

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT – CROSS PARTY GROUP ON GAELIC

(DRAFT) Minute of the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Gaelic, held in Committee Room 3, The Scottish Parliament, Holyrood on Wednesday 26th November 2013 at 1pm.

Present: *Angus MacDonald MSP, (Convener); David Thompson MSP (Vice Convener); Jamie McGrigor MSP; Jean Urquhart MSP; John Wilson MSP; Donald MacNeill, (Secretary); Coinneach MacÌomhair (Comunn na Gàidhlig); Iain Aonghas MacAoidh (Bòrd na Gàidhlig); Coinneach A Moireach (Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd); Mata MacIver (UHI); Diane MacIntyre (Scottish Parliament); David Brew (MG Alba); Fiona O'Hanlon (Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann); Iain M MacLeòid (An Comunn Gàidhealach); Carole Henderson; Ann Dessyn; Derek MacKenzie (SDS); DJ Mac an t-Saoir (CLÌ Gàidhlig); James Graham (An Comunn Gàidhealach); DK Mac a' Phì (Comhairle Bhaile Ghlaschu); Stuart Pescodd (Scottish Government); Neil M Graham (MG Alba); Donald Smith; Jamie Wallace (Social Media Alba); Ceitidh Mhoireach; Sheila Carvel; Fada Nassar (per Rhoda Grant MSP); Lyssandra Colledge (per Maureen Watt MSP); Lisa Doig; Neil Ross (HIE); Stephen Conolly (DC Research); Alasdair MacLeòid – simultaneous interpretation.*

In an opening address prior to commencing the meeting Agenda, the Convener raised the issue of MSP attendance. The CPG meeting was once again coinciding with important Parliamentary business that could not have been predicted when the meeting date was agreed.

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies had been received from: Hamish Fraser (The Highland Council); Finlay MacLeod

2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of Wednesday 25th June 2014 were approved. Proposed by Stuart Pescodd; Seconded by John Angus MacKay.

3. Matters Arising.

There were no matters arising from the minute.

4. Gaelic as an Asset - Presentation:

This presentation highlighted key findings and future actions from the recently-completed 'Gaelic as an Asset' study. The study had been co-ordinated by Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and supported by a partnership group of public bodies. The presentation was made by Neil Ross, Highlands & Islands Enterprise; and Stephen Connolly, DC Research.

Further information on the study is available at:

www.hie.co.uk/community-support/support-for-gaelic-development/gaelic-research.html

The presentation outlined the research findings, including significant use of Gaelic by business and community organisations, and touched on several case studies from the research.

It reported that the potential value of Gaelic to the Scottish economy could be in the region of £82 – 149M and that this represented a significant opportunity to be realised.

In the subsequent discussion, the following points were made:

- The study was welcomed as further evidence that Gaelic contributes significantly to the Scottish economy, in contrast to the view that it is a drain on public resources.
- That HIE was to seek to channel development funds to businesses and community projects looking to make more use of Gaelic as an asset.
- That Gaelic had a significant social value, but that this was difficult to quantify meaningfully.
- That greater opportunities for activity existed in certain economic sectors: tourism; creative industries; and food & drink
- That a research ‘model’ had been established that could be re-used/revisited in due course to determine progress and development.

The Convener welcomed the presentation, and discussion, noting the potential benefit in maintaining the study partnership group into the future.

5. SDS – progress on implementing the Gaelic Language Plan – presentation:

A presentation was made by Derek Mackenzie, Gaelic Development Officer, SkillsDevelopmentScotland (SDS) on the implementation of the agency’s Gaelic language plan.

Actions included promotion of Gaelic learning – including supporting the development of a strategy for Gaelic adult learning; promotion of Gaelic careers to young people – including a successful pilot careers day with S2/3 pupils in Inverness; and a plan to use the Modern Apprenticeship scheme for Gaelic-related employment – with particular emphasis on the sectors of creative industries, childcare, and social services.

SDS is also engaged in promotion of Gaelic Medium Education training and development.

6. The value of social media in Gaelic development – a presentation:

A presentation was made by Jamie Wallace, Social Media Alba, on the opportunities and presence of Gaelic within the social media.

This included the following points: that there was limited authoritative data available; that other minority languages were successfully using the social media and that lessons could be learnt; that there had been a substantial increase in the amount of Gaelic used on twitter (up from 6 – 150 users between 2009 and 2014; and a 43% increase in twitter accounts using Gaelic)

It was suggested that more use could be made of the social media by Gaelic organisations, but that this might require some consideration in terms of staff recruitment.

It was also suggested that there was no reason not to hold more ‘Gaelic twitter days’ if organisations wanted to promote their own activities in this way.

The use of the social media as an education tool – for pupils, and teacher communications – was also highlighted.

7. Consultation on parental rights for Gaelic medium education – update:

Stuart Pescodd gave a brief update on the progress of the consultation exercise on parental rights to Gaelic Medium education.

The consultation closed in September, and any outcome or future action would be included in a wider Education Bill.

There were 79 responses, mainly positive, though there were some differences of opinion. Local Authorities were more or less evenly split on the requirement for legislation or otherwise.

An independent analysis of the consultation responses is being carried out and ought to be available before Christmas. (the link to the findings will be circulated to the CPG mailing list in due course.)

Any Bill, if forthcoming, would not be put forward until Easter 2015.

8. AOCB:

Due to an oversight, there was no AOCB item on the Agenda. However a number of items were raised briefly:

Whether a response had been received to a letter sent to Health Minister Alex Neil MSP, and Scottish Languages Minister Alasdair Allan MSP, in relation to provision for Additional Support Needs in GME and speech & language therapy (*CPG Minute 25/6/14*). The Convener undertook to follow this up.

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That the Group ought to consider the topic of Gaelic teacher retention, as well as recruitment.

Whether the Parliament could give more consideration to the use of Gaelic within the Chamber or Parliamentary business. This could be the regular or routine use of 'prepared' or standard phrases which would not require the use of translators or equipment. The Convener undertook to take this up with the Parliamentary authorities.

No date was fixed for the next meeting, but it was agreed it would take place in May/June 2014

9. Date of next meeting:

It was agreed that an additional CPG meeting be considered to cover topics relating to GME:
The guidance on GME for local authorities produced by Education Scotland;
The outcome of the consultation on parental rights to GME;
GME teacher recruitment/retention.

A date to be agreed electronically in due course.