such events will have a Gaelic Language Plan through time. We do not believe there is a lack of goodwill towards such ideas but rather Gaelic is not sufficiently uppermost in the minds of the people who work on those events and in those organisations for them to think about Gaelic’s inclusion. Clearly there is much more work to be done on this but, as in my earlier points to Stewart Maxwell’s question, if more status was attached to the
importance of the delivery of Gaelic Language Plans, that would be helpful in making progress.

I would also say that Gaelic is the central theme of one of Scotland’s high profile national events, Am Mòd Nàiseanta Rioghail - The Royal National Mòd. Gaelic played a significant part in the 2009 Year of Homecoming and the 2011 Year of Scotland’s Islands and we will continue, as John Angus MacKay said, to work with Creative Scotland and others on themed years in the future. Gaelic also features strongly in other events of national significance such as Celtic Connections, the Blas Festival and the HebCelt Festival as it has done, several times, at the Edinburgh International Festival, the most recent example being the Gaelic Hiort production.

BBC ALBA enables many of these national events to be brought to a much wider audience, often offering the only television coverage of them.

Jean Urquhart MSP’s question relating to Gaelic across Scotland, Gaelic Language Plans of other organisations - local authorities in particular - and whether the Bòrd has the money to deliver the National Gaelic Language Plan

Under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, it is Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s duty to produce, and agree with the Scottish Government, a National Gaelic Language Plan.

In putting this draft Plan together, we were particularly mindful of the Scottish Government’s commitment to ensure that, by 2021, the number of speakers of Gaelic in Scotland will be back up to 2001 levels. This is a considerable challenge but if everybody that can play a part does play its part, the Bòrd is confident that this could be achieved. Indeed, this needs to be achieved if we are to see growth in Gaelic speaker numbers into the future.

Gaelic belongs to the whole of Scotland. It is a significant feature of Scotland’s history and living heritage and this is a national plan. We are well aware of the different traditions that exist in certain parts of Scotland, are sympathetic to that and this is reflected in the way we deal with public bodies. We recognise the place of the Scots Language and local dialects and Bòrd na Gàidhlig promotes Gaelic as an official language of Scotland. We have not, and will not, promote Gaelic as the language of Scotland.

While Bòrd na Gàidhlig will help deliver this National Gaelic Language Plan within its known budget, all public bodies and local authorities in Scotland can, and should, also play a part in its delivery. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has modest funds to help public bodies and local authorities deliver certain measures within their own Gaelic Language Plans. But in order to ensure Gaelic’s future, authorities will have to mainstream costs which will always be relatively small in the big scheme of things. If it is believed that Gaelic should have a sustainable future, it would be reasonable to invest in ensuring that future and we would like to work cooperatively and co-invest in areas of Gaelic development.

Investment in Gaelic is an investment in jobs. There are many economic benefits from investment in Gaelic. For example 910 FTE posts exist across Scotland.
where Gaelic is essential or desirable, worth £23.7m to the Scottish economy. This figure does not include the impact of the operational spend of the organisations for which these people work. With many of the posts based within the Highlands & Islands the impact on the economy of reasonably well-paid jobs is likely to be greater than in an urban setting.

Research carried out by Brian Ashcroft and Allan Sproull in 1993, found that Gaelic activities contributed over £40m to the Scottish economy. The Bòrd will be revisiting the work done then as it is fair to say that over the past 20 years the number of jobs requiring Gaelic as a desirable or essential skill has increased, and we would expect that £40m figure to be considerably higher now.

Marco Biagi MSP’s question relating to institutional capacity to deliver

Marco Biagi stated that the Bòrd seemed to be involved in a wide range of partnership working and asked whether the Bòrd has the institutional capacity to deliver. In his answer, John Angus MacKay pointed out that Bòrd na Gàidhlig is a small organisation and that the National Gaelic Language Plan can only be delivered to its fullest extent if everyone gets behind what is a national strategy.

While the Bòrd staff complement is relatively small, we do have Service Level Agreements with around 15 Gaelic organisations of different kinds all of which are delivering elements of the current National Plan for Gaelic. Bòrd na Gàidhlig invests £1.9m in those Gaelic organisations but the spend by them is in excess of £7m so clearly others are investing in Gaelic development and progress is being made through partnerships created by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and those organisations funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Conclusion

My apologies, once again, that I was unable to appear in person before the Committee on 6 December. I would be happy to do so at a later date if the Committee feels that would be of assistance. In the meantime, I hope this paper is helpful in augmenting John Angus MacKay’s contribution to the Committee’s proceedings.
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