



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 16 June 2015

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EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
16th Meeting 2015, Session 4

CONVENER

*Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*George Adam (Paisley) (SNP)

*Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)

*Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP)

*Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

*Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Iain Caimbeul/Iain Campbell (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)

Nicola Dudley (Scottish Council of Independent Schools)

Rod Grant (Clifton Hall School)

Dr Daniel Hovde (International School of Aberdeen)

Ken Muir (General Teaching Council for Scotland)

Coinneach Moireach/Kenneth Murray (Highland Council)

Magaidh Wentworth (Comann nam Pàrant)

John Wilson (East Ayrshire Council)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Terry Shevlin

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Education and Culture Committee

Tuesday 16 June 2015

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:47]

Education (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Convener (Stewart Maxwell): Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the 16th meeting in 2015 of the Education and Culture Committee. I remind everybody to ensure that all electronic devices, and particularly phones, are switched off at all times.

Our first agenda item is to continue our evidence taking on the Education (Scotland) Bill. Today, we will take evidence from two panels of witnesses, the first of which will cover the bill's provisions on Gaelic. Some of the witnesses will speak in Gaelic. Headsets are, I hope, available for everybody, including those in the public gallery.

I welcome Iain Campbell from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Kenneth Murray from the Highland Council, Magaidh Wentworth from Comann nam Pàrant and John Wilson from East Ayrshire Council. If the witnesses do not mind, we will move straight to questions, starting with Siobhan McMahon.

Siobhan McMahon (Central Scotland) (Lab): The policy memorandum states that the main policy aim of the bill in relation to Gaelic is to "promote the growth" of Gaelic-medium primary education. In oral evidence, a Scottish Government official stated:

"I am confident that the bill will lead to faster growth in Gaelic-medium education throughout Scotland."—[*Official Report, Education and Culture Committee*, 28 April 2015; c 15.]

Do you agree with that statement?

Iain Caimbeul/Iain Campbell (Bòrd na Gàidhlig): Tha am bile a' toirt cothrom air adhartachadh a thoirt air foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, ach feumar sùil a thoirt air ciamar a tha sinn a' dol a thoirt taic do thràth-bhliadhnaichean agus gu foghlam anns an àrd-sgoil a chionn, mar a thuigeas sibh, tha foghlam aig ìre tràth-bhliadhnaichean na bhunaid airson clann a tha tighinn a-staigh dhan bhun-sgoil agus an uair sin airson misneachd a chruthachadh ann an intinnean phàrantan agus cothrom a thoirt do chloinn a dhol dhan àrd-sgoil. Tha e cianail fhèin cudthromach gum bi ceanglaichean anns an t-siostam airson foghlam tron Ghàidhlig eadar na trì ìrean a tha sin—bho ìre tràth-bhliadhnaichean suas gu ìre àrd-sgoile.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

The bill as it stands gives an opportunity for Gaelic-medium education to develop, but we must look at how we give support to the early years and secondary education. Early years education is a foundation for children coming into primary school. To give support to parents, there must be links between the three areas up to high school. We need to develop Gaelic-medium education from the early years right through to secondary level.

Coinneach Moireach/Kenneth Murray (Highland Council): Tha mi ag aontachadh leis a sin, a neach-gairm. Ma chuireas comhairle sam bith no Riaghaltas sam bith airgead agus oidhirp a-steach ann am brosnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, cha dèan iad sin airson fàilligeadh. Tha iad a' dèanamh sin airson gum bi sinn soirbheachail agus gum bi adhartas ann agus àrdachadh anns na h-àireamhan. Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' brosnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig mar as àbhaist, mar-thà, ach chan eil teagamh sam bith nach fhaic sinn àrdachadh anns na h-àireamhan ma tha sinne a' cur oidhirp a-steach ann am margaidheachd no ann am brosnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I agree with that. If a council or any Government is going to put money into GME, there is a chance that there will be development. We want to encourage numbers. Highland Council supports GME and we are putting effort into marketing. There is no doubt that we will see an increase in numbers.

Magaidh Wentworth (Comann nam Pàrant): Chan eil am bile a' cruthachadh na còrach laghail a bha sinn ag iarraidh do fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus tha Comann nam Pàrant a' smaoinèachdainn airson fàs gum feum a' chòir laghail sin a bhith ann. Tha e reusanta gum bu chòir cothrom a bhith aig pàrantan, ma tha iarrtas reusanta ann, iarrtas a chur a-staigh airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig aig ìre sgoil-àraich no bun-sgoil agus gum bi am foghlam a tha sin a' leantainn don àrd-sgoil. Mar sin, tha e reusanta a bhith ag ràdh nach eil an t-iarrtas airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig dìreach airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig anns a' bhun-sgoil.

Cuideachd, mura bi a' chòir laghail ann, chan eil tèarainteachd sam bith aig pàrantan ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, agus mar sin chan eil sinne a' faicinn càil anns a' bhile a tha dol a chur stad air ùghdarrasan ionadail o bhith a' cur stad air cumail taic ri pàrantan ma tha a' chlann aca ann am foghlam tron Ghàidhlig aig ìre sam bith. Às aonais na cinnt a tha sin, cha bhi fàs cho mòr sin ann leis a' bhile.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

As parents, we must say that the bill does not create the legal rights that we are looking for. Comann nam Pàrant is looking for development. We think that it is reasonable that, if there is a reasonable demand for Gaelic education, parents should also have the opportunity to request GME at pre-school, nursery and high school or secondary levels. Demand for GME is reasonable at all levels, not just primary.

Without a legal right, there is no long-term commitment to GME. Without that commitment, we do not see anything in the bill to prevent local authorities from discontinuing support for parents who have children in Gaelic-medium education at any level.

John Wilson (East Ayrshire Council): I concur with what has been said. I place particular importance on the need for solid work in the early years. Evidence shows that language learning takes place in the very early years, so immersion should be used where possible. I would also like to think about the links with the one-plus-two language learning initiative.

Siobhan McMahon: You have spoken about the early years, a legal right and marketing by councils. Will any growth be a result of the bill, or will it be because of initiatives that individual councils or other organisations are promoting?

Coinneach Moireach: Nì am bile feum mar lagh, oir an uair sin chì am poball gu bheil dleastanas oirnn uile feuchainn ri rudeigin a dhèanamh a thaobh àireamhan luchd-ionnsachaidh agus luchd-bruidhinn na Gàidhlig àrdachadh. Mar chomhairle a tha a' tabhann foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig gu faisg air 2,500 den òigridh air a' Ghàidhealtachd bho sgoiltean-àraich suas gu ìre àrd-sgoil, tha sinne a' smaoinèachadh gu bheil e cudthromach dha-rìribh gum bi rud sam bith a tha sinn a' dèanamh a-mach às a' bhile a tha seo comasach a dhèanamh agus a libhrigeadh agus gu bheil sinn a' toirt a' phoball còmhla rinn. Ma chì am poball gu bheil sinne a' smaoinèachadh gu bheil dà-chànanas ann an Alba cudthromach agus gu bheil fianais ann gu bheil dà-chànanas math dhan òigridh againn, agus ma chuireas sinn uile ar n-oidhirp ris an sin agus ris na teachdaireachdan a tha ann an lùib dà-chànanas, bi sinn soirbheachail dha-rìribh a thaobh àrdachadh foghlam trom mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

The bill will be useful. It will provide a foundation in law, and the public will see that the Government and all of us are under an obligation to help to increase the number of speakers of Gaelic. As a council offering GME to nearly 2,500 children from nursery to high school, it is most important that

anything that we do under the bill is possible to deliver and that we take the people with us. If the public see that bilingualism is important and that there is evidence that it is good for our youth, and if we give our commitment to that and deliver the message, that will be exceptionally successful in promoting Gaelic-medium education.

Iain Caimbeul: Tha còrr air 14,000 sgoilear ann an Alba ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig aig ìre a choireigin agus tha a' chuid as motha dhiubh a' tighinn a-staigh do fhoghlam Gàidhlig air sàillibh gun robh pàrantan gu saor-thoileach a' cur a-staigh iartras.

Tha am bile a' toirt dhuinn bun-stèidh gun teagamh sam bith ach tha earrannan den bhile a dh'fheumas a bhith air an neartachadh a chionn tha pàirtean dheth a tha gu math lag ann an iomadach dòigh, gu h-àraidh earrann 10. Tha tuilleadh 's a' chòir de chnapan-starra ann an sin a bhiodh na dhuilgheadas do phàrantan gu h-àraidh. Cuideachd, dh' fhaodte gun robh na h-earrannan sin air an cleachdadh mar leisgeul dha na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail gun foghlam a thabhann, gu h-àraidh am fo-earrann a tha ag ràdh gum feum cultar na Gàidhlig a bhith ann an sgìre mun tig foghlam a thabhann tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Chan eil sin idir ciallach anns an t-saoghal a tha sinn beò ann an-diugh. Tha Alba gu tur eadar-dhealaichte bho thoiseach na linn a chaidh seachad san t-suidheachadh a th' againn an-diugh.

Ann an cuid de dh' àiteachan den bhile, feumaidh gnothaichean a bhith air an neartachadh, briathrachas a bhith air a theannachadh agus soilleireachd a thoirt do chuid de na faclan. Mar eisimpleir, dè a tha "reusanta" no "desirable" a' ciallachadh? Tha cothroman ann gun teagamh sam bith. Tha am bile a' toirt dhuinn cothrom pròiseas a chruthachadh airson adhartas a dhèanamh ach tha rudan ri atharrachadh agus ri neartachadh agus feumaidh sinn cuimhneachadh gu bheil sinn air slighe an seo.

'S e e am facal "proportionality" a bha còir a bhith air a chleachdadh a chionn tha tòrr adhartas air a dhèanamh agus an rud mu dheireadh a tha a dhith oirnn, 's e bacadh a chur air an adhartas a tha sin ann an dòigh sam bith ach, aig an aon àm, feumaidh teachdaireachd a chur a-mach gu na pàrantan a bhios a' sealltainn dhaibhsan agus a bheir dhaibh misneachd gu bheil foghlam tron Ghàidhlig gus a bhith air a neartachadh agus air a leudachadh anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

There are 14,000 children in Scotland learning Gaelic at some level or other. Most of them come into Gaelic-medium education because the parents request that.

The bill certainly gives a foundation, but parts of it must be strengthened. It is weak in many areas, especially section 10, which has too many handicaps that would make it difficult for parents to get the education that they want for their children and which could be used as an excuse by local authorities not to deliver that form of education. The bill says that there needs to be a Gaelic culture in an area before Gaelic-medium education is delivered. That is not sensible, as Scotland is quite different now from how it was at the beginning of the last century.

The bill needs to be strengthened in many areas. The terminology must be strengthened and many of the provisions must be defined. For example, the bill should define what “reasonable” and “desirable” mean. The bill gives us an opportunity to create a process for development, but at the end of the day it needs to be strengthened.

As we sit here, we must remember that the word “proportionality” is used a lot; much progress has been made and the last thing that we want is that there should be any difficulties or handicaps to development. The message to parents must be positive and give them support: Gaelic-medium education will be strengthened in coming years.

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha mi ag aontachadh leis a h-uile càil a tha Iain Caimbeul ag ràdh mu phàrantan. Tha e math gu bheil pròiseas anns a’ bhile a thaobh ùine. Nì sin diofar. An-dràsta chì sinn pàrantan a’ cur a-staigh iarrtas airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig gu ùghdarrasan ionadail agus tha e a’ toirt bliadhna gu leth no nas fhaide gum am faigh iad freagairt ach tha am pròiseas a tha anns a’ bhile uabhasach trom air pàrantan. Feumaidh an t-aon phàrant a tha a’ dol a chur iarrtas a-staigh chun ùghdarras ionadail a bhith gu math làidir is gu math fiosraichte ciamar a tha iad dol a dh’fhaighinn lorg air pàrantan eile anns an sgìre. Feumaidh taic a bhith ann dhan ùghdarras ionadail agus na buidhnean Gàidhlig airson seo a dhèanamh agus feumaidh cuimhne a bhith againn ann an tòrr àiteachan gu bheil am feum againn air a’ phròiseas a tha seo air sgàth ’s nach eil ùghdarrasan ionadail taiceil agus chan eil iad airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig adhartachadh. Tha an cnap-starra sin ann.

Anns an dòigh sin, tha am pròiseas feumail a thaobh ùine ach tha tòrr cheistean ann mu dheidhinn agus am bi e comasach dha mòran phàrantan seo a dhèanamh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I agree with what Ian Campbell has said. It is good that there is a process, which will make a difference in terms of timescales. At the moment, parents request GME and sometimes it is a year

and a half or longer before they get a response. The process also puts quite a heavy pressure on parents. A parent who sends in a request must be very strong and know how other parents in the area feel. We must remember that in many areas we need the process because local authorities are not supportive and do not wish to deliver GME. Those are the current problems.

It is important that there is a process in place, but there are many questions still to be clarified on how parents are supported in dealing with that process.

John Wilson: The bill lays out a strong context, particularly with regard to promotion and giving advice to local authorities. East Ayrshire Council is about to move GME into a brand-new building, which is a three-to-18 campus. Our Gaelic provision will be within that campus and have that throughflow. That is very positive.

I would like to wrap around that context the two aspects of resourcing and funding: the money that currently comes through the Gaelic-specific education grant and the capital fund. We have also benefited from the Gaelic immersion for teachers programme. That brings me to a concern that I have regarding the accessibility of staff to allow us to meet the need created by the expansion of Gaelic.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Last week, Angus MacDonald secured a debate on the 10 years of Bòrd na Gàidhlig in which two other Highland MSPs and I mentioned the fact that the entitlement that was promised in the 2007 and 2011 SNP manifestos was an entitlement to learn Gaelic—I should say that the other two MSPs were elected on the Scottish National Party manifesto. That entitlement has now become a process to assess parental requests.

When I read the submissions, I thought that I might have seen some concern from Bòrd na Gàidhlig about that, but it seems that you are quite happy, which surprises me. Are you quite content that what was promised as an entitlement to Gaelic has now been watered down to become a process by which parental requests for Gaelic will be done, and that, even where an assessment has been made that sufficient demand and resources exist, there is still no requirement for a local authority to provide Gaelic? Is that the beginning and end of it? Are you concerned in any way that an entitlement has become a bureaucratic process?

10:00

Iain Caimbeul: Gun teagamh sam bith, chan eil am bile seo làidir gu leòr. Tha am pròiseas math gu leòr aig aon ìre, ach tha sreath de dh’earrannan anns a’ bhile a dh’fheumas a bhith

air an neartachadh airson dèanamh cinnteach nach e dìreach bureaucratic process a th' ann. Chan eil sion a dh'fheum a bhith a' cur Bile an Fhoghlaim (Alba) air beulaibh an t-sluaigh airson a chur ann an lagh mur a bheil e làidir gu leòr airson adhartas a dhèanamh agus taic a thoirt do phàrantan. An rud a tha iad ag iarraidh, 's e sin foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' smaointinn gu bheil am bile a' toirt dhuinn cothrom coimhead air a' phròiseas, ach bhiodh sinn airson gum biodh am pròiseas air a neartachadh. Tha sinn air slighe an seo, ceum air cheum, airson còraichean laghail, mar gum biodh, dh'fhaodte anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn ceangailte ri foghlam tron Ghàidhlig.

Rud nach eil mi airson tachairt, 's e gum milleadh sinn an t-adhartas a tha sinn air a dhèanamh gu ruige seo ach, aig an aon àm, feumaidh am bile a bhith air a neartachadh gu mòr a chionn tha tòrr de na h-earrannan anns a' bhile ro lag agus tha e a' dol a thoirt cothrom do chuid de na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail gun foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a thoirt do phàrantan no do chloinn.

Bho 2009, 's e 18 de dh'ùghdarrasan poblach a tha a' toirt seachad foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an Alba. Chan eil adhartas sam bith no atharrachadh sam bith air tighinn anns na h-àireamhan a tha sin bho 2009 a dh'aindeoin 's gu bheil Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005 againn agus gu bheil Bòrd na Gàidhlig ann. Ach le ràdh sin getà, tha tòrr adhartas air tachairt ann an cuid de sgìrean agus do chuid de na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail agus tha iad rim moladh airson sin a dhèanamh.

Aig an aon àm, tha neartachadh ri dhèanamh air a' bhile agus chan e dìreach an rud mu dheireadh a tha a dhìth—chan e dìreach pròiseas. Feumaidh adhartas a bhith ann agus feumaidh misneachd a bhith aig pàrantan gu bheil foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ri fhaighinn bho thràth-bhliadhnaichean suas gu ìre àrd-sgoil.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Undoubtedly the bill is not strong enough. The process is fine at one level, but the bill needs to be strengthened in many sections to ensure that it is not just, as Mary Scanlon says, a bureaucratic process. The Education (Scotland) Bill must be strong enough to encourage parents and give them support to get the Gaelic-medium education that they want for their children. Bòrd na Gàidhlig believes that the bill gives us an opportunity to look at the process, but we want that process to be strengthened. We are taking it step-by-step in the hope that we will have legal rights to GME in the future.

We do not want to spoil the progress that we have made so far, but the bill needs to be

strengthened because many of the sections are weak, and that weakness would give many local authorities an opportunity not to provide GME when parents request it. In 2009, 18 local authorities provided GME. There has been no progress on that, despite the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. However, there has been progress in many areas and some local authorities are supportive.

As I said, the bill needs to be strengthened. We need more than a process: we need encouragement for parents that GME is available from early years right through to high school.

Coinneach Moireach: Tha mi ag aontachadh leis a' mhòr-chuid de na chaidh a ràdh gu ruige seo. Na bha a dhith oirnn aig ìre nàiseanta, 's e pròiseas a bha a h-uile duine againn a' tuigse. Cha robh càil a mhath dhuinn a bhith dìreach ann an aon phàirt den dùthaich a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri iartas airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus an uair sin a' dèiligeadh ris ann an dòigh gu tur eadar-dhealaichte ann an àite eile. Agus tha am bile seo a' cur pròiseas air a beulaibh ge brith càite a bheil sinn anns an dùthaich. Bidh proportionality ann, mar a bha Iain Caimbeul ag ràdh. Chan e 's gu bheil sinn dol a dhèiligeadh ri foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig san aon dòigh can an-dràsta far a bheil i air a' Ghàidhealtachd no anns na h-Eileanan Siar no ann an Siorrachd Aonghais no Siorrachd Àir, mar eisimpleir.

Feumaidh sinn a bhith mothachail mu dheidhinn sin ach cuideachd gum bi e ciallach a ràdh gu bheil a' chuid as motha de h-ùghdarrasan ionadail a tha a' cur ri foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig air oidhirp mhòr a dhèanamh. Chanainn-sa an-dràsta gu bheil Comhairle Baile Dhùn Èideann, Comhairle Baile Ghlaschu, Comhairle Earra-Ghàidheal is Bhòid, Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd agus Comhairle nan Eilean Siar air oidhirp mhòr a dhèanamh agus air adhartas mòr a dhèanamh ri toirt foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig air adhart agus sin tro na planaichean cànan aca fhèin.

Tha planaichean reachdail againn mar chomhairle a tha toirt dhuinn stiùir mu dheidhinn dè tha sinn a' dèanamh mu dheidhinn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus tha sin air aontachadh le Bòrd na Gàidhlig aig ìre reachdail. Agus ma smaoinicheas sinn fhèin ann an Inbhir Nis, a' chiad sgoil dìreach airson na Gàidhlig a chaidh a thogail ann an 2007: Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis. Thàinig oirnn a leudachadh ann an 2010 agus tha i a-nis loma-làn a-rithist agus sùil againn ri dè bu chòir dhuinn dèanamh mu dheidhinn sgoil eile ann an Inbhir Nis, 's mathaid. 'S e teachdaireachd mhath a tha sin.

Ann an dà mhìos eile—anns an Lùnastal—tha sinn a' fosgladh sgoil ùr Ghàidhlig anns a' Ghearasdan agus tha sinn an-dràsta a' togail sgoil ùr Ghàidhlig ann am Port Rìgh a bhios fosgailte

ann an 2017. Tha sinn ag obair agus a' dèanamh adhartas aig ìre àrd-sgoil ann an acadamaidh rìoghail Inbhir Nis. Tha ionad ùr Gàidhlig gu bhith an sin ann am bliadhna gu leth. Cuideachd, tha ionad trì gu 18 gu bhith ann am àrd-sgoil ùr Baile Dhubhthaich agus bidh a' Ghàidhlig air a stèidheachadh taobh a-staigh sin.

Tha adhartas ann; tha obair mhòr ann, ach chan eil sin ag ràdh nach eil dùbhlann air ar beulaibh. Tha e math dha-rìribh airgead calpa fhaighinn, ach tha dùbhlann ann mu dheidhinn luchd-obrach. Cuideachd, ge brith dè a thig a-mach às a' bhile, ma bhios sinn soirbheachail ag àrdachadh nan àireamhan, feumaidh sinn goireasan agus airgead a chur air cùlaibh sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I agree with much of what has been said. At a national level, we need a process that we all understand. There is no point in dealing with demand for GME in one part of the country in one way and then having a different way of dealing with it in another part of the country. The bill creates a process that would operate throughout the country. There will be proportionality, as Iain Campbell said; we will not deal with GME in the same way in the Highlands and Western Isles as we would in Ayrshire. There will be proportionality and we must respect that.

Most local authorities that provide GME have made significant progress. The City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow City Council, Argyll and Bute Council, Highland Council and Western Isles Council have made tremendous effort in advancing Gaelic-medium education through their Gaelic language plans.

We have statutory plans that give us guidance about GME, which have been approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. In Highland Council, the first school that was built specifically for GME had to be extended in 2010 and is now full again. We are now looking to see how we can provide another Gaelic school in Inverness. In September we are opening a new Gaelic school in Fort William, and we are currently building a new Gaelic school in Portree to be opened in 2017. We are working hard. We are making progress at high school level. Inverness royal academy has a new Gaelic unit, and Gaelic will be very much a part of the new campus provision for three-to-18 in Tain in 2018.

There has been a lot of progress, but there are challenges, too. Capital funding is welcomed, but there are challenges in other funding. Whatever the final shape of the bill, if we succeed in increasing numbers of GME students, there will need to be funding and other provision to meet that.

Magaidh Wentworth: Bhon fhianais sgrìobhte a chuir na diofar bhuidhnean a-steach—Comann nam Pàrant agus pàrantan air leth—tha e gu math soilleir gu bheil pàrantan a' smaoineachadh gu bheil feum air còir laghail airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha e ceart gu bheil adhartas ann an tòrr de na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail mar Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd. Tha mòran adhartas air a bhith ann, ach tha tòrr de na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail far nach eil foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig sam bith. Chan eil eòlas aca air foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, agus tha e doirbh dha pàrantan, is mar sin tha sinn a' smaoineachadh gu bheil feum air còir laghail airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Tha rudan a bha Iain Caimbeul a' togail a thaobh laigsean anns a' bhile. Tha sinne a' smaoineachadh gu bheil cothrom air fàs ann am foghlam Gàidhlig ma thig barrachd brosnachadh bho na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail agus chan e na h-ùghdarrasan mar Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd a tha dèanamh mòran ach na h-ùghdarrasan eile.

Tha tòrr anns a' bhile a tha seo mar

“as the authority considers appropriate”,

gum bi iad a' dèanamh brosnachadh. Tha seo ro lag agus bidh rudan mar seo air an cleachdadh mar leisgeul gun a bhith a' dèanamh càil.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

From the written evidence submitted by various organisations, including Comann nam Pàrant, it is clear that there is a need for a legal right to Gaelic-medium education. There has been some progress, as Highland Council has suggested, but many local authorities are not making progress—they still have no GME provision, they do not know about Gaelic education and parents are being disappointed. There is a need for Gaelic-medium education to have a statutory basis.

Iain Campbell raised the weaknesses in the bill. There is an opportunity to make progress if there is more promotion of GME, not just in councils such as Highland Council but in other areas too.

The phrase

“as the authority considers appropriate”

is too weak and is something that will be used as an excuse not to do anything.

John Wilson: The bill sets out a strong context for promotion, and we are focused on that locally in East Ayrshire. Having spoken to our parent groups, we are going to move ahead with it. With a three-to-18 campus coming online within the next couple of years, we will certainly have the resources. Our only anxiety is about staffing capacity.

We are also looking to expand the community learning aspect of our provision to raise Gaelic language learning among parents and carers so that they can support their children's learning.

Mary Scanlon: I am grateful for the progress report. I lived close to the Gaelic school. However, only Ms Wentworth answered my question; it was not answered by the other witnesses.

We are at stage 1 of the bill so there is no point in me, Dave Thompson or Jean Urquhart raising our concerns about the entitlement to Gaelic-medium education when Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Highland Council say—I have written it down—that the bill is an opportunity for progress and the legal rights will come in the future. There is really no point in us being concerned if the witnesses are content, and I pick up the feeling that they are, apart from Magaidh Wentworth, who said that it should be a legal right. It would seem that the three MSPs I am talking about are on the wrong track. If you are quite content with the process of the bill and with the administration that the bill requires, I have no further questions.

Iain Caimbeul: Chan eil sin buileach fìor. Chan e sin buileach na tha sinn a' ciallachadh. Tha sinn uile airson gum bi còraichean laghail aig foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach tha àm ann airson sin a chur air bhonn, mar gum biodh. Cha chreid mi gu bheil sinn aig an ìre fhathast gu bheil sinn ag iarraidh làn-chòraichean laghail a bhith ann airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha sinn a' dèanamh ceum air cheum gu ruige sin ach feumaidh sinn a bhith gu math faiceallach nach mill sinn an suidheachadh a th' againn agus an t-adhartas a tha air a bhith a' tachairt.

Chan eil sinn idir an aghaidh gum biodh còraichean laghail ann airson pàrantan clann a chur tro fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach cha chreid mi gu bheil sinn aig an ìre sin fhathast airson diofar reusanan.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That is not quite what we meant. I think that we all want to see legal rights to Gaelic-medium education, but there is a time for that to be established and I do not think that we are at the point that we want full statutory rights to Gaelic-medium education. We are taking steps towards that, but we must be careful that we do not abandon the situation that we are in.

We are not against parents' legal rights to GME, but I do not think that we have reached that point at the moment for various reasons.

Coinneach Moireach: Dìreach airson cur ris a sin cuideachd, ma chruthaicheas sinn an-dràsta còir laghail, 's e a' chiad cheist a dh'fhaighnicheas sinn mar chomhairle: a bheil e comasach dhuinn a dhèanamh? A bheil e comasach dhuinn seo a

libhrigeadh? A bheil e comasach ar dleastanas a chumail ris a' chòir a tha sin? Leis a' ghearan a tha againn aig ìre nàiseanta mu dheidhinn ghoireasan, thidsearan agus goireasan eile air fad ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, tha sinn ga dhèanamh ceum air cheum, mar a tha Iain Caimbeul ag ràdh. Sin mar a tha sinne ga fhaicinn agus 's e ceum mòr a tha anns a' bhile a tha seo.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

If we create a legal right now, the first question that we would ask would be whether it is possible to achieve that and to deliver that commitment. With the doubts that we have at the national level about the availability of teachers and other facilities in Gaelic-medium education, as Iain Campbell said, we must take a step-by-step approach. That is how we see it. The bill is a significant step in that direction.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Good morning. I will put us on a different track. Mr Murray, you talked earlier about proportionality and about the fact that, although the process of considering applications needs to be similar across the country, for understandable reasons the approach taken in Highland will be different from that taken in Ayrshire and so forth. I think that that bears out what was in Highland Council's written evidence, which suggests that

"The process must be flexible and not a 'one size fits all'. In addition, geographic, transportation and demographic challenges must also be borne in mind. Any process to assess demand must be based on the sustainability and long term likely success of provision; and the best use of resources."

I represent Orkney, where there is no tradition of Gaelic education but there is a strong tradition of Scots in the form of the Orcadian dialect. In Shetland, similar factors and characteristics are at play. In going down the route of strengthening this right still further, is there a risk that the resources that are deployed to try to support, expand and promote the awareness and uptake of the Scots language, the Orcadian dialect and the Shetland dialect could in effect be crowded out by a right that is seen as underpinned by law and therefore trumps, or is prioritised ahead of, the safeguarding and promotion of those dialects, which have historically struggled and are struggling to get the attention that they deserve?

Coinneach Moireach: Tha sin inntinneach agus 's e ceist a tha sin a bhios air a togail ann an diofar àiteachan anns an dùthaich—shuas ann an Siorrachd Obar Dheathain, far a bheil Doric ann, agus ann am pàirtean eile den dùthaich. Tha duilgheadasan ann co-cheangailte ri cur Gàidhlig suas mar a tha i ach, nar beachdne, 's e Gàidhlig cànan na dùthcha agus tha prògram rianachd Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' cantainn rudeigin. Canaidh mi seo sa Bheurla.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That is interesting, and I think that it is a question that is raised in various parts of the country—in Aberdeenshire, where Doric is well used, and in other parts of the country. There are difficulties in relation to raising Gaelic to the level that it is. I will say this in English.

Coinneach Moireach continued in English:

The Highland Council's programme for administration gives equal respect to all languages and dialects in the Highlands, including Gaelic.

Coinneach Moireach continued in Gaelic:

Gàidhlig air a h-ainmeachadh ann, ach a tha e ag ràdh ge brith càite am bi thu anns an àite, gu h-àraidh gu h-ionadail, gum bi na faireachdainnean sin aig a' phoball air an toirt a-steach. Tha sin cudthromach dha-rìribh oir 's e sin a tha air a chlàradh againn mar Chomhairle—gum bi urram ann dha cànanan is dialects eile a bharrachd air a' Ghàidhlig, ach gu bheil àite sònraichte ionadail aig a' Ghàidhlig air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Chan eil fhios agam am biodh dleastanas air Comhairle Arcaibh plana Gàidhlig a chruthachadh far nach eil Gàidhlig gu h-eachdraidheil air a cleachdadh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Gaelic is mentioned but, whatever part of the Highlands you are in, these feelings will be taken account of, and that is important indeed. That is what we have recorded as a council—that respect is given to other languages and dialects in addition to our language but that Gaelic has a particular local application in the Highlands. I do not know whether Orkney Council would have a requirement for a Gaelic language plan, as Gaelic has not historically been used there. Iain Campbell might explain.

Iain Caimbeul: Gu h-inntinneach, ann an Eilean Arcaibh, eadar an dà chunntas-sluaigh mu dheireadh, dh'èirich àireamh nan daoine a tha comasach air Gàidhlig a labhairt 37 anns a' cheud, agus dh'fhaodte anns an eilean aig Mgr MacArtair gu bheil daoine a' tionndadh gu Gàidhlig. Tha fios agam gu bheil na h-àireamhan caran beag gun teagamh sam bith, ach tha am bile seo mu dheidhinn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Feumaidh a' chlann uile ann an Alba foghlam fhaighinn ann an cànanan Beurla no cànan air choireigin eile agus tha saoghal na Gàidhlig a' toirt làn urram do na cànainean eile a th' ann an Alba.

Tha e math gu bheil leithid de chànanan againn ann an Alba, gu bheil daoine ag obrachadh còmhla agus nach eil na mion-chànanan rin cleachdadh ann an seagh poiltigeach mar a th' ann an dùthchannan anns an Roinn Eòrpa. Gun teagamh sam bith, tha còraichean aig mion-chànanan eile ach tha am bile seo mu dheidhinn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus a

dh'aindeoin 's gu bheil àireamhan luchd-labhairt ann an Eilean Arcaibh air a dhol suas beagan eadar an dà chunntas-sluaigh mu dheireadh, aig an ìre seo chan eil plana Gàidhlig aig Comhairle Arcaibh agus cha bhiodh sinn airson a' chuideim sin a chur air Sealtainn no air Arcaibh aig an ìre seo co-dhiù.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Interestingly, in the previous census, the number of people in the Orkney Islands who were able to speak Gaelic rose by 37 per cent, so perhaps there are people in Mr McArthur's islands who are turning to Gaelic. However, at the end of the day, the bill is about Gaelic-medium education. Every child in Scotland must receive education in some sort of language, so the Gaelic community gives full respect to other areas of Scotland.

It is good that there are several languages in Scotland and that minority languages are not looked at from a political viewpoint. The bill is about GME. Even though the number of Gaelic speakers in Orkney rose in the last census, Orkney Council does not have a Gaelic language plan, and we would not want to put that level of pressure on Orkney or Shetland councils at this point.

Magaidh Wentworth: Ma tha sinn a' bruidhinn air iarrtas reusanta ann an sgìre sam bith—ma tha an t-iarrtas a' tighinn bho phàrantan—cha bhi diofar sam bith ann dè an sgìre a tha sin, tha còir aig na pàrantan cothrom fhaighinn. Carson a tha sinn a' dol a ràdh ri pàrantan bho sgìre sam bith ann an Alba nach eil e ceart gum bi iadsan a' cur a-staigh iarrtas airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig? Bu chòir saorsa a bhith aig na pàrantan anns na sgìrean sin an co-dhùnadh sin a dhèanamh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

If we are talking about reasonable demand in any area—if parents have that reasonable demand—it should not matter what area the parents are in, they should have the opportunity. Whatever area they are in, it is not right that someone should have a reasonable demand in one area but not in another.

John Wilson: I do not have anything to add.

10:15

Liam McArthur: I am interested in those responses. The concern is that we have a Gaelic language plan but we do not yet, as far I understand, have a Scots language plan. I think that the Scottish Government can claim some credit for supporting initiatives aimed at promoting the Orcadian and Shetland dialects as part of its promotion of Scots language.

However, if there is inequality in the statutory protection afforded to Scots and Gaelic, parents who wish to have their children taught in Scots, or to see the work with Scots that is being done at present spread more widely, will find themselves at a disadvantage compared to a similar number who seek to have their children taught under Gaelic-medium education. In local authorities the size of Orkney and Shetland—two of the smallest local authorities in the country—the resources that can be brought to bear are far less than those in Glasgow, Edinburgh or even Highland, for that matter. Therefore, the concern is that what we have through the bill detracts from the attempt to promote Scots language provision in order to satisfy the requirements of this piece of legislation. Is that not a justified concern?

Iain Caimbeul: Tha e caran doirbh a' cheist sin a fhreagairt oir tha e an urra ri Pàrlamaid na h-Alba agus na riochdairean againn a tha anns a' Phàrlamaid plana foirmeil no achd foirmeil a bhith ann airson Albais. Ma tha Comhairle Arcaibh airson foghlam tro Albais a thoirt do na sgoilearan acasan, shaoileadh tu gum biodh i a' dèanamh sin an-dràsta.

Chan eil mise a' faicinn gu bheil duilgheadas mòr sam bith ann dèanamh sgaradh eadar Gàidhlig no Albais no Beurla no Sinis no Spàinntis no mar sin air adhart ach tha sinn an seo mu dheidhinn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha sinn a' smaointinn gum bu chòir adhartas, leudachadh agus neartachadh a bhith ann air foghlam tron Ghàidhlig. Tha sinn air faicinn sin thairis air na bliadhnaichean a chaidh seachad. Tha beagan de dh'adhartas air a bhith ann a thaobh cànan Albais, mar a chunnaic sinn o chionn ceala-deug air ais le plana a' tighinn a-mach. Tha sinn a' toirt làn urram do chànaichean eile ach tha e an urra ris na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail taic agus goireas a thoirt seachad agus tha e cuideachd an urra ri Pàrlamaid na h-Alba fhèin dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil taic agus goireasan airson cànanan na h-Alba air fad a neartachadh anns na sgoiltean againn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

It is a bit difficult to answer that. At the end of the day, it is up to the Scottish Parliament and the representatives here to have a formal act in respect of Scots. If Orkney Council wants to provide education in Scots, I would think that it would be able to do that at the moment.

I do not think that there is any point in making a difference between Gaelic and Scots or Spanish and so on. We are here to focus on Gaelic-medium education, and we believe that there should be development and expansion to strengthen the language. We have seen that happening in the previous years. There has been some progress in relation to the Scots language,

as we saw several weeks ago. We give every respect to other languages but, at the end of the day, it is up to local authorities to make provision for and to support them, and it is up to the Scottish Parliament to make sure that there is provision for education to be supported in indigenous languages.

Coinneach Moireach: Tha sinn a' dèanamh sin tro phoileasaidh Riaghaltas na h-Alba an-dràsta a thaobh cànanan aon thairis air a dhà—one-plus-two model—far a bheil e comasach dha sgoiltean taghadh nan cànanan a tha iad a' gabhail. Tha feadhainn de na sgoiltean a' taghadh Albais, mar eisimpleir, feadhainn a' taghadh Fraingis agus feadhainn a' taghadh Gàidhlig. Agus tha am poileasaidh agus an comas a tha sin a' toirt cothrom dha sgoiltean taghadh cànanan eile airson ionnsachadh cuideachd.

'S e cànan reachdail a th' ann an Gàidhlig leis an aon urram agus tha e cudthromach gun cùm sinn a' dol leis a sin agus a' putadh air adhart leis na h-àireamhan.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We are doing that in Highland through publicity—through the one-plus-two language model, in which it is possible for schools to choose the languages that they wish to teach. It could be Scots, French or another language. The ability for schools to choose other languages to teach is there.

Gaelic is an official language that is given respect in statute, and support in that way maintains the status of the language.

Liam McArthur: I should probably declare that I have a sister whose children both go to the Gaelic-medium school in Glasgow, for the avoidance of doubt.

The Convener: I am not sure that you had to declare that, but okay.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): There seems to be a willingness to grow the teacher numbers in Gaelic education, but what more can be done to increase the availability of Gaelic-medium teachers?

Iain Caimbeul: Aig an ìre seo, tha sreath de chùrsaichean a' dol airson adhartas a dhèanamh airson tuilleadh thidsearan a chuir dhan t-siostam. Gun teagamh sam bith, sin pàirt den duilgheadas a th' againn le foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach tha sinn a' dèanamh adhartas. Tha duilgheadas ann le foghlam tro mheadhan na Beurla cuideachd. Tha gainead de thidsearan anns an t-siostam sin cuideachd agus tha fada a bharrachd de thidsearan a dhith airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Beurla.

Tha sinn a' dèanamh adhartas ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig beag air bheag. Tha e caran doirbh gun teagamh sam bith ach tha mi a' faicinn le aithisgean bhon Phàrlamaid fhèin tha còrr is cha mhòr 300 tidsear comasach air Gàidhlig a theagasg anns a' bhun-sgoil ach chan eil ach dìreach beagan a bharrachd air 150 a' teagasg Gàidhlig agus mar sin tha beàrn mhòr eadar na tha comasach agus na tha a' teagasg. Tha pàirt den sin ceangailte ri càite a bheil tidsearan a dhith air feadh na dùthcha. Tha e caran doirbh uaireannan tidsearan a chur a-mach chun nan eilean agus àiteachan eile agus cha bhiodh tidsearan airson iad fhèin a ghluasad gu sgìrean ùra. Tha duilgheadasan mòra ann mar sin gun teagamh sam bith ach tha cùrsaichean a' dol agus tha sinn a' dèanamh adhartas.

Dh'fhaodadh sinn a bhith a' coimhead air acadamaidh digiteach—virtual school—a chruthachadh airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a theagasg thairis air Alba air fad a chionn bheireadh sin piseach mòr air an t-suidheachadh, chruthaicheadh e obraichean dha na sgìrean agus bheireadh e cothrom do thidsearan barrachd is aon sgoil a fhrithleadh.

Gun teagamh sam bith tha duilgheadasan ann ach tha adhartas ga dhèanamh beag air bheag agus bheir e ùine mus faigh sinn na th' againn de thidsearan a dhith airson cur ris an iartas a th' againn an-dràsta airson foghlam tron Ghàidhlig sa bhun-sgoil agus gu h-àraidh san àrd-sgoil. Tha duilgheadas mòr ann an sin oir, ma tha sinn dol a leudachadh foghlam anns a' bhun-sgoil, bidh an uair sin làn dhùil againn gum bi sin leudachadh cuideachd anns an àrd-sgoil, ach tha tuilleadh thidsearan a dhith an sin agus tha cuideachd feum air leudachadh tighinn air cùrsaichean anns an àrd-sgoil. Na cùrsaichean a th' againn chan eil ann, ach dìreach deannan beag agus feumaidh sinn an leudachadh a-mach airson tuilleadh misneachd a thoirt do phàrantan agus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil foghlam againn bho thràth-bhliadhnaichean gu ìre àrd-sgoile.

Tha adhartas ga dhèanamh, tòrr dhuilgheadasan ann agus dùbhlain ann, ach tha cothroman ann cuideachd. Ma thòisicheas sinn air smaointinn ann an dòighean caran cruthachail is ceanglaichean a dhèanamh eadar diofar ùghdarrasan ionadail agus goireasan is tidsearan a roinneadh a-mach thairis air an dùthaich, nì sinn adhartas.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

At this level, there are a number of courses available in order to add more Gaelic teachers to the system. It is undoubtedly one of the difficulties that we have. Progress has been made. We know that there are also difficulties with English-medium education because of a lack of teachers and that

many more teachers are lacking in English-medium education.

We are strengthening Gaelic-medium education little by little. We see that 300 teachers are available at the moment to teach in primary schools but there are only a few more than 150 in high schools. It all depends on where teachers are needed—in what part of the country. It is difficult to provide teachers on islands and in areas that are being newly developed. There are difficulties, but there are many courses and we are making progress.

We might also consider a digital academy to allow Gaelic to be taught throughout Scotland. That electronic process would make a difference to availability.

Undoubtedly, there are difficulties, but we are making progress bit by bit. It will take time for us to ensure that plenty of teachers are available in primary and secondary. There are particular difficulties in high school. Obviously, if we are going to expand primary education, there will eventually be a similar demand in high school. Many courses are being developed for secondary teachers, and those must be expanded so that parents are given encouragement and so that a wide range of education is available from pre-school to high school. There are opportunities. If we start thinking creatively, we will come up with answers. It might be possible to share teaching resources throughout the country.

The Convener: John Wilson referred to his concern about teachers, rather than resources, in East Ayrshire.

John Wilson: Yes, that is an on-going issue for us. Perhaps it is to do with our geographic area in Scotland, but there is also the Gaelic provision within that. Each year, we anxiously await the news on whether we will receive a probationer teacher. When we receive a probationer teacher, that allows us to fulfil our requirements regarding the learning and teaching experience. Happily, we have received a probationer this year.

I would just like to say how much we appreciate the Gaelic immersion for teachers programme. There were 10 places available on the programme last year, and two of those were taken up by members of staff from East Ayrshire. One member of staff had a stronger understanding and level of Gaelic than the other, but they have both progressed and we look forward to having them back in our schools and building on that.

Magaidh Wentworth: A thaobh tidsearan, tha e math gu bheil sinn a' dèanamh adhartas a thaobh nan cùrsaichean a tha rim faighinn airson teagaisg ach feumaidh sinn dòighean a lorg airson teagasg tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a dhèanamh tarraingeach dha tidsearan. An-dràsta aon chnap-

starra a th' againn 's e foghlam Gàidhlig anns an àrd-sgoil. Chan eil ar clann a' faighinn gu leòr airson a' Ghàidhlig aca a chumail aig ìre a tha iad fhèin a' faicinn a tha math gu leòr airson teagasg agus tha na daoine òga a tha sin caran leisg airson a dhol air adhart gu teagasg. Rud eile tha am beachd a tha seo ann gu bheil teagasg tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig nas doirbhe na tha teagasg tro mheadhan na Beurla. Tha na tidsearan òga a tha sin air beulaibh clasaichean mòra—clann aig nach eil Gàidhlig. Tha aca ri làn bhogadh ri dhèanamh leis a' chlann a tha sin agus feumaidh sinn dòighean a lorg airson barrachd taic a chumail ris na tidsearan òga a tha sin anns na clasaichean.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

It is good that there has been some progress on teachers and that additional courses are available. However, we must find ways to make Gaelic teaching attractive to potential teachers. In high school, there is not enough provision for their Gaelic ability to be maintained and developed. Therefore, youngsters are often reluctant to go to the next stage of teaching in Gaelic. Young teachers are in front of large numbers of classes that have no language skills. These are difficult times for teachers. We must find ways in which we can support young teachers in the classroom.

George Adam: My next question follows on from something that Iain Campbell said, but perhaps John Wilson and Kenneth Murray will answer it as well. Do the geographic problems with Gaelic-medium teachers mirror the difficulties with teachers in general? Do the problems apply to both types of teachers, or is the situation with Gaelic additional?

John Wilson: In East Ayrshire, if we get a young probationer coming into our area and being successful, there is undoubtedly a significant draw to the Glasgow Gaelic school. We would perhaps expect that, as it enables a probationer to move on to the next stage. Although we are trying our very best on learning and teaching and to provide a promotion network for teachers, that is one of the things that we suffer from locally.

Coinneach Moireach: Tha dùbhlann againn cuideachd a thaobh tidsearan aig an iomall. Tha sgoiltean anns nach eil ann ach is dòcha aon no dà thidsear Ghàidhlig agus tha sin gu math aonaranach uaireannan agus is e sin aon de na gearanan a bhios aig tidsearan—gu h-àraidh tidsearan òga ma thig iad suas nam probationers. Tha uaireannan solais agus rionnagan Dhùn Èideann agus Ghlaschu nas tarraingiche na feadhainn de na sgìrean a th' againn aig tuath agus feumaidh sinn a bhith onarach mu dheidhinn sin, gur ann mar sin a tha cùisean uaireannan agus tha sin a' cur cnap-starra air beulaibh ùghdarrasan ionadail. Tha sinn a' dèanamh ar

dìcheall còmhla ri Bòrd na Gàidhlig agus an Riaghaltas a' bruidhinn agus a' feuchainn ri tarraing feadhainn suas gu na sgìrean iomallach.

Chuir sinn suirbhidh air dòigh anns a' Ghearran 2014 gu na tidsearan againn air fad air a' Ghàidhealtachd. Fhuair sinn còrr air 600 freagairt air ais, agus am measg nan toraidhean inntinneach a bha sin 's ann mu dheidhinn sgilean Gàidhlig nan tidsearan—cha b' e dìreach tidsearan Gàidhlig—bha faisg air 60 tidsear a bha a' teagasg tro mheadhan na Beurla dèidheil air atharrachadh gu teagasg tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. A-nis bha sin a' comharrachadh dhuinne, an àite a bhith a' fuireach ri àireamhan ri bhith tighinn tro na colaistean agus na h-oilthighean, gu bheil daoine againn fhèin a tha air an trèanadh, a tha proifeasanta, le teisteanas bhon General Teaching Council Scotland, a tha comasach a thighinn a-null gu Gàidhlig ma tha sin tarraingeach dhaibh.

Mar a bha Magaidh Wentworth ag ràdh, feumaidh sinn a bhith caran mac-meanmnach mu dheidhinn seo. Chan e dìreach gu bheil sinn a' cur goireasan is oidhirpean a-steach dha na h-oilthighean is na colaistean ach gu bheil cuideachd tidsearan a-muigh an sin le cothrom trèanadh bogaidh a thigeadh a-nall bho Bheurla gu Gàidhlig. Feumaidh sinn sealltainn a-steach dhan sin ann an doimhneachd anns a' bhliadhna a tha air thoiseach oirnn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We have challenges in relation to teachers on the periphery. In schools where there might be only one or two Gaelic teachers, that can be quite isolating for teachers and probationers. On occasion, the lights and stars of the big cities are more attractive than some parts of the Highlands. We have to be honest about that and realise that there might be difficulties with providing teaching staff in isolated areas. We have to find ways of attracting teachers to remote areas.

We instigated a survey in February 2014 of all our teachers throughout the Highlands and we got more than 600 responses. The survey was about Gaelic skills that teachers have and language skills in general. Among the findings was that nearly 60 teachers teaching in English were willing to change to teaching in Gaelic. That was very interesting to us and indicated that rather than having to wait for numbers of Gaelic teachers to come through the colleges, we already have teachers in our midst who are able and willing to move to teaching in Gaelic.

As Magaidh Wentworth said, we have to be creative and look at possibilities like that. There are teachers out there who could be available to us if they had greater immersion skills for teaching

in Gaelic. We have to look in depth at such options.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): A number of written submissions stated that the bill should not be limited to primary school provision. I note that in 2014 there were nearly 2,800 primary pupils in Gaelic-medium education and another 4,600 primary pupils in Gaelic-learning classes. With more children leaving primary school with Gaelic, how will they be able to maintain their education in that medium if the bill does not cover secondary schools?

Coinneach Moireach: Nar beachd-ne co-dhiù, 's e a bhios Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' dèanamh ach a' sealltainn ri modail seasmhach. Ma tha clann a' dol tro fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig san sgoil-àraich, bidh iad an uair sin a' biathadh a-steach don bhun-sgoil agus an uair sin suas don àrd-sgoil. 'S e sin as coireach gu bheil sinne a' creidsinn gum bu chòir don bhile a bhith air a neartachadh, ged a tha e a' cantainn rudeigin mu dheidhinn ro-sgoile. Feumaidh sinn sealltainn ri ciamar a tha na transitions ag obair anns a h-uile sector a tha seo—ri ciamar a bu chòir dhuinn taic a chuir ris na transitions bho sgoil-àraich a' dol a-steach gu primary 1 agus an uair sin bho P7 a' dol a-steach gu secondary 1 anns na h-àrd-sgoiltean oir tha sinn a' faicinn gun teagamh sam bith gu bheil laigse ann a thaobh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig anns an àrd-sgoil.

Tha an t-uabhas den òigridh againn sa chiad bhliadhna. Tha 1,500 den òigridh air a' Ghàidhealtachd ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig anns an àrd-sgoil ach tha na h-àireamhan le Gàidhlig shìos aig faisg air 300. Mar sin, tha rudeigin ann an sin. Chan e a-mhàin mu dheidhinn nan tidsearan ach cuideachd mu dheidhinn nan cuspairean a th' air clàr-gnothaich na sgoile. Air ar son ne bu chaomh leinn faicinn iomradh a thoirt air h-uile sector—ro-sgoile, sgoiltean-àraich, a' biathadh suas dhan bhun-sgoil agus an uair sin dhan àrd-sgoil—agus sin a' biathadh a-steach dhan bhile ma tha e comasach idir.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Highland Council has an established model in which children go through nursery education, into primary school and then into high school, but we believe that the bill will undoubtedly provide a wider coverage than we have. We look at how the transitions work between all the sectors and we support the transitions between nursery and primary 1, and between primary 7 and secondary 1.

As has been said, there are undoubtedly weaknesses in GME at secondary school level. A lot of our youngsters—about 1,500 pupils—are learning Gaelic in high school, but under 300 pupils are studying through the medium of Gaelic.

We must therefore look at not only the numbers of Gaelic teachers but the subjects in the curriculum that we are making available through Gaelic. We would like references to all sectors—from nursery up to high school—to be fed into the bill, if possible.

Iain Caimbeul: Tha mi ag aontachadh leis na tha Coinneach Moireach ag ràdh. Tha e caran inntinneach nuair a choimheadas tu air rannsachadh gu bheil e a' sealltainn anns a' bhun-sgoil gu bheil clann a' faighinn 70 anns a' cheud de dh'ùine ann an Gàidhlig agus an uair sin nuair a thèid iad don chiad bhliadhna san àrd-sgoil tha sin a' tuiteam gu 17 anns a' cheud. Mar sin, tha diofar mòr eadar an dà shiostam agus feumaidh am bile a tha seo na ceanglaichean sin bho thràth-bhliadhnaichean, bun-sgoil gu àrd-sgoil a neartachadh.

Mura bheil sinn ann, tha e a' dol a thogail tòrr cheistean ann an ceann phàrantan agus chan eil a' chlann a' dol a thighinn a-mach aig deireadh an àm aca san sgoil fileanta ann an Gàidhlig. Agus mura bheil a' chlann fileanta ann an Gàidhlig, chan eil sinn a' dol a ruigsinn nan targaidean a tha air an cuir a-mach anns a' phlana cànan againn an-dràsta. Fear de na targaidean a tha aig an Rìghaltas do Bhòrd na Gàidhlig, 's e gum bi a' cheart uimhir de dhaoine comasach air Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn ann an Alba aig an ath chunntas-sluaigh sa bha ann an 2001. Tha sin a' ciallachadh gum feum àrdachadh suas co-dhiù 10,000 no 12,000 duine a bharrachd a bhith comasach air Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn aig an àm sin. Thig a h-uile duine dhiubh tro na sgoiltean agus tha sin a' ciallachadh gum feum an ceangal a bhith ann eadar a' bhun-sgoil agus an àrd-sgoil agus gum bi e comasach don chlann a tha a' thighinn a-mach às an àrd-sgoil a bhith fileanta ann an Gàidhlig. Mura h-eil sin a' tachairt, cha ruig sinn gu bràth an targaid a tha sin agus tha an targaid sin mun cuairt 26,000 duine ann an Alba a bhith comasach air Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn ann am 2021.

Is e targaid gu math dùbhlanaich a th' ann ach tha e an crochadh gu mòr air a' bhile a tha seo, an ceangal a tha eadar bun-sgoil agus àrd-sgoil, misneachd a bhith ann do phàrantan agus cothrom a thoirt do chlann a' Ghàidhlig ionnsachadh agus a bhith fileanta sa chànan aig deireadh an ama aca san sgoil.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I agree with what Kenneth Murray said. Interesting research on primary school children shows that 70 per cent get teaching time in Gaelic but that that falls in high school to about 17 per cent, so there is a big difference between the two systems. The bill must strengthen the links from the early years through to primary and on to high school.

If that does not happen, a lot of doubt will be left in parents' minds about the fullness of the system. If the children are not fluent in Gaelic, we will not achieve our targets in the national plan. The target set by the Government is that there should be as many Gaelic speakers at the next census as there were in 2001. That means that we need a big rise in the number of speakers. The links must exist between all sectors so that children coming out of high school are fluent in Gaelic. Until that happens, we will never reach the targets that have been set.

The targets are very challenging, and whether we meet them depends largely on what is in the bill in relation to education at all levels so that parents are encouraged and children have the ability to use Gaelic at high school level.

10:30

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha Iain Caimbeul ceart. Tha ceist ann a thaobh misneachd aig pàrantan agus aig daoine òga san àrd-sgoil. Tha e gu math duilich a bhith a' faicinn daoine òga a tha fileanta sa Ghàidhlig a' dol a-staigh dhan àrd-sgoil agus mean air mhean tha iad a' call misneachd anns a' chànan aca. Tha e nas doirbhe anns an àrd-sgoil dha daoine òga Gàidhlig a leantainn aig amannan airson chan eil cothrom ach beagan chuspairean a-nis a dhèanamh aig ìre àrd-sgoil tron Ghàidhlig. Feumaidh sinn coimhead air dòighean barrachd taic a chumail ri daoine òga le bhith toirt barrachd chothroman taobh a-muigh chuspairean tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig gus am faigh daoine òga barrachd chothroman Gàidhlig a chleachdadh anns a h-uile dòigh. Tha sinn a' tòiseachadh air cumail taic ri daoine òga le tachartasan mar duais Iain Muir tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach mura bi iad a' leantainn le cànan anns an àrd-sgoil anns a h-uile diofar dhòigh cha bhi iad fileanta a' fàgail na h-àrd-sgoile agus 's e call a tha sin dhan chànan às dèidh dhaibh a bhith cho fileanta a' tighinn tro fhoghlam aig ìre bun-sgoile.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Iain Campbell is right: there is a question around encouragement of high school pupils. It is very disappointing to see them lose the encouragement in high school when they move from primary school. There are difficulties in high school for youngsters who want to follow the Gaelic language. For example, there is a restriction on taking subjects in schools. We have to look at ways in which we can support secondary pupils and give them opportunities outwith Gaelic as a subject to use Gaelic in many ways. We are beginning to do that through the John Muir award for Gaelic and other such initiatives. If pupils do not use the language in high school, they will not be fluent when they leave. That will be a loss to

the system and to the language, after they have been so fluent at the primary stage.

John Wilson: I agree with much of what Kenneth Murray said, although in my local area GME is on a far smaller scale. To give you an idea, there are 11 children learning in primary, which translates in secondary to six fluent speakers. We also have 203 S1 learners and 122 S2 learners who are also getting that experience.

As I said, our new three-to-18 campus offers a definite through line. Gaelic provision should be seen as running from three to 18. That has to be the way that it works out, and we can share expertise across sectors.

Gordon MacDonald: If the bill is extended to include secondary schools, how could that be implemented practically, given that the numbers are still pretty small even in Highland? About 11,500 pupils throughout Scotland receive some form of education in Gaelic.

Coinneach Moireach: Ged a tha na h-àireamhan beag, tha sinn a' smaoineachadh gu bheil cothrom ann aig ìre àrd-sgoil—gu h-àraidh nuair a thig clann a-steach ann an S1—Gàidhlig a chumail a' dol. Mar a bha Iain Caimbeul ag ràdh, tha a' Ghàidhlig a' tuiteam air falbh anns an spot cha mhòr nuair a thig iad a-steach dhan na h-àrd-sgoiltean agus tha sin anns a h-uile ceàrnaidh den dùthaich air an robh sinn a' sealltainn. 'S e neartachadh nan cuspairean a th' againn anns na h-àrd-sgoiltean a tha cudthromach. Chan e a bhith a' leudachadh ach a' neartachadh agus a' dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil tidsearan ann airson nan cuspairean a th' againn—sin ceithir no còig de chuspairean a tha sinn a' tabhann anns a' Ghàidhlig.

An uair sin, ma tha clann a' tighinn tro fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig aig a' bhun-sgoil, ge brith càite a bheil iad a' dol an uair sin aig an àrd-sgoil, feumaidh sinn dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil plana ann far a bheil timetable na h-àrd-sgoile a' toirt aire dhan Ghàidhlig agus dha feumalachdan a th' aig an luchd-ionnsachaidh sin a thaobh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig oir tha na figearan dhan òigridh a tha a' gabhail foghlam luchd-ionnsachaidh mìorbhaileach math. Tha sin na bhrosnachadh dhuinn agus mar thoileachas, ach feumaidh sinn sealltainn ris an oidhirp a tha a dhith agus a dh'fheumas a dhol a-steach dha cuspairean tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus cuideachd Gàidhlig air a theagasg tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig mar chànan.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Although the numbers are low, we believe that there is an opportunity for pupils coming into high school at secondary 1 to maintain their Gaelic. As Iain Campbell said, Gaelic tends to fall away when pupils go to high school; that happens in all areas

of the country. The way to deal with that is to strengthen the subjects that we currently offer in Gaelic in high school. That is important: rather than necessarily expanding, we should strengthen what we have and what we provide in Gaelic.

We should also ensure that for pupils who come through primary school GME there is a plan wherever they go to high school to ensure that the high school timetable gives effect to provisions to meet the needs of Gaelic and Gaelic learners. The statistics show that the number of Gaelic learners is very good. That is very encouraging and is a delight to us, but we must look at what is needed in terms of subjects being taught through the medium of Gaelic and in terms of Gaelic being taught as a subject at high school.

Iain Caimbeul: Tha mi ag aontachadh gu bheil duilgheadasan mòra ann chionn tha saoghal na Gàidhlig sgapte air feadh Alba air fad ach feumaidh sinn a bhith a' coimhead air gnothaichean ann an dòigh a tha fada nas cruthachaile agus chan e dìreach ag atharrais air dè a tha a' tachairt ann an siostam foghlam tron Bheurla. Feumaidh na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail a bhith a' còmhradh nas fheàrr ri chèile agus a bhith ag obair ann an com-pàirt nas fheàrr ri chèile agus gum biodh iad a' roinneadh a-mach goireasan dh'fhaodte eadar a chèile. Feumaidh iad a bhith a' dealbhadh nas fheàrr, mar a bha Coinneach Moireach ag ràdh, co-cheangailte ris na sgoiltean aca, na tidsearan aca agus clann.

Mar a bha mi ag ràdh mu thràth, tha cothrom ann teicneòlas a chleachdadh airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a libhrigeadh ann an cuid de dh'àiteachan agus sin carson a tha mi ag ràdh gum bu chòir acadamaidh digiteach—no virtual school—a bhith air a stèidheachadh ann an Alba airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a neartachadh, aig ìre àrd-sgoil gu h-àraidh ach cuideachd aig ìre na bun-sgoile chionn. Dh'fhaodadh tu an uair sin lionra làidir a chruthachadh agus bhiodh e na tharraing mhòr do tidsearan, gu h-àraidh tidsearan òga, a' tighinn a-steach dhan t-siostaim far a bheil iad comasach air obair fhaighinn agus gu bheil iad a' cleachdadh teicneòlas.

Anns an sgìre far an robh mi fhìn a' fuireach air a' Ghàidhealtachd, tha Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean le eòlas mòr aca a' cleachdadh siostam teicneòlas airson clasaichean a libhrigeadh anns an dòigh sin eadar na colaisdean ann an Arcaibh, Earra-Ghàidheal, na h-Eileanan an Iar is Inbhir Nis. Tha sin ag obrachadh glè mhath, agus tha e air fhaicinn mar dheagh eisimpleir anns a' Bhruiseil cuideachd.

Ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig, tha e comasach dhuinn sin a dhèanamh. Feumaidh meadhan a bhith ann airson sin a dhèanamh agus goireas a bhith air a' chùlaibh airson sin a chleachdadh, ach

tha cothroman ann teicneòlas a chleachdadh airson adhartas a dhèanamh agus chan eil e dìreach ri ràdh gu bheil leisgeul againn oir nach eil tidsearan gu leòr againn agus nach fhaigheadh sinn tidsearan anns a' Ghàidhealtachd no ann an sgìre Àir no mar sin air adhart. 'S e dìreach a bhith a' smaointinn ann an dòigh nas cruthachaile agus ag obrachadh nas fheàrr ann an com-pàirteachas ri chèile còmhla ris an Riaghaltas. Is ann mar sin a nì sinn adhartas agus gu faigh sinn barrachd clann òga a-staigh aig diofar ìrean gu foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I agree that there are substantial difficulties throughout Scotland, but in my view we must look at things in a much more creative way, and not just follow what happens in the English-medium system. Local authorities should work collaboratively and share resources, and work closely together and plan together—as Kenneth Murray said—within their schools.

As I said previously, there is an opportunity to use technology to deliver Gaelic-medium education in some areas. There could perhaps be virtual schools in some areas to strengthen GME at high school level especially, but also at primary school level. We are looking to create a strong established system that supports teachers in using technology.

For example, in the area where I currently live, the University of the Highlands and Islands has great experience and knowledge of using technology among colleges in Orkney, Argyll, Inverness and the Western Isles. That works very well.

The next stage is to develop that for Gaelic. It is possible to do it, but there must be good will and provision in order for technology to be used to advance Gaelic education. It is not enough to give the excuse that there is a lack of teachers, because there are opportunities to think more creatively and to work more collaboratively among ourselves and with the Government so that we get more youngsters in at all levels.

Magaidh Wentworth: Nuair a thig fàs bi e nas fhasa. An-dràsta 's aon de na trioblaidean a th' ann gu bheil na h-àireamhan air a bhith cho beag dol a-staigh dhan àrd-sgoil gu bheil e air a bhith doirbh aig amannan dha sgoiltean a thaobh timetabling, nuair a tha dithis no trì ann an aon chlas. Ach nuair a thig na h-àireamhan mòra tron bhun-sgoil mar a tha a' tachairt anns na diofar àiteachan far a bheil sgoiltean Gàidhlig—ann an Glaschu agus Inbhir Nis, mar eisimpleir—bidh e nas fhasa barrachd chlasaichean a tairgsinn tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I think that, when advancement comes, it will be easier. The numbers have been small for pupils going into high school, and timetabling has been difficult where there are only two or three in a class. When there is an increase in numbers coming through from primary—as there has been in Glasgow, Inverness and so on—it will be easier for more classes to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic.

John Wilson: That is certainly the way in which we are planning to move ahead. As Magaidh Wentworth said, we are looking to grow the number of youngsters in primary but, more importantly, in the early years and even through our parent-and-toddler groups. We can then get a significant mass of pupils in secondary school, which will allow us to offer greater provision in terms of timetabling.

I agree with the point about the use of technology. We are looking forward to our new campus, and to having state-of-the-art technology and making best use of it so that we can provide as many learning experiences as possible for youngsters, particularly in Gaelic.

Gordon MacDonald: Earlier, Iain Campbell spoke about the early years and how they are important as a foundation for primary schools. Is there any indication of the likely levels of demand for Gaelic-medium education in early learning and childcare? Would local authorities have sufficient resources to provide that?

Iain Caimbeul: Thairis air na bliadhnaichean a tha air a dhol seachad, thàinig iarratas mòr a-staigh airson clann a' tighinn gu ionadan tràth-bhliadhnaichean. Tha còrr air 70 buidheann againn an-dràsta on a ghabh Bòrd na Gàidhlig sealbh air an obair a bha sin agus tha tuilleadh iarratas againn a' tighinn a-staigh. Mar a thuigeas sibh, tha goireas a' fàs gu math teann, ach ma tha pàrantan a' faicinn chothroman airson clann a chuir a-staigh don thràth-bhliadhnaichean feumaidh sin tachairt. Ma tha sinn a' smaointinn gu bheil a' chlann an uair sin a' dol don bhun-sgoil, feumaidh sinn taic a thoirt aig ìre thràth-bhliadhnaichean airson na goireasan a tha sin a leudachadh agus na cothroman sin a chruthachadh do phàrantan.

Bha dleastanas co-dhiù air ùghdarrasan ionadail taic a thoirt do chlann aig ìre òg airson ionadan foghlaim ro àm bun-sgoile, ach chan eil diofar sam bith eadar a' Ghàidhlig agus a' Bheurla anns an t-seagh seo san farsaingeachd. Thig tuilleadh iarratas a-staigh ma thèid am bile seo a neartachadh agus a chì pàrantan gu bheil slighe chothromach ann gu ìre àrd-sgoile. Feumar sùil mhionaideach a thoirt air càite a bheil goireasan a' dol a thighinn airson taic a thoirt dha na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail airson seo a leudachadh a chionn 's ann aig ìre nan tràth-bhliadhnaichean a

tha gnothaichean a' tòiseachadh, far a thig misneachd aig ìre pàrantan agus far a bheil an cànan aig an toiseach air a h-ionnsachadh do chloinn.

Tha tòrr ri dhèanamh gun teagamh sam bith. Tha sinn an dòchas gum bi iarratas mòr a' dol a nochdadh nuair a thèid am bile an gnìomh an ath-bhliadhna, agus feumar sùil gu math mionaideach agus cùramach a chur air goireas air beulaibh iarratas sam bith a thig a-staigh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

In previous years, there has been great demand for provision for children in the early years. There are more than 70 organisations at present, and there is greater demand coming in. Opportunities for provision are tight, but if parents see an opportunity for early years provision, we have to try to provide that so that those children eventually go into Gaelic-medium primary school. We have to give specific support in early years to enable provision to be extended and developed. There is a responsibility on local authorities to support that and provision for nursery education already exists. There should not be any difference between Gaelic and English provision. More and more demand will come in as the legislation is delivered, and it will strengthen up to high school level. We have to think about how we make provision available so that the pre-school sector is strengthened. That is where things begin and encouragement is available for parents, and it is where children's learning starts.

A lot of work needs to be done. I am sure that there will be greater demand once the legislation comes into effect. We have to be prepared to deliver the provision.

Coinneach Moireach: Tha uallach air a' chomhairle an-dràsta gu h-àraidh aig ìre ro-sgoile. Tha faisg air 30 buidheann cròileagan againn air a' Ghàidhealtachd agus sin a' tabhann eacarsaich bheag anns a' Ghàidhlig bho neoni gu dhà sa trì, agus tha sin airson faisg air 300 naoidhean. An uair sin, anns na sgoiltean-àraich againn, tha faisg air 300 ach tha sin air an sgapadh eadar 25 solaraichean sgoil-àraich, agus tha na 300 sin ann a' biathadh a-steach dha foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Tha fhios againn dè a tha a' tighinn a-steach dha na sgoiltean aig ìre P1 a h-uile bliadhna. Bidh sinn a' sealltainn ri dè an uallach a tha gu bhith air na sgoiltean far a bheil sgoiltean-àraich a' biathadh a-steach agus cuideachd a h-uile bliadhna tha stiùiriche cùraim agus an fhoghlaim a' cur a-mach litir chun a h-uile pàrant air a' Ghàidhealtachd aig a bheil naoidhean ann an sgoil-àraich a' dol a-steach do P1 a' brosnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, fiù 's ged nach deach iad tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig anns an

sgoil-àraich. Ma tha cothrom ann—ma tha sgoil gu h-ionadail far a bheil foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig air a theagasg—tha an taghadh sin aca airson an cuid chloinn aig P1 nuair a tha iad a' dèanamh an àirde an inntinn. An uair sin, tha sinn a' comharrachadh dè mar a tha sin a' biathadh a-steach gu P7 agus a' dol suas dhan àrd-sgoil, ach aig ìre nan tràth-bhliadhnaichean, tha planaichean againn a h-uile bliadhna mu dheidhinn dè mar a tha na sgoiltean-àraich againn a' biathadh a-steach dhan bhun-sgoil.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

The council has specific responsibility for the pre-school sector. We have nearly 30 playgroups in Highland that offer various provision in Gaelic from age zero to three. We have nearly 300 youngsters spread among 25 nurseries and feeding into Gaelic-medium primary schools.

We know the numbers that are coming in to primary 1 and what needs to be provided. Every year, our director sends out a letter to all parents in Highland who have a nursery child going into primary 1 encouraging them to make use of Gaelic-medium provision. If a local school provides GME, parents have the opportunity to choose that in P1. We then look at how that feeds in up to primary 7 and, eventually, to high school. At the early years level, we have plans for that sector feeding into primary.

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha ìre nan tràth-bhliadhnaichean cho cudthromach airson ceangal a dhèanamh le pàrantan cuideachd. Seo an cothrom a th' againn ceangal eadar na pàrantan agus a' chlann aca a neartachadh gus am bi iad a' cumail sin suas fhad 's a tha a' chlann a' dol tro fhoghlam. Tha fhios againn cho cudthromach 's a tha sin gum bi pàrantan a' gabhail ùidh ann am foghlaim. Cuideachd tha e cudthromach, mus bi teaghlachaichean a' taghadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, gum bi fios agus tuigse aca dè tha seo a' ciallachadh—nach e gum bi a' chlann ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig anns an sgoil ach gu bheil am foghlam aca air fad tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Aig an aois neoni gu trì, bi pàrantan fhathast a' dol gu diofar thachartasan le clann anns na buidhnean. Seo cothrom agus tha seo cho cudthromach, mar a chì iad ceum ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

It is extremely important for parents that there are links from the early years sector to the next sector. Parents are keen for the early years level to be strengthened and developed. We believe that when parents choose the form of education they should have sufficient information about and understanding of what it means to go into Gaelic education. At the zero to three level, it is important

that parents see the next step, leading into primary.

John Wilson: At the moment, we certainly have the resources, and the bill gives us a clear mandate to push ahead with promotion, which we want to build up in order to populate our early-years establishments and primary schools and then see that feeding through into secondary schools.

The Convener: Mr McArthur, do you have a supplementary question?

10:45

Liam McArthur: Yes, I have a small supplementary on secondary provision. Understandably, everybody has talked about how we build up the pipeline of demand through primary and the early years. However, with secondary provision, inevitably, there is a concentration as we move from primary schools to fewer secondary schools. Is the experience in Highland, for example, that that has resulted in the council concentrating investment in secondary provision in the key areas? Mr Murray referred to investment in Fort William, Inverness, Portree and, I think, Tain. I am not quite sure whether that was in relation to primary or secondary education or a combination of both. It strikes me that Thurso and Wick were not mentioned; we would expect the investment to go into the areas that you mentioned. Has the council's approach been to focus the Gaelic-medium investment in secondary provision in areas where there is strength of numbers?

Coinneach Moireach: Tha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' libhrigeadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an 22 bun-sgoil agus iad sin a' biathadh a-steach do 16 àrd-sgoiltean. Chan ann dìreach ann an trì no ceithir. Tha sinn a' togail air an fheadhainn sin: tha bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig ùr a' fosgladh anns a' Ghearasdan, bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig air a togail an-dràsta ann am Port Rìgh, àrd-sgoil ùr aig Acadamaidh Rìoghail Inbhir Nis a' tighinn air adhart agus ionad ùr trì-gu-18 ann am Baile Dhubhthaich. Tha sinn a' libhrigeadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an 13 àrd-sgoiltean air a' Ghàidhealtachd agus, a bharrachd air an sin, trì far a bheil cuspairean tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus Gàidhlig airson luchd-ionnsachaidh.

Mar sin, 's e modail seasmhach a th' againn. Tha sgoiltean-àraich againn a' biathadh a-steach dha na bun-sgoiltean agus, an uair sin, bun-sgoiltean a' biathadh a-steach do associated core group gu na h-àrd-sgoiltean. Ach feumaidh sinn barrachd taic a chuir ris a' Ghàidhlig nuair a thig clann a-steach dhan àrd-sgoil oir chan eil gu leòr thidsearan ann. Tha sinn cuideachd caran draghail

mu dheidhinn na h-uiread de chuspairean a th'againn tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an sin ach feumaidh sinn dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil sinn a' tabhann nan cuspairean a th' againn aig ìre fada nas fheàrr agus nas treasa.

Chan eil sinn dìreach a' cur ar n-oidhirp ann an trì no ceithir de dh' àrd-sgoiltean idir; tha sinn a' cur sin a-steach dhan a h-uile àrd-sgoil far a bheil sinn a' tabhann foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Ach tha duilgheadasan ann aig ìre àrd-sgoile gun teagamh sam bith. Sin as coireach gu bheil a h-uile duine againn ag ràdh gum bu chòir dha sin a bhith air a chomharrachadh mar phàirt den bhile oir tha e cho cudthromach sa ghabhas, gu h-àraidh nuair a bhios pàrantan a' taghadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha iad mar a h-uile pàrant eile agus iad a' sealltainn dè nì an leanabh aca aig deireadh na h-àrd-sgoile—dè an dreuchd a tha gu bhith aca agus dè an seòrsa beatha a tha gu bhith aca. Tha sin cudthromach dha-rìribh nuair thig e gu ìre foghlam tron àrd-sgoil.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Highland Council delivers GME in 22 primary schools that feed into 16 high schools. I will highlight some examples. There is a new primary school in Fort William, a new primary school is being built in Portree and there is a new high school in Inverness. There is also a new three-to-18 unit in Tain. We deliver GME in 13 high schools in Highland and there are three more where some subjects are delivered through the medium of Gaelic and there is Gaelic for learners.

Our established model is that we have nurseries feeding into primary schools, which feed in to associated high schools, but we have to provide more support for Gaelic when students come into high school. We do not have enough teachers; we are also a bit concerned about the number of subjects that are being provided through the medium of Gaelic. We have to make sure that we provide existing subjects at a better standard.

We are not focusing our attention just on three or four high schools. There are undoubtedly difficulties at high school level, which is why we are all saying that that should be in the bill, especially because when parents choose GME, they are looking for an established long-term system. What kind of life and prospects will the students have once they leave school? That is what we are focusing on.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): I have a few questions about the assessment process—first, about the consultation. The statutory consultation process includes Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Education Scotland and the national parent forum of Scotland. A number of submissions have questioned whether the list should cover those

particular organisations or whether some should be removed and others should be added. Do you think that the list of statutory consultees is sufficient or would you suggest any changes?

Coinneach Moireach: Nuair a chuir sinn a-steach an aithisg againn mu dheidhinn a' bhile, cha tug sinn iomradh air seo idir, oir mar chomhairle nì sinne co-chomhairleachadh co-dhiù. Tha sinn cleachdte gu leòr a bhith ag obair còmhla ri coimhearsnachdan, pàrantan, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, an Riaghaltas agus buidhnean eile. Mar sin, chan eil beachd againn gu foirmeil air cò bu chòir a bhith mar bhuidhnean co-chomhairleachaidh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

In our submission, we did not refer to that point at all. As a council, there has to be consultation—we do that in any case. We are accustomed to working with communities and parents, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the Government and other organisations. For that reason, we do not have any formal view about who should be on the consultee list.

Iain Caimbeul: Tha sinne riarachta gu leòr leis an triùir bhuidhnean a tha thu air ainmeachadh. Mar a tha Coinneach Moireach ag ràdh, tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig ag obair le sreath de ùghdarrasan ionadail air feadh na dùthcha agus bidh sinn a' cumail oirnn a' dèanamh sin, ceangailte ri foghlam tron Ghàidhlig. Tha diofar chomataidhean air an stèidheachadh an-dràsta airson dèiligeadh ri foghlaim aig ìre bun-sgoile is àrd-sgoile agus bidh làn dhùil againn cumail a' dol a' còmhraidh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd agus a h-uile comhairle eile a tha a' dèiligeadh ri foghlam tron Ghàidhlig. Anns an fharsaingeachd, chan eil beachd cruaidh sam bith againn air cò a dh' fhaodadh no cò nach bu chòir a bhith air a' bhuidhinn a tha seo.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Bòrd na Gàidhlig is happy enough with the organisations that are listed and, as Kenneth Murray said, we work with a range of local authorities and will continue to do that in connection with Gaelic education. We have various established committees for dealing with education at various levels and we will continue our consultation of Highland Council and other councils and organisations. Generally, we do not have a hard and fast view about who consultees should be.

Magaidh Wentworth: Mar a bhithear an dùil, tha Comann nam Pàrant a' faireachdainn gum bu chòir beachd a bhith aig a' bhuidhinn air a' phròiseas. Tha Comann nam Pàrant air a bhith ann mus do thòisich foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Is ann tron bhuidheann Comann nam Pàrant a chur sinn iarrtas a-steach an toiseach airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha an structar a tha sin fhathast againn agus fhathast

feumail. Is ann an sin a tha eòlas phàrantan air foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus bu chòir beachd a bhith againn air a' phròiseas.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

As would be expected, Comann nam Pàrant expressed various views about the process. Comann nam Pàrant has existed since Gaelic education started. We feel that that structure of consultation is applicable and useful, and we do not have any further views on that.

John Wilson: East Ayrshire Council does not have a view that differs from that which has already been expressed by Highland Council.

Mark Griffin: Do you feel that the assessment process is clear or does it need to be simplified again, given the number of submissions with conflicting views? Some organisations and local authorities said that there was a clear process and that they were happy with it, but others felt that the assessment process was complex and could be simplified. What are your views on that?

Coinneach Moireach: Tha am pròiseas mar a tha e air a chur a-mach a' coimhead caran duilich. Tha coinneamh air a bhith againn mu dheidhinn seo mar bhuidhnean ùghdarrasan ionadail agus tha sinn a' smaoinèachadh aig an ìre seo agus a' bruidhinn ri Bòrd na Gàidhlig, ris an Riaghaltas agus ri ùghdarrasan ionadail eile gur mathaid gum bi e comasach rudeigin a tharraing ri chèile mar A-to-Z toolkit no easy guide to the assessment process. Ge brith cò a bhiodh ag obair leis a seo—cuideigin bhon Riaghaltas, oifigear bho Bòrd na Gàidhlig no oifigear bho ùghdarras ionadail air neo pàrantan—gum biodh rudeigin air a chuir air dòigh far am biodh e soilleir is furasta a chruthachadh ceum air cheum agus furasta a chleachdadh dhan a h-uile duine a bhiodh ann an lùib a' phròiseas.

Thòisich sinn air sin Diardaoin 's a chaidh. Chi sinn dè mar a thèid leinn ach, mar a tha draghan ann mu dheidhinn a' phròiseas, tha mi an dòchas gu bheil e mar chomhfhurtachd co-dhiù gu bheil sinn a' sealltainn air seo oir tha sinn ag iarraidh gum bi rudan cho simplidh sa ghabhas agus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil e soilleir dha pàrantan agus a h-uile duine a bu chòir a bhith ann an lùib a' phròiseas dè na ceumannan a th' ann.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

The process as indicated looks a bit daunting. We have had a meeting with councils, and at the moment we are speaking to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the Government and other local authorities. Perhaps it might be possible to create a kind of A-to-Z toolkit or easy guide to the assessment process. Whoever works with that process—whether it is the Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig officers, local

authorities or parents—should have a clear, step-by-step guide that is easy to use for everybody.

We began discussing that last week, and we will see how it develops. We are considering the issue, and we want the various steps and levels of the process to be as simple, clear and easily understood as possible.

Iain Caimbeul: Airson a' phròiseas measaidh, tha trì prìomh thresholds ann. Tha na sgìrean measaidh fhèin ann. Cha deach iad sin a dhearbhadh fhathast agus dè a tha am bile a' ciallachadh leis a sin. Tha còmhraidhean air a bhith ann leis na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail agus le buidhnean eile airson dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil sinn soilleir dè a tha sinn a' ciallachadh leis a sin. Bidh an àireamh de chlann a tha co-cheangailte ris a' phròiseas measaidh a tha sin caran eadar-dhealaichte ann an eilean mar a tha Barraigh agus baile mòr mar a tha Dùn Èideann.

Tha cuideachd ceist ann mu dheidhinn dè a tha sinn a' ciallachadh le "iarratas reusanta". Tha na faclan a tha sin caran fosgailte airson eadar-mhìneachaidh a dhèanamh orra agus dh'fheumar a bhith gu math faiceallach dè tha am bile a' ciallachadh leis a sin. Feumar sùil mhìonaideach a thoirt air earrann 10(7)(i) gu (n)—gu h-àraidh (n)—anns a' bhile agus nach eil iad gu bhith air an cleachdadh mar leisgeul airson dìreach stad a chuir air a' phròiseas. Tha foghlam tron Ghàidhlig fosgailte dhan chlann uile a tha ann an Alba. Chan e dìreach clann far a bheil cultar na Gàidhlig no a thàinig bho sgìre far a bheil cultar na Gàidhlig air fhaicinn ann an seagh traidiseanta. Feumar sùil a thoirt air earrann 11 den bhile cuideachd chionn chan eil e idir soilleir ciamar a ruigear co-dhùnaidh. Ged thigeadh iarratas a-staigh bho phàrantan, ciamar a thig na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail gu co-dhùnadh? Feumaidh sin a bhith air a mhìneachadh nas soilleire airson gum bi misneachd anns a' phròiseas.

Chanainn gum bu chòir sùil a thoirt air an dà earrann sin sa bhile airson a neartachadh agus dèanamh cinnteach nach eil sinn glacte ann am pròiseas burocrataigeach far a bheil argumaid air ais 's air aghaidh agus nach eil adhartas mòr sam bith air a dhèanamh. Feumaidh seo a bhith sìmplidh, mar a tha Coinneach Moireach ag ràdh, agus a bhith a' togail air dè tha air tachairt mu thràth. Feumaidh cnapan-starra sam bith a tha sinn a' cruthachadh sa bhile ceangailte ri cultar na Gàidhlig agus cothroman tidsearan gan cur gu aon thaobh agus feumaidh am pròiseas a bhith fosgailte do chlann sam bith cothrom fhaighinn Gàidhlig ionnsachadh ann an Alba.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

The assessment process has three main thresholds that indicate what is meant in the bill. There has been discussion about that, and we

must ensure that we are clear about what is understood. The number of children involved in the assessment process in Barra will be a little different from the number involved in Edinburgh, for example.

There is also the question of what “reasonable demand” means. Such open terms need to be clarified. We must be sure what the bill means. As I said, we must consider section 10(7)(i) to (n), especially paragraph (n), very closely so that it is not used as an excuse to stop the process. Gaelic education is open to all children in Scotland, not just those who are connected with Gaelic culture or who live in an area where culture is seen in a traditional sense, so we must look closely at that. In section 11, it is not at all clear how conclusions will be reached or how local authorities will arrive at a decision. That needs to be interpreted a bit better.

Those two sections of the bill must be looked at to ensure that we are not caught up in an extremely bureaucratic process in which arguments go back and forth. As Kenneth Murray said, the bill must be simple and must build on what we already have. Given what the bill says about Gaelic culture and teacher provision, the process must be open for all children in Scotland to learn and use Gaelic.

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha mi ag aontachadh ri Coinneach Moireach agus Iain Caimbeul. Feumaidh am pròiseas a bhith sìmplidh gu leòr airson pàrantan a thuigsinn agus feumaidh sinn a bhith cinnteach gum faigh pàrantan fiosrachadh a thaobh a’ phròiseas. Ceist na bu mhotha a th’ aig pàrantan cuideachd, cò a’ bhuidheann riaghlaidh a tha gu bhith air a’ phròiseas a tha seo. Ma tha co-dhùnadh an ùghdarras ionadail a’ dol an aghaidh an iarrtais aig pàrantan, am bi cothrom aca ath-thagradh a dhèanamh. Chan eil sin soilleir anns a’ bhile an-dràsta. Tha tòrr cheistean ann fhathast a thaobh a’ phròiseas.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I agree that the process must be simple so that parents can understand it and that they must get the appropriate information about the process. It is a question of who will decide on the process. In addition, it is not quite clear whether there will be an appeals process. There are one or two questions that still need to be clarified.

John Wilson: We set out that there is a clear process, but it also needs to be accessible. That is what we are talking about today. Kenneth Murray mentioned that a toolkit would be helpful, and we would reiterate that.

Mark Griffin: Finally, comments were made about the potential for an appeals process and whether there is one, which is unclear. Section 11 sets out the procedure to be followed following a

full assessment. Should there be an appeals process after that?

The Convener: Can we have yes or no answers to that question?

Iain Caimbeul: Bu chòir cothrom a bhith ann ath-thagradh a dhèanamh agus bu chòir mìneachadh gu soilleir carson a chaidh gnothaichean a dhiùltadh ma tha gnothaichean air an diùltadh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Yes. I think that there should be an appeals process so that it is known why a refusal has been given.

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha sin cudthromach. Às deidh a’ cho-dhùnaidh sin, ma tha pàrantan air iarratas a chur a-staigh agus ma tha a’ chlann aca a’ tòiseachadh san sgoil a’ bhliadhna a tha sin, bu chòir an cothrom sin a bhith ann. Chan eil e math gu leòr dha ùghdarras ionadail a ràdh, “Uill, gheibh sibh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach ann an dà bhliadhna.”

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I also think that that is important. When children begin school, it is not good enough for local authorities to say, “You will get Gaelic-medium education in second year.”

John Wilson: My answer is yes.

Coinneach Moireach: Bu chòir dhuinn dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil na co-dhùnaidhean againn cho fosgailte sa ghabhas.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We should make sure that conclusions are open and clear.

The Convener: Thank you. I will ask briefly about thresholds before we move on to another area. The current threshold is five pupils. We have submissions that say that it is too high, submissions that say that it should be flexible and submissions that say that it should be based on a percentage rather than on a number. That leaves us in some difficulty in knowing what to make of the thresholds. To what extent should there be the flexible approach that is suggested in some submissions? Do you agree with that or would any kind of flexibility, in effect, undermine the idea of having a threshold in the first place?

Iain Caimbeul: Tha còignear ciallach gu leòr ach feumaidh sùbailteachd a bhith anns a’ phròiseas oir, mar a thuirt mi roimhe, tha Barraigh gu math eadar-dhealaichte bho sgìre Ghlaschu no Dùn Èideann. Aig deireadh an latha, tha e an crochadh air an fhianais a thig air aghaidh gu na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail. Tha am bile fhèin a’ sealltainn gu bheil ùghdarras aig na ministearan

gnothaichean atharrachadh suas mun cuairt na thresholds a tha seo ma tha iad a' smaoinichadh gu bheil sin reusanta agus deatamach a dhèanamh. Feumaidh sinn a bhith cinnteach nach cruthaich sinn cnap-starra a chuireas bacadh air pàrantan a' tighinn air adhart le bhith ag iarraidh iarratas airson foghlam tron Ghàidhlig. Tha còignear reusanta gu leòr nam bheachdsa ach, aig an aon àm, feumaidh sinn a bhith cinnteach gu bheil cothroman ann. Tha diofar mòr eadar sgìrean eileanach, sgìrean dùthchail agus na bailtean mòra agus feumaidh sinn a bhith a' toirt sin a-staigh anns an argumaid cuideachd.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Five is a sensible number, but there needs to be flexibility in the process. As I said earlier, Barra, for example, is different from Glasgow or Edinburgh. At the end of the day, it depends on the evidence that is provided to the local authorities. Under the bill, the Scottish ministers will have the opportunity to adjust the thresholds if it is believed that that is reasonable. We have to be sure that we will not create difficulties for parents who come forward with requests for GME. Five is a reasonable threshold in my view, but we must be sure that differences are permissible depending on the size of areas.

The Convener: John, what is East Ayrshire Council's view?

John Wilson: We said that the thresholds are appropriate and we stand by that, particularly given the way that we are set up with our one campus.

The Convener: Thank you. Magaidh, do you have a view?

Magaidh Wentworth: Mar a thuirt Iain Caimbeul, tha còignear reasanta gu leòr ach bidh sgìrean ann far bu chòir beagan sùbailteachd a bhith ann. Nuair a thòisich foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann an Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, 's e ceithre gach bliadhna a bh' againn ri lorg agus rinn sinn sin ann an tòrr sgìrean. Dh'fhaodadh còignear air a bhith cus ann am feadhainn de na sgìrean sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

As Iain Campbell said, five is reasonable enough, but there will be areas where there needs to be some flexibility. When Gaelic-medium education began, we had to find four pupils each year, and we did that in many areas. Five might have been too many in some areas.

Coinneach Moireach: Chan eil beachd foirmeil againn air còignear. Mas e còignear a th' ann 's e còignear a th' ann, ach 's e as cudthromaiche dhuinn gu bheil modail seasmhach ann. Chan e dìreach a' cruthachadh foghlam airson còignear gun sealltainn ris an àrainneachd san

fharsaingeachd. Tha e cudthromach faicinn a bheil feadhainn eile ag iarraidh foghlam sgoil-àraich agus an cothrom sin a thoirt tron sgoil agus gu bheil rudeigin ann air a bheil bun-stèidh làidir airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a bhith seasmhach anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I do not have a formal view. Five seems okay. What we need is an established model. We should not be looking at a model of five without looking at the overall numbers, whether others are coming in and whether there will be other requests in future for nursery provision. The figure is not the important thing. What is important is that we have the foundation for an established development for the future.

The Convener: Thank you for that. Colin Beattie is next.

11:00

Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP): I would like to look at what is always a difficult area—cost.

I notice that paragraph 8.2 of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's response says:

"The Bòrd highlighted that significant investment was needed to ensure the Gaelic education was supported and developed".

A number of councils also highlighted in their submissions concerns that providing Gaelic-medium education might divert funds away from other areas of education. I would be interested to find out whether the panel thinks that the provision of GME is inherently more expensive or whether it just redirects resources that would have gone to the child anyway.

Iain Caimbeul: Chan eil foghlam tron Ghàidhlig nas cosgaile na foghlam tron Bheura agus tha rannsachadh air sin a shealltainn ann an sgìre na Gàidhealtachd mu thràth.

Mar a thuirt sinn mu thràth, feumaidh ùghdarrasan ionadail clann a theagasg ann an sgoiltean agus chan eil mise a' dèanamh sgaradh idir idir eadar Gàidhlig no Beurla. Chan eil na cosgaisean sin eadar-dhealaichte an uiread sin airson a bhith air an cleachdadh na leisgeul gun foghlam tron Ghàidhlig a thabhann ann an sgìrean. Tha na cosgaisean gu ìre co-ionann. Gun teagamh sam bith tha tuilleadh ghoireasan—leabhraichean is tidsearan is mar sin air adhart—a dhith airson foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ach tha na cosgaisean sin a' tuiteam air foghlam tron Bheurla co-dhiù aig an aon àm.

Tha sinn a' coimhead air an t-siostam gu h-ìomlan. 'S e an aon chosgais a bhios ann. Chan eil

e gu diofar foghlam tron Ghàidhlig no foghlam tron Bheurla. Tha rannsachadh air sealltainn, gu h-àraidh ann an sgìre na Gàidhealtachd, gu bheil na cosgaisean gu ìre co-ionann eadar a' Ghàidhlig agus a' Bheurla.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

In my view, GME is not any more expensive than English-medium education. That has been proved in areas such as Highland.

As we have said, local authorities are under an obligation to educate children in their schools, and there should not be any difference. The cost differences are not such that they should be used as an excuse not to provide education to children in Gaelic. Greater facilities are undoubtedly required in Gaelic education—for example, in teacher training—but those costs also apply to English education.

We are looking at a wide-ranging system. The overall costs should be the same whether education is in Gaelic or English. In every study that has been done in Highland, the costs are virtually the same in both languages.

Coinneach Moireach: Tha sin fìor—sin na tha sinn air faicinn. Ged a tha cosgaisean tòiseachaidh an lùib an rud, mur a h-eil clas anns an sgoil, 's mathaid gum feum sinn demountables airson greiseag air neo goireasan a bharrachd. Feumaidh a' chlann a bhith air an oideachadh co-dhiù anns a' Ghàidhlig no anns a' Bheurla. Tha sinn air rannsachadh a dhèanamh thar bhliadhnaichean air seo agus, ged a tha sinn air comharrachadh gu bheil cosgaisean ann, mur a h-eil clas no seòmar teagaisg againn no ma tha tidsear a dh'fhaig an-dràsta is a-rithist, sin na cosgaisean. Ach, as dèidh beagan bhliadhnaichean—trì no ceithir bhliadhnaichean—chan eil cosgaisean a bharrachd an lùib foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus tha na buannachdan a th' ann tro dhà-chànanas a' tighinn am follais cuideachd gu math luath dhan chlann.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That is true—that is what we have discovered. Although initial costs are high—perhaps a demountable might need to be supplied if there is no classroom space—children need to be educated in whatever language is used, whether that is Gaelic or English. We have studied the matter over the years. There might be costs if we do not have sufficient accommodation or if a teacher is needed, for example. Those are the initial costs, which are equalised after a few years, with the result that there is no difference between the costs. The benefit of bilingualism comes to light very quickly, of course.

Magaidh Wentworth: Dìreach a thaobh cosg, tha mi ag aontachadh. Chan eil cosgais a bharrachd ann ach aig toiseach tòiseachaidh agus sin carson a tha tabhartasan sònraichte air a bhith ann airson nan ùghdarrasan ionadail airson sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

In relation to costs, as far as we are concerned, the issue is just the initial set-up cost. Additional support is made available by the Government for Gaelic.

John Wilson: There are two types of costs: resource costs and on-going staffing costs. On resources, we receive funding through the Gaelic schools capital fund to support our money that is coming together for our new school build.

As far as classes are concerned, the issue is maybe class sizes. My authority is small, and when we look at staffing in schools, we look at the staffing pointage in relation to a formula that is set out for the pupils. If we have small classes that are led by one teacher in Gaelic, that obviously has a higher cost, but we hope that, as we develop our early years work, that cost will be neutralised as class sizes become closer to other class sizes.

Colin Beattie: I was interested in East Ayrshire Council's submission, which says:

"The implementation of the duties outlined in the Bill would have an impact both in terms of finance and human resources and would therefore have a consequential impact on the delivery of other educational services."

John Wilson: That was on the basis that we would be looking at expanding the number of teachers that we would need. We were looking much further down the line. Currently, we have capacity, but the bill is obviously for the future, not just the next couple of years. Our thinking was that, as the promotion developed in the local authority, more children would learn in Gaelic and there would be a bigger staff implication.

Colin Beattie: The financial memorandum says that the additional funding in 2017-18 will be £72,500, rising to £177,500 in 2020-21. Presumably, that is on-going additional funding, which will be required in order to bring the duties in for councils.

John Wilson: Yes.

Colin Beattie: Other than that, I wanted to ask about the fairly modest assumptions for the establishment of new units. The financial memorandum estimates that there will be

"one new unit every two years".

Is that too modest? Is it too ambitious? How does the panel view that?

Coinneach Moireach: Tha sin duilich—sealltainn a-steach ann an crystal ball, mar a bhios

sinn ag ràdh—oir ma nì sinn oidhirp a thaobh margaideachd agus brosnachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, chan eil fhios againn dè cho soirbheachail sa bhios seo. 'S mathaid gum bi barrachd ann. Cuiridh sinn ar gualann ris a' chuibhle seo. Cò aig a tha fios cò às a tha an t-iartras a' dol a thighinn, dè an t-uallach a tha sin a' dol a chur air ùghdarrasan ionadail? 'S e toiseach tòiseachaidh a tha seo; 's e benchmark a th' ann. Ma tha sinn gu bhith soirbheachail leis a' mhargaideachd a tha gu bhith againn agus leis an oidhirp a nì sinn, 's mathaid gum faic sinn barrachd na tha air a chomharrachadh anns a' bhile. Tha seo a' sealltainn air ais oir tha fianais ann air dè a thachair anns a' bhliadhna no trì a chaidh romhainn ach, ma nì sinn oidhirp a tha gu bhith mar dleastanas oirnn a-steach dhan iomairt a tha seo, cò aig a tha fios cho soirbheachail sa bhios sinn?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

It is quite difficult to identify what is going to happen in the future. If we are going to be successful, we will be marketing Gaelic-medium education. I do not know how successful that will be—perhaps there will be more. We do not know where the requests will come from or what responsibility that will place on local authorities. It is the beginning of a process. The local authorities will make the effort to promote GME. Looking back at what happened previously, the evidence indicates that development will come, but who knows how successful the initiative might be?

Iain Caimbeul: Mar a tha Coinneach Moireach ag ràdh, chan eil dearbhadh no fios againn le cinnt ach tha mise a' smaointinn gu bheil sinn aig crois-rathad ann am foghlam tron Ghàidhlig leis a' bhile a tha seo. Ma thèid am bile a neartachadh ann an diofar earrannan agus ma bheir sinn misneachd do phàrantan, thig adhartas air an iartras a th' ann. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil latent demand a-muigh an sin airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Cruthaichidh neartachadh anns na h-earrannan anns a' bhile misneachd ann am pàrantan agus aig na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail fhèin a chionn tha buannachd mhòr ann a bhith dà-chànanach ann an Alba. Tha daoine a' tighinn a-mach às na sgoiltean Gàidhlig a tha gu math cruthachail is misneachail is a tha a' cur ri toradh na dùthcha. Sin na tha a dhìth oirnn ann an Alba aig deireadh an latha—daoine a thogas Alba gu ìre eile. Tha foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a' dèanamh sin agus tha sinn a' faicinn mar a tha Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu air clàr nan liogan gu math àrd ann an Alba. Tha sin fhèin na dhearbhadh gu bheil foghlam tron Ghàidhlig gu math soirbheachail.

Tha e doirbh a ràdh aig an ìre seo, ach tha mi a' smaointinn le neartachadh sa bhile gun tig tuilleadh iartras a-staigh. Tha sin a' ciallachadh

gum feum sinn a bhith faiceallach dè mar a thèid a làimhseachadh anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

As Kenneth Murray says, we do not know for certain how it will work out, but if the bill is strengthened in various sections, and if that gives encouragement to parents, I think that there will be an increase in demand. I think that there is a latent demand. If the relevant sections are strengthened, that will certainly give parents encouragement. It will also encourage local authorities, because of the tremendous benefit of bilingualism for children. We must consider those issues. What we need in Scotland is people who will improve their education. The Glasgow Gaelic school has a very high level of educational success.

With a strengthened bill, there will be additional demand, and we have to be careful how things are handled in the future.

Magaidh Wentworth: Bi barrachd cothrom air fàs na th' againn an-dràsta. Mar a thuirt Iain Caimbeul, tha Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu a' dèanamh fìor mhath ach chan eil rùm a-nis anns a' sgoil airson na clann a tha a' tighinn a-staigh bho na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail a tha timcheall air Glaschu. Mar sin, feumaidh na h-ùghdarrasan ionadal fhèin a bhith a' tabhann foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Bi cothroman airson tòrr a bharrachd fàs na

“one new unit every two years”.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I think that there is potential for growth. As has been said, the Glasgow Gaelic school is doing exceptionally well. The number of children who come into the school from the surrounding areas is increasing, and the provision of GME by local authorities outwith Glasgow is an issue. If the bill is successful, there will be more demand than

“one new unit every two years”.

John Wilson: I do not have anything to add to that.

Colin Beattie: According to the financial memorandum, we are talking about

“one new unit every two years”.

Is that not what we have at the moment? Is that actually an expansion?

Iain Caimbeul: 'S e leudachadh a th' ann gun teagamh sam bith ach tha e crochte air dè a thachair ann an eachdraidh mar gum biodh. Tha mise gu math cinnteach ann an dòigh gu bheil latent demand ann airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus, ma thèid am bile a neartachadh agus ma chruthaicheas sin barrachd misneachd ann an coimhearsnachd na Gàidhlig agus ann am

pàrantan, thig sinn am bàrr agus thig adhartas gun teagamh sam bith a bharrachd air dè na tha am financial memorandum ag ràdh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

It is an expansion but, in historical terms, that is how GME has developed. The additional encouragement that the bill is likely to provide will add to the latent demand that exists. There will undoubtedly be development in addition to what the financial memorandum says.

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha sinn air ais far an do thòisich sinn. Tha am bile cho lag is cha dèan e cus diofar. 'S e sin firinn na cùise. Feumaidh am bile a bhith air a neartachadh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We are back to where we started. The bill is too weak at the moment; it needs to be strengthened if there is going to be advancement.

The Convener: Mary Scanlon and Liam McArthur want to ask questions. I ask everyone for quick questions and short answers, please. We are running out of time.

Mary Scanlon: I return to paragraph 41 of the financial memorandum, which Colin Beattie just mentioned. All the panel members have talked about an increase in demand, but in fact the financial memorandum to the bill states that

"There is no expectation that there will be a high number of parental requests".

Colin Beattie mentioned just one parental request over a two-year period. Are your expectations the same as those that are stated in paragraph 41?

Coinneach Moireach: Feumaidh sinn cuimhneachadh gur e seo ach iarrtas airson roinnean ùra Gàidhlig. Feumaidh sinn cuimhneachadh cuideachd gu bheil Gàidhlig air a thabhann ann an iomadach sgoil a th' air a' Ghàidhealtachd agus air Alba agus gu bheil beàrn ann—suidheachaidhean bàna—ri lìonadh cuideachd. Chan e dìreach mu dheidhinn nan àireamhan a tha a' dol tro fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach fiù 's solar ùr. A dh'aindeoin sin, tha fhathast sgoiltean againn far a bheil cothrom ann dhuinne na h-àireamhan àrdachadh. Tha sinn a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn solar ùr agus, mar sin, 's e sealladh eachdraidheil a th' ann. Nuair a thòiseachas sinn air an iomairt a th' againn a thaobh margaidheachd, is mathaid gum faic sinn dealbh diofraichte.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We have to remember that that is demand for new Gaelic units. Gaelic is already provided in many schools and there are empty chairs to be filled. This is not just dealing with numbers going through GME, but new provision—new demand for

units. We already have empty places in some of our schools and an opportunity to expand on numbers. This is looking at new provision, so it is a historical outlook. Perhaps with that we can see a different picture.

Iain Caimbeul: An-dràsta fhèin tha còrr is 600 sgoilearan a' chiad clas anns na bun-sgoiltean, suas 18 anns a' cheud bhon uiridh agus, bho 2007, tha an àireamh air àrdachadh 44 anns a' cheud. Tha sinn a' sealltainn gu bheil adhartas mòr air tighinn thairis air na bliadhnaichean a tha air a dhol seachad, cha mhòr saor-thoileach a thaobh pàrantan. Ma thèid am bile a neartachadh, thig tuilleadh iarrtas a-staigh agus bi sinn a' cumail air an t-slighe sin far a bheil àireamhan a' sìor dhol am mead a h-uile bliadhna mar a tha an eachdraidh a' sealltainn—mar a tha iad air a dhol am mead thairis air na bliadhnaichean a th' air a dhol seachad—agus bidh làn dùil againn gun cùm sin a' dol.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

At the moment there are 600 pupils in primary 1, which is an increase over last year. The number has gone up by 40 per cent over seven years. If the bill is strengthened, I believe that there will be increasing demand and the numbers will increase, as practice has shown in recent years, and that will continue.

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha cothrom airson fàs ma tha na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail a' dèanamh barrachd margaidheachd. Ma tha pàrantan a' faighinn fiosrachadh mu dheidhinn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig agus ma tha am pròiseas ann, tha cothrom ann gum bi barrachd iarrtas ann.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

There is an opportunity for growth if additional marketing is done at a local level. If further information is offered, there is an opportunity for greater demand.

John Wilson: We hope that the promotional aspects will bring greater demand, which we can currently fill within capacity.

The Convener: We will go on to that very soon.

Liam McArthur: Regarding the assessment of costs, you quite rightly point to the need to look at benefits, too. I think that you all mentioned the benefits that derive from bilingualism.

Mr Murray talked about up-front capital costs. Highland Council's written submission states:

"We would also anticipate additional staff training and development costs to maintain knowledge and expertise and related Continuous Lifelong Professional Learning. Another area where significant costs could be incurred is in pupil transportation".

It then talks about the impact that growth in GME would have on "additional funding support

requirements" elsewhere for educational provision. It would be fair to say that there are not simply up-front capital costs; there are other costs that the council has identified. Whether you have assessed those to be costs that are worth bearing over the piece is one issue, but nevertheless the picture looks different from what you have expressed this morning.

Coinneach Moireach: Duilich, a Mhaighstir MacArtair, às dèidh dhomh cantainn gu bheil cosgaisean calpa cudthromach dhuinn, thuir mi cuideachd "agus cosgaisean eile ann" agus 's e sin revenue costs. Sin na bha mi a' ciallachadh nuair a bha mi a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn cosgaisean eile. Cuideachd, tha cosgaisean còmh-dhail ann an diofar sgìrean ag ìre gu math àrd agus tha cosgaisean againn a thaobh feumalachdan a bharrachd sònraichte a th' aig clann—feumalachdan taic nach eil air a bhith a' tighinn thugainne anns na bliadhnaichean a chaidh seachad ach a tha a-nis a' tighinn am follais.

Tha feumalachdan ann mar a tha foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a' fàs. Tha feumalachdan a bharrachd nach robh sinn a' faicinn a' tighinn am bàrr cuideachd. Mar sin, tha sinn a' dol air adhart is a leasachadh agus a' fàs agus tha sinn a' faicinn cosgaisean an lùib sin. Chan e dìreach cosgaisean a bharrachd tha iad co-dhiù air taobh a-staigh na comhairle ach tha iad a' tighinn a-steach. Tha iad a' biathadh a-steach dhan Ghàidhlig. Chan i gur e cosgaisean a bharrachd a th' ann ach gu bheil iad cuideachd an lùib na Gàidhlig agus feumaidh sinn a bhith mothachail mu dheidhinn sin. Ma tha cosgaisean sam bith a tha sa bhile a tha seo a tha a' cur uallach a bharrachd air ùghdarrasan ionadail, feumaidh sinn sealltainn riutha agus feumaidh sinn a bhith onarach mu dheidhinn. Tha e a cheart cho math dhuinn a sgoltadh aig an ìre seo agus a chur air ur beulaibh an àite a bhith ga fhàgail. Sin na bha air cùlaibh an fhiosrachaidh a chuir sinn thugaibh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I am sorry, Mr McArthur. After I said that capital costs are important, I referred to other costs, and that is what I meant by other costs. Transportation costs are high in some areas. We also have additional educational costs. It is now evident that, as Gaelic-medium education has increased, there are additional requirements that we did not anticipate.

We are going ahead with development and growth, but we are seeing additional costs come in. There are already costs within the council that feed into Gaelic-medium education. There will not necessarily be additional costs overall, but there are specific costs of Gaelic. Where there are anticipated costs for local authorities from the bill, we must look at that and not just pass them by.

11:15

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): I think that we all agree with Mr Campbell's comment that we wish to see bilingualism in Scottish schools. Before I come on to promotion, provision and support, I have a question for Magaidh Wentworth. We know from your submission that, under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, local authorities are provided guidance on how they can promote Gaelic-medium education and on entitlement, provision and improving Gaelic education in pre-school, primary and secondary. However, you are

"concerned that local authorities have not adhered to the guidance issued".

I presume that there was no marketing or promotion of that at the time.

Magaidh Wentworth: Tha sin ceart, agus sin an dragh a th' air pàrantan fhathast: a' cheist a thaobh cò buidheann riaghlaidh a bhitheas a' cumail smachd air a' pròiseas. Tha e fìor a ràdh cuideachd, ann an 2000, cha robh Bòrd na Gàidhlig no planaichean Gàidhlig againn. Mar sin, tha barrachd cothrom ann a-nis tro na planaichean gum bi sinn a' cumail sùil air dè tha a' tachairt anns na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail ach fhathast tha ceist ann cò buidheann riaghlaidh a tha dol a cumail smachd air seo agus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail a' dèanamh margaidheachd agus a' brosnachadh pàrantan mar a tha sinn ag iarraidh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That is right. Parents are concerned about who is going to keep an eye on the process. In 2000, Bòrd na Gàidhlig did not exist and we did not have Gaelic plans, so there are now more opportunities for the process to be monitored at local level. However, there is an issue about what organisation will monitor the situation and ensure that marketing is done and that the system is promoted, as parents would expect.

Chic Brodie: I hate the idea that we are going to start setting targets rather than look at the outcomes that we are trying to achieve. I have a question for Mr Murray on that. Under section 13, all education authorities are to promote GME, irrespective of whether they currently provide it. How do we ensure that provision follows the promotion and that support is ready for the provision, or that it follows the provision? How do we ensure that all those activities follow in an integrated fashion so that we achieve the objectives?

Secondly, you talked about proportionality. Why are we seeing growth in one particular area? I know from contacts in East Ayrshire Council that, across the rest of South Scotland, there is no rush to have pupils learn Gaelic. Why is there no cross-

communication on what we are trying to achieve? Will the bill achieve that?

Coinneach Moireach: Uill, mar riochdaire aon chomhairle a tha a' tabhann foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, tha e duilich dhomhsa a ràdh dè tha a' dol a thachairt ann an ùghdarrasan ionadail nach eil a' tabhann foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Cha chuirinn-se uallach orra agus tuigidh sibh fhèin sin, a Mhaighstir Brodie.

Ach, air ar son dheth, bidh sinn a' bruidhinn ri ùghdarrasan ionadail eile agus sinn a' smaoinèachadh gu bheil e cudromach gum bi ùghdarrasan ionadail ag obair còmhla. Faodaidh sinn sealltainn ri na sgìrean a tha a' tabhainn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig—na h-àireamhan de luchd-ionnsachaidh agus de sgoiltean—an-dràsta mar aon ùghdarras ionadail nàiseanta. Feumaidh sinn a bhith ag obair fada nas dlùithe còmhla ri chèile a' dèanamh na ceanglaichean sin agus a' cur rudan air dòigh mar am pròiseact a tha Foghlam Alba a' toirt air adhart an-dràsta mu theagasg is ionnsachadh air taobh a-staigh saoghal na Gàidhlig.

Tha cothroman ann—chan e dìreach cnap-starra a chur air beulaibh ùghdarrasan ionadail san spot—ach feumaidh sinn a bhith onarach, ma tha dleastanas gu bhith air ùghdarras ionadail nach eil a' tabhann foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig an-dràsta, ciamar a tha sinn a' dol a dhèiligeadh ri sin an taca ri ùghdarrasan a tha cleachdte gu leòr ri sin a dhèanamh agus aig a bheil goireasan agus luchd-taic. Feumaidh ùghdarrasan ionadail ceanglaichean a dhèanamh còmhla agus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil iad gu bhith soirbheachail an àite a' cur caraidean suas airson fàiligeadh san spot. Cha bhiodh sin glic, cha bhiodh e ciallach.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

My council offers GME and it is difficult for me to say what happens in local authorities that do not offer it.

However, we speak to other local authorities and we believe that it is important that local authorities work together. We can think about the areas that offer GME and the learners and schools in them as one large or national local authority. We need to work more closely together to establish links. An example of that is Education Scotland's current digital learning initiative.

We should not put difficulties in front of local authorities. For authorities that do not offer GME at the moment, we must be honest about that and consider how the authorities that are well accustomed to delivering it can be involved. Local authorities need to establish closer links.

John Wilson: Mr Brodie mentioned the growth of Gaelic in East Ayrshire. We are certainly proud

of Onthank primary and Grange academy, and we are looking forward very much to our new three to 18 campus. We are very much looking to the future. The bill sets out a clear mandate for promotion.

The other question was about the cart-before-the-horse issue and how we promote if there is no capacity. My local authority is looking to move ahead positively and to grow numbers, although we do not want to increase the governance or extend ourselves beyond what we can provide. As Mr Brodie points out, we want to grow our Gaelic and we are therefore going to promote in a strong way.

Chic Brodie: How will you do that? You talk about marketing. That is great, but how are you going to grow?

John Wilson: One key aspect that has been mentioned is about getting to parents when their children are at the younger stages and are enrolling for early years. We heard from Ken Murray that, in Highland, that is done through a letter directly from the directorate. There are ways of linking through parent and toddler groups to get that family of learning wider known. There are also electronic ways, such as refreshing the website and ensuring that it is accessible and attractive. We can use aspects of social media and the schools texting service. We need to use every possible way to reach parents so that they know about the quality service that is available and sign up for it.

The Convener: I thank all the panel members for coming along. We are grateful to you for taking the time to appear before the committee on the Gaelic provisions in the bill.

I suspend the meeting briefly to allow a changeover of witnesses.

11:23

Meeting suspended.

11:29

On resuming—

The Convener: Our second panel of witnesses this morning will cover the bill's provisions on General Teaching Council for Scotland registration. I welcome to the meeting Nicola Dudley from the Scottish Council of Independent Schools; Rod Grant from Clifton Hall School; Dr Daniel Hovde from the International School of Aberdeen; and Ken Muir from the GTCS.

As with the first panel, we will move straight to questions from members, and Siobhan McMahon will start.

Siobhan McMahon: Since we first looked at the bill, the process has moved on. As we are aware, no formal consultation was undertaken on the bill's provisions in advance of its introduction. Given that, what do you believe the current state of play to be?

Ken Muir (General Teaching Council for Scotland): We have begun to look at what is required to widen the registration opportunities for teachers within the GTCS, and a working group that has been set up with representation from independent and grant-aided schools and the GTCS is looking at how we might transition to the bill's requirements for full registration of everyone in those sectors. Work is already under way on how we can put in place the measures that are required to fulfil the bill's requirements.

Nicola Dudley (Scottish Council of Independent Schools): We have welcomed those discussions, which, to date, have been very positive. The work that still needs to be undertaken is very much about the detail of how we meet the diversity of the sector's needs and recognise not only the different and very individual recruitment needs of some of the schools and the staff who are employed in them but their future recruitment needs. After all, the sector includes mainstream day and boarding schools, special schools, international schools, specialist schools and schools such as Steiner schools that have a very unique curriculum, so it is very diverse and has very diverse needs.

Dr Daniel Hovde (International School of Aberdeen): We have had someone from the GTCS come up and talk to the teachers who are registered about how they can maintain their registration and how the new process will work. We are also in the process of asking someone to come up and help us with the details of the issue that we are most worried about, which is how we get people who are not registered on the register, especially those from overseas whom we would like to recruit.

Rod Grant (Clifton Hall School): Obviously, I am talking on behalf not of the entire independent sector but of my school and our own recruitment procedures, but we find that we get a lot of applications from outwith Scotland's borders. Given that it is extremely difficult for any teacher to become GTCS registered, I am concerned about how I employ someone from England who, under the bill, will have to be registered prior to my appointing them to a post. I am sure that the GTCS will work on that, but it is a major concern for me.

There is another issue that has probably not been mentioned much. I personally believe that there are industry experts who are perfectly capable of teaching, and I want the freedom to

make that choice in my school. As politicians, you might be very comfortable teaching modern studies, but I want to be able to make that judgment not just on the basis of your registration with the GTCS. I do not necessarily see GTCS registration as a kitemark of quality; it just means that you are registered. I would assume that many people might well agree that there are GTCS-registered teachers—of whom there are many in my school—who are not necessarily excellent practitioners. That is my point.

Siobhan McMahon: Those comments are helpful, because, as I have said, there has been no consultation and we are trying to keep up with what is going on. My colleagues will probably pick up on some of the issues that you have just highlighted.

First, though, I want to ask Mr Muir about the specific potential benefits and improvements for pupils in independent schools. What can they expect to get from teachers who are registered? Moreover, what improvements can we realistically expect to be made in attainment, which we are examining in a separate inquiry?

Ken Muir: One of the things that the Scottish education system prides itself on is high-quality teachers, and to suggest that you can bring someone in off the street to teach youngsters significantly undermines the complexity of teaching as a profession. The requirement for teachers to be registered guarantees to politicians such as yourselves and society as a whole that they are, first and foremost, well trained to deal with that complexity. There is something in the teaching profession about teachers maintaining their professionalism through that registration. Teachers who are registered get significant support from the GTCS, and they are required to undertake professional update, which is an indication that they take their professionalism seriously and that they are continuing to learn as the complexities of teaching change and as society at large demands more and more of them.

Registration gives teachers an opportunity to access the my GTCS system, which provides support and research findings. It allows them to log and access their professional learning. There are many benefits to individual teachers in being registered and to society as a whole. As a regulator, we provide the reassurance for society and for individual headteachers that, should anyone be subject to our fitness to teach process and they be removed from the register, there is a guarantee that they will be unable to teach in any other part of Scotland or any other jurisdiction. That is a particularly significant point at the moment, given what is happening in a number of schools in Scotland.

There are reassurances and benefits for individual teachers in being registered, and it benefits the professionalism of Scottish teachers as a whole and society as a whole.

Siobhan McMahon: What are the specific benefits for pupils? If I was playing devil's advocate, I would take Mr Grant's point about taking people from different sectors. We are talking about the Wood commission and how we get pupils to think about different career options and subjects. Would taking the advanced knowledge of people who have worked in other sectors and bringing it into teaching not increase the attainment of certain pupils?

Ken Muir: It could very well do that on some occasions. It is a requirement of being registered that teachers undertake professional update every five years. As part of that process, their professional learning is supported by GTCS and others, and they have that signed off. High-quality teaching makes the biggest difference to outcomes for youngsters. The professional update is a means by which teachers are encouraged and supported to continue professional learning throughout their career. That should have an automatic knock-on effect on the quality of the learning that youngsters get. If teachers continue to keep their skills and knowledge up to date and have that validated by GTCS, pupils' outcomes and learning will benefit.

Nicola Dudley: We would argue that the professionalism of teachers is of the utmost importance to the schools regardless of whether they are GTCS registered. That professionalism is at the heart of what teachers do in supporting professional learning. Professional review and development systems have been in place in independent schools since before professional update and the good practice in many independent schools has been recognised by GTCS. It is not just GTCS-registered schools that have systems to support professional learning and professional review and development procedures. Such systems are open to staff in all schools.

As continuing professional development co-ordinator at SCIS, I see the uptake and the positive response to the professional learning opportunities that we lay on as an example of the support that there is for professional learning. Teachers go through rigorous selection procedures prior to their appointment to ensure that the school gets the best teacher for the job. Many schools look at not just the quality of the teacher but their commitment to providing pastoral care and support for the pupils, which includes 24/7 provision in boarding schools and meeting the highly individual needs of some pupils in special schools.

Professionalism is at the heart of that and the schools are under scrutiny from Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate, the registrar of independent schools in Scotland, the parent bodies and the governors, who are responsible for managing the performance of schools. Whether or not the teachers are registered, their professionalism is taken as a given.

Dr Hovde: I certainly do not see registration as an advantage for our pupils; I see it as a disadvantage. It threatens the good teachers we have right now and the excellent teachers we can hire in the future, and I do not see that as being good for pupils.

We certainly do not take people off the street. The vast majority of our teachers are certified in wherever they come from. We have professional development and go through an accreditation process, which includes a self-study to point out things for the school to work on; in addition, the visiting team that comes to accredit us gives us ideas about what we might work on. Our professional development is aimed at that.

Siobhan McMahon: How would registration threaten the current status? You say that you believe that most teachers are already up to standard.

Dr Hovde: We have a hard time filling our positions as things stand. Registration would take away the opportunity to hire people from overseas to add to the diversity of our international community and our unique curriculum.

Most of our folks have teaching certification. In rare cases they might not, but in those cases they go through evaluation every year and are put on a mentoring programme. We just had a teacher with 28 years' experience and another with 10 years' experience as mentors. I would argue that you cannot get much better professional development than that in the teaching profession. We do not just have them go out there and go it alone.

The teachers are experienced, they have expertise in a particular field and they do a fantastic job for our pupils. They have also committed themselves to our school and have made the commitment to live in Scotland. To have the rules change such that they would have to go back to school or give up their jobs would be entirely unfair, and it would be detrimental to the pupils whom we have now, because those teachers are excellent.

Siobhan McMahon: We have read in your submission that you would not be able to attract people from abroad. Why would that be the case, when across the world there are different registers that teachers are on and requirements that have to be met? Why would you be unable to recruit, and why would people have to give up their jobs, given

that there would be a process that would lead to registration?

Dr Hovde: There would have to be a process for them, but we have them already—they are teaching full time—and their focus should be on their pupils and going through the professional development process that we have.

As far as recruiting from afar is concerned, candidates are not going to be registered with the GTCS. There would at least have to be a process lasting a couple of years to allow them to get that done. In recruiting teachers from abroad, I need to be able to give them a degree of confidence that their teaching certificate is going to be accepted here. If I cannot do that, they will take one of the many other jobs that are available around the world rather than take the chance that they will be accepted here.

Rod Grant: I would like to read something from a member of my staff that was not submitted prior to the meeting. It is from a gentleman called Dr Richard Phillips, who sent it to me yesterday, knowing that I was coming to see the committee today. I think that it illustrates the points that we are making about the difficulty of someone becoming GTCS registered when they have been teaching in, or their teaching experience is in, a different country. He wrote:

"In 2012 I moved from Yorkshire to Edinburgh with my wife, who had been offered a promotion within the NHS. At that time I continued to work as a University Lecturer at Leeds but eventually decided to return to school teaching, having previously taught for ten years in challenging schools in London. I had also worked for ten years in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Berkeley, California, and was excited to take new knowledge and experience back into the classroom.

My first hurdle was to become registered with the GTCS. I had no experience of the Scottish sector and was surprised to discover that my PGCE and twenty years in the education sector did not qualify me to teach science in a Scottish state school. If I were returning to teach in England or Wales I would only need to apply to the school in question. However, I duly examined the 16 webpages on the GTCS website that concerned registration and downloaded and read the 14-page registration form, the 23-page 'registration and standards rules' and the 5-page 'statement of principles and practice for applicants qualified outside of Scotland'. I then wrote to the four universities at which I studied in order to get copies of degree certificates and exam transcripts. The process of receiving all of the documentation took several weeks.

Having what I thought was all the necessary paperwork I submitted my forms and paid the processing fee of £60. A few days later I received a letter stating that my application was incomplete. As I had worked for the University of California for two years I needed an overseas police check. Obviously I had not registered this when reading the overwhelming documentation. The GTCS letter stated that I had 30 days to get the US police check otherwise I would lose my processing fee and all of my forms would be destroyed. There was no advice on the letter on how to get a US police check, though I did eventually find a note on

the GTCS website directing me to a Canadian visa site which proved useful.

After further research I worked out that I needed to get my fingerprints taken by the Metropolitan Police and pay them £72.50, then complete a form for the FBI and pay \$18. The earliest appointment I could get with the Metropolitan Police was just before the 30 day deadline set by the GTCS. Obviously the FBI would not be too concerned about my need to submit my police check before the allocated time so I phoned the GTCS. I explained the situation to the helpdesk and was met with what I can only describe as rude derision—the basic message was that I had 30 days with no extension and loss of my processing fee regardless of the issue.

After putting paperwork together for several months, spending over £150 on transcripts, 'processing' fees and fingerprints, I was coming to the conclusion that the GTCS was an arcane bureaucratic body that did not care too much for outsiders and was seemingly not interested in recruiting from outside of its limited club, regardless of experience or talent. The fact that there was no flexibility to extend the deadline is nonsense, given the circumstances, and I don't think that I have ever dealt with such an intransigent organisation. For newcomers, the Scottish system appears complex and opaque. The GTCS do little to simplify registration and, in my experience, are certainly not welcoming.

Ultimately, I decided not to register. I remain a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher and am lucky to work in a friendly and inspiring school with children who seem to greatly enjoy physics. My experience with GTCS has not been constructive or pleasant and I remain confused as to what the benefits of joining are. Being a member will not make me a better teacher and a PVG check seems to cover issues of child protection."

By the way, that gentleman is the world expert on plate tectonics.

11:45

The Convener: Would you like to respond, Mr Muir?

Ken Muir: Yes. It is worth while pointing out that any suggestion that GTCS does not register teachers from other parts of the United Kingdom or worldwide is inaccurate. In the past four years, we have registered 594 teachers from overseas countries and 1,006 teachers from England. To suggest that we do not register teachers or that we disadvantage teachers who apply from England or overseas is quite outrageous. The evidence shows that we register those teachers.

I cannot comment on the specifics of the case that Mr Grant has referred to, because I am not aware of it. I do not remember any complaint to GTCS from either the school or the individual concerned. We try to process applications as quickly and effectively as we can. With an overseas applicant, it is only right that we ask for criminal record checks and police checks on the individual to satisfy us that they are fit to be put in front of children in Scottish schools.

The timescale for processing is not entirely in the hands of the GTCS, because part of the protecting vulnerable groups check can take time. Similarly, we require references as part of the application process, and sometimes we sit and wait for months for referees who have been cited on the application form to get back to us. Although I accept that there are cases in which an individual teacher who is applying for registration may experience a delay, we process the vast majority of applications very quickly and effectively. We do that for folk who come from England and those who come from overseas.

It is unfortunate that Mr Grant's teacher, Mr Phillips, met that difficulty. I apologise for that. As I said, I am not aware of the circumstances surrounding the case. It is important that we go through those processes in order to satisfy ourselves and the users of the education system that the people whom we put in front of the children are high quality and are trained in the complex profession of teaching.

As I said, we have had unqualified teachers in the Scottish system in the past. We now have a rigorous and demanding process for people to get into the teaching profession in Scotland. That is because teaching is difficult. We go to the ends of the earth to ensure that teachers who are able to teach go through that process to provide reassurance at all levels.

As Nicola Dudley said, since the introduction of the Education (Scotland) Bill, GTCS has been working with all partners in the system to find a way in which the very teachers that Mr Grant and Dr Hovde are talking about can be registered with us. Our submission clearly shows a number of ways in which teachers can be given conditional or provisional registration, and we are working to ensure that teachers who come to Scotland who do not have the requisite qualifications can be facilitated in getting them by GTCS.

A lot is happening out there but, fundamentally, we need to guarantee to the users of any education system—in the public sector or the independent sector—that the teachers are highly academically qualified and able to deliver on the complexities of teaching.

Siobhan McMahon: On the basis of that discussion and the evidence that you have submitted—I should say to Mr Muir that this question is for the other three witnesses—is it fair to say that you have not revised your opinion with regard to the opposition to registration? In view of the 14 other submissions that we have received in favour of this, the discussions that you have had with the Scottish Government and the fact that things have moved on through the part that you have played in the working group, has your opposition to this measure moved on?

Nicola Dudley: It is fair to say that the majority of independent schools that we speak to are, in principle, against full registration. They accept the value of being registered with a regulatory professional body and the recognition of the professionalism of their teachers that that brings. However, there have been challenges with registration. Schools have been moving towards full registration for the past 15 years and now have a significant number of registered teachers; in fact, in many schools, there is almost full registration. However, when those discussions took place 15 years ago, there was an understanding that there would always be exceptions, because of the unique nature of some of the curriculum programmes, the provision of certain subjects that are not recognised in the GTCS categories and so on.

We have numerous examples of teachers who have wanted to register but have not been able to get registered. In some cases, it is hard to understand why that is, when, by all accounts—evidence from schools and so on—they are excellent and highly competent teachers. It would be a great loss to those schools if the ability to cast a wide net when recruiting were to be restricted by restrictive regulation categories, and we welcome the discussions that have been taking place in that regard.

I can give the committee a couple of examples. One individual has a BA in classics from Cambridge and an MA in classics from King's College London and got an outstanding award from the graduate teacher programme, which is a programme that is not recognised by the GTCS. She is currently undertaking an MSc in learning and teaching at Oxford, but the GTCS has not been able to confirm whether after all that she will be eligible for registration. Another individual is a teacher who is trained and experienced in teaching English, has 24 years of teaching experience and has undertaken a further M Ed in learning support. She was taken on by a support for learning department but when she applied for registration, she was told that she had to complete her probationary period in English. She was then employed as a support for learning teacher. Those people, and others like them, are teachers who are professional and diligent and who are seeking recognition of their professionalism.

We are urging flexibility in the registration requirements. There was a system in place—the exceptional admissions route—that worked well for a while; it seemed to be manageable for schools, and it made up for any shortfall in academic content in a degree or in teaching qualifications by taking teaching experience into account. However, although the option worked well for a number of years, the decision was taken to remove it. Since then, it has been increasingly

difficult for teachers from outside Scotland to get recognition, especially those from England, because of the range of qualifications that they come with.

Dr Hovde: I want to mention background checks, just because of where some of our folks come from. We carry out background checks through a company out of the States that does checks through the FBI and overseas organisations. Think of the issues involved in running background checks on someone like me, from Indonesia, or—let us pick someone else—a person from Pakistan. Good luck running those people down. It is just not going to happen—and it is certainly not going to happen in the required timeframe. The headteacher of our lower school tried to go through the FBI process and ran out of time—the FBI was unable to do it. There should be some flexibility to account for that. Experience is also key; if someone has a proven track record in teaching, that should be taken into account.

I should clarify that our recruiting process tends to happen between November and February to give people enough lead time to get ready to move to Aberdeen from the country that they are in. When an opening comes up, I try to get people's attention—and sometimes people try to get my attention, if they are smart enough to know that Aberdeen is a great place to be. However, before they decide to quit their job, sell their home and get ready to move overseas, I have to give them a great deal of confidence that they are going to be accepted for registration. I need to be honest with them so that they can weigh their options against other job offers that they might get from other parts of the world.

George Adam: I am having difficulty understanding this process. My question is for the people from the independent sector. Why should teachers in your schools not be in line with what happens in mainstream education, where teachers are registered? Why would we have unqualified teachers teaching classes?

Rod Grant: When I talked about an unqualified member of staff, I was talking about one out of 67. I have no problem with the registration of individuals if the registration process is straightforward. I am passionate about two things: education, and Scotland as a nation. As I have said, people who come into Scotland from outwith the country find it a great struggle to become registered. All of the examples that I have given are of people who are qualified teachers in their own country, but Scotland is somehow suggesting that their qualifications are not as good as Scottish ones or that they must be proven, and those people are facing hurdles with regard to academic transcripts and degrees.

I am confused about the rationale behind and the motivation for that; indeed, I do not understand the rationale behind registration. I am interested in people who are good teachers. People who come with stacks of qualifications, including teaching qualifications, can struggle to register with the GTCS, not because they do not want to register, but because they find the system intransigent and opaque.

Dr Hovde: That sums it up for me. We hire highly skilled people; after all, we are trying to serve a demanding population in the oil and gas industry. We talk about the oil patch, which is small around the world. Because the reputation of a school in a certain location gets round quickly by word of mouth, we have to be top-notch.

We deliver a unique curriculum; for example, we run the international baccalaureate programme. Because we run our curriculum backwards from that, we need to make very good decisions about the certified teachers who are delivering that type of curriculum.

Nicola Dudley: Independent schools are independent in the sense that they are autonomous in their learning and teaching and their curricular and examination choices. As I have said, on the whole they support the full registration of teachers where possible, but in trying to provide what they judge to be the most appropriate curriculum for their body and their pupils, they find that there are certain categories in which that is just not possible.

One example is the teaching of classics. At the moment, there is a lack of classics teachers, because there are insufficient classics teacher training programmes; there are none in Scotland and only two in England. If schools wish to provide those subjects—and they very much do—they will have to appoint unregistered teachers if there is a dearth of registered teachers. They always seek to appoint the best person for the job, and if that means having to go outwith Scotland to recruit, they can do so under their autonomous status in order to provide for their pupils.

Special schools have pupils with wide-ranging and in some cases very specific needs, and the teacher's skills and attributes enable those schools to meet those needs. However, a lot of those teachers find it a struggle to register if they have not previously been registered in a mainstream primary or secondary category. When those teachers have sought registration, they have been told that they must complete the probationary period in a mainstream environment, even though that is not appropriate when they have chosen to support pupils in special schools.

George Adam: I wonder whether Ken Muir can answer some of the points that have been made

about the challenges with regard to registration. Is there an issue here? If so, what is it, and how can we deal with it?

Ken Muir: As Nicola Dudley has said, we estimate that more than 90 per cent of teachers in the independent sector are already registered with the GTCS. Over the past 10 or 15 years, headteachers and the independent sector more generally have seen the advantages of registration. Until now, it has not been compulsory. You have to ask why schools have decided that there are benefits to accrue for teachers, for the youngsters and for the parents who are paying money for their children's education. There must be something that is beneficial for them, and I suggested earlier what some of those benefits might be.

12:00

The process of registration should be—and for very many folk is—relatively straightforward. As I have said, delays can sometimes arise in receiving references to support registration and at the PVG check stage, or there can be difficulties in running criminal record or police checks on individuals coming into the country. Where we can get those references or run those checks, we do so; where we cannot, we depend on attestations, character references and so on to allow teachers to take part. Neither that nor the bill is an attempt to remove teachers in the independent sector from their jobs—that is certainly not what the GTCS sees as the bill's role.

As Nicola Dudley serves on the working group, she will be aware that we have looked at our registration requirements and, in order to fulfil the bill's transitional arrangements, a number of the other issues that have been talked about such as conditional registration. Indeed, Nicola also mentioned exceptional registration. We are looking at all of those areas, including how teachers can undertake additional training, if that is required.

Only last year, the GTCS accredited the first top-up training course for teachers who have come from England and do not have a teaching qualification. We need to be clear about that. It is very easy to say that a teacher is qualified because they have had experience in a school, but such teachers would not have a teaching qualification. We are looking at such service partly in lieu of qualifications and as part and parcel of an option that we have for the transitional arrangements.

The top-up training programme for teachers who have qualified outside of Scotland is at the University of Northampton. That allows them, largely by distance learning, to bring up their teaching qualification to a level that would be

acceptable for registration in Scotland. We have two other English universities that want the GTCS to accredit their top-up programmes as well, and we also have interest from certainly one and possibly two Scottish universities that offer a similar provision. We are ensuring that teachers who want to be registered to teach in Scotland and who want to increase their teaching qualification to a level that automatically allows them to be registered are able to do so, and we have begun to put in place the steps to allow that to happen.

As I have said, our working group has taken on board the 15 different categories of teacher that apparently exist in the independent sector. Nicola Dudley's paper identifies those categories and explains some of them, and our job is to find a way of registering those individuals. We might not necessarily be talking about full registration; for example, it might be entirely possible to have restricted registration in, say, the International School of Aberdeen, which would restrict the teachers in question to teaching in that school. That provision is within our order. Indeed, those teachers could also be restricted to teaching in the independent sector as a whole. All of those options are open to us. Previously, the GTCS has not considered those options, but it is considering them now.

Mary Scanlon: The Maastricht treaty of 1992 brought in the free movement of people and the harmonisation of professional qualifications in the European Union. Does a teacher who is registered in Scotland have any difficulties? Will they have the same problems if they go to England, Wales or Northern Ireland? Is it easier for them to go to other European countries? Given that we have had the free movement of labour and the harmonisation of qualifications for 23 years, why are we sitting here arguing about a teacher in a country of five million not being able to teach in the same United Kingdom without getting another qualification? I do not understand that.

Ken Muir: There is no difficulty at all in teachers who are qualified in Scotland being registered to teach in any other country.

Mary Scanlon: So a teacher can go from Scotland and pick up a job anywhere in England, Wales or Northern Ireland with no problem.

Gordon MacDonald: No.

Mary Scanlon: Gordon is answering my questions. Would he mind if the witnesses answered?

The Convener: I will let Ken Muir answer that question.

Ken Muir: One of the things that a Scottish teaching qualification gives people is—

Mary Scanlon: Do they have to go through the same process?

Ken Muir: They have to apply. As you are probably aware, there is no general teaching council in England, but people would have to go through a process with what was the General Teaching Council for Wales but which is now the Education Workforce Council or with the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland in order to satisfy the requirements. However, their qualifications as a qualified teacher in Scotland would not be in question.

Mary Scanlon: Right. Would somebody who was a registered and qualified teacher in England have to go through the same process on either side of the border? From what I am hearing, the process seems to be more bureaucratic and time consuming for those coming from England.

I ask the question, convener, because several schools in Moray had to send children home in February even though we had a queue of spouses and partners at RAF Lossiemouth who were qualified and experienced teachers in the English system. They are up here for only three to five years but they would have had to pay either £4,000 or £2,500 to get registered. We had qualified teachers on the doorstep, but Moray Council was not allowed to employ them. I want to know about that situation as well.

Ken Muir: Those teachers did not have a teaching qualification; they had teaching experience. Either they had either come through the graduate teacher programme in England, which does not lead to a teaching qualification, or they had qualified teaching status, which does not necessarily give them a teaching qualification. That qualification is one of the two required elements for registration in Scotland.

Mary Scanlon: I will go back to Moray Council and ask about that, because that is not how I understood the situation in that case.

The Convener: I am sorry, Mary, but Nicola Dudley wants to come in.

Nicola Dudley: Our experience is that teachers from England are probably the group who struggle most with registration; indeed, the graduate teacher programme has just been mentioned in that regard. I accept that the GTCS has its conditions for registration, but by all accounts those teachers are experienced, and the testimony from schools suggests that they are of a high calibre. A number of teachers in Scotland registered with GTC Wales because they were not able to re-register with GTC Scotland, and they found that process to be a smooth one. There are differences in expectation with regard to registration.

Mary Scanlon: From what you say, it seems that a teacher who is registered in England can register in Wales, which makes it easier to teach in Scotland.

Nicola Dudley: The example that I highlighted was not for teaching in Scotland; it related to a requirement for the registration of boarding staff, who are required to be registered with the regulatory body, which can be the GTCS, the Scottish Social Services Council or some other regulatory body. Previously, teachers who were registered with GTC England would have met those needs, but when GTC England was dissolved, GTC Wales became an option. There are differences in registration for different councils.

Mary Scanlon: Okay. My second question is on what the policy memorandum says are the benefits of considering what we are looking at today. Paragraph 98 states:

“There is a clear relationship between poor teacher quality and weaknesses in the provision of education.”

That is why we are discussing the matter today.

However, the paper from the Scottish Council of Independent Schools, which you represent, states that the pass rate for SCIS schools was 97 per cent for national 5, 92 per cent for highs and 93 per cent for advanced highs, so where is the

“poor teacher quality ... in the provision of education”

that needs to be addressed? In answering the question, can you also say whether we should be equally concerned about further education? When I was in that sector, being a trained teacher certainly was not a requirement. Are our universities at risk of failing because they do not have staff who are trained teachers?

Nicola Dudley: As I have already said, the professionalism of teachers is given the utmost importance in our schools.

Mary Scanlon: I am trying to find out where the problem of poor teacher quality lies.

Nicola Dudley: The emphasis on teaching and learning is very strong, and the results are testament to that. Although we support the principle of full registration, we cannot see what it will alter. Independent schools have a continuing commitment to the professional development of teachers and the provision of excellence in teaching and learning. There is nowhere for poor teachers to hide in independent schools, given the internal and external scrutiny, the high expectations of both parents and pupils, and—

Mary Scanlon: I know that. I am just trying to find where the problem lies. We know what the solution is, but where is the poor teacher quality? Given those pass rates, I am trying to find where the problem lies.

Rod Grant: You are asking the same question as I am: what is the rationale? I do not understand the rationale.

Mary Scanlon: Yes. What is it?

Rod Grant: If we are saying that registration is a legal requirement, there must be an issue or problem with our teaching quality, because this is about teaching.

Mary Scanlon: That is right.

Rod Grant: For me, it is about individuals. I want to see people who can engage with kids, who are professional and who look after their own professional learning and do not need an external body to make them do that.

Mary Scanlon: My final point is about further education and universities—

The Convener: Sorry—Ken Muir wanted to come in on your previous point.

Ken Muir: My comment is specifically on your previous point, Ms Scanlon.

As some of you are aware, I am a former chief inspector of education, with nearly 20 years' experience of inspecting independent schools. Although I generally agree with Nicola Dudley's point about the high quality that is prevalent across the majority of independent schools, some of the reports on independent schools that Education Scotland has published recently make for quite interesting reading—indeed, they answer your question, Ms Scanlon.

Let me give the example of a school in Glasgow that was inspected and reported on this year. The report, which is dated 28 April, states:

"There is potential to build on the most effective practice to secure greater consistency in learning experiences across the academy."

That suggests to me that there is variation in the quality of teaching, and probably therefore in the quality of learning, in that particular institution.

Five or six years ago, I inspected an independent school in Glasgow that on one of the five quality indicators came out as weak, with three indicators satisfactory and one unsatisfactory.

Although the teaching quality across Scottish education as a whole is generally good—in some cases, it is very good—and I would not dispute the fact that that is the case in the independent sector, there is still variation.

Encouraging teachers, irrespective of whether they are in the state sector or the private sector, to maintain their professional learning and to continue to develop their professionalism—which is one of the things that the professional update

process and registration will require of teachers—is one of the ways in which youngsters are guaranteed a better deal in the longer term.

Rod Grant: Can I ask a question? Ken, was there a correlation between—

The Convener: Sorry, Mr Grant—you are not allowed to ask questions. That is what we do.

Rod Grant: Okay—sorry.

Mary Scanlon: I have a final point. I understand that the proposed requirement covers not just teachers but school heads. The Scottish Government wants all school heads to have attained a headship or leadership qualification. If there is to be a headship course in Scotland that people have to pass in order to be a school head, how will that affect someone who comes up from England, say, to be head of a school in Scotland? Will they have to go through the GTCS and do another qualification in order to be head of a school in Scotland?

Nicola Dudley: I understand that the details are still being discussed. We would certainly—

The Convener: Just for clarification, I add that that proposal is not in the bill as it stands. My understanding is that such a proposal may come forward. I think that discussions are on-going, as Nicola Dudley has just indicated. I am not sure that we can be certain about what the proposal will actually involve.

Mary Scanlon: Okay—I will leave it there then.

The Convener: If Nicola Dudley wants to add anything on that, I am happy for her to do so. I just wanted to provide some clarity.

Nicola Dudley: I think that it is fair to say that there are, at this stage, a significant number of heads who come from outwith Scotland and who would not, prior to coming to Scotland, have had access to such a qualification. Again, I highlight the professionalism of those heads. Many come with previous headships and have had access to other professional learning opportunities. We certainly have considerable concerns about the expectation that one qualification will be appropriate for all. It is the remit of the governors, as trustees of the schools, to choose an appropriate head to take their school forward.

The Convener: Thank you for that.

Mary Scanlon: I have a very quick question for Mr Grant.

The Convener: One final question, Mary.

Mary Scanlon: Mr Grant, you gave us a two-page submission with an example of someone who had a first-class honours degree in music from Cambridge. He had been teaching for seven

years, and was head of a music faculty for five years. You outlined the process, but you did not mention how long it took him, given his background, experience and qualifications, to register with the GTCS.

Rod Grant: It took nine months.

Mary Scanlon: Nine months. Thank you.

Liam McArthur: I want to follow up on the previous point. We are being asked to legislate in a certain area, and it would therefore be helpful for us to have a clear understanding of the problem that we are trying to address through that legislation.

In demonstrating variability in quality in the independent sector, Ken Muir cited examples of inspections that have been carried out. Frankly, the same argument could be made about the state sector, where GTCS registration is required.

I think that it would be good for us as a committee, particularly as there has been no formal consultation on the proposals, to get our heads round where those proposals come from and where the problem lies—a problem that people feel needs to be addressed. I fully accept that that question is more for the minister than for you, Mr Muir.

There is an organic process, involving schools themselves as well as individuals, of recognising that, in many instances, there is a benefit from being GTCS registered. Therefore, how have people reached the point of saying, “Up with this we shall not put any longer”, and of asking us to make registration compulsory across the board?

12:15

Ken Muir: You are quite right in stating that the question is probably best directed at ministers, but I can give you my best shot at an answer.

One of the things that has happened in the past decade in Scottish education generally—in fact, not just in Scotland but around the world—has been the increase in expectations of what the education system will deliver, irrespective of whether that is in the independent sector or the state sector.

There is greater recognition that teachers are having to deal with more complex situations in schools—for example, there are different types of youngsters coming into schools. The fast-changing expectations of the education system require teachers constantly to refresh and review their knowledge, understanding and skills.

I suggest that the legislation has been introduced on the back of that recognition that teachers, who are expected to deliver high-quality teaching for the Scottish education system as a

whole and for all the individual sectors that make up that system, require some kind of infrastructure through which they can be supported. As I have tried to suggest, registration provides part of that infrastructure, and the professional update process provides that guarantee to the users of the system that teachers are taking that seriously, and developing their professionalism seriously.

Liam McArthur: That proposition is not necessarily an unreasonable one. However, as Siobhan McMahon suggested, to an extent it conflicts with the recommendations of the Wood commission on the need to expand the availability of expertise and to allow schools—in the state sector and, I suspect, in the independent sector—to draw on a wider range of expertise.

Ken Muir: Yes, and I made the point earlier that we in the GTCS are in that different world, too. We have had registration requirements in the past that the GTCS and its governing council recognise need to be reviewed. We are going through that process just now.

It just so happens that the proposals in the bill are aligned with what our governing council has already recognised needs to happen. We need to look at a wider range of routes and greater flexibility to allow teachers to become registered. That is where we are, and such proposals may very well form the outcomes of the working group’s considerations in respect of registration in the independent sector.

Liam McArthur: Having unfairly asked you a question that probably should instead be directed at the minister, I think it would be fair to acknowledge that, on a local basis, there appear to me to be improvements in the way in which GTCS deals with applications that were not evident four or five years ago.

Nevertheless, going back to the point that there has been no formal consultation on the proposals, we are now seeing what appear to be constructive discussions taking place with the SCIS—and possibly with individual schools—about how to make the legislation work in a pragmatic fashion.

However, in a Parliament that prides itself on its pre-legislative scrutiny and consultation—in fact, that scrutiny and consultation are required because we do not have a revising chamber—those discussions serve only to underscore how regrettable it is that we have found ourselves in this situation, with an aspect of the bill not put through that process before the bill was introduced. That leaves you trying retrospectively to come up with solutions that do not undermine the quality of education provision in the independent sector.

Ken Muir: That is for folk on the other side of the table to take forward, but I think that members

of the committee should be reassured by the constructive work that is being done by the working group and by the GTCS governing council to facilitate registration. We are increasing flexibility, which we recognise is a requirement, but we should also maintain a set of standards that the Education and Culture Committee, the users of the system and the public at large expect from teachers standing in front of children in Scottish classrooms.

We are carrying out a very careful balancing act at the moment, but I think that we are doing so successfully, very constructively and in strong partnership with key players. Given that there has been no formal consultation process, I can reassure committee members that we are working hard at our end to make this work.

Liam McArthur: It would be interesting to find out whether, even with the lack of a formal consultation, the proposals came entirely out of left field or whether there had been indications that something was afoot. If we are looking at a transition period of two years—or even, as has been argued, of up to three years—it will be more difficult to achieve what needs to be achieved in that timeframe because we are starting the process without a formal consultation having fleshed out some of the concerns and identified solutions to them.

Nicola Dudley: It is fair to say that this did not come as a surprise; we kind of saw it coming, but the timeframe was unknown. As I have said, we have been working towards full registration on the understanding that, where possible, registration can be acquired.

As Ken Muir has made clear, we have recently had positive and constructive discussions about the ways forward, and we urge that any moves be realistic, practical and proportionate with regard to the nature of the teachers concerned. For example, as far as the transition period is concerned, we should not only consider the timeframe for the current workforce but keep an eye on future recruitment and ensure that it is possible to appoint someone who does not have GTCS registration, subject to their being registered. If that does not happen, it will limit the pool from which a school that is looking further afield can employ. I note that with regard to the SSSC, for example, someone who is appointed can have six months to register, subject to their having spent three years acquiring the necessary qualifications or standard. Such discussions need to take place to ensure that recruitment is not stunted when the legislation comes in.

We have already mentioned the range of provision in our schools and the need to ensure that none of that is lost as a result of the changes, and that is where we need some clarity with

regard to teachers. Anyone who supports and enhances the breadth and flexibility of programmes in schools, or otherwise enriches them, should not be subject to registration, if that is not appropriate, so that we can ensure that there is no reduction in those programmes.

With that in mind, I also stress that, regardless of the role that anyone plays in a school, child protection is of utmost importance, and rigorous procedures must be in place in line with national guidance. That situation must not change; no matter whether a person is a registered teacher, everyone must go through the appropriate PVG and Disclosure Scotland checks.

The Convener: Before I move on, I believe that Gordon MacDonald has a very brief supplementary on this specific issue.

Gordon MacDonald: I am struggling to understand the difficulties here. We have nearly 51,000 full-time equivalent teachers in Scotland, 90 per cent of teachers in the independent school sector are registered with the GTCS and, as Nicola Dudley has said, there has already been a 15-year transitional period.

This morning, I looked at a UK Government webpage entitled “Qualified teacher status: qualify to teach in England”. It says:

“Teachers who trained in either Scotland or Northern Ireland must obtain”

qualified teacher status

“to take up a teaching post”.

With regard to EU nationals, the webpage says:

“If an EEA member state recognises you as a qualified school teacher you can apply for QTS in England”,

pointing out that

“It may take up to 4 months to process your application.”

Is there any jurisdiction either in the UK or in Europe that does not have minimum registration standards that an individual must meet to be able to teach?

Ken Muir: Not that I am aware of.

The Convener: I think that that answers your question, Gordon.

Chic Brodie: Good morning—or good afternoon, as it is now. Before I ask about the transitional arrangements, I have a question for Mr Grant. We all have friends in England whose sons or daughters attended university here. When they graduated they, like you, were passionate about Scotland and went on to do teacher training and got the General Teaching Council for Scotland to allow them to teach. Those are English students who have come to Scotland. How does that sit

with your view that the recommendation is politically motivated and very anti-English?

Rod Grant: I am not saying that it is politically motivated or anti-English; I am saying that it is extraordinarily difficult for teachers who are outwith the Scottish borders.

Chic Brodie: I am sorry, but you wrote it. Your submission states that the change

“would appear to be politically motivated and very anti English”.

I think that that says more about you than it does about what we are talking about.

Rod Grant: No, not at all.

Chic Brodie: Right. Given the costs that might be involved, is there a concern that smaller independent schools might not be able to operate? How do you view that?

Nicola Dudley: Some small special schools have just four to eight teachers. If a significant number are unregistered, and if the options do not allow a smooth registration process, meaning that people have to undertake further qualifications, significant commitments will be required in terms of cost and time from both the school and the individual. If that is a continuing pattern, such a school would struggle with future recruitment, given its size. Larger schools also contain unregistered teachers who may need to undertake further qualifications. Where there are significant numbers, a transitional period of two years to allow that to happen would be tight, given the need to spread the time and cost.

Chic Brodie: Dr Hovde, what is your view?

Dr Hovde: About 10 of our teachers are registered. They are from Scotland and are local. It is fantastic if we can pick up local teachers. As an international school, we try to have a fairly diverse staff to match our diverse student body.

We are trying to figure out how we will operate under the bill, and we are looking for avenues to do that. As in the Moray case, we can take advantage of expatriate teachers in the area who have already worked in international schools and would like to work with us. In some cases, we may have an emergency opening because of increased enrolment or something like that—

Chic Brodie: Sorry to interrupt. You say that you would love to pick up local, presumably GTCS-registered teachers. What is the difficulty in doing that?

Dr Hovde: I guess we are just a little different, so we do not get a huge number of applicants, certainly in the secondary school. I am not talking about the quality of the teachers; I am just talking about the number of applicants, especially for

maths and sciences. At secondary level, we get very few applicants throughout the EU.

Chic Brodie: Do we know why people are not applying?

Dr Hovde: There are just not enough applicants.

Nicola Dudley: Chic Brodie asked about smaller schools. Another example is the Steiner model, because a significant number of teachers in those schools will not be registered. Many will have the Steiner qualification, which is not currently recognised by the GTCS. It is hoped that it will be considered appropriate to include a supporting category for Steiner teachers, as that would enable them to register, meet the requirements of the bill and continue within Steiner education. It has an internationally recognised curriculum. That is an example of where the bill will have a significant impact on smaller schools unless a route is found to enable those teachers to register.

Chic Brodie: Okay. I have a final question for Ken Muir. You say that conversations are going ahead, but what role is the Scottish Government playing in discussions between you and the other parties?

12:30

Ken Muir: We regularly meet Scottish Government officials to provide them with an update on the work of the General Teaching Council for Scotland, so they are aware of the decisions that have been taken at council. Scottish Government observers who sit on our council are aware of our review of our registration requirements. As chief executive, I report back to them quarterly at council on the review, so we are directly linked in with Scottish Government policy colleagues to take matters forward.

The sorts of things that Daniel Hovde and Nicola Dudley in particular have talked about are part of what I see as feasible transitional arrangements, whether that involves awarding some kind of provisional, conditional registration or providing an opportunity to undertake top-up training.

On the timescale that might be required, I agree that two years is probably too tight. Three years is probably a better timescale to introduce the transitional arrangements.

Gordon MacDonald: Most of what we were going to discuss has already been covered, but I want to go back to what Nicola Dudley said about concerns about smaller schools not being able to operate. She gave the example of Steiner schools. Will you highlight what the difficulties are or what the problem is with teachers who have the Steiner

qualification? Why are they not recognised by the GTCS?

Nicola Dudley: That is a question that the GTCS would have to answer.

Gordon MacDonald: Yes, but there is obviously a perception from your side.

Nicola Dudley: I spoke to the Edinburgh Steiner school recently. The majority of teachers there are not registered, but most of them have the qualification. If they do not have it, I think that there would be willingness to undertake it. It meets their needs. Even the curriculum subjects would not fit into GTCS subject categories as individual categories. That is just the nature of the curriculum. That is an example that involves individual recognition.

On the other side, I should say that, although we support the steps that are being taken to meet the needs of individual groups, on the whole, we encourage full recognition and unconditional registration with the GTCS for the majority of teachers. Otherwise, transfers and transitions between schools will be limited, which is not in the interests of the individuals' careers or the employers. On the whole, we would push for routes that allow for full, unconditional registration with the acceptance that, in a couple of individual cases, individual categories are the most appropriate option.

Ken Muir: We support that. That is very much the direction of travel that the GTCS council wants to go down. We do not want to restrict registration and we certainly do not see it as a means of teachers who deliver well in schools losing their jobs as a result of what is in the bill, as I said earlier. The greater flexibility that we are already showing and which Mr McArthur suggested that he sees at the sharp end is very much what we want. Ultimately, we want to encourage full registration for everyone who teaches in the independent sector.

Colin Beattie: I want to consider the definition of a teacher and the issues around that. The Scottish Government suggests that

"a teacher is anybody who is employed to teach in a school and has the appropriate professional skills and knowledge necessary to enable them to undertake the teaching duties allocated to them."

Is everyone clear about what a teacher is and who is and is not covered? That seems a simple question, but it looks as if a definition could be an issue.

Ken Muir: Nicola Dudley touched on that. It is interesting that, as part of our review of our registration requirements, we have been approached by instrumental music instructors who are actively seeking registration with the GTCS.

We know that there are around 750 of them across Scotland and that there are instructors in the independent sector who are not teachers. That distinction is important in the state sector because they are on different salary scales. Therefore, there is an issue to do with the definition.

Our understanding is that a teacher is someone who delivers a formal curriculum or an element of it. There are teachers in the state sector and particularly in the independent sector who offer extra-curricular activities and perhaps have job titles other than "teacher". A bit of clarity is therefore required on the definition of a teacher and to whom the bill will apply.

It is interesting that the bill has come at a time when instrumental music instructors are asking us for voluntary registration because they recognise, as many of their headteachers in the state sector do, that they often engage on a one-to-one basis with children and young people in schools. They are seeking the sanctuary and reassurance that registration can almost be said to bring, both for them as professionals and as a guarantee to the public.

It is clear that, if a teacher is subject to misconduct proceedings or is removed from the register for incompetence, one of the big advantages and benefits of registration is that the individual cannot go to another school in Scotland, south of the border or anywhere else in the world where there is a teaching council because they will be in our records as having been removed. That is a benefit and guarantee to the users of the system.

Colin Beattie: I am a wee bit concerned that your definition is a bit different from the Government's. You are talking about delivering a curriculum or part of a curriculum; the Government is talking about someone who is employed to teach and who has the professional skills and knowledge.

Ken Muir: Yes. Professional skills and knowledge are a prerequisite for a teacher to be defined as such. I do not think that there is any doubt about that, and that is one of the reasons why we have the registration requirements that we have. Teachers have a degree or equivalent, and they have a teaching qualification. In secondary teaching, the subject that they are qualified in and that they have their degree in broadly matches the curriculum that they deliver in school. I do not think that we are at odds on the description.

Colin Beattie: It just sounds as if you have added a wee bit on—that is all.

Ken Muir: I am making a distinction with what I recognise as an issue in the independent sector, in that some teachers are perhaps not delivering a formal curriculum—they may be largely delivering

caring or extracurricular activities without being part of a more formal curriculum as it is traditionally understood.

Colin Beattie: What about those who are coming up to retirement? Are you thinking about exemptions for them?

Ken Muir: That is an interesting point. In the working group, we have discussed how we might limit registration to a particular school or sector. As Nicola Dudley said, that would not suit younger teachers who are coming into the independent sector who might at some point in the future consider going into the state sector.

There might not be one particular answer to the issue of transitional arrangements. A recipe or menu of features will probably have to be put in place. We might create a category of registration that limits a teacher who comes to teach in Daniel Hovde's international school to teaching only in that school. There are a number of creative ways in which we can adjust and revise the register by creating new categories to fit teachers who are coming closer to retirement and who are unlikely to move out of the school where they are teaching now, as well as to meet the needs of young teachers coming into the independent sector who might wish to keep as open a field as possible for their future career.

Colin Beattie: It has been mentioned a few times that the number of teachers who are affected is very small. The figure that I have in front of me is 265. Do you recognise that figure?

Ken Muir: I recognise the figure, although I am not sure that we have an accurate handle on just how many teachers will be affected. The figure is of that order—it is a relatively small number in comparison with the number of teachers who are already registered.

Colin Beattie: It is.

Will the bill apply to staff in independent sector nurseries?

Nicola Dudley: All nurseries have a number of registered teachers, which will depend on the size of the nursery, along with nursery support staff. Nursery support staff are registered with the Scottish Social Services Council. When teachers are in employment in nurseries, we would expect them to be GTCS registered. On the whole, they are registered at present. That is certainly not a category that has been brought up in discussions with schools recently.

As for getting a clearer idea of the numbers that we are talking about, SCIS represents 72 member schools, but there are 100 independent schools in Scotland, so there is a group that we at SCIS do not have a handle on when it comes to the registration of teachers. Among the 72 SCIS

schools, there are 52 mainstream schools and 20 special schools.

The Convener: Is the estimated number to which Colin Beattie referred of teachers who may be impacted by the bill roughly accurate? Do you recognise it?

Nicola Dudley: Yes. We have been trying to get a handle on the exact numbers. Roughly 10 to 15 per cent are still unregistered. There are people who are going through registration now that they know that it is coming in, so the number will probably reduce gradually once people are clear about where they stand with registration.

The Convener: Ken Muir said that roughly 90 per cent are registered. I presume that some of the 10 per cent who are left have the appropriate qualifications and just have not registered, and some others may have a bit of work to do but could be registered relatively easily. I am asking about the people who are left. What percentage of that 10 per cent is there really some difficulty with?

Nicola Dudley: It is about half. There are about 100 to 150 people who do not have a qualification, partly for historical reasons. They have not required it and they have been in teaching for many years. With any luck, however, the positive and instructive discussions that we have had and the options that we have been discussing will provide routes for the majority of them. There certainly seem to be options out there.

Another issue is the accreditation of programmes that people can go through. An example is the PGCE that the University of Buckingham offers. There are about 20 staff in independent schools with that qualification and a number who want to commit to it. If that was accredited, it would immediately cater for that group.

The Convener: Does Mark Griffin have a question?

Mark Griffin: It has been covered.

The Convener: I will finish on a question that goes back to the point that was made about consultation or no consultation. It is about the discussions that seem to be taking place, probably in the working group. I imagine that the question is not for Ken Muir but for the other three witnesses.

Are you now more comfortable with the discussions—Ken Muir mentioned some of them—about registration that would allow somebody to work only in Dr Hovde's school, in the independent sector or in a specialist school such as a Steiner school? I know that the options have not been finalised yet, but are you comfortable with the bill going through as long as they are bottomed out and agreed?

Nicola Dudley: Yes, as long as the concerns about the processes, the length of time that it takes to go through the paperwork that is involved and the time-consuming nature of some of the processes can be ironed out. We still have concerns that some of the options have a level of complexity and could be simplified but, on the whole, we feel more comfortable and reassured by the messages that we are getting.

We must remember that at the heart of the issue is the professionalism of teachers, which we should not question. They are dedicated professional staff with a lot of support behind them from the schools.

Dr Hovde: Having heard the numbers that are not registered, it seems to me that most of them are in my school. [*Laughter.*] I stated that there are not enough teachers who are interested in applying to our school. We have a great school and a great place to live, but not enough teachers are interested in teaching in an international school and teaching our curriculum. A lot of times, we look a bit odd to local teachers. They do not know what we are all about. When we get one, they stay a long time.

The vast majority of our teachers—60 per cent or more—are international teachers. They are here for five to seven years and then they move on to their next assignment in another country. They have learned that they like international education and the variety that it brings, and they have made a life out of that. We are looking for a way to keep our school open and meet the idea that the bill is putting forward, but in such a way that we can continue to bring in teachers from around the world to bring diversity for our diverse student body and to teach our unique curriculum.

Rod Grant: I just want the registration process to be simple. I am not against registration—far from it—but I am against the process and structures that are put in place.

Nicola Dudley's point is good. For many teachers, it feels as if their professionalism is being questioned. If a teacher has been teaching for 20 years in three or four different countries, has worked as a university lecturer and is regarded as a world expert in a certain field, but they find difficulty in being registered, that is unfortunate.

The Convener: Does Ken Muir want to comment on that?

Ken Muir: As I said, the example that Rod Grant gave you is unfortunate. We can always pick out individuals who have had difficulty in registration. As I hope I have made clear, not all of that—for examples, the delays that can sometimes take place—is necessarily at the door of the GTCS.

I am confident that we have worked constructively to meet what we think are the requirements of the transitional arrangements and arrive at full registration. That might involve developing different categories. We are very much up for it in the GTCS council and we see no major impediments to the proposals in the bill being taken forward for independent schools—and indeed grant-aided schools. We have not mentioned them much, but the vast majority of teachers in those schools—all bar two, I think—are already registered with us.

The Convener: That is probably why the subject did not come up. We were aware of that.

I thank all of you for coming along. We appreciate your time, as always. At next week's meeting, we will conclude our oral evidence sessions on the bill. We will speak to local authority representatives and the minister.

Meeting closed at 12:45.

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