

EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 9 November 2004

Session 2

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EUROPEAN AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

18th Meeting 2004, Session 2

CONVENER

*Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind)

*Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP)

*Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con)

*Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab)

*Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

*Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab)

Mr Keith Raffan (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Richard Lochhead (North East Scotland) (SNP)

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Philip MacHugh

Malcolm Maclean (Pròiseact nan Ealan)

Alasdair Macleod (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Stephen Imrie

ASSISTANT CLERKS

Nick Hawthorne

David Simpson

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament

European and External Relations Committee

Tuesday 9 November 2004

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 14:00]

Promoting Scotland Worldwide Inquiry

The Convener (Mr John Swinney): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the 18th meeting this year of the European and External Relations Committee. We have received apologies from Keith Raffan, but I have received no notification that a substitute member will attend.

The first item on the agenda is the continuation of our promoting Scotland inquiry, which is examining the external relations policy, strategy and activities of the Scottish Executive. We have one panel of witnesses today. It is my pleasure to welcome Malcolm Maclean, who is the director of Pròiseact nan Ealan, the national Gaelic arts agency. We also have Alasdair Macleod, who is from the Western Isles Council, or Comhairle nan Eilean Siar—Alasdair Morrison will correct me if my pronunciation is wrong—and Philip MacHugh, who is a freelance broadcaster. You are all very welcome, gentlemen.

I invite you to make brief opening remarks to the committee to introduce yourselves and to say a little about the organisations and issues that you represent. I understand that each of our witnesses will address us in Gaelic. Headsets are available for translation purposes and members' consoles are preset to channel 2 for the translation. I am told that members of the public have a hand device that should be preset to channel 2.

Malcolm Maclean (Pròiseact nan Ealan): Is mise Calum MacGill Eain. Tha mi nam stiùiriche air Pròiseact nan Ealan, a tha na phròiseact a tha air a bhith ag obair fad 15 bliadhna às leth nan ealan Gàidhlig gus an leasachadh air feadh Alba agus aig ìre eadar-nàiseanta. Tha ùidh mhòr againn anns a' chuspair seo. Mar sin, tha sinn toilichte dha-rìribh an cothrom fhaighinn a bhith a' fosgladh a-mach tuilleadh còmhraidh mu dheidhinn. Le tuigse gur beag an tìde a bhios againn an-diugh, le triùir luchd-fianais mu choinneamh na comataidh, tha mi deònach a' chuid eile a tha agam ri ràdh a chantainn anns a' Bheurla.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I am Malcolm Maclean, the director of the Gaelic arts agency, which for 15 years has worked on behalf of the Gaelic arts throughout Scotland and at international level. We have a great interest in the topic of the inquiry, and are happy to be here to open out the debate. Given that there is so little time today and that there are three witnesses in front of the committee, I am happy to say what I have to say for the rest of the meeting in English.

Alasdair Macleod (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar): Feasgar math agus tapadh leibh airson a' cuiridh fianais a thoirt seachad dhan chomataidh. Is mise Alasdair MacLeòid agus tha mi a' riochdachadh Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Mar oifigear-leasachaidh Gàidhlig, tha mi ag obair am broinn sgioba Gàidhlig na comhairle. Is e a' phrìomh obair agam a bhith a' leasachadh agus a' brosnachadh a' chànan taobh a-staigh na chomhairle agus dèiligeadh le buidhnean Gàidhlig eile.

Bhon a chaidh Comhairle nan Eilean Siar a stèidheachadh ann an 1974, tha a' chomhairle air a bhith uabhasach taiceil dhan Ghàidhlig an iomadach dòigh. Tha a' chomhairle mothachail gur e coimhearsnachd Ghàidhlig a tha anns na h-Eileanan Siar. Mar sin, tha sinn a' toirt taic dha iomadach buidheann ann an iomadach dòigh, ach gu h-àraid gu foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha sinn a' faicinn gum bi foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig uabhasach cudthromach anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.

Tha a' chomataidh a' dèiligeadh an-diugh ri cuspairean mar thurasachd agus brosnachadh turasachd thall thairis. Tha turasachd a' toirt buannachd mhòr do eaconomaidh nan Eilean Siar. Tha e a' toirt a-steach timcheall air £40 millean gach bliadhna. Anns na beachdan a chuir mi a-steach, thuirt mi gu bheil sinn a' faicinn gu bheil turasachd a' toirt buannachd mhòr chan ann a-mhàin dha na h-eileanan ach a dh'Alba gu lèir. Tha sinn deònach beachdachadh mu dheidhinn dòighean eadar-dhealaichte a chumas sinn sin a' dol anns na bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Good afternoon everyone, and thank you for the invitation to be a witness at the committee. I am Alasdair Macleod, and I represent the Western Isles Council. I am a Gaelic development officer with the council, and I work with a Gaelic team. My main occupation is to develop and encourage the use of the Gaelic language, and to deal with other Gaelic bodies.

The Western Isles Council was established in 1974, and has since then been supportive of Gaelic in many ways—it realises that there is a Gaelic community in the Western Isles. We give support to many bodies, especially through Gaelic-medium education, which we view as being very important.

The committee is dealing with topics such as tourism and encouraging tourism from overseas. Tourism brings many benefits to the economy of the Western Isles. It brings in about £40 million a year, which does much for the economy. As I said in my written submission, tourism brings benefits not only to the islands, but to the whole of Scotland, and we are willing to think of and debate different ways of keeping that going in the years to come.

Philip MacHugh: Is mise Philip MacÙisdean. Tha mi nam phresenter aig a' BhBC, a' dèanamh phrògraman cloinne ann an Gàidhlig agus ann am Beurla. Rugadh mi an Glaschu agus dh'ionnsaich mi Gàidhlig anns a' bhun-sgoil an sin tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Rinn mi Gàidhlig aig an àrd-ìre san àrd-sgoil Hillpark faisg air Glaschu. Tha mi air a bhith ag obair airson Bòrd Turasachd na h-Alba airson sia bliadhna, a' dèanamh promotions thall thairis air feadh an t-saoghail. Tha mi air a bhith anns an Roinn Eòrpa, ann an Iapan agus a-null ann an Ameireagaidh agus Barbados, a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig ri òigridh agus ris a h-uile duine eile aig fèisean mòra air feadh an t-saoghail.

Tha mi an seo an-diugh mar fhear òg a tha air saoghal Gàidhlig fhaicinn ann an Alba agus thall thairis agus is mise an duine as òige a tha an seo an-diugh. Tha mi air tòrr turasan fhaicinn air feadh an t-saoghail agus tha mi air a bhith a' gabhail pàirt ann am fèisean, ann am Pàrlamaid na h-Òigridh a tha a' tachairt a h-uile bliadhna agus ann an tachartasan eile fo Pròiseact nan Ealan. Ma tha ceistean sam bith agaibh, cuireadh sibh thugam iad.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I am Philip MacHugh. I present Gaelic programmes for the BBC, but I also work through the medium of English. I was born in and live in Glasgow, but I went through Gaelic-medium education and went on to do Gaelic at higher level. I have been working for the Scottish Tourist Board for many years doing promotions overseas. I have been in Japan, Barbados and Europe talking in Gaelic to young people and at festivals.

I am here today as a young person who has learned Gaelic and who has worked in Gaelic in Scotland and in Europe. I am the youngest person on the panel today and I would like to find out what the questions for today are. I have seen a lot of things happening throughout the world and have taken part in a lot of festivals throughout the world. I have also taken part in the Youth Parliament and events run by Pròiseact nan Ealan. If you have any questions about that, I would be happy to answer them.

The Convener: I thank Mr MacHugh and the other gentlemen for their opening speeches. I will begin the questions to all three witnesses. One

point that comes out clearly from the submissions that you have made and the discussions that a number of us had when we were in the United States of America last week is that a tremendous opportunity exists in cultural exchange and cultural tourism. The Republic of Ireland has marshalled that opportunity well and, to some extent, there are good examples of how that has been done from Scotland's perspective, particularly in relation to the Smithsonian festival, which is referred to in a number of submissions.

Is interest from outside Scotland the primary driving force for involvement of the organisations and individuals who are represented by the witnesses, or is the driving force a desire on the part of organisations in Scotland to ensure that we seize the initiative and promote our own distinctive cultural identity? Does the initiative come from here or from the United States or other marketplaces in which we are involved?

Malcolm Maclean: Pròiseact nan Ealan's impression from experience is that the initiative has usually been taken outwith Scotland, and Scotland has reacted to it. We are conscious of a more proactive role being played over recent years in events such as tartan day in the United States, which is not an event with which I am familiar. However, the Smithsonian festival, to which you referred, is an American initiative, and the other events overseas with which we have been involved—there have been numerous such events over the past 10 years—have consistently been initiated overseas. Interest comes from overseas and there is certainly a high level of interest that drives events forwards. However, once Scottish arts organisations and Scots in general become aware of the significance of the opportunity, they become more proactive. Our clear impression is that, generally speaking, initiatives until recently arose outside Scotland and we have responded to them.

Philip MacHugh: From my experience of going abroad as a performer as well as a broadcaster, it seems that if the initiative is taken in Scotland, it is usually by an outside organisation. For example, the tartan day trip to New York and down to Barbados was funded by Dewar's whisky. Obviously that is a Scottish brand, but it has international links in America. Other trips that I have been on have been funded primarily by organisations that are based in London, such as the British Council, or by multimillion pound organisations such as Johnnie Walker whisky and UDV Diageo. VisitScotland puts in some money for such trips, but not the money that takes large groups from the Western Isles or the Gaelic nation, or for anything to do with Scottish promotions.

Alasdair Macleod: Anns an aithisg a chuir mi a-steach dhan chomataidh, tha eisimpleir math de sin anns a' chuireadh à Korea a fhuair na h-Eileanan Siar bho chionn trì bliadhna air ais. Chan eil mi den bheachd gu bheil tòrr ann an Korea aig a bheil Gàidhlig, ach tha an eisimpleir sin a' sealltainn gu bheil ùidh aig daoine air feadh an t-saoghail anns a' chànan. Aon rud a bha cudthromach dhan chomhairle mu dheidhinn a' chuiridh a thàinig thugainn bho thaobh eile an t-saoghail, b' e gun robh iad deònach pàigheadh airson toirt còrr air 20 duine—cluicheadairean, seinneadairean agus dannsairean—thall thairis, dha eilean Jeju. Chòrd an turas rinn gu dearbh agus chòrd e ris na daoine a bha an làthair. Sheas an fhèis fad trì seachdainean agus bha faisg air 250,000 duine an làthair. Bha sinne a' cleachdadh a' chànan againn fhìn, bha ceòl na pìoba, dannsairean agus seinneadairean ann, agus bha e dìreach a' cur iongnadh oirnn cho tarraingeach 's a bha sin.

Nise, tha an £40 millean a tha turasachd a' toirt a-steach dhan eaconomaidh againn na bhuannachd mhòr, ach chan eil mi a' smaoineachadh gu bheil sinn air a bhith a' dèanamh feum gu leòr de chleachdadh a' chànan agus a' chiùil thall thairis tro na bliadhnaichean. Ach chan eil sin ag ràdh nach urrainn dhuinn a dhèanamh anns an bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

In the submission that I made to the committee there is a good example from the Western Isles. About three years ago we got an invitation from Korea. I do not think that many people in Korea speak Gaelic, but the example shows that people throughout the world have an interest in the language. That invitation came from the other side of the world. It is not just that we got the invitation—what was more important to the Western Isles Council was that Korea was willing to pay for more than 20 people to go abroad. We enjoyed immensely the three weeks that we spent on the island of Jeju in Korea and the people there enjoyed the festival, which lasted three weeks. There were almost 250,000 people in attendance. We used our own language, we had dancers, the pipes and so on and we were amazed at how much people enjoyed that.

There is £40 million coming into our economy every year, which is of great benefit, but I do not think that we do enough to use the language overseas. However, that does not mean to say that we cannot do so in the years to come.

The Convener: Mr Maclean mentioned that he feels that we are now moving from being reactive to being more proactive. What practical steps would assist you in the wider promotion of the Gaelic language as part of the wider promotion of

Scotland? What steps could the Executive take to enhance the initiatives that you are all involved in, either at organisational or individual level?

Malcolm Maclean: From our point of view, several things would be of assistance, the most fundamental of which would be clarification of the support systems that are available to organisations or individuals in relation to working overseas. There are established organisations, such as the British Council, that do very good work and with which we have worked closely in several different countries. However, by and large, the British Council's way of operating is that the lead is taken by the country and funding for events comes from the British Council office in the host nation. In some cases, that can make for complications.

We are not aware of a clearly established system within Scotland for those who seek support, whether funding or other forms of support. Clarification of that would be of benefit.

In practical terms, the Executive could do a variety of things at the simplest level; for example, there is a big issue surrounding the visibility that the Executive is willing to accord Gaelic. Greater visibility of Gaelic—in printed and other forms of publicity material—normalises it and introduces it to situations in a way that is unobtrusive, for want of a better word, while acknowledging it and registering its presence. That would be of benefit to Gaelic. However, I appreciate that the Executive is addressing a bigger issue in the context of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill.

There is a variety of practical ways in which support could be provided to arts and other organisations that are involved in events overseas. Where an event is recognised as having potential, we should be in a position to provide material and support of one sort or another so that we can capitalise on the event to the benefit of tourism or to promote Scottish industry. All too often, there is no such back-up for the events in which we are involved overseas and connections such as I have described tend not to be made. There is an increasing will for that to happen, but at the moment there are no clear practical mechanisms for ensuring that it does.

14:15

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): Have you had any connection with the European Commission's and the European Parliament's programmes to support the development of, and to promote, minority languages across Europe? There is a network and people are keen to involve those from Scandinavian countries, Scotland and elsewhere who want to keep minority languages active in their communities and to take them

abroad. Have any of you had practical involvement with the network or received budgetary assistance?

Malcolm Maclean: We have had a variety of engagements with the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages. We have sent staff on the study tours that the bureau organises and have participated in a number of its events. Until very recently, the bureau had no resources for project funding, so the extent to which it could provide funding support was limited. We have been far more successful in accessing funding from mainstream European Union schemes, in direct competition with majority as well as minority languages. We have enjoyed remarkable success on that score.

The network to which Irene Oldfather refers is very important in this context, because it is extensive and very active. A high level of discussion between Europe's minority languages takes place on an on-going and regular basis. Six weeks ago, I was invited to speak at a two-day symposium on European cultural policy, which was chaired by the president of Catalunya. That was one of a series of events over the past year at which issues of language that are of major interest across Europe and are rapidly moving up the European agenda were addressed from a variety of perspectives. Gaelic is of serious interest, because Britain is seen as having one of the major languages of Europe. The extent to which Britain—and Scotland—deals or fails to deal with such issues is of interest to other countries.

Irene Oldfather: It seems to me that there would be major interest in the procedures that are used to teach the Gaelic language, such as immersion teaching. Much could be learned throughout Europe from initiatives that we have taken in Scotland.

Malcolm Maclean: Yes, a great deal of sharing of information and experience is taking place, and we have learned a great deal from Europe.

Alasdair Macleod: Thig sin air ais gu cuspair co-cheangailte, a tha a' crochadh air a' cheist a chaidh fhaighneachd o chionn mionaid mu dheidhinn ionmhas. Sin an trioblaid as motha a tha aig a' chomhairle agus aig buidhnean Gàidhlig eile air feadh Alba. Bidh iartasan a' tighinn a-steach thugainn bho bhuidhnean beaga agus buidhnean mòra a tha ag iarraidh a dhol thall thairis, airson buannachd dhaibh fhèin agus buannachd dhan choimhearsnachd. Ach, mar a tha thuirt Calum MacGill Eain, gu math tric tha e duilich an t-airgead a lorg. Chan eil airgead gu leòr aig comhairle sam bith ann an Alba, tha mi cinnteach, ach tha e duilich a bhith a' lorg a-mach dòighean anns an cuidich sinn na buidhnean sin. Bhiodh e na b' fhasa dhan a h-uile buidheann nan robh barrachd stiùireadh againn bhon Riaghaltas fhèin

agus nam biodh fhios againn gum b' urrainn dhuinn cantainn riutha, "Uill, bu choir dhuibh a dhol an siud no bu choir dhuibh a dhol an seo, agus bidh taic airgid agaibh."

Air cuspair na Roinn Eòrpa, bha e na b' fhasa airgead Eòrpach fhaighinn bho chionn dhà no trì bliadhnaichean, ach tha sinn air cur a-steach airson taic airgid airson pròiseact no dhà thairis air na trì bliadhnaichean a chaidh seachad agus tha e a' fàs nas duilghe agus nas duilghe fad na tìde. Chan eil e furasta idir.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I return to the question about funding. That is the biggest problem that Western Isles Council and Gaelic bodies throughout Scotland have. Requests often come in from small and big groups that are asking to work overseas to benefit themselves and the community; however, as Malcolm Maclean says, it is difficult to find out about funding for such things. No council in Scotland has enough money and it is difficult for us to find ways in which we can help them. It would be easier for every group if we had more direction from the Executive and knew that we could tell a group where it ought to go for funding.

On the question of Europe, going back a few years, it was easier to get money from Europe. We have asked for financial support over the past few years and it is getting more and more difficult to get it—it is not easy at all.

Philip MacHugh: I was at the Gaelic-medium primary school in Glasgow. Gaelic-medium education is a great thing, as it gives people wider opportunities to do things culturally and language-wise here in Scotland and worldwide, which is what we are talking about. One thing that has been fantastic for me is the links that we set up with Ireland through Pròiseact nan Ealan. We need cultural exchanges with Ireland in primary 7 and all the way up to secondary 3. The education was funded by our families—it was something that we had to pay for. In the long run it was good to do, but it would have been fantastic to have had support from various bodies, which was not there at the time. It might be there now, but it was not there at the time. I know that exchanges are still linked with Ireland.

We tried to make a connection between Glasgow and Kentucky—we went there for two weeks—but that was done through Gaelic-medium education, not through the normal school curriculum. We were given that privilege and it was good for us to do that, but it was funded by us and our parents, not by any committee or organisation.

Dennis Canavan (Falkirk West) (Ind): My question is directed specifically to Mr Alasdair

Macleod, but if any of the other witnesses want to answer, I would welcome that.

In your written submission to the committee you are pretty scathing in your criticism of the Scottish Executive. For example, you state:

"It is difficult to be objective about the role of the Scottish Executive in exploiting Gaelic culture as a means of promoting Scotland abroad because the Executive has not really been involved in this arena to any great extent as far as Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is aware."

That contrasts with the very positive remarks that you make about the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, especially about Brian Wilson MP, whom you mention twice as having assisted in giving financial grant to enable participation in the world festival for island cultures. Would you go as far as to say that the London-based Foreign and Commonwealth Office is more supportive of international promotion of Gaelic culture than the Scottish Executive?

Alasdair Macleod: Chan eil a' cheist furasta a fhreagairt. Mar a thuirt mi anns an aithisg a chuir mi thugaibh, chan eil tòrr eòlais aig a' chomhairle a bhith a' dol thall thairis, ach sin aon eisimpleir far an d' fhuair sinn taic. Tha mi a' creidsinn gu bheil an rannsachadh seo a' dol air adhart air sgàth gu bheil Riaghaltas na h-Alba ag iarraidh atharrachaidhean a thoirt a-steach agus air sgàth gu bheil e ag iarraidh a bhith nas taiceil dha pròiseactan a tha a' dèanamh ceangal eadar sinn fhìn agus na dùthchannan thall thairis. Nuair a gheibh sinn cuireadh a dhol an siud no a dhol an seo anns na bliadhnaichean a tha a' tighinn, tha mi 'n dòchas gum bi Riaghaltas na h-Alba taiceil nuair is buannachd dhuinn agus do dh'Alba.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Thank you for the question, which is not easy to answer. As I say in my submission, the council is not used to going abroad, but that is an area in which we got support. I believe that the inquiry is taking place because the Scottish Executive wants to introduce changes and become more supportive of the projects that are making links between us and lands overseas. We hope that, in the years to come, when we are invited to go somewhere that will be of benefit to us, the Scottish Executive will be supportive.

Dennis Canavan: Yes, but did you ask the Scottish Executive for assistance specifically for participation in the 2001 festival in South Korea? The Scottish Executive and the Scottish Parliament were up and running at that time. If you did ask the Scottish Executive for assistance, what response did you receive?

Alasdair Macleod: Feumaidh mi aideachadh nach eil mi cinnteach an deach iarrtas dìreach thuca. Bha ùidh mhòr aig Brian MacUilleim anns a' phròiseact air sgàth na h-obrach a bha e fhèin a'

dèanamh aig an àm aig Riaghaltas Lunnainn. Chan urrainn dhomh a bhith cinnteach an deach iarrtas a-steach, ach aig deireadh an latha is ann bho Bhrian MacUilleim a thàinig an taic.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I admit that I am not sure whether a request was submitted. Brian Wilson had a great interest in the project as a result of his work at Westminster at the time, but I am not sure whether a request for money was made. However, at the end of the day, the support came from Brian Wilson.

Dennis Canavan: Will Western Isles Council make representations to the Scottish Executive for assistance for such events in the future?

Alasdair Macleod: Tha sinn an dòchas gun dèan an rannsachadh seo feum dhan chomhairle againn fhìn agus dha chomhairlean ionadail eile a tha ag iarraidh a dhol thall thairis airson pròiseactan mar am pròiseact anns an robh sinn fhìn co-cheangailte.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Yes, indeed. We hope that the inquiry will help people in our council or any other council who want to go abroad.

Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab): Faodaidh mi tòiseachadh le bhith a' toirt freagairt air feadhainn dhe na ceistean a chuir Philip MacUisdean o chionn mionaid mu dheidhinn nan ceanglaichean eadar Èirinn agus Alba. O chionn seachd bliadhna, chaidh ceanglaichean a chur air dòigh tro iomairt Chaluim Chille aig a h-uile ìre— aig ìre choimhearsnachd, sgoiltean agus oilthighean—agus tha tòrr nithean a-nis a' tachairt eadar sinn fhìn agus na h-Èireannaich, agus cuideachd aig ìre an Riaghaltais eadar ministearan.

Tha dà cheist agam dha na buidhnean a tha fo ar comhair. Ann am barail an luchd-fhianais, a bheil an roinn phoblach agus an roinn phrìobhaideach a' gabhail nan cothroman a dh'fhaodadh iad a ghabhail airson a bhith a' cleachdadh na Gàidhlig mar innleachd ann a bhith a' reic Alba? Mar eisimpleir, tha mi a' faicinn anns an fhianais sgriobhte aig Calum MacGill Eain— ann am paragraph 5 air duilleag 7, aig mullach na duilleig—gu bheil e ag ràdh nach eil tuigse ann agus nach eil soilleireachd gu leòr anns na buidhnean a thaobh ciamar a bu choir a' Ghàidhlig a bhith air a cleachdadh. Fiù 's anns an earrann far a bheil e ag ainmeachadh fèis an Smithsonian, tha e ag ràdh gun robh an t-eagal air buidhnean a' Ghàidhlig a chleachdadh mus cuireadh sin na h-Ameireaganaich ann an seòrsa de cheò. A-rithist, tha mi ag iarraidh barrachd tuigse air sin.

Bu toil leam cuideachd faighneachd dhan luchd-fhianais mu dheidhinn Alba Nuadh, an aon choimhearsnachd eile san t-saoghal far a bheil a'

Ghàidhlig fhathast ga cleachdadh agus air bilean dhaoine mar chiad chainnt. Gu mì-fhortanach, tha àireamhan an sin a' crìonadh gu mòr, ach a bheil sinne ann an Alba a' dèanamh gu leòr aig a h-uile ìre airson ceanglaichean ceart a dhèanamh le Alba Nuadh?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Thank you. I want to start by answering one or two questions, especially one that Philip MacHugh dealt with a wee while ago. About seven years ago, links were put in place by the Columba initiative at every level—in schools, communities and universities, and at Executive level with ministers.

Are the public sector or the private sector willing to consider Gaelic for selling Scotland? Malcolm Maclean's submission says that there is no understanding of, or evidence about, how Gaelic should be used—I refer to paragraph 5 on page 7 of the written submissions, which is at the top of the page. He names the Smithsonian's Scottish festival. Some groups were afraid to use Gaelic in case it would make the Americans faint.

I also want to ask about Nova Scotia, which is the other community in the world in which Gaelic is still spoken and used as a first language. Unfortunately, the numbers are fading fast. Are we doing enough in all areas of Scotland to make links with Nova Scotia?

Malcolm Maclean: As a board member of Iomairt Chòlm Chille—the Columba initiative—I welcome Mr Morrison's endorsement of the initiative's work. The initiative has done a remarkable job in normalising and renewing connections between Scotland and Ireland. We have certainly learned a great deal from it not only about our shared experience, but about the differences between Scotland and Ireland in relation to overseas promotion. There is a certain parallel-universe quality in respect of Scotland and Ireland in that context. Some aspects of the Irish situation appear to be similar, but if their surface is scratched, they are found not to be. Other aspects appear to be dissimilar, but if their surface is scratched, they are found to be identical. Over the past few years, a great deal has come out of the Columba initiative which has been to the mutual benefit of Scotland and Ireland.

Looking to Cape Breton and Canada, we have had significant involvement over a number of years with Cape Breton, particularly through the Ceòlas summer school in South Uist, which annually involves Cape Breton tutors in substantial numbers, and links have been built up with the Celtic Colours international festival in Cape Breton, with the Celtic music festival and exchanges that take place through that, which form other forms of cultural linkage. Although I feel

that the Scottish-Irish connection is in the process of being renewed in exciting ways, it is far less clear what is happening on the Canadian front. We know that there is remarkable interest in Gaelic in Canada and that that interest is not unique to Cape Breton, but extends throughout Canada. I am not aware, however, of any seriously focused attempt to build on that connection in the same way as the Columba initiative has been doing in Ireland.

14:30

Philip MacHugh: I am going to Nova Scotia next October, which is when its big festival takes place. The trip will be funded by a small Glasgow choir, which is fundraising right now to support the trip. The problem with that connection is that the two-week festival takes place at exactly the same time as Gaelic's biggest festival—the Royal National Mod, which is also in October. People tend to stay at home to support Gaelic culture here rather than attend the festival in Nova Scotia. Perhaps that problem will be sorted out in the long run, but we are certainly going over next year to support the Nova Scotia event.

Mr Morrison: Tha dà phuuing ghoirid agam. Cha d' fhuair mi freagairt air a' cheist mu dheidhinn bhuidhnean poblach a' cleachdadh na Gàidhlig, agus gu h-àraid air a' phuuing a tha Mgr MacGill Eain a' sgrìobhadh mu dheidhinn air duilleag 7.

Agus tha aon cheist eile a dh'ìochuimhnich mi fhaighneachd do Philip MacUisdean. Air duilleag 8, tha e a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn an latha a chosg e ann an New York—latha mòr an tartain—mar tè dhe na tursan bu mhiosa air an robh e a-riamh. Bu toil leam an toiseach mineachadh fhaighinn bho Mgr MacGill Eain, agus an uair sin freagairt bho Philip MacUisdean air carson a bha an turas sin cho uabhasach seach an iomadach turas air an robh e?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I have two short points to make. First, I did not get an answer to the question about public bodies using Gaelic, in particular the ones that Alasdair Macleod was speaking about.

I also have a question that I forgot to ask Philip MacHugh. On page 8 of his submission, he writes about the day that he spent in New York—tartan day—and says that it was one of the worst visits he has ever had. Will he please explain to us why that visit was so awful compared with other visits that he has made?

Alasdair Macleod: Feumaidh mi aideachadh nach eil ceanglaichean làidir aig Comhairle nan Eilean Siar ri Alba Nuadh. Chan ann tric a bhios sinn a' moladh comhairle eile, ach feumaidh mi aideachadh gu bheil ceanglaichean gu math làidir

aig Comhairle na Gaidhealtachd ri Alba Nuadh, agus chan eil adhbhar sam bith nach b' urrainn dhuinn tionndadh ri sin san àm a tha romhainn.

A' dol air ais dhan cheist mu dheidhinn dè mar a tha sinn a' cleachdadh a' chàin, tha fios agam gu bheil na h-Èireannaich a' toirt buannachd thairis air na bliadhnaichean às a' chàin agus à ceòl. Tha ceanglaichean air a bhith ann eadar Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Newry is Mourne agus County Clare fad trì no ceithir bliadhnaichean, agus tha buidhnean a' dol air ais agus air adhart eadar na trì dùthchannan air sgàth sin.

O chionn naoi bliadhna air ais, thoisich sinn fèis ciùil Cheiltich anns na h-Eileanan Siar—an Hebridean Celtic Festival—a tha a' tarraing an t-uabhas luchd-turais bho air feadh an t-saoghail, ach tha mi a' smaoinichadh gun ionnsaich sinn bho eisimpleir nan Èireannaich. Bidh mi fhìn a' dol dhan fhèis a h-uile bliadhna, agus am bliadhna seo choinnich mi ri feadhainn à Alaska, feadhainn às an Ruis agus feadhainn às an Roinn Eòrpa fhèin. Tha sinn ag ionnsachadh na buannachd a tha ann bhon a bhith a' cleachdadh ceòl airson margaideachd na dùthcha againn fhìn. Chan eil fhios agam a bheil sinn a' dèanamh gu leòr, ach tha sinn a' tòiseachadh ag ionnsachadh agus tha eisimpleir math dha-rìribh aig na h-Èireannaich.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I have to admit that there are not strong links between the Western Isles Council and Cape Breton, but Highland Council has strong links with Nova Scotia. There is no reason why we should not look at developing stronger links with Cape Breton in future.

I return to the first question of how public bodies are using the Gaelic language. In Ireland, they have made great strides in that area. Links between Western Isles Council, Newry and Mourne and County Clare have existed for some years and groups from those areas visit back and forth all the time.

Nine years ago in the Western Isles, we started the Hebridean Celtic festival. We can learn from the Irish example. The festival brings in many tourists from all over the world. When I was there, I met people from Alaska and Russia as well as others from Europe. We are learning the benefits of using music and language to market our land. I do not know whether we are doing enough, but we are learning.

The Convener: Mr Macleod's last point can be linked to one that Mr Maclean made—it comes out in the written evidence, too—about the extent to which a cohesive strategy is in place to make the most of promoting distinctive Gaelic culture to a wider audience. I get the sense from both of you that you want the inquiry to settle on that issue and to deliver some constructive measures to

improve the use of the opportunity that our distinctive Gaelic culture provides as part of the promotion of Scotland. Is that a fair summation of your points?

Malcolm Maclean: That would be a fair summation. Our experience overseas has consistently demonstrated a remarkable measure of interest on both sides of the Atlantic, be that in mainland Europe or North America. Consequently, it can be intensely frustrating if we are involved in something and we see a remarkable response involving tens of thousands of people but no awareness of the potential is reflected in the system in Scotland. I believe that there is a growing awareness here, and I hope that using Gaelic to promote Scotland is one of the areas that the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill will address. Until it is addressed, Scotland will miss out on substantial promotional opportunities overseas in relation to Celtic music if nothing else. One of the consequences of neglect of this area is that our Irish cousins are well on the way to having run off with the Celtic ball in the eyes of a good part of the world. I do not believe that it is entirely a lost cause, but it is fair to say that the Celtic associations, other than Celtic Football Club, have been much more assertively addressed by the Irish than they have by Scotland.

I turn to the levels of interest in Gaelic. On the Leabhar Mòr na Gàidhlig project, which we were involved in creating, we were approached by the director of the McMaster Museum of Art, Ontario with a view to taking the Leabhar Mòr na Gàidhlig exhibition. She was not approached about it; she came to us having coming across it. She asked whether the museum, which is one of the top galleries and museums in Canada, would be allowed to launch the exhibition in North America. She referred to the fact that two years ago it had shown four pages of the Magna Carta over a week and received 4,000 visitors a day. She said that, in her view, the Leabhar Mòr na Gàidhlig would be of greater interest to a Canadian audience than was the Magna Carta.

Alasdair Macleod: Chan eil mi a' smaoinichadh, aig an ìre seo, gu bheil an Riaghaltas air strategy a chur ri chèile airson a' chàin anns an dòigh sa bheil sinn a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn an-diugh. Mar eisimpleir, bidh na còmhlaing-chiùil as ainmeil ann an Alba, Runrig agus Capercaillie, a' siubhal air feadh an t-saoghail a' cleachdadh a' chàin agus a' toirt buannachd mhòr às, agus tha mi cinnteach gu bheil iad a' tarraing dhaoine air ais dhan dùthaich againn fhìn. Chanainn-sa gum biodh e na bhuannachd do dh'Alba a thaobh turasachd agus na bhuannachd mhòr dhan Ghàidhlig a bhith a' reic a' chàin thall thairis.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I do not think that the Executive has put together a strategy to support funding of the language in the way that we are talking about. For example, the most well-known bands in Scotland, such as Capercaillie and Runrig, travel throughout the world using the language, and I am sure that they are bringing people back to our countries. There is a benefit to tourism in Scotland through Gaelic and there is a benefit to Gaelic from tourism and selling the language abroad.

The Convener: Thanks very much for that.

Philip MacHugh: I have been to many festivals worldwide. Tartan day is more of a showcase for VisitScotland than anything else. The point of setting up exchanges and trips abroad is to make the connection with the country. Why not go to the Basque or Catalan regions where we can build up friendships and make longer-lasting connections, rather than just go out to New York and put on a magnificent show, which VisitScotland sees as good, although the Americans do not see it that way? By travelling around the south of the United States, putting on exhibitions and doing smaller gigs in towns that were interested in the Scottish or Gaelic culture—as a Highland dancer that is how I first got involved with VisitScotland—we made the connections better than we would have done by putting on a big performance in New York and spending a lot of money on it.

Mr Morrison: A bheil dòigh ann sin a thomhas? An urrainnear dearbhadh gu simplidh gur faodadh, mar a bha thu ag ràdh, barrachd buannachd fhaighinn bho latha mòr an tairtain?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

You were talking about wanting to get more benefit from tartan day. Is there any way in which that can be measured?

Philip MacHugh: One of the things we could do is to reach out and find out which parts of America and the world are interested in Scottish culture. From Japan to America, people have St Andrew societies, St Andrew's day celebrations, Burns suppers and so on. We should be going to those kinds of things rather than concentrating our resources on a one-day or one-week festival that is quickly forgotten. Why not spread out our resources over the year so that everyone can get a part of them?

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): I am slightly confused about whether you think that Gaelic provides us with a deep cultural link to other countries or is a tool that we can use to promote tourism in Scotland. I think that Mr Macleod suggested that tourism brings £47 million a year into the Western Isles. How much of that is related to the wide use of Gaelic in those islands?

What is the split between domestic tourism and international tourism in the Western Isles?

Alasdair Macleod: Is ceist mhath sin. Mar a bha mi ag ràdh, tha buannachd mhòr dha na h-Eileanan Siar a' tighinn bho thurasachd, agus tha tòrr dhe sin a' crochadh air gu bheil cultar agus cànan eadar-dhealaichte air fhàgail anns na h-Eileanan Siar. Anns an latha an-diugh, tha daoine a' lorg a-mach rudan eadar-dhealaichte, agus tha rud againn anns na h-Eileanan Siar agus anns a' Ghaidhealtachd nach eil aig àite sam bith eile san t-saoghal. An-diugh tha daoine a' lorg niche markets, agus sin niche market nach fhaigh duine an àite sam bith eile.

A' tighinn air ais chun na ceist cò às a tha na daoine a' tighinn dha na h-Eileanan Siar, tha 20 às gach ceud a' tighinn às an Roinn Eòrpa, a rèir nam figearan mu dheireadh a chunna mi. Is e ceòl pàirt den tarraing, mar a thuirt mi, agus cuideachd gu bheil cultar, dòigh beatha agus àrainneachd eadar-dhealaichte againn. Tha daoine a' lorg rudan eadar-dhealaichte anns an latha an-diugh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That is a good question. The Western Isles benefit greatly from tourism and much of that is because of the difference in our culture and language. People are looking for different things nowadays. In the Western Isles and the Highlands, we have something that exists nowhere else in the world. We have a niche market that nobody can find anywhere else.

The most recent figures that I saw said that around 20 per cent of visitors to the Western Isles are from Europe. Part of the attraction for them is the music, but they are also attracted by the culture, the different way of life and the different environment. People are looking for something different.

Malcolm Maclean: We used to have a cartoon on our office wall. In it, a teacher asked her class, "What do you call someone who speaks two languages?" to which the pupils reply, "Bilingual." She then asks, "What do you call someone who speaks three languages?" and they reply, "Trilingual." Finally, she asks, "What do you call someone who speaks one language?" and the pupils reply, "British."

That perception of the United Kingdom is widespread across Europe. Europeans are remarkably interested to discover that Britain is not a monoglot, English-speaking state and that it is home to at least four indigenous languages. That is an asset in terms of cultural relationships and identification between the various cultures of Europe. In that sense, Europeans regularly identify with Gaelic in a way in which they do not do identify with English, for a variety of reasons.

There is an inextricable benefit in making such cultural connections. Another aspect is the fact that the Celtic family of languages is not only among the oldest groups of languages but, as a growing amount of evidence suggests, is at least 1,500 years older than was previously assumed. That makes it one of the last great pan-European cultures that people across Europe are capable of identifying with. On that ground alone, there is great potential for renewing cultural connections. The tourism potential of all that is significant for modern, 21st century economies. There are cultural and economic reasons for building on such links.

14:45

Phil Gallie: That is quite interesting. Given the international interest in Gaelic, is the language being taught in any foreign countries? Are groups in Scotland exporting the language?

Malcolm Maclean: It goes beyond that. Last week, a Gaelic film festival was held in Bonn by a group of Gaelic speakers in that area. The festival has been surprisingly successful; I believe that it is now in its third year and that the organisers are looking to expand it. I find that, when I converse with these people, their Gaelic is perfect and I become aware that they are German only when they start speaking English. As a result, initiatives in other European countries are being led not only by Scottish Gaels but by people in Europe who take a passionate interest in and engage with the language. If you like, it is a somewhat more substantial version of the Irish pub syndrome.

Alasdair Macleod: Tha dìreach facal no dhà agam ri ràdh a chur ris na bha Calum MacGill Eain ag ràdh mu dheidhinn na Gearmailt. Thairis air na bliadhnaichean, tha mise air coinneachadh ri iomadach duine a tha air a bhith a' siubhal anns na h-Eileanan Siar, agus gu math tric tha Gàidhlig aca no tha iad ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig, agus tha feadhainn aca air ràdh rium gu bheil iad air a bhith ag ionnsachadh a' chàinain air sgàth Runrig. Tha tòrr air a bhith a' leantainn Runrig ann am pàirtean den Roinn Eòrpa, gu h-àraid anns a' Ghearmailt, agus tha sin a' tarraing dhaoine chun a' chàinain. Mar a thuirt mi, tha ceòl a' tarraing dhaoine chun a' chàinain agus tha ceòl a' tarraing dhaoine dha na h-Eileanan agus a dh'Alba.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I will add a word or two to Malcolm Maclean's comments about Germany. Many people I have met—especially Germans—who have travelled in the Western Isles over the years have learned or are learning Gaelic. When I ask them why they are learning the language, most of them say, "Because of Runrig." Music brings people both to the islands and to the language.

Phil Gallie: Believe it or not, you have answered perfectly my next question about the link between music and language.

The Convener: I will tell my colleague the MP for North Tayside that his influence lives on in Germany.

Mrs Margaret Ewing (Moray) (SNP): My question follows on from the subject that Phil Gallie has been asking about. The written submissions and today's oral evidence seem to suggest that the witnesses seek a clarification or codification of the funding access points. Given the Scottish Executive's role in tourism and culture—although not in broadcasting, I am sorry to tell Mr MacHugh—which of the departments would you feel most comfortable dealing with? Will you also give us a ballpark figure for the funding that Gaelic needs?

Malcolm Maclean: If it came down to a choice between dealing with VisitScotland with its tourism interests and dealing with the Scottish cultural sector, which presumably would mean the Scottish Arts Council and the British Council, we have no shadow of a doubt that the Scottish Arts Council and the British Council would be far more alert than VisitScotland has been to the potential significance of these issues. Indeed, I refer to our experience of that in the written submission. I believe that Scottish tourism interests really struggle with the Gaelic dimension. It can be problematic for simple concepts such as branding and marketing approaches, which are good at telling us what people might already be interested in but are no good at all at telling us about what people might respond to but do not yet know about.

To answer the first part of your question, the cultural sector is much more alert to the significance of the issues from a Gaelic perspective than is VisitScotland. I like to think that VisitScotland will improve in the area, but that is part of a bigger issue that is being addressed by the Executive in the context of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill—it comes down to a process of normalisation of Gaelic in Scotland.

In the second part of your question you asked how much funding is needed. The answer is surprisingly little, given the potential benefits. The scale of the activities overseas in which we have been involved is such that a remarkably modest amount of funding is capable of making the difference between an event happening or not happening, so funding can have a substantial impact in the part of the world where an event takes place. We argue for funding from the cultural sector and a substantial proportion of the available funding would bring benefits. However, the sums of money do not have to be huge.

Alasdair Macleod: A thaobh brosnachadh na Gàidhlig agus toirt taic dhan Ghàidhlig, tha sinne deònach gu leòr a dhol gu sporan sam bith, ma tha e mòr agus ma tha e domhain, ach is ann bho thaobh cultar mar is trice a tha sinn a' faighinn taic.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We are willing to approach any purse, as long as it is big and deep, for encouragement and support for the Gaelic language. However, we usually receive support through cultural initiatives.

Irene Oldfather: Mr MacHugh made passing reference to the Royal National Mod—I think that North Ayrshire recently had the privilege of hosting that event. Do you feel that there are more opportunities to promote the Mod internationally? Is VisitScotland involved in that?

Philip MacHugh: Not that I know of. The promotion of the Royal National Mod abroad is not too bad. Choirs come to the Mod every year from Vancouver and there are Gaelic organisations in Germany and London. Solo competitors come from the Catalan-speaking area and people learn Gaelic as a means to get to the Mod, because they have an interest in the culture and the language. People come as solo artistes or as part of a group.

As far as I know, VisitScotland does not do much to promote the Mod—the trips abroad that I go on are usually to do with the promotion of a tartan company or a whisky brand. I would like the Gaelic brand to be taken abroad more. Gaelic arts and culture could be promoted in Japan, for example, and people could be encouraged to come to the Mod. There is a St Andrew society in Japan and a Gaelic teacher. The last time I was there, three students were learning Gaelic through the “Can Seo” and “Speaking our Language” videos. The Japanese have a huge fascination for the language and culture of Scotland—I think that stems from the fact that most people wore tartan to school.

Much more could be done to take Gaelic abroad. There are so many trips abroad that could involve Gaelic, as we know. I want to push for that and help it to happen.

Irene Oldfather: From what you say, the approach seems to be a little haphazard and owes more to the interests of people who want to come to Scotland than to any promotion of the event.

Philip MacHugh: Malcolm Maclean might want to add something about the promotion of the Mod, which does not happen to its full capacity, as far as I am aware.

Malcolm Maclean: I want to add a point about funding. I have made a quick calculation and I think that I can safely say that in our areas of

project activity, which are the accounts that I know, the proportion that Scotland has contributed to our expenditure on our programme of overseas events over the past few years has been less than 10 per cent. That goes back to what I said about the fact that relatively modest sums of funding can have significant leverage and can encourage additional sources of funding from host countries or European funding.

If one is in a position to take an event or initiative to another country and enter into dialogue, different forms of support can be drawn into the equation. One needs the core catalyst; one needs to be able to set things up in the first instance. However, at the end of the day, it can pay remarkable dividends.

The Convener: I want to explore a couple of other issues, the first of which is the image of Scotland portrayed overseas. Mr MacHugh might want to be the first to respond to this point.

In much of the evidence that we have heard, there has been a debate about the right image of Scotland to promote. Should it be tartan biscuit tins or should it be modern and dynamic icons and imagery? Needless to say, a strong strand of opinion would say, “A bit of both.”

From written evidence that we have received, and from a number of comments from all three witnesses on the panel, I get a strong impression of an aversion to using Gaelic language and culture among the public agencies that are responsible for the promotion of Scotland. They seem to feel that it would confuse a perhaps uninformed audience in other countries. Are you wrestling with that issue?

Philip MacHugh: Not enough Gaelic is used in the promotion of Scotland abroad but, from what I can see, tartan shortbread tins are what works. People come to Scotland to see the castle and have their kilts measured up, as well as to see the Highlands and enjoy the culture and music.

When we go on trips, I am one of perhaps 20 and, most of the time, I am the only one who has the language. At a ceilidh, I will sometimes be asked to use Gaelic or to sing a Gaelic song, but people do not understand why I am talking or singing in Gaelic because—and this goes back to the whole British thing—everybody thinks that we have just one language, even though we have two in Scotland. I have to explain that at festivals, because people ask, “What is Gaelic?”

People who know about it want to know more about it, but—apart from what I do—we are not really able to help them to know more about it. No body is speaking about the promotion of the language. We have Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and it would be easy enough for people there to come along with us on a trip and say to people, “Well, if

you want to learn Gaelic, come to Scotland and come to the Highlands. We have the resources and we can teach you the language." We certainly want to promote Gaelic, because the more people can speak it, the bigger it will grow.

Alasdair Macleod: Chan eil fhios agam am bu choir dhuinn a bhith a' càineadh nam buidhnean a tha a' putadh agus a' bruthadh turasachd. Mar a tha mise a' tuigsinn an t-suidheachaidh, tha turasachd a' toirt buannachd mhòr do eaconomaidh na h-Alba, ach tha atharrachaidhean mòra a' tighinn a-steach, a chionn 's nach robh an aon làmh a' tuigsinn dè bha an làmh eile a' feuchainn ri dhèanamh. Air sgàth sin, tha VisitScotland air crathadh mòr a thoirt air turasachd anns an fharsaingeachd, agus bho thoiseach na h-ath bhliadhna, bidh na h-atharrachaidhean mòra a' tighinn a-steach.

Thèid mi air ais a-rithist gu puing a rinn mi roimhe. Anns na latha an-diugh, tha daoine a' siubhal air feadh an t-saoghail a lorg rudeigin eadar-dhealaichte. Tha rudeigin eadar-dhealaichte againn anns a' Ghaidhealtachd agus anns na h-Eileanan Siar ann an Alba, agus is e sin a' Ghàidhlig agus a h-uile càil a tha crochte ris. Tha mi a' smaoinèachadh nach eil sinn air a bhith a' dèanamh buannachd gu leòr a-mach às a' chànan, a-mach às an rud eadar-dhealaichte a tha againn, thairis air na bliadhnaichean, ach tha mi a' smaoinèachadh gu bheil daoine mothachail a-nis gum b' urrainn dhuinn sin a dhèanamh. Thug mi eisimpleir dha Mgr Gallie o chionn mionaid mu dheidhinn Runrig. Is e ceòl cànan an t-saoghail agus sin an dòigh anns an tarraing sinn daoine a dh'Alba agus dha na h-Eileanan Siar.

Cha leig a leas an tartan a bhith againn fad na tìde. Tha buannachd anns an tartan, anns na pìoban agus anns na dannsairean Gaidhealach, ach feumaidh sinn a h-uile càil a chur ri chèile ann an dòigh as urrainn dhuinn a reic ris an t-saoghal. Is ann mar sin as urrainn dhuinn daoine a tharraing agus buannachd agus prothaid fhaighinn, airson Alba gu lèir agus gu h-àraid airson nan Eileanan Siar, ach feumaidh sinn sealltainn ri taic-airgid. Aig deireadh an latha, mura bi taic-airgid ann agus mura bi dòigh air a lorg a-mach, bidh e duilich dha buidhnean mar Pròiseact nan Ealan, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar agus buidhnean eile a bhith a' toirt buannachd às an rud a tha againn an seo.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I do not know whether we should be denigrating the groups that are giving funding and pushing for tourists to come to the country. The way I see it, tourism is of great benefit to the economy of Scotland but big changes are coming in. The reason for those changes is that one hand did not know what the other was doing. That is why VisitScotland has made big changes in tourism in general.

I will go back to a point that I have made before. In this day and age, people who travel throughout the world are looking for something different. We have something different in the Western Isles and that is Gaelic and everything connected with it. I do not think that we have been getting enough benefit from the language and making enough of that difference. However, people are now taking heed. We have been talking about Runrig and music. Music is the language of the world and that is how we can encourage people to come to the Western Isles.

We do not need to have tartan all the time, but there is a benefit in tartan—and in the pipes and in Highland dancing. It is about putting all that together in such a way that we can sell it to the world and entice people to come in and provide an economic benefit to the Western Isles and the rest of Scotland. However, we must examine the funding strategy. If there is no funding, it will be difficult for groups such as Pròiseact nan Ealan and Western Isles Council to take any benefit from what we have here.

15:00

Malcolm Maclean: I appreciate the challenge that Scotland's image overseas presents to VisitScotland. There are issues with branding, which are compounded by Scotland's history of relative Gaelic invisibility. The degree of visibility that Gaelic now enjoys is a relatively recent phenomenon, which stems from the 1990s. It is logical that against that background and the relatively low level of understanding of Gaelic that the Scottish education system has imbued in my generation and subsequent generations of Scots, there is a relatively low level of awareness of the issues that is not unique to tourism promotion interests and other bodies. That is one of the reasons why what the Executive is doing to address the Gaelic issue is enormously healthy, not just for Gaelic but for Scotland.

Within that context, in our sector there is a debate around the polarities of the traditional tartan, pipes and other images of Scotland that are most widely recognised overseas and the urge to promote a much more contemporary, cutting-edge, modernist, 21st century Scotland. From a Gaelic point of view, those two polarities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There are ways in which the traditional images and associations with Scotland could and should be developed, progressed and reinvented for the 21st century, in the same way that Gaelic is having to do. In some people's minds, the Gaelic dimension is capable of being guddled up and of being associated with Scotland's past as opposed to Scotland's present and future, which is partly why the tourist board has had difficulty engaging with it from a marketing perspective.

Last week, I was told of an American who turned up in the Gaelic college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig recently and referred to a heritage interpretation centre that he had just visited, but which I will not name. His quote on entering Sabhal Mòr Ostaig was, "I've seen Coney Island. I'm here to see the real thing." There is an extent to which many people out there are looking for an authentic experience when they come to Scotland, which Gaelic is capable of providing.

The Convener: I have one last question, which follows on from the points about tourism and the route to attracting people to come to this country through the Gaelic language, and relates to genealogy. Some time ago, I visited an outstanding genealogy centre in Northton in Harris. I was impressed by the volume of information there, and by the fact that the centre was trying to establish connections with people who are now living in the United States, Canada and various other countries, to determine why they would come back to find out more about their roots in the Western Isles. In the context of your work, where does genealogy fit in as a major part of cultural roots? Is it a device for bringing people back to this country to enjoy what they can see and experience in the Western Isles and other parts of Scotland?

Alasdair Macleod: Tha eòlas agam air an àite anns na Hearadh air a bheil thu a' bruidhinn, agus gu dearbha fhèin is e àite iongantach a tha ann, agus tha e a' sealltainn na buannachd a tha e a' toirt dhan bhuidheann sin fhèin agus dha na h-Eileanan Siar. A' dol air ais 200 bliadhna, dh'fhàg an t-uabhas de dhaoine a' Ghaidhealtachd agus na h-Eileanan Siar agus chaidh iad thall thairis a dh'Ameireagaidh agus a Chanada agus àiteachan mar sin. Anns an latha an-diugh, tha daoine a' lorg a-mach cò às a thàinig iad, agus tha mi a' smaoinachadh gu bheil sloinntearachd uabhasach feumail agus gu bheil e a' toirt buannachd dhan phàirt sin de na h-eileanan agus gu bheil barrachd ri dhèanamh.

Tha càil sam bith a tha a' tarraing dhaoine air ais a' dol a dhèanamh feum ach, mar a thuirt Calum MacGill Eain, feumaidh sinn a dhèanamh ceart. Chan eil càil de mhath a bhith ga dhèanamh ann an dòigh leibideach no anns an dòigh san deach iomadach rud eile a thilgeil ri chèile anns na bliadhnaichean a chaidh seachad. Tha luchd turais an-diugh a' lorg rudeigin ceart is prìseil, agus cha ghabh iad ri rud lapach.

A thaobh an seòrsa obair a thathar a' dèanamh ann an Seallam anns na Hearadh, tha sin a' toirt buannachd mhòr. Thug Comhairle nan Eilean Siar taic-airgid dhan phròiseact nuair a chaidh a chur ri chèile, agus tha sinn a' faicinn gu bheil buannachd ann am pròiseactan mar sin. Thairis air na bliadhnaichean, ged nach urrainn dhan chomhairle

fhèin an obair sin a dhèanamh, tha a' chomhairle air a bhith mothachail gur urrainn dhi, le bhith toirt taic-airgid do phròiseactan matha a thig na lùib, a bhith a' toirt buannachd dha na daoine a tha gan dèanamh agus dha choimhearsnachd nan Eilean Siar.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I know the place that you are talking about in Harris, which is, indeed, a wonderful place. It shows the benefit that can be brought to the group itself and to the Western Isles. Two hundred years ago, a large number of people left the Western Isles and the Highlands and went abroad to places such as Canada and America. Nowadays people want to find out where they came from, so genealogy is important and is bringing benefits to that part of the islands.

There is more to be done, and anything that brings people back will be of benefit. However, as was said, we must do it properly. There is no point in doing it haphazardly, as happened in years gone by. Nowadays tourists are looking for something that is real and valuable; they will not accept any old thing.

The work that is being done at Seallam in Harris provides great benefit. Western Isles Council gave the project funding when it was being put together. We see that there is great benefit in such projects. Although the council cannot do the work itself, it has noticed over the years that such projects are valuable and it is able to provide funding. That brings benefit both to the people who run such projects and to the community in the Western Isles.

Malcolm Maclean: Genealogy has great potential and there is a long-established interest in it. However, rapid advances are being made in information technology, computers and databasing and research on DNA. As Alasdair Macleod says, people left the Highlands and Islands in very large numbers for overseas and for other parts of Scotland. Professor Tom Devine estimates that an absolute minimum of 50 per cent of the population of central Scotland has Highland antecedents. There is a variety of issues and there are different opportunities that make international connections potentially a significant growth market for Scotland. On a more modest level, I will be curious to see how one Ian Hislop of *Private Eye* and "Have I Got News For You" takes to discovering this evening on BBC2 that he comes from the region of Uig on the Isle of Lewis.

The Convener: I am sure that he will take it in his stride.

I thank Mr Maclean, Mr Macleod and Mr MacHugh for taking the time to appear before the committee and for the evidence that they have contributed. The committee will reflect on that

evidence as it draws its inquiry to a close. I suspend the committee until 3.15, when we will reconvene.

15:08

Meeting suspended.

15:16

On resuming—

The Convener: Agenda item 2 continues our inquiry into the Executive's strategy for promoting Scotland overseas. I have circulated three letters that I issued on 2 November to ask the Executive when we could expect ministers to give evidence to the inquiry.

Some time ago—the request predates me—the Executive was made aware that the committee wanted to see three ministers: the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport and the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, who is responsible for external relations. We scheduled the Deputy First Minister and the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport to appear today and the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform was scheduled for 23 November.

As of 2 November, we had received no confirmation of ministers' intentions. Earlier today, we received from Tom McCabe, the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, a letter that has been made available to members. The letter suggests that the Deputy First Minister and Mr McCabe could appear before the committee on 7 December. Our meeting on that date is pretty congested, as we are scheduled to take evidence from Susan Stewart, who is the Executive's representative in the United States, and from a panel of political figures from various parties. We can schedule evidence from ministers on 7 December, but that will require rejigging by the committee.

The direction that I have given the clerks on the inquiry's timescale is that I want us to conclude evidence taking on 7 December, so that at the meeting on 21 December, the committee can have its first discussion of conclusions, with a view to drawing the inquiry to a close in January. I am conscious that the inquiry has lasted for a long time. If it is to have any value, it must report on a decent timescale. If we delay longer, we might report in March, which is too late.

The committee asked me to accelerate the timescale for seeing Mr McCabe not only for the inquiry on promoting Scotland, but for discussion of the priorities for the UK's presidency of the European Union, which will occur in the latter part

of 2005, and of EU office arrangements. We will have a congested agenda on 7 December. I am opposed to extending the timescale, because that would mean that we could not close the inquiry or make a meaningful contribution.

Gordon Jackson (Glasgow Govan) (Lab): Who is on your panel of ex-politicians or current politicians?

The Convener: Henry McLeish is scheduled to come before the committee on 23 November. The clerks can keep me right on this, but the panel of other politicians is to include Robin Cook and Neil MacCormick, and we are waiting to get confirmation from Menzies Campbell and from a Conservative member.

Gordon Jackson: Those are big hitters. You wouldnae squeeze in those four in half an hour. That is why I asked.

The Convener: Yes, there is an element of courtesy involved.

Mr Morrison: You are right to point out that the programme for that day could become quite congested. We have to hear from Tom McCabe, who has ministerial responsibility on a whole range of issues relating to the European Union and to the promotion of Scotland abroad. I am trying to think of a way to avoid such a congested day, but I cannot think of one. Tom McCabe will have a range of issues and important information for our investigation. I wonder if it would be appropriate for him to give us that in written form—I suppose that he will be doing that to a degree anyway. Susan Stewart will speak for at least 40 or 45 minutes. There will then need to be another 45 minutes for the panel of—

Members: And the rest.

Mr Morrison: Yes—and the rest. So there will be 60 minutes—with no extra time or penalties. Then Tom McCabe and Jim Wallace will be speaking on three important areas.

The Convener: That is precisely why we were trying to schedule them in a way that suited the committee. To an extent, we will be able to rejig things with the clerks, but I am a bit concerned about how it will work out.

Irene Oldfather: Until now, we have been taking about an hour or an hour and 15 minutes of evidence and then doing other committee business, including the convener's report, the sift and so on. If we shifted our business, I wonder if it would be possible to keep the agenda for that one meeting entirely free of other items, so that we would have only evidence taking on that day. That could give us a little bit more leeway to accommodate everyone. The alternative would be to run into January, and I do not think that anyone wants to do that.

We started the inquiry in September 2003, when we agreed the remit. That is more than a year ago. There is a danger that evidence that we took early on, on tourist boards and so on, is becoming out of date. I thoroughly support what you are saying, convener, about trying to draw things to an early conclusion. Doing as I have suggested might help free up a little time while still giving the committee the opportunity to question the witnesses and ministers.

Phil Gallie: Never hesitant to be unpopular in the committee, could I suggest that we might be able to fit in an extra meeting, given the importance of the political figures involved?

Mr John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): We are going to have to.

Dennis Canavan: Rather than having an extra meeting, I would suggest that we start a bit earlier, if we could fit in all the politicians on the same day.

The Convener: I will consider the matter with the clerks. I have no idea whether it will be possible to arrange this, but I will see whether we can get Susan Stewart's appearance before the committee brought forward by a fortnight. I have no idea whether that would be practical with regard to flight arrangements. She is coming from the United States, and I do not know how that would fit in with other priorities that she might have.

I would like to put on record the fact that the committee delegation that was in the United States last week was very well supported by Susan Stewart and her colleagues in what we were doing there. That was much appreciated. If we could bring forward Susan Stewart's appearance, that would relieve a bit of pressure on the meeting of 7 December. When we conduct our evidence taking, I would plan to have no other business that day, and we can deal with other issues on 21 December. We can try to draw things to a close in that fashion.

Irene Oldfather: That sounds a sensible way to proceed.

Members indicated agreement.

European Union Fisheries Control Agency

15:24

The Convener: Item 3 is on the remit and functions of the EU fisheries control agency. Members have in front of them a committee paper, EU/S2/04/18/3, from Mr Morrison.

Mr Morrison: This is a holding paper to bring the committee up to speed with where I am. With the help of the clerks and the Scottish Parliament information centre I have written to a number of organisations, which are listed on page 4. Those are by no means the only organisations that I could have written to, but we jointly believe that they represent a geographic spread of fishermen's associations and other relevant organisations. The key issues are identified on page 3. I am hesitant to ask members whether I have omitted an issue of overriding concern, but I would like to hear from them. Given that no one has spoken I will assume that that is fine and that you all agree.

The Convener: Not so fast, Mr Morrison. You did not have the chairman's eye for that remark.

Mr Home Robertson: Can you confirm that it is your intention that we should consider enforcement outside European Union waters, in adjacent waters? I think that the issue is covered by the bullet points, but I want to get confirmation of that. Reference is made to "Norway, Russia etc." Are we talking about EU waters, or will we extend our thoughts to the control of fisheries outside EU waters?

The Convener: I will take a number of comments, Alasdair, and then I will ask you to close.

Phil Gallie: I have a query that Alasdair might be able to answer immediately. It seems to me that a lot of equipment and resource will be required. I worry about who will supply that and who will direct its use. Perhaps Alasdair could pick up on that and tell me where it is covered within his future intentions.

Irene Oldfather: I thank Alasdair for the work that he has done to date. It seems to me that it is reasonable to ask SPICe, as is suggested on page 4, to provide a short background paper on some of the key issues.

I note that Alasdair hopes to produce the draft report by 23 November. That is obviously a tight timescale. I give my endorsement to ensuring that support is available to him from SPICe. There is also a new EU legal adviser in the Scottish Parliament; I hope that that will also be of assistance.

Mrs Ewing: On the point about the deadline being 23 November, given our previous conversation, I wonder whether Alasdair could perhaps be given another fortnight to produce the report. The council meeting has been postponed and those issues are popping up all over the place. In light of our having said that we will take only evidence on 23 November, I wonder whether we could put the deadline back. However, I recognise that that is up to the committee.

The Convener: The point that I am most mindful of in relation to the timescale is that the European Parliament reports to the council meeting. The timetable for the council meeting should not affect that. As there is a parliamentary timetable, my main concern is to ensure that the committee has the opportunity to have an input into the work that Elspeth Attwooll is doing before the deadline, which seems to be 24 November. I suspect that the committee meeting on 23 November is the less stressed of the two, so I would rather that we keep to the original timescale—hard though it will be to draw the work to a conclusion within that period.

The first and third bullet points on the “Key issues identified”, on page 3 of the paper, are very much interlinked and are at the centre of the issues that the previous discussions indicated are of concern to the committee. In my view, we must be certain that nothing comes out of the European Union fisheries control agency that undermines the commitments that have been given on the decentralisation of fisheries management through the fisheries advisory councils. It would be unfortunate for there to be growing confidence that more control will be exercised locally by fisheries management councils, only to find that power haemorrhaging to the European Union fisheries control agency. The committee has identified that as the central concern, so it should be the issue on which we should concentrate our thinking.

Mr Morrison: I agree with where you place the emphasis, convener, with regard to the areas that we are going to look at over the next fortnight or so. I undertake to e-mail colleagues, before a week on Friday, with a rough draft and an update on the tone of the representations that we have had from various organisations. I can get that information to all members by a week on Friday and then report, as originally scheduled, on 23 November, taking in the matters that have been raised by John Home Robertson and Phil Gallie. Sadly, Margaret Ewing’s reasonable point has been butted out.

Convener’s Report

15:30

The Convener: Item 4 is the convener’s report. There are two items for the committee to note. The first is the letter that has been received from the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Allan Wilson, on European structural funds. The contents of the letter are self-explanatory, but we need to keep a watching brief over that whole area of policy. The second item is a courtesy paper that we have received from the external liaison unit of the Parliament in relation to visits that are made to and by the Parliament. It is a courtesy paper—we are not responsible for the governance of that unit—and is for members’ information only.

Gordon Jackson: I am probably showing incredible ignorance, but what does the bit at the end of the convener’s report mean? It says that

“the Clerk has written to ELU to remind them of the importance of certain key principles when putting together a programme for visiting parliamentarians.”

The Convener: The point was made by Keith Raffan, at the previous committee meeting, that a lot of delegations that come to the Parliament are pointed towards officials and not members. It was suggested that delegations do not, as a matter of course, meet members. The clerk has written to the external liaison unit, making the point that we think that it is important for delegations to meet members when they are here.

Mrs Ewing: On the issue of European structural funds, I read in the newspapers that the Committee on Regional Development of the European Parliament has been asked to visit Scotland in 2005. I wondered whether contact should be made with the secretariat of that committee, as it might be interesting for us to meet it and get its vision of what is happening.

The Convener: An initial contact has been received from the Committee on Regional Development of the European Parliament about that visit. It is an issue that the clerks are progressing, and we will return to the committee with it in due course. Obviously, that will be a very welcome visit to the Parliament.

Irene Oldfather: While we are talking about this, we should not forget the role of the regions in Europe. The Committee of the Regions is currently looking at structural funds, and it is going to agree its report in January or February. In that report, there will be some mention of N+2. I can keep a watching brief on that, and I am sure that the clerks will do the same. It is important that, when we think about structural funds, we think not only about the European Parliament. There are people

with whom we work in Catalonia, Tuscany and so on who feel as we do about a number of issues. It is important that we keep those network links open and show those people that we are willing to work with them.

The Convener: I had a meeting this morning with the German consul in Edinburgh about the dialogue with the delegation from Saxony-Anhalt, which will be here for the meeting of the network of regional parliamentary European committees. Structural funding is of central importance to that Land. We had a useful discussion about how the committee may be able to share some information with the parliamentarians from Saxony-Anhalt. The point that you make about the impact of structural funds in a number of different spheres is well made.

Pre and Post-council Scrutiny

15:34

The Convener: The final paper for us to consider is the pre and post-council scrutiny paper. In addition to the substantial paper, there is a paper on a reply from Andy Kerr on the working time directive, which was previously of interest to members. That paper was made available to members in advance of the meeting.

Members will find information on the relevant European councils in the summary table in annex A, which is on page 3 of the paper. No specific action points arise, other than to note the comments in the table. In particular, we should note the point that Margaret Ewing raised on the agriculture and fisheries council, which is that its meeting of 22 November is "unlikely to take place". Obviously, that has implications for the setting of quotas for 2005, which would normally happen at the December council. As I am not sure whether any implications arise from the delay, I ask the clerks to take up the point with the Executive.

As members have no further points to raise, I will move on to the letter from the Minister for Health and Community Care about the European working time directive, which gives some background as to how the directive is being applied.

Phil Gallie: Once again, the letter demonstrates a certain nonsense in how the directive is being applied. On-call doctors are considered to be working when they are sleeping in hospital premises whereas on-call power company engineers, for example, are not considered to be working when they are sleeping at home. The working time directive has created many areas of conflict and I commend the nations that are now seeking opt-outs.

Irene Oldfather: The minister's letter is quite helpful. The paper also helpfully explains a lot of what was not clear beforehand. Given the potential for the United Kingdom to resolve some of the issues, we should hold out for that. It is good to have the explanation.

The Convener: The minister's letter is helpful. We need to examine further the point that Phil Gallie made about the apparent contradictions in the application of the directive, particularly given the need to resolve some of the difficult issues that affect a range of public sector service provision.

We note the minister's reply. Obviously, in due course, as part of our continuing scrutiny, we will look again at the issues.

Meeting closed at 15:37.

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