

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday 17 November 2004

Session 2

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

23rd Meeting 2004, Session 2

CONVENER

*Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)

*Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP)

*Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP)

*Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP)

*Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

*Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

*Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Rosie Kane (Glasgow) (SSP)

Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Iain MacIlleChiar (Comann nam Pàrant)

Pam Talbot (Clì Gàidhlig)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Mark Roberts

ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

LOCATION

Committee Room 2

Scottish Parliament Education Committee

Wednesday 17 November 2004

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 09:50]

Item in Private

The Convener (Robert Brown): Good morning. I welcome people to this meeting of the Education Committee. We had a slight technical problem in establishing whether my microphone was working. We are in public session, so people should ensure that their mobile phones and pagers are not on.

Agenda item 1 is to decide whether to take in private item 4, which is consideration of our draft report for the budget process. I am inclined to suggest that not much is at issue and that we should not go into private, but I am interested in members' views. If it is okay with members, we will not move into private.

Members indicated agreement.

Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

09:51

The Convener: Item 2 is consideration of evidence at stage 1 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill. Our kick-off witness is Pam Talbot, who is Clì Gàidhlig's convener. You will give an introduction, after which we will ask questions. You sit in rather solitary splendour at the top of the table, but you are welcome to the committee and we look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Pam Talbot will speak in Gaelic, so we will have the interesting experience of checking whether the headphones through which we should hear simultaneous translation work. I welcome the two translators in the little cubicle at the back of the committee room, who will work hard for us this morning.

Pam Talbot (Clì Gàidhlig): Madainn mhath. Mar a thuit an neach-gairm, tha mise nam chathraiche bòrd Chlì Gàidhlig, a tha na bhuidheann cothrom agus adhartachadh na Gàidhlig—[Briseadh a-steach.]

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Good morning. As the convener said, I am the chairperson of Clì Gàidhlig's management board. The group gives access to Gaelic and I am here—[Interruption.]

The Convener: Can I stop you? We are not hearing anything through the headphones. Our technical incompetence, rather than anything else, appears to be the problem. I am sorry about that. Everybody's headphones are now turned on, so I ask you to start again.

Pam Talbot: Madainn mhath a-rithist, a h-uile duine. Is mise cathraiche bòrd Chlì Gàidhlig. Is e buidheann cothrom agus adhartachadh na Gàidhlig a tha ann an Clì Gàidhlig. Tha sinn taingeil airson a' chothruim fianais a thoirt seachad air Bile na Gàidhlig (Alba).

Tha sinn a' cumail taic anns an fharsaingeachd ri prionnsabalan coitcheann a' bhile, agus tha sinn toilichte gu bheil an Riaghaltas air gabhail ri cuid de na molaidhean a rinn sinn air an dreachd bhile an-uiridh. Sgrìobh sinn chun an Riaghaltais mu dheidhinn. Rinn sinn iomairt cairt-puist a bha air leth soirbheachail, le barrachd air 1,700 freagairtean cairt-puist gan cur chun an Riaghaltais bho bhallrachd Chlì agus bho bhuidhnean eile. Bha sin na leth-phàirt de na freagairtean uile a fhuair an Riaghaltas.

Tha Clì Gàidhlig a' toirt taic do luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig, a' solarachadh chùrsaichean agus a' coiteachadh mar ghuth an

luchd-ionnsachaidh ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig. Tha sinn air a bhith ag obair gu dlùth le Bòrd na Gàidhlig bhon a chaidh a stèidheachadh. Tha sinn an dùil agus an dòchas gun lean an co-obrachadh sin agus gum bi ro-innleachd ionnsachaidh na phàirt cudthromach den phlana nàiseanta.

Tha sinn toilichte gu bheil am bile a-nis a' dèanamh iomradh air foghlam—rudeigin nach robh anns an dreachd bhile—ach tha sinn fhathast a' moladh gum bu chòir reachdail air foghlam stàite tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a bhith anns an reachdas.

Tha sinn an dòchas gun cuir na h-ùghdarrasan poblach an gnìomh planaichean a bhios a' brosnachadh luchd na Gàidhlig—luchd-ionnsachaidh agus daoine aig a bheil Gàidhlig bho thùs—gu bhith a' cleachdadh na Gàidhlig nuair a bhios iad a bruidhinn ri, no a' sgrìobhadh gu, na buidhnean sin. Sin rud nach eil air tachairt thuige seo, oir tha daoine a' faicinn Gàidhlig mar chànan a bhios tu a' bruidhinn aig an taigh, anns an eaglais no aig cèilidh.

Ann am beachd Chli, tha e gu math cudthromach gum bi dealbhadh buannachaidh a' dol air adhart agus a' toirt cothrom do thòrr dhaoine airson a bhith a' cleachdadh a' chànan anns a h-uile suidheachadh. Tha Cli Gàidhlig a' creidsinn, ge-tà, gu bheil a' Ghàidhlig freagarrach anns a h-uile suidheachadh, a' gabhail a-steach gnothaichean poblach, agus gu bheil cruaidh fheum air àbhaisteachadh no cumantachadh a' chànan. Às aonais àbhaisteachadh agus às aonais cothrom a bhith a' bruidhinn na Gàidhlig gu nàdarra anns gach suidheachadh, chan urrainn dhuinn crìonadh cànan a thionndadh. Mura dèan sinn sin, is e cùis nàire a bhios ann dhuinn uile mar Albannaich.

Mar a thuirt am Prionnsa Tearlach is e a' tadhal air Sabhal Mòr Ostaig o chionn ghoirid, ma bhàsaicheas Gàidhlig ann an Alba, bàsaichidh i anns a h-uile h-àite agus cha mhair i. Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil e ceart mu dheidhinn sin. Tha an Riaghaltas air sealltainn gu bheil toil phoileataigeach ann airson ar cànan prìseil a chuideachadh, ach feumaidh an reachdas a bhith làidir gu leòr agus feumaidh maoinachadh ceart a bhith aig na buidhnean a bhios an sàs anns an obair mhòir a tha romhainn uile.

Tha mi toilichte ceist sam bith a fhreagairt. Mòran taing airson èisteachd.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Good morning again, everybody. As the convener said, I am the chairperson of Cli Gàidhlig's management board. The group gives access to Gaelic and promotes the language. Cli Gàidhlig is thankful for the opportunity to give evidence to the committee.

In general, we are happy that the Executive has adopted the recommendations that we gave it on the draft bill last year. Through our postcard initiative, more than 1,700 postcards were sent to the Executive, which was half of the responses that the Executive got to its consultation.

Cli Gàidhlig supports learners of Gaelic and provides Gaelic courses. We have worked closely with Bòrd na Gàidhlig since it was established and we hope and pray that that co-operation will continue and that learners will be a major part of that development. We are happy that the bill now deals with education, which was not covered in the draft bill, but we recommend that the bill should give rights to state education through the medium of Gaelic.

We hope that people who have learned the Gaelic language will be able to use it when they speak or write to local authorities, which has not been possible until now. People see Gaelic as a language that is spoken at home, in church or at a ceilidh. In Cli Gàidhlig's opinion, it is important that access is given to many people to use the language in every situation. Cli believes that Gaelic is suitable for every situation, including public ones, and that there is a great need to use the language and to make it useful. If we do not popularise Gaelic and give it the opportunity to be used naturally in every situation, the decline of the language will not be reversed, which would be shameful for us as Scots. When Prince Charles visited Sabhal Mòr Ostaig recently, he said that if Gaelic dies in Scotland, it will die everywhere. I am sure that he is right about that.

The Executive has shown that it has the political will to help the language, but its status needs to be strong enough and the groups that are involved with the language need support. I am happy to answer any questions.

The Convener: The committee's job is to establish whether it agrees with the general principles of the bill and to report to the Parliament on that, although obviously a number of subsidiary issues will arise. Is your organisation happy with the overall planning framework in the bill, which involves the Gaelic board, the language plan and an obligation on public authorities to feed into that?

Pam Talbot: Tha Cli toilichte san fharsaingeachd, ach tha sinn beagan mì-thoilichte mu dheidhinn, is dòcha, facal no dhà, mar an dòigh anns an do chleachdadh am facal "cùltar" an àite "cànan". Tha an dòigh anns a bheil cùltar ainmichte anns a' bhile beagan farsaing, oir chan eil e a' sònrachadh a' chànan fhèin. Sin beachd a' bhùird co-dhiù.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Cli Gàidhlig is happy in general with that, but it is a bit displeased about the words that are used.

The bill mentions language rather than culture, but we are considering ways in which culture can be named or specified in the bill as well.

The Convener: What do you mean when you ask for a more specific reference to culture?

Pam Talbot: Chan e am facal “cultural” fhèin; is e gu bheil sinn a’ coimhead airson facal a thaobh cànan. Tha sinn beagan draghail mu dheidhinn an dòigh anns a bheil am bile ag ràdh gum bi an Riaghaltas a’ cur taic ri cultar san fharsaingeachd. A bheil sin a’ ciallachadh gu bheil e a’ coimhead air stuth nan ealan, a’ toirt a-staigh òrain agus bàrdachd agus stuth mar sin, an àite a bhith a’ coimhead air dòighean anns a bheilear a’ brosnachadh a’ chànan gu bhith ga chleachdadh gu làitheil anns gach suidheachadh? Sin am beachd aig Clì. Chan eil sinn cinnteach mun dòigh anns an cuirear molaidhean an Riaghaltais an gnìomh. Mar eisimpleir, a bheil iad ann airson a bhith a’ cur taic ri foghlam anns na sgoiltean? Am bi cothrom ann airson a h-uile duine a bhith ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig mar chòir reachdail an àite a bhith dìreach a’ strì airson ghoireasan mar seo?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

The issue is not just the word “culture”, but its meaning in respect of language. We are a bit worried about how the bill says that the Executive supports culture in general. Does that mean that it is looking at the arts or matters that involve language and poetry, instead of ways in which the language can be developed to be used in daily situations? That is what Clì is examining. Clì is not sure how the Executive’s recommendations will be put into action. Are they intended to support education in schools, or will everybody have an opportunity to learn Gaelic as a valid right, as I said? Clì strives for such facilities.

10:00

The Convener: Are the two matters necessarily contradictory? I presume that the ability to learn, enjoy and use Gaelic is much enhanced if it can be taken in its cultural context.

Pam Talbot: Chan eil sinn an aghaidh context mar sin idir. Tha Clì dìreach beagan draghail gun cuirear cudthrom dìreach air rudan cultarach an àite a bhith a’ dèanamh cinnteach gum bi cothroman ann airson an cànan fhèin ionnsachadh. Am bi fianais ann gu bheil an cànan freagarrach airson a h-uile suidheachadh ann am beatha làitheil, mar ann an àiteachan poblach agus ann a bhith a’ dèiligeadh ri buidhnean agus a’ dèiligeadh ri daoine anns an àite-obrach agus stuth mar sin anns an fharsaingeachd? Ann an dòigh, tha i eadar-dhealaichte bhon taic a bhios an Riaghaltas a’ cur ri stuth cultarach san fharsaingeachd. A bheil sin a’ dèanamh ciall?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That is not the context that we are talking about. As I said, Clì is a bit worried that we are putting too much emphasis on cultural matters, rather than on ensuring that there are opportunities for the language to be learned. The language is suitable for every situation in our daily lives, such as in public places, in dealing with organisations and with people and in the workplace. In a way, that is different from the support that the Executive gives for cultural situations. Does that make sense?

The Convener: I follow you. I will ask one technical question. The last paragraph of your letter to the committee says:

“attention needs to be given to **knowledge [experience], culture and ethnic diversity** when appointing members”

of the Gaelic board. I am not sure what the objective of that is and what you want to happen that is not happening.

Pam Talbot: Tha sinn dèidheil gum bi beachd bho gach ceàrn den choimhearsnachd a’ tighinn chun a’ bhùird agus gum bi am bòrd a’ coimhead air gach suidheachadh. Mar eisimpleir, feumaidh am bòrd a bhith a’ coimhead air an dòigh anns a bheil foghlam air a sholarachadh air feadh Alba air fad. Tha sinn dèidheil gum bi beachdan bho dhaoine aig a bheil sealladh eadar-dhealaichte air a’ chùis. Sin an rud a tha sinn a’ ciallachadh anns an litir a fhuair a’ chomataidh mìos no dhà air ais.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We would like people from every quarter of the community to join the board so that it considers every situation. For example, the board will consider the ways in which education is provided throughout Scotland. We would really like a few people who have a different vision of the situation. That is what I think that we mean. That was in the letter that the committee received last month.

The Convener: Do you mean that people from throughout Scotland should be appointed to the board and that they need not even be people with a Gaelic background?

Pam Talbot: Nuair a tha thu a’ coimhead air an dòigh anns a bheil luchd-ionnsachaidh sgapte air fad, chan eil iad a’ tighinn dìreach bho àiteachan no sgìrean tradiseanta mar na h-Eileanan Siar agus a’ Ghaidhealtachd. Tha iad a’ tighinn bho àiteachan mar Ghlaschu is Dùn Èideann agus bho phòcaidean eile air feadh Alba. Nuair a tha am bile a’ bruidhinn mu dheidhinn cur air dòigh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, thathar a’ smaoineachadh an toiseach mu dheidhinn dìreach sgìrean far a bheil Gàidhlig ann bho thùs, ach tha tòrr iarrtas ann an àiteachan eadar-dhealaichte leithid na Crìochan agus taobh an iar Alba agus Alba a deas. Tha ùidh mhòr anns a’ Ghàidhlig

anns na h-àiteachan mar sin. A bheil sin a' freagairt ris na bha sibh ag iarraidh?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

They would not just be people from places such as the Western Isles. Learners are spread throughout the country and do not come just from traditional places such as the islands and the Gaidhealtachd. Learners come from places such as Glasgow and Edinburgh. Other pockets of learners exist throughout Scotland.

When the bill speaks about putting Gaelic-medium education in order, to begin with, we think of areas where Gaelic has been spoken from time immemorial, but many other places, such as the Borders and the south-west coast of Scotland, have a great interest in Gaelic. Is that the answer that you wanted?

The Convener: That is fine. Thank you.

Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I am interested in your views about equal status for Gaelic. The bill would require the bòrd's functions to be

"exercised with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language".

What is the difference between what you call for and what the bill proposes?

Pam Talbot: Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gum bi diofaran mòra ann. Bhon eòlas aig dùthchannan eile, chan eil inbhe thèarainte an còmhnaidh a' ciallachadh gum bi cothrom ann airson cleachdadh a' chàinain. Mar eisimpleir, nuair a choimheadas tu air an t-suidheachadh ann an Èirinn, far an d'fhuair inbhe thèarainte bliadhnaichean air ais, chì thu nach robh sin an còmhnaidh soirbheachail dhan strì airson a' càinain. An e sin an rud a tha sibh a' ciallachadh?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

There would be a big difference. We have learned from the experiences of other countries that it is not easy to secure equal status. There must be opportunities for using the language. In Ireland, for example, the Irish language achieved secure status a long time ago and has been very successful, through striving for the language. Is that what you mean?

Dr Murray: I am interested in the practical implications. Would the approach operate in the same way throughout Scotland or would there be differences between different parts of Scotland in what was understood by equal status?

Pam Talbot: Tha mi cinnteach gum bi diofaran mòra ann. Is dòcha gum bi na daoine aig nach eil Gàidhlig a' coimhead air a' chànan ann an dòigh eadar-dhealaichte ma tha inbhe co-ionannachd ann. Tha mi cinnteach gun dèanadh sin diofar mòr

an àite dìreach inbhe thèarainte. Tha e ceart gu leòr a bhith a' cur inbhe thèarainte air pàipear agus a bhith ag ràdh gu bheil Gàidhlig na cànan oifigeil, ach chan eil sin a' ciallachadh gum bi daoine ga cleachdadh ann an aon dòigh 's nan robh inbhe co-ionannachd ann. Is e dìreach ceum nas àirde a thaobh a' chàinain.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I think that there would be big differences. People who do not speak Gaelic might regard the language differently. The securing of equal status, rather than just secure status, would make a big difference. It is all very well to provide for secure status on paper and to say that Gaelic is an official language with secure status, but equal status would be a higher status.

Dr Murray: I represent Dumfries. As you know, Gaelic was not traditionally part of the history of Dumfries and Galloway, although I accept that many people might well be interested in Gaelic language and culture. Dumfries and Galloway Council is concerned about what it might be required to do if Gaelic were to be given equal status. This might be an extreme example, but the council might be reluctant to publish all its committee papers in Gaelic, given that very few people in the region read Gaelic.

Pam Talbot: Chan eil sinn ag ràdh gum bu chòir a h-uile rud a tha sgrìobhte a bhith anns a' Ghàidhlig. Is dòcha gum biodh sin glè mhi-phragtaigeach. Cha bhiodh sin na dhòigh mhath airson airgead a chleachdadh. Chan eil airgead gu leòr ann, mar a tha fios aig a h-uile duine. Bu chòir cothrom a bhith ann airson a bhith a' gabhail cothrom air a' chànan ma tha iartas ann. Tha dà fhacal a tha am bile a' cleachdadh—gum bi "iartas reusanta" ann—ceart. Sin cnag na cùise, ach dè tha sin a' ciallachadh? Tha mi ag aideachadh gur e ceist dhoirbh a fhreagairt ann an sgìre mar an sgìre agaibh.

Tha mi eòlach air daoine anns an sgìre sin aig a bheil ùidh anns a' Ghàidhlig, agus tha iad a' sireadh ghoireasan mar chlasaichean oidhche, cothrom air teagasg agus goireasan teagaisg. Tha sibh ceart gur dòcha nach bi iartas mòr ann airson a' chàinain ann am beatha phoblach an sgìre sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

All written material would not have to be published in Gaelic as you described. That might be impractical and would not be a good way of using money. There is not enough money, as everyone knows, but there should be an opportunity for everyone to take advantage of the language. I am sure that the bill uses the correct words: the heart of the matter is whether there is a need and a reasonable demand for the language. I agree that you raise a difficult question about

areas such as yours. I know people in your area who are interested in Gaelic and would like to attend night classes, for example, but you are right to say that there might not be great public demand for Gaelic in your area.

Dr Murray: Part of the rationale behind the bill is to allow for different approaches to be taken in different parts of the country. In Dumfries and Galloway, for example, the emphasis might be on opportunities for adult learners or on offering the Gaelic language as a second language in schools. Other areas might have a different emphasis. If Gaelic were to be afforded equal status, would councils and other public authorities still be able to develop the language in a way that was appropriate to their area? Is it necessary to say that Gaelic has equal status to be able to do that?

Pam Talbot: Tha bòrd Chli air fad den bheachd gum biodh e fada nas fheàrr nan robh inbhe nas àirde ann an àite dìreach inbhe thèarainte. Tha inbhe thèarainte ag ràdh gu bheil an cànan oifigeil, ach chan eil sin ag ràdh gum bu chòir a h-uile cothrom a bhith ann airson an cànan a chleachdadh. Tha mi a' tuigsinn glè mhath na tha sibh ag ràdh nach bi iarrtas mòr a' dol air adhart anns an sgìre agaibh fhèin. Is dòcha gu bheil sibh ceart. Tha Cli glè mhothachail air na suidheachaidhean eadar-dhealaichte bho sgìre gu sgìre. Mar eisimpleir, bidh an t-iarrtas airson a' chànan fada nas àirde ann an àite mar na h-Eileanan an Iar agus a' Ghaidhealtachd.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I am of the opinion, as is the management board, that it would be far better if Gaelic had a higher status rather than just secure status. With secure status the language would be official, but that does not mean that people would have every opportunity to use it. I understand when you say that there might not be big demand in your area. Perhaps you are right. Cli is aware that areas are different and that demand in places such as the Western Isles is much greater.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): I have a similar question to Elaine Murray's. What would be the difference in practice between the planning approach to education that is taken in the bill and a rights-based approach that says that all parents and pupils have a right to Gaelic-medium education?

Pam Talbot: Tha mi duilich. An can sibh sin a-rithist?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Could you say that again, please?

Mr Macintosh: What would be the difference in practice? Hopefully, the bill will secure Gaelic, encourage more Gaelic learners and encourage the culture as well as the language to flourish. If

you were to amend the bill to establish a right to Gaelic-medium education, as opposed to imposing a duty on local authorities to support Gaelic-medium education, what would the difference be in practice?

Pam Talbot: Ma choimheadas tu air na rudan aig a bheil dleastanas aig comhairle a thaobh a bhith a' cur air dòigh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, tha an dleastanas sin a' neartachadh oidhirpean an ùghdarrais a bhith a' cur air dòigh stuth airson luchd-ionnsachaidh. Chan eil e dìreach ag ràdh gu bheil còir aig a h-uile duine a bhith a' faighinn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Bhiodh e fada nas fheàrr nan robh faclan nas làidire gan cleachdadh agus nan robh reachdas an Riaghaltas nas làidire anns a' chiad dol-a-mach. A bheil sibhse a' smaoineachadh gum bi trioblaid ann ma tha an dara dòigh a' gabhail àite?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

If there is a duty on councils to provide Gaelic-medium education, that will strengthen the provision that is made, but it will not mean that everyone has the right to Gaelic-medium education. It would be far better to use stronger words for the status in the first instance. Do you think that there might be a problem if the second route is taken?

Mr Macintosh: No, I think that your aim and the aim of the Executive to promote Gaelic are the same. The issue is whether the approach that is taken in the bill is the right one, or whether we should go for the approach that Cli supports, which is a rights-based approach.

Is there any other area of education where people have a right similar to the right that you are talking about to be educated in the medium of Gaelic? All children and parents enjoy a range of rights in education, and they are common to all, but is there a specific area of education where there is a right that is comparable to the right that you are asking us to introduce for Gaelic-medium education?

Pam Talbot: Cha do thuig mi air fad a' cheist a tha sibh a' faighneachd dhomh. Dè tha sibh a' ciallachadh le seòrsa pàirtean den fhoghlam? Am minich sibh sin?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I do not understand totally what you are asking me. What do you mean by another part of education? Could you explain?

Mr Macintosh: Certainly. The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 introduced a range of rights for all children, but we do not come from a tradition in this country of rights to education. Establishing specific rights to specific types of education might be the right way to go,

but it might also open up other areas, so we might wish to extend rights within education to other groups.

Pam Talbot: A bheil sibh a' smaoin eachadh air luchd-labhairt de chànanan eile mar Urdu?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Are you thinking of speakers of other languages such as Urdu?

10:15

Mr Macintosh: No, not at all. The important thing to consider is the impact of the bill and whether it will achieve its objectives. The drafters of the bill have taken a planning approach, rather than a rights-based approach. We will be able to quiz the Executive about why it has taken that approach, but it would be good to hear reasons why the planning approach will not achieve what it is supposed to achieve and why we need to take a rights-based approach. I cannot see what taking a rights-based approach would do that taking the planning approach would not do, given that a planning approach supposedly provides the flexibility to reflect the different demands in different parts of the country. The right to an education in the Western Isles is not necessarily going to be exercised in the same way as it would be in places such as Dumfries and Galloway.

Pam Talbot: Feumaidh mi aideachadh nach eil mi a' tuigsinn carson nach eil sibh toilichte leis an dòigh anns a bheil Clì Gàidhlig agus daoine eile a' coimhead air còraichean dhaoine airson foghlam air fad. Nar beachd-sa, bidh an obair fada nas èifeachdaich ma tha faclan agus obair nas làidire ann, an àite dìreach a bhith a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn dealbhachadh cànan agus dealbhachadh na dòigh anns a bheil foghlam air a sholarachadh do chloinn agus do dh'inbich. Chan eil sinn a' faicinn gum bi trioblaid ann.

Ma tha sibh ag iarraidh tuilleadh fiosrachaidh mu dheidhinn sealladh Chlì, faodaidh sinn sin a chur sìos ann am pìos-sgrìobhaidh, a mhinicheas ann an dòigh nas mionaidich carson a tha sinn a' coimhead air cùisean mar seo. Am biodh sin freagarrach?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I must admit that I do not understand why you are not happy with the way in which we at Clì Gàidhlig view the rights of people to education in general. In my opinion, the work would be much more effective if much stronger words were used and work was going on instead of people saying, "We are devising a plan. We are considering the way in which we are providing for education for children and adults." We do not think there will be a problem. If you would like more information on Clì's vision, we could provide a written submission,

which would set out more practically the way that we view the situation. Would that be useful?

Mr Macintosh: That would be useful. I am not necessarily against taking the rights-based approach. I am just asking for your views on why it would be more effective. I am asking you to provide evidence that we could mull over and put to the Executive about why a rights-based approach would be better than a planning approach. You should not take my questions as hostile.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): I want to pursue that a bit further. The idea is being presented that the planning approach will allow more co-operation between organisations, whereas there is a danger that the rights-based approach would create confrontation, with people, quite rightly, demanding their rights. What do you think about the Executive's argument that taking a planning approach—rather than a straightforward rights-based approach to do with fairness and justice—allows co-operation and is about encouraging and enabling?

Pam Talbot: A bheil sibh a' smaoin eachadh gum bi strì eadar an dà choimhearsnachd mar thoradh air sealladh mar sin? An e sin na tha sibh ag ràdh?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Do you think that there might be strife between the two communities as a result of this vision? Is that what you are saying?

Fiona Hyslop: Others are presenting that view, but I am not saying that it is my view. We have to work out why the Executive has come up with the planning approach instead of the rights-based approach and consider the merits and demerits of it in law and in practice. The argument has been presented that the planning approach is more co-operative and consensual than the rights-based approach. Scottish education was founded on rights, so it is not alien to have a rights-based system.

Pam Talbot: Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil obair a' gabhail àite tro dealbhachadh. Tha mi a' tuigsinn dè tha sibh ag ràdh. Ann an dòigh, bidh cothrom ann airson na dà bhuidhinn a thighinn còmhla, an àite a bhith a' strì an aghaidh a chèile a thaobh foghlam. Aig an aon àm, is dòcha gu bheil trioblaid ann nach eil na dòighean cho cinnteach ma tha thu a' gabhail an dòigh dealbhachaidh an àite an dòigh a thaobh còraichean dhaoine. Sin an rud a tha mi ag ràdh. Is dòcha gum bi prògraman agus stuth mar sin gan dealbhachadh, ach is dòcha nach bi iad gan cur an gnìomh. Chan eil cinnt ann gum bi a h-uile rud air a chur an gnìomh ma tha thu a' coimhead air an stuth bho shealladh dòigh dealbhachaidh. Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil sin a' dèanamh ciall.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I understand. I am sure that work is going on through planning, but in a way, there could be an opportunity for the two groups to come together instead of being against each other regarding education. Perhaps there is a problem that the ways are not so certain if a planning approach rather than a rights-based approach is taken. Perhaps programmes will be planned but not put into action. There is no certainty that everything will be put into play if a planning approach is taken. I hope that that makes sense.

Fiona Hyslop: It is about the delivery of the plan, not the plan itself.

The Convener: I want to pursue that a little because we are having some difficulty in getting to the heart of the matter. The constitution of the Soviet Union of 1936 was the most amazing document ever; all the rights were in it, but no one got those rights. There are some limitations and there is a big difference between the theory and the practice. In this instance, there are quite a lot of limitations of resource. There are not enough primary and secondary teachers of the Gaelic language and there are not enough translators. There is a whole series of issues that would make the bringing about of the right to something much more difficult. The Executive is trying to look at each part of the country to see what the priorities are. It is trying to increase the resource over time and to make sure that we are able to deliver whatever the priorities are in those particular areas. What is wrong with such an approach?

Pam Talbot: Aig deireadh an latha, cò bhios a' dèanamh a' cho-dhùnaidh air an iarrtas a tha anns gach sgìre? An e daoine taobh a-staigh coimhearsnachd na Gàidhlig no daoine taobh a-muigh? Nì sin diofar mòr a thaobh nan co-dhùnaidhean sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

At the end of the day, who will be making the decision? What kind of demand is there in each area? Who is thinking about people within the Gaelic community, or is it all about people outwith the Gaelic community? That makes a big difference to such decisions.

The Convener: Does the shape of the plan not give powers to the Gaelic board and to the elected local authority in that particular area to have a large part in such decisions?

Pam Talbot: Fon bhile, tha am facal mu dheireadh leis na h-ùghdarrasan an àite leis a' bhòrd fhèin. Tha sin a' dèanamh diofar. Ann an dòigh, a bheil sibh dìreach a' faighinn a-mach rudan anns a bheil duilgheadasan a thaobh sin?

A bheil sin a' dèanamh ciall? A bheil sibh a' tuigsinn an rud a tha mi a' feuchainn ri ràdh?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

In the bill, the last word is with the local authorities rather than with the board itself. That makes a difference. It is with the way in which people find out about situations that there are difficulties. Does that make sense?

The Convener: I think so. We have given you a hard time on that one. We will move on to a slightly different aspect.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): I have a question about distance learning. If only one, two or three pupils from a school in the Borders or the south of Scotland, for example, want to learn Gaelic and there is no Gaelic teacher, do you agree that the use of technology through videoconferencing and distance learning could play an important role?

Pam Talbot: Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil sin uabhasach cudthromach. Nuair a thòisich mise air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh, rinn mi cùrsaichean tro foghlam aig astar a bha uabhasach math. Bidh sin na phàirt uabhasach cudthromach den obair, gu h-àraidh anns na coimhearsnachdan a tha sgapte. Ma tha dìreach aon duine ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig, bidh e fada nas fheàrr gum bi e na phàirt de lìonra nan colaistean mar Oilthigh na Gaidhealtachd a tha a' crochadh gu ìre mhòr air stuthan teicnigeach mar sin. Tha mi ag aontachadh ribh mu dheidhinn sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Certainly. That is very important. When I started learning Gaelic, my initial course was through distance learning, which is certainly an excellent way of learning. It is a vital part of the work, particularly in scattered communities. As you have indicated, in any area there might be just one person learning the language so distance learning would be a much more practical approach. The network of colleges that are part of the UHI Millennium Institute depends on those technical facilities. I agree with you.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The minister gave evidence to the committee last week that a study into that subject is on-going, which is encouraging.

From your point of view, would it be preferable to have a teacher wherever possible? If, however, there are insufficient resources to provide a teacher in a particular locality, or insufficient demand on the local authority to provide a teacher, is distance learning a useful way to take matters forward?

Pam Talbot: Gu dearbh, bhiodh e na thaghadh glè fheumail. Chan e an dòigh as fheàrr—bhiodh e fada nas fheàrr nam biodh tidsear ann gu pearsanta—ach mura h-eil dòigh eile ann, bhiodh e fada nas fheàrr a bhith a' cleachdadh stuth teicnigeach ann am foghlam aig astar.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Certainly. That would be a useful option. It would probably not be the most effective way of learning—the most effective way is to have a teacher on a one-to-one basis—but if there is no other option it would be effective to use technology and distance learning.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Are you aware of many cases of good practice in distance learning of Gaelic in the Highlands and Islands?

Pam Talbot: Tha tòrr ann. Mar eisimpleir, tha Sabhal Mòr Ostaig anns an Eilean Sgitheanach a' cleachdadh stuth mar sin. Tha Clì glè mhothachail air cùl an cùrsa-inntrigidh a tha a' dol air adhart an-dràsta. Tha an cùrsa air a bhith uabhasach soirbheachail, le daoine a' gabhail pàirt bho air feadh Alba agus na Rìoghachd Aonaichte air fad agus bho thall thairis. Tha e air a bhith uabhasach soirbheachail bhon a chaidh a stèidheachadh bho chionn trì bliadhna. Tha an cùrsa sin a' cleachdadh an eadar-lìon agus an fòn airson tutorials. Sin fianais gu bheil stuth mar sin ag obair ann an dòigh glè mhath.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, which is the Gaelic college on Skye, uses such material in teaching the language and that work is very successful. People throughout Scotland use the course, and even people from abroad, so it has been very successful since it was established about three years ago. The college uses the internet, with on-line tutorials, and the phone. That is evidence that that kind of course works.

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): Should the issue of teacher supply be left to the plans?

Pam Talbot: Dè an dòigh eile airson coimhead air solarachadh thidsearan?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

What other way is there to look at the matter of specifying the supply of teachers?

Mr McAveety: So you want the issue to be addressed in the bill.

Pam Talbot: Bidh. Tha e cudthromach gum bi cùrsaichean-trèanaidh ann agus gu bheil maoinachadh ann air an son. Aig deireadh an latha, bidh an dòigh anns a bheil a' chlann air an teagasg anns na sgoiltean a' crochadh air gum bi tidsearan gu leòr ann. Mar sin, tha feum air cùrsaichean-trèanaidh airson daoine anns na h-aonadan Gàidhlig anns na sgoiltean.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Yes. It is important that training courses are provided and that there is funding for them. At the

end of the day, the way in which pupils are taught in schools is dependant on there being sufficient teachers to meet the demand. Therefore, there is a need for training courses for people in the schools and the Gaelic-medium units.

Mr McAveety: If local authorities have endeavoured to pull together Gaelic plans that include the teacher supply issue, worked with training colleges and perhaps invested in new technology as a way in, would that not be a reasonable defence if they could not provide specifically for the demand that might emerge in parts of the country where, historically, demand has not been great? If local authorities have made reasonable efforts, perhaps they should not be considered in breach of whatever legislation emerges.

Pam Talbot: A-rithist, tha e a' crochadh air an fhacal "reusanta". Tha e na fhacal glè dhoirbh a bhith a' mìneachadh dè tha e a' ciallachadh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Again, that depends on what is reasonable. It is difficult to define what "reasonable" means in relation to demand.

Mr McAveety: The two dilemmas that face members of the committee are, first, the search for a reasonable definition of "reasonable" and, secondly, the meaning of culture. I spent a period of time involved in the culture portfolio and I assure you that my understanding of culture was not necessarily the same as the understanding of others in the sector. We need to nail down those two issues accurately, as best we can, and I wonder how we should deal with them. From the presentation that you gave earlier, I did not get a sense of how you think culture should be reflected in the bill. I hear the word a lot but I do not necessarily have any comprehension of it in the context of the bill.

Pam Talbot: Mar a thuirt mi na bu tràithe, chan eil Clì an aghaidh taic bhon Riaghaltas a bhith a' dol do chultar san fharsaingeachd, ach chan eil cultar agus cànan nan aon rud. Tha cànan na phàirt cudthromach de chultar, ach chan e an aon rud a tha ann. Bu chòir dhuinn a bhith a' dèiligeadh ris an dà rud ann an dòigh fa leth, an àite a bhith dìreach a' cur cànan còmhla ri cultar anns an fharsaingeachd.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

As I said earlier, Clì is not opposed to Government support going to culture in general but culture and language are not the same thing. Language plays a large part in culture but they are not the same. They should be dealt with separately and in different ways instead of being lumped together.

Mr McAveety: That is the dilemma. When you engage with folk in different parts of Scotland who care passionately about sustaining Gaelic, much of the discussion is about how the language and the culture are almost inextricably linked. That engenders a passionate debate for those of us who do not come from a Gaelic tradition, as the point is made powerfully that a simple distinction should not be made between the two. I do not think that there is an easy answer to the question, if there is an answer at all. That is the real problem for most of us when we explore this issue.

10:30

Pam Talbot: Tha mi ag aontachadh ribh gu ìre, ach aig an aon àm chan eil e freagarrach a bhith a' dèiligeadh ri Gàidhlig ann an dòigh cultarach a-mhàin. Tha làn fhios aig a h-uile duine ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig gum bi cultar agus cànan cho dlùth ri chèile 's tha e glè dhoirbh a bhith a' dèanamh sgaradh eadar a dhà. Aig an aon àm, ma choimheadas sinn dìreach air na cùisean a tha sinn a' deasbad an-dràsta, chan eil e fìor a ràdh gum bu chòir dhuinn a bhith a' coimhead air stuth dìreach bho shealladh cultarach, oir tha cultar na choncept fada nas fharsainghe na cànan. Mar eisimpleir, chan eil fhios agam cò thuirt e, ach chuala mi an t-seachdain a chaidh bho dhuine a bha a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn dùthchannan ann an Roinn Eòrpa an ear. Thuirt esan gu bheil iad a' seinn òrain dìreach ann an cànan aca fhèin ach tha an cànan a' bàsachadh.

Tha mi an dòchas gu bheil sin a' dèanamh ciall.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I agree with you to a certain extent. At the same time, it is not appropriate for us to deal with Gaelic only in a cultural way. In the Gaelic world, we all know that language and culture are closely intertwined and that it is very difficult to separate them. Nevertheless, it is not true that we should consider the matters that we have just debated only from a cultural point of view, because culture is a much wider concept than just language. I will provide members with an example. I do not know who said it, but last week I heard someone who was talking about European countries say, "We are singing a song in our language, but the language is dying." Does that make sense? I hope that it does.

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I want to ask about funding, which links back to the issue of the supply of teachers. I understand that the Gaelic development fund will have a budget of roughly £1.75 million, £350,000 of which will go to Bòrd na Gàidhlig to assist public bodies in producing their plans. The remaining £1.4 million will go to public bodies to enable them to do that. Additional money is being made available to help

with the preparation of plans. The existing Gaelic-specific grant is about £3.7 million and goes to 21 local authorities, although only 14 of them have primary school Gaelic provision. There is anxiety that the preparation of the plans, for which £1.4 million has been put aside, may generate more demands on the Gaelic-specific grant. How do you think that demand is likely to emerge? What might the resource implications be?

Pam Talbot: An e iarrtas air feadh Alba a tha sibh a' ciallachadh?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Are you referring to demand throughout Scotland?

Ms Alexander: Yes.

Pam Talbot: Tha e fìor a ràdh, mar a tha làn fhios againn, gu bheil iarrtas eadar-dhealaichte bho sgìre gu sgìre. Mar a tha fios aig a h-uile duine, tha ùidh anns a' Ghàidhlig a' dol suas ann an àiteachan far nach eil Gàidhlig na phàirt de tradisean na sgìre. Aig an aon àm, tha sinn glè mhothachail nach eil maoineachadh mòr ann airson solarachadh ghoireasan airson a' chàin. Is dòcha gum bu chòir dhuinn a bhith a' coimhead gu cothromach air an dòigh anns a bheil an t-iarrtas diofaraichte bho sgìre gu sgìre. Ann an àiteachan far nach eil tòrr iarrtas ann, is dòcha nach bu chòir dhuinn cleachdadh tòrr den mhaoineachadh a tha a' tighinn bhon Riaghaltas. Tha feum ann a bhith a' coimhead air a' phlana bho shealladh Alba air fad.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I understand. As we all know, demand varies from area to area. You are right about that. At the same time, as everyone is aware, interest in Gaelic is increasing in areas that are not traditional Gaelic-speaking areas. We are very aware that there is not much funding to facilitate access to the language. Perhaps we should consider the way in which demand varies from area to area. Perhaps areas where there is not much demand should not receive the same amount of Government funding as areas where there is greater demand. Planning should be on a nationwide basis.

Ms Alexander: I want to establish what the key constraint is in local authorities that are in receipt of the Gaelic-specific grant. I am thinking of my own local authority, Renfrewshire, which is in receipt of the Gaelic-specific grant but does not use it for pre-school, primary or secondary provision or, as far as I am aware, for the promotion of Gaelic among adult learners. Is the issue in local authorities such as Renfrewshire or the Ayrshires an absence of demand from parents, or is the absence of a supply of teachers constraining the emergence of a primary unit, for example?

Pam Talbot: Tha an dà chuid ann, agus tha an aon rud a' neartachadh an rud eile. Tha e fìor a ràdh nach bi daoine a' tighinn gu clasaichean mura h-eil tidsearan ann. Chan eil mi glè eòlach air an t-suidheachadh anns an sgìre agaibh fhèin, ach tha mi eòlach air an t-suidheachadh ann an sgìrean eile. Ma tha daoine ann aig a bheil ùidh anns a' Ghàidhlig agus gun chlasaichean-oidhche air an son, bidh iad a' feuchainn clas no dhà a chur air dòigh, ach bidh iad a' call ùidh às dèidh ùine mura h-eil tòrr ghoireasan ann no mura h-eil tidsearan ann fad an t-siubhail. Ann an dòigh, tha an aon rud a' crochadh air an rud eile.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

There are probably two parts to that, and one strengthens the other. If there are no teachers, then nobody will come forward for classes. I do not know your area, but I am aware of situations in other areas where people have an interest in Gaelic. There might be no evening classes, and people might try to set up a couple of classes. After a time, if there are still not many facilities or teachers, people lose the interest that they had. One thing feeds the other and is dependant on it.

Ms Alexander: Is your organisation monitoring the total of the demands that have been made by parents who have written to authorities, looking for Gaelic-medium education, but then learning that it is not possible because of the constraints on supply? Are you aware of any such monitoring by any other organisation? How easy is it to get a sense of what the suppressed demand might be? Has that been well surveyed, and do you expect that the bill will help to monitor the situation more systematically in future?

Pam Talbot: Tha sinn an dòchas gum bi sin ag èirigh mar thoradh bhon bhile. Mar a thuirt sibh, bho chionn bhliadhnachan air ais bhathar a' feuchainn sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air an ìre de dh'iarrtas airson na Gàidhlig, ach tha e glè dhoirbh a bhith a' dèanamh measadh air na h-àireamhan air fad. Tha sibh ceart gu bheil feum mòr ann airson cruinneachadh fiosrachadh mar sin ma tha sinn ri chur plana èifeachdach air dòigh. Sin an fhreagairt dhan cheist.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We certainly hope that that will be the case and that it will happen as a result of the bill. Some years ago, we tried to carry out a survey of the level of demand for Gaelic. It is difficult to assess the figures and the statistics but, as you have indicated, there is a great need to collect that information and to process the data. If we do that, we will be in a better position to develop an effective plan.

The Convener: How widespread is your organisation? Do you have a presence or activities in all local authority areas in Scotland?

Pam Talbot: Tha a' bhallrachd againn bho air feadh Alba. Tha an àireamh de bhuill nas àirde ann an cuid de sgìrean na ann an sgìrean eile. Tha tòrr ùidh ann an àiteachan de dh'Alba mar Dhùn Èideann is Glaschu, far a bheil ceanglan teaghlach leis a' Ghaidhealtachd agus far a bheil tòrr stuth a' dol air adhart. Mar eisimpleir, tha sgoil Ghàidhlig ann an Glaschu a chaidh fhosgladh dà no trì bhliadhna air ais. Tha sin air a bhith glè shoirbheachail. Tha a' bhallrachd againn chan ann dìreach bho Alba ach bhon Rìoghachd Aonaichte air fad agus bho thall thairis. Tha a' bhallrachd a' leudachadh a-mach gu dùthchannan eile mar na Stàitean Aonaichte, Canada agus àiteachan eile cuideachd.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We have members throughout Scotland. It is true that our membership is bigger in some areas than in others. There are some places in Scotland where there is a lot of interest, including Edinburgh and Glasgow. In Glasgow, that might be linked to families that have come from the Highlands. A lot of things are happening in those areas. There is a Gaelic school in Glasgow, which was opened two or three years ago, so we have been very successful in those areas. We work not only in Scotland but in the United States and in Europe. Our membership extends to other countries, including the United States and Canada.

The Convener: It is presumably fair to say that there are three areas that we should be considering: the homelands—the west Highlands and the islands in particular; Glasgow, Edinburgh and perhaps Perth, where there is a reasonably significant number of Gaelic speakers or learners; and areas such as Orkney and Shetland, where there is no tradition of Gaelic, but where there is a different tradition. There are also the Borders and, possibly, Dumfries and Galloway, where Gaelic has never been spoken. Different criteria perhaps apply to those areas.

Putting the Gaelic bill to one side, what are the top three practical things that you would like to happen that would enhance the security of the language the most? Would you choose more Gaelic teachers and signposts all over the place?

Pam Talbot: Bhruidhinn sibh air dà rud air an robh sinn a' smaoinichadh. An toiseach, tha sibh ceart gur e tidsearan an rud as cudthromaich a dh'fheumas sinn ma tha sinn gu bhith a' teagasg dhaoine eile a tha a' tighinn don chànan. Tha tòrr iarrtas ann airson barrachd àiteachan air chùrsaichean-trèanaidh far am bi daoine air an trèanadh a bhith nan tidsearan luchd-ionnsachaidh.

Tha e inntinneach gun tug sibh luaidh air stuth mar shoighnichean is bileagan is stuth ann an àiteachan poblach. Feumaidh fianais a bhith ann gu bheil Gàidhlig na phàirt de gach roinn de

bheatha làitheil luchd na Gàidhlig. Tha mi cinnteach nach eil daoine aig nach eil ùidh no eòlas air Gàidhlig mothachail air dè cho cudthromach 's a tha stuth mar shoighnichean agus bileagan anns a' chànan.

Tha Clì a' feuchainn ri cur air dòigh siostam-ionnsachaidh a bheir daoine cothrom a bhith a' faighinn teisteanas bho Chlì fhèin. Anns an dòigh sin, bidh luchd-ionnsachaidh a' faighinn misneachd anns an dòigh anns a bheil iad ag ionnsachadh a' chànan. Tha sinn a' coimhead air plana gus an cànan a sholarachadh anns an dòigh sin. Às dèidh a h-uile rud, tha sinn nar buidheann a tha dìreach a' tòiseachadh a sholarachadh ghoireasan do luchd-ionnsachaidh. Tha sinn a-nis a' dèiligeadh riutha mar phàirt cudthromach den obair againn. A bharrachd air sin, tha sinn a' cur taic ri fileantaich agus ri daoine aig a bheil Gàidhlig bho thùs.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

You have mentioned two issues that we have been discussing. The supply of teachers—to teach others the language—is probably one of the most important. There is a great demand for training courses and places where people can be trained as teachers. You are also correct on signs, leaflets and so on in public areas, providing evidence that Gaelic is part of daily life. People who do not speak Gaelic are not aware of how important those signs and leaflets are, or of the importance of evidence of Gaelic in public life. At Clì, we are considering a plan to implement a learning system that will provide people with an opportunity to get a certificate. That would mean that learners would have confidence in the way in which they were learning the language. At the end of the day, we are an organisation that was set up to provide facilities for learners. Learners are still a very important part of our work, but we also support those who are fluent in the language.

Fiona Hyslop: I have a point that may or may not be technical. Compared to the draft bill, the bill as introduced says that it should apply to devolved functions of Scottish public authorities only, whereas the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Official Languages Act 2003 in Ireland listed public bodies. The problem is that the bill, if passed as it stands, would not apply to bodies such as the Inland Revenue and the Department for Work and Pensions, and people probably have more connection with the functions of those bodies than they do with the devolved functions of Scottish public authorities. What is your view on that? Is it related to your definition of equal status? You may argue that the bodies to which the bill applies would not necessarily need to be listed if there was equal status.

Pam Talbot: Tha mi cinnteach gu bheil sin na phàirt cudthromach. Tha fios againn nach bi

dleastanas air buidhnean mar sin a bhith a' solarachadh plana Gàidhlig. Nar beachd-sa, tha sin na bheàrn mhòr. Bu chòir an dleastanas sin a bhith ann, ach chan eil fhios againn air an fhreagairt don cheist doirbh sin. Nar beachd-sa, bu chòir buidhnean mar sin a bhith a' gabhail pàirt ann am plana nàiseanta a' chànan.

An e sin an rud a bha thu ag iarraidh?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I am sure that that is very important. We know that such organisations do not have a duty to specify Gaelic plans and, in our opinion, that is a huge gap. That duty should be there. It is very difficult, and we do not know the answer to that question. However, in our opinion, those organisations should participate in a national plan. Does that answer your question?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes. Thank you.

The Convener: Pam, I will finish by going back to the point that Ken Macintosh raised about information on the practical implications of the bill. If, after reflecting on this morning's evidence, you can help us further on that, we would find that useful. I am sure that committee members are concentrating on practical implications such as what we can do to help the Gaelic language, how the bill fulfils that desire, where the gaps are that we should be concentrating on and what practical moves we can make to secure and sustain the language. It would be useful if you could write to the clerk with any further thoughts on such aspects.

You have been our first witness on the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill and, as we are still struggling with the issues, you have probably had quite a hard time from us. We are extremely grateful for your input—it has been very useful. Thank you for your attendance.

Pam Talbot: Mòran taing airson èisteachd.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Thank you very much for listening to me.

10:45

The Convener: Our second panel of witnesses is from Comann nam Pàrant. I welcome Magaidh Wentworth, the national co-ordinator, and Iain MacIlleChiar, a committee member of the organisation. I hope that you will accept my apologies for any deficiencies in the translation of names and things. You are both welcome. Would you like to make an opening statement to supplement your written submission?

Iain MacIlleChiar (Comann nam Pàrant): Bha mise a' dol gur moladh airson cho math 's a bha a' Ghàidhlig agaibh an toiseach. Madainn mhath

dhuibh uile, agus mar a chanas sinn sa Ghàidhlig, a chàirdean, feumaidh mi ur leisgeul iarraidh. Tha mi car coltach ris an Dr Mhoireach oir dhùisg mi madainn an-diugh le tùchadh nam amhaich, agus ma chailleas mi mo ghuth leitheach slighe troimhe, tha mi duilich. Feuchaidh mi cuideachd ri gabhail air mo shocair airson nan teangairean air mo chùlaibh an seo. Cumaidh mi seo caran goirid sgiobalta agus fàgaidh sin barrachd ùine airson cheistean.

Tha mise nam lar-chathraiche air Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta agus tha Magaidh Wentworth na h-oifigeach làn-ùine againn. Is e a tha ann an Comann nam Pàrant ach a' bhuidheann nàiseanta a tha a' riochdachadh nam pàrant aig a bheil clann ann am foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha buill air a' chomataidh nàiseanta againn a tha bho air feadh na h-Alba air an taghadh gu deamocratach leis na meuran ionadail.

Nise, chan eil mi idir coltach ri Mark Anthony; chan ann gur moladh a thàinig mi ach airson a chur an cèill na draghan a tha oirnn mun bhile. Tha sinn a' dèanamh toileachais ge-tà gu bheil, mu dheireadh thall, bile Gàidhlig a' dol a nochdadh sa Phàrlamaid, ach tha uallach oirnn nach eil sa bhile seo ach faileas de na chaidh iarraidh le muinntir na Gàidhlig anns a' chiad àite. An toiseach, is e inbhe oifigeil a dh' iarr sinn; chaidh sin a thanachadh gu "inbhe thèarainte" agus mu dheireadh chaidh uisgeachadh sìos gu "a dh' ionnsaigh inbhe thèarainte".

San fharsaingeachd, chan eil guth air co-ionannachd leis a' Bheurla sa bhile, mar a thuit an neach-labhairt mu dheireadh. Is e puing air leth cudthromach nach eil am bile a' toirt a-steach na roinn prìobhaidich, roinn a bhuail leas gu mòr agus gu trom air a' chloinn, le bùithtean gu h-àraidh, buidhnean saor-thoileach agus a leithid. Mar sin, tha e eu-coltach ri achdan cànan eile ann an dùthchannan eile, leithid Canada, mar eisimpleir.

A thaobh pàirt an fhoghlaim dhen bhile, chan fhaic sinn gu bheil a' chòir as cudthromaiche a tha ann an seo. Is e sin a' chòir aig pàrant air foghlam fhaighinn tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig airson a' phàiste aca, agus ma tha seo fìor a thaobh na bun-sgoile tha e nas fhollaisiche buileach a thaobh na h-àrd-sgoile.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I was going to praise your Gaelic, which is good. Good morning everyone and how are you? That is what we say in Gaelic, friends. I need to ask you to excuse me: I woke this morning with laryngitis, so if I lose my voice halfway through, I am sorry. I will try to take my time for the interpreters behind me. I will keep my comments somewhat short and that will leave time for questions.

I am the vice-chair of Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta and Magaidh Wentworth is a full-time

officer with us. Comann nam Pàrant is a national organisation that represents all parents with children in Gaelic-medium education. The national committee members are chosen democratically from throughout Scotland.

I am not at all like Mark Anthony because I am not here to praise you, but to put in front of you our worries. We are happy that, at long last, a Gaelic bill is going through the Parliament. However, we are worried because the bill deals with only part of what we asked for, as far as Gaelic is concerned. First, the official status for Gaelic that we asked for was thinned down to "secure status", which was then watered down to "working towards secure status".

In general, as the previous speaker said, there is no word in the bill about Gaelic having equal status with English. Another important point is that the bill does not include the private sector, which touches children very much. The bill is not like language legislation in other countries, such as Canada. We do not see in the education part of the bill what we regard as the most important right, which is that every parent should have the right to have Gaelic-medium education for their children. That is true for primary education, but it is even more important for secondary education.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig does not seem to have much authority to propose opportunities and plans. The board must return to the minister for permission or advice before it can put a plan into action. I would very much like the committee to note our worries about that principle.

The Convener: I will try to put the situation in context. You made a comparison with the position in Canada. In due course, we will hear evidence from the Welsh Language Board about the position in Wales. In both those countries, the minority language—if that is the right way in which to describe it—is spoken routinely by a much higher percentage of the population throughout the country. Do any differences arise in Scotland because the position here is different from that in Wales and Canada, which have a different balance of language forces?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi a' tuigsinn gum feum an dòigh anns a bheil na planaichean cànan gan dealbhachadh agus gan cur an gnìomh a bhith eadar-dhealaichte. Ach, mar a chì mise e, feumaidh reachdas sam bith ùghdarras a thoirt dhan t-sluagh, no cha bhi an siostam ag obair nuair a tha rudan gan diùltadh orra. Mar eisimpleir, tha cuid againn glè fhortanach oir tha sinn a' fuireach ann an sgìrean far a bheil deagh rùn aig a' chomhairle is poileasaidh Gàidhlig a tha ga chur an gnìomh agus far a bheil eachdraidh suas ri faisg air 20 bliadhna a-nis de fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Ach tha daoine eile ann nach eil cho fortanach. Tha cuid de na

comhairlean fhathast teagmhach. Tha feadhainn aca air a bhith nàimhdeil tro na bliadhnaichean agus tha iad air bacadh a chur air pàrantan bho bhith a' faighinn foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I understand that the way in which Gaelic language plans are devised must be different, but an act may or may not give status and authority to the people—that depends on how it works. Some of us are fortunate to live in the areas of councils that support Gaelic, put Gaelic plans into action and have had Gaelic-medium education for more than 20 years. Other people are not as fortunate. Some councils remain a bit doubtful and have not been favourable towards Gaelic.

The Convener: Do you support the general approach of having the Gaelic board, the plans and the different approach for each local and public authority, to try to proceed on a structured basis?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi a' dol leis gu mòr. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gur e an rud as cudthromaiche a chunna mi ann am fear de na pàipearan-taighe no na pàipearan-comhairleachaidh a thàinig leis a' bhile gur e an Riaghaltas fhèin a' chiad bhuidheann a dh'fheumas plana a chur ri chèile, a chionn 's gu bheil Riaghaltasan a' tighinn agus a' falbh agus tha luchd-poileataics a' tighinn agus a' falbh. Tha aon chòignear no sianar de mhinistearan Gàidhlig air a bhith againn anns an ùine a tha mise air a bhith an lùib Comann nam Pàrant. Tha e cudthromach gu bheil rudan stèidhichte ann an lagh mar chòraichean agus nach eil e dìreach an urra ri ge b' e cò a tha ann aig an àm an rud a dhèanamh mar a tha e a' dol air adhart.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Yes. I agree with that very much. The most important feature that I saw in a consultation paper that accompanied the bill was that the first group that must produce a plan is the Executive. Executives come and go and politicians come and go. In the time that I have been involved in Comann nam Pàrant, five or six ministers have been responsible for Gaelic. It is important to establish rights in law and not to depend on the present minister to do something.

The Convener: We will explore that more.

Dr Murray: Your written evidence says:

"The Bill should specifically state that Gaelic is an official language in Scotland and will, in principle, be treated equally with English in the conduct of public business."

What would that mean in practice?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Mar a thuirt mi na bu tràithe, dè a thachras mura h-eil buidheann air choreigin

a' cur plana an gnìomh? Ged a bhiodh poileasaidh agus plana cànan aca agus ged a bhiodh Bòrd na Gàidhlig air iarraidh orra a chur an gnìomh, mura h-eil a' bhuidheann fhathast ga dhèanamh, tha e an uair sin an urra ris a' mhinistear. Ma tha ministear làidir gnìomhach ann, glè mhath; dh'fhaodadh gun toireadh e orra sin a dhèanamh. Ach ma tha fear ann nach eil buileach cho dealasach, chan eil seasamh againn ann an lagh. Chan urrainn dhuinn a dhol gu ombudsman no duine eile. Chan eil còraichean sam bith againn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

As I said, what happens if an organisation does not put into practice a policy—even if it has a policy and a Gaelic plan and even if Bòrd na Gàidhlig asks it to put that policy into action? If the minister is strong and principled, he could make the organisation put the policy into practice, but if he is not, the organisation would not do that and we would have no standing in law. We could not approach an ombudsman or anyone else. We would have no rights.

Dr Murray: The situation depends on which public body is involved. Recourse could be had to the Scottish public services ombudsman. Perhaps we will explore with ministers whether the ombudsman would afford that protection.

I was thinking of practical matters. As I said to the previous witness, in Dumfries—which I represent—people have considerable interest in Gaelic but few are conversant in it. In such an area, what practical provision would you expect a public body to make in, for example, court? I have a friend who comes originally from the Western Isles and is a Gaelic speaker. Should he be able to expect to have someone who could speak to him in Gaelic in hospital, for example, if he preferred to speak to a consultant in Gaelic? I know that that is a slightly extreme view, but what are you saying? You state that Gaelic should,

"in principle, be treated equally with English in the conduct of public business."

What does that actually mean to the person on the ground?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Is e Comann nam Pàrant a tha annainn, agus mar sin is ann ri còraichean phàrantan agus clann as motha a tha sinne a' dèiligeadh. Mar eisimpleir, tha poileasaidh air a bhith aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, far a bheil mise a' fuireach, gun tòisich a' chomhairle roinn Ghàidhlig ann an sgoil a tha stèidhichte mar-thà, ma tha ceathrar phàistean aig aois sgoile a bha ag iarraidh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha mi a' smaoinichadh gum biodh sin na dheagh slat-tomhais de dh'iarrrtas air feadh Alba. Ma tha cròileagan air chois far am bi clann nas òige na aois sgoile a' tighinn suas agus ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig, bhiodh tuairmse aig a' chomhairle

gun cumadh roinn Ghàidhlig a' dol agus gum fàsadh i tro na bliadhnaichean ri tighinn. Bha thu a' bruidhinn air an fhacal "practical", agus sin an rud a mholamaid.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We are Comann nam Pàrant, therefore we represent mostly the rights of parents and children. The policy in the Highland Council area, where I live, was that where there were four children of school age, the council would start a Gaelic-medium unit in the local school. That would be a good measure for elsewhere in Scotland, and could be used to establish things like playgroups. The council might have the idea that the Gaelic department would keep going and grow in the years to come. You talked about what is practical. That is what we recommend.

Dr Murray: How would that be different from what the bill proposes for local plans? Surely all those issues could be incorporated into local plans, given that ministers would have the power to direct public bodies if they did not implement their plans. I wonder what the difference would be. Could you explain to me what the difference would be if the bill stated that Gaelic should be treated equally with English? What would be the difference in operation between your approach and the Executive's approach?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi mothachail air fiosrachadh bho thall thairis—leithid Èirinn, far a bheil achd ann—gum feum daoine tilleadh agus tilleadh agus tilleadh chun na cùrsa sin a chionn 's nach eil buidhnean ga chur an gnìomh. Ged is e Gaeilge an cànan oifigeil agus am prìomh chànan ann an Èirinn, b' fheudar do dh'achd cànan a bhith air a thoirt a-staigh an sin a chionn 's nach robh caochladh bhuidhnean Riaghaltas a' cur an dleastanas an gnìomh. Tha fhios agam cuideachd, mar fhear a dh'ionnsaich eachdraidh anns an oilthigh, ma tha thu a' faicinn achd a' nochdadh bliadhna às dèidh bliadhna, tha e a' ciallachadh nach robh e ag obair. Saoilidh mise gu bheil tuilleadh is a' chòir dorsan-teichidh anns a' bhile mar-thà. Faodaidh buidhnean poblach a ràdh, "Uill, chan eil iarrtas ann, agus chan eil gnothach againne ris an sin." Tha e ro fhurasta dhaibh sin a dhèanamh mar a tha e an-dràsta.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I am aware of what has been happening overseas, for example in Ireland, where there is a language act. Often, people have to return to the act because it is not being implemented. Although Gaelic is the main official language, Ireland still had to bring in a language act because the authorities were not fulfilling their duties. I know, having learned history at university, that if an act appears year after year it is not working. There are too many get-outs in the bill that will enable public

organisations to make excuses and say, "We have nothing to do with that." It is too easy for them to do that as it is.

The Convener: There is a difference, which we will need to explore, between what you want in education and what you want in other public spheres.

Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP): I want to explore further the demand for equal status, or co-validity, of the language. It is not just about practicalities, is it? It is about the psychological impact of having a statement that provides equal status for Gaelic. That has a knock-on effect on native Gaelic speakers' confidence that they can progress in life using their language. Is that not what it is all about?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Mar a thuirt thu, tha e co-cheangailte ri modh agus urram agus inbhe air feadh na dùthcha. Ach nuair a thig e gu a h-aon 's gu dhà, mar a their an sean-fhacal againn ann an Gàidhlig, is e am beul a labhras, ach an gnìomh a dhearbhas. Uill, is e an gnìomh a tha a' dearbhadh an seo. Tha sibhse mar Phàrlamaid a' cur an gnìomh gun urrainn dhuinne tighinn an seo agus fianais a thoirt seachad ann an Gàidhlig. Tha sin cudthromach. Tha mi ag aontachadh gu mòr leis an sin. Sin a bha mi a' ciallachadh leis a' bhun-phrionnsabal gu bheil Gàidhlig is Beurla co-ionann ri chèile ann am prionnsabal.

Ann an Alba, cha do dh'fhuiling sinn anns an dòigh san do dh'fhuiling iad sa Chuimrigh, oir bha achd an aghaidh na Cuimris ann aig àm ann an eachdraidh. Ann an Alba, tha achdan air a bhith ann an siud agus an seo ann an eachdraidh nach robh ro bhàigheil, ach cha robh a-riamh achd ann an dubh is an geal ag ràdh gur e ar poileasaidh a bhith a' cur às dhan Ghàidhlig. Nan togradh iad, dh' fhaodadh a h-uile buidheann phoblach ann an Alba a-màireach a' Ghàidhlig a thoirt a-staigh gun bhile no achd sam bith.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Yes. As you said, it is connected with respect and good manners, but when it comes down to it, we have an old proverb in Gaelic—"It is the mouth that speaks, but it is the deed that makes it work." The Parliament is putting that into action by bringing us here and we are giving our evidence in Gaelic. I agree with that very much. In principle, Gaelic and English are equal.

In Scotland, we did not suffer in the same way as people did in Wales. In Scotland, there were acts here and there throughout history but there was never an act in black and white saying, "Our policy is to do away with Gaelic." Every public body in Scotland could bring in Gaelic without any bill or act.

11:00

The Convener: Is there a difference between different parts of Scotland? I can see how equal status—however you define it—could be relevant in areas such as the Western Isles, where there are a significant number of Gaelic speakers; that would also be true to a slightly lesser extent in the Highlands. In other parts of Scotland, however, would equal status be a reality in terms of the psychology that Adam Ingram talked about, or in terms of practical issues such as supply and numbers? Is there not a different concept in other parts of Scotland from what there is in the home territories?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha a' cheist sin ag èirigh ann an dùthchannan eile cuideachd far a bheil cànan nas làidire am pàirt dhen dùthaich na am pàirt eile. Cluinnidh sibh, tha mi cinnteach, ann am fianais Bòrd na Cuimris, gur ann tro planaichean cànan a tha iadsan ag obair cuideachd. Tha iad a' tòiseachadh anns a' chridhe, mar gum biodh, agus ag obair a-mach bho sin.

Mar a thuirt Adam Ingram, tha e a' toirt misneachd do dhaoine a bhith a' faicinn na Gàidhlig gu follaiseach air gnothaichean nàiseanta. Tha cuimhne agam a bhith a' faicinn nan sanasan taobh a-muigh togalach na Pàrlamaid a bha agaibh mus d'fhuair sibh an togalach eireachdail seo, agus bha e gu math follaiseach fiù 's air an telebhisean gun robh a' Ghàidhlig ann. Mar as motha a chì daoine a leithid, is ann as fheàrr. Is dòcha gu bheil sin a' freagairt tè dhe na ceistean aig an Dr Mhoireach. Ann an Dùn Phris agus Gall-Ghaidhealaibh, tha na h-ainmean-àiteachan bho Ghàidhlig, ach nuair a tha mise air làithean-saora an sin, feumaidh mi tomhas dè tha annta, oir chan eil e ag innse dhomh dè a' Ghàidhlig cheart air an son.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That question arises in other countries. Some parts of the country are stronger than others. Again, the Welsh Language Board gave evidence that it has language plans and that is the way in which it works. It starts in the heartland of the language and works outwards.

As Adam Ingram said, people gain confidence by seeing evidence of Gaelic and other national things. I remember seeing notices outside the buildings that the Parliament used before it got this beautiful building and it was evident that there was Gaelic there. It is also evident on television and people need to see more of that. Perhaps that answers Dr Murray's question about Dumfries and Galloway, where place names are in Gaelic. If I am on holiday there, I have to guess what the names are because the Gaelic is not correct.

Mr Macintosh: I want to talk about rights in education. To what extent have parents and pupils

been refused Gaelic-medium education by local authorities in different parts of Scotland? To what extent have their reasonable demands not been met by local authorities in the past?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Feumaidh mi a bhith onarach agus a ràdh gun robh sin a' tachairt barrachd anns na bliadhnaichean a chaidh seachad, ach tha e air tachairt ann an cuid de dh'àiteachan gu mòr. Anns na comhairlean far a bheil foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig stèidhichte, tha an t-eagal air a bhith air oifigich-foghlaim na comhairle ro leudachadh air na tha ann de roinnean Gàidhlig air sàilleabh gainnead luchd-teagaisg. Tha sin air a bhith na chnap-starra cho mòr 's a tha air a bhith ann bhon a thòisich an gnothach.

Gu fortanach, tha sinn a' faicinn feadhainn dhen chiad chloinn a chaidh a-staigh anns na sgoiltean a' tighinn a-mach a-nis nan luchd-teagaisg, ach bheir sin ùine. Tha feum againn air fada a bharrachd chùrsaichean do luchd-teagaisg, an dà chuid cùrsaichean cànan agus cùrsaichean foghlaim. Chan eil na cùrsaichean-oideachaidh dhan luchd-teagaisg anns na colaistean foghlaim—tha iad a-nis nan oilthighean—idir freagarrach airson tidsearan a tha a' dol a-mach a theagasg ann an sgoiltean tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Tha an t-uabhas de ghearain ann mun sin an-dràsta bho na h-oileanaich fhèin a tha air a bhith gan dèanamh o chionn ghoirid.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

To be honest, that used to happen but it still happens in some places. Also, in council areas where there is established Gaelic-medium education, education officers have been afraid to broaden out the areas in which Gaelic is taught because of the shortage of teachers. That has been a big stumbling block since the issue arose.

Fortunately, the first children to start in Gaelic-medium education are now coming out educated and becoming teachers. There ought to be far more courses for teachers and education. The current college and university courses are not suitable for teachers who are going out to teach in Gaelic-medium schools. Recently there has been a lot of complaint and discontent from the students.

Mr Macintosh: It is interesting that you say that. We might get a chance to return to the subject of teacher supply, but I certainly endorse your remarks about needing to supply more teachers. Otherwise, we cannot increase Gaelic learning at all.

I would like to explore the idea that we should use parents' and the community's demand to improve the situation of Gaelic as the force with which to increase the number of Gaelic speakers and to create a more flourishing culture in which Gaelic can exist, following a rights-based approach. To return to a point that the convener

made, it strikes me that that would be appropriate in certain parts of the country. There is clear demand in some areas. It also strikes me that councils in those areas are relatively responsive. In other areas of the country, however, there is no demand. It is not a case of there being parents who are not able to assert their rights; they do not want to assert their rights.

What we need to do—what I think the bill seeks to do—is to stimulate demand and to create a planned approach so as to encourage people to take up Gaelic, rather than thinking that we are somehow refusing people the opportunity. That is my impression. The disparity between the Gaidhealtachd and many parts of the central belt—never mind the Borders—requires different approaches to be taken. Does that echo with your experience in Comann nam Pàrant?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi a' smaoin eachadh, bho latha gu latha—

Mr Macintosh: I am sorry to interrupt. The interpreters cannot hear you for some reason. Your microphone seems to have gone off—it is not your fault. Could you start again?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Dè bha mi ag ràdh a-nis?

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Now, what was I saying?

The Convener: Could you repeat that little bit, if you can remember it? Do you want to go over the question again, Ken?

Mr Macintosh: Some parents want to assert their rights. In other areas of Scotland, there is no demand, and we need to encourage demand, rather than just meet it.

Iain MacIlleChiar: Chan eil cuid dhe na comhairlean a' sgaoileadh fiosrachaidh mar a dh'fhaodadh iad. Ged a tha roinn Ghàidhlig ann an aon sgoil an àiteigin anns an t-siorrachd sin, chan eil am fiosrachadh sin a' dol a-mach dha na sgoiltean eile. Ma tha e a' dol a-mach dha na sgoiltean eile, is dòcha nach eil ceannardan nan sgoiltean ga thoirt seachad dha na pàrantan, air eagal 's gum bi iadsan a' call clann air sàilleabh sin. Mar sin, fiù 's far a bheil foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ann, chan urrainn dhut a ràdh dè iartas a tha ann. Tha a' mhòr-chuid de dhaoine ann an Alba gu tur aineolach mun Ghàidhlig, agus chan eil mi a' cantainn sin le droch chiall. Tha mi a' ciallachadh dìreach nach eil fios aca mu dheidhinn na Gàidhlig. Cha d'fhuair iad fhèin foghlam sam bith anns an sgoil mu dheidhinn na Gàidhlig, gun ghuth air foghlam ann an Gàidhlig no cothrom air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh mar chànan.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Some councils do not distribute information as they ought to or as they could. There might be a

Gaelic department in one school in an area, but the information might not be going out to the other schools. Perhaps the head teachers are not distributing the information to the parents, because they might lose children from their schools as a result. Even where there is Gaelic-medium education, we cannot really say that there is no demand for it. Most people in Scotland are ignorant about the Gaelic language. I do not mean that in a bad way; I mean that they do not know about the language. They did not have any education about Gaelic in school, and they did not have the opportunity to learn the language.

Mr Macintosh: I would agree with that, and I want to pick up on the point about whether we should have a rights-based approach or a planning approach in the bill. If we were to follow a rights-based approach, in what ways would the parental right to a Gaelic-medium education be tempered or qualified? We could introduce a test of reasonableness. Would you wish to introduce any other qualification? How would you interpret a test of reasonableness across Scotland?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi a' smaoin eachadh gur e sin an rud a bha mi ag ràdh na bu tràithe. Tha e air obrachadh mu thuath tro na bliadhnaichean gun robh ceathrar chloinne gu leòr airson an gnothach fhaighinn a' dol. Is e àm uabhasach mì-chinnteach agus cugallach do phàrantan nuair a tha am pàiste eadar trì agus còig. Feumaidh cinnt air choreigin a bhith aca gu bheil an t-aonad Gàidhlig a' dol a leantainn. Anns an fhianais sgriobhte againn, bhruidhinn sinn air siostam foghlaim, agus tuilleadh agus tuilleadh tha sin a' tighinn mar phàirt de shiostam foghlaim na h-Alba. Ma tha teagamh sam bith ann nach eil roinn Ghàidhlig a' dol a dh'fhosgladh, no gu bheil i a' dol a dh'fhosgladh ach cha cum i a' dol ach ma tha clann gu leòr innte no is dòcha gun dùin i an ceann trì bliadhna, chan eil cuid de na pàrantan a' dol a chur an cuid chloinne a-staigh dhan sgoil sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

That is what I was talking about earlier. It worked for us, over the years—up north, anyway. We had four children, and that was enough to get things going. It is an uncertain time for parents when they have a child of between three and five years. They need some kind of certainty that their children's education will follow on, and that there is an education system there. More and more, we are becoming a part of the Scottish system. If there is some doubt that a Gaelic unit will keep going, and if there are not enough children using it, the unit might close after a year or two. Some parents will not send their children to a school where that is the situation.

The Convener: Perhaps this is an obvious point, but is not the issue of Gaelic-medium education central to the debate? If that provision is

enhanced and increased, the language has a basic and strong support on which to build. The important issue is at what point there is a trigger that produces the right to, or the availability of, Gaelic-medium education. That is the essence of what is involved. I wonder whether the substance of the dispute about rights is that you are trying to get to a position in which there is a reasonable level of demand; provision is stabilised, which ensures that people have confidence in it; and that gets the response of sufficient funding to make it happen. Moreover, would not the hope be that there would be Gaelic-medium provision right through education, from nursery to primary, secondary and perhaps even higher education as well? Is that the essence of the Gaelic-medium issue?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Mar a thuirt mi, tha sinn fortanach nach eil an t-uabhas de roinnean Gàidhlig air dùnadh tro na bliadhnaichean, ach tha feadhainn aca air dùnadh. Tha mi toilichte gun do thog thu a' phuing mu dheidhinn foghlam aig ìre àrd-sgoil, a chionn 's gur e cnap-starra mòr eile a tha sin. Tha sinn a' call na cloinne a rinn cho math agus a dh'ionnsaich an cuid Gàidhlig anns a' bhun-sgoil. Nuair a thèid iad dhan àrd-sgoil, mar is trice chan fhaigh iad ach Gàidhlig mar chuspair, agus is dòcha aon chuspair eile—eachdraidh no cruinn-eòlas no rudeigin—suas chun a' cheathramh bliadhna. Chan eil cothrom aca air deuchainnean a ghabhail tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ach ann an Gàidhlig, eachdraidh agus cruinn-eòlas aig an ìre choitcheann. Chan eil an cothrom sin ann aig ìre nas àirde na sin. Anns na 10 bliadhna mu dheireadh, chan eil an t-uabhas de dh'adhartas idir air a bhith ann aig ìre àrd-sgoil.

Na bu tràithe, bha Pam Talbot a' freagairt ceist bho Sheumas Dùbhghlas-Hamilton mu teicneolas agus conaltradh bhideo. Bidh e inntinneach fhaicinn dè thachras leis an teicneolas, ach tha mi a' smaoinèachadh gu bheil sin nas fhreagarraiche air clann aig ceann shuas na h-àrd-sgoil na clann aig ceann shìos na h-àrd-sgoil. Is e tidsear àrd-sgoil a bha annam fhìn aig aon àm.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

As I said earlier, not many Gaelic-medium schools have closed over the years, but some have. I am glad that you raised the point about secondary education, because that is a huge obstacle. We lose many children who do well in Gaelic at primary, because up to fourth year in secondary school they perhaps get Gaelic only as a subject, with perhaps one other subject in Gaelic—for example, geography or history. Therefore, they have no opportunity to sit exams through the medium of Gaelic, other than to do so in Gaelic, history and geography. However, that opportunity happens only at standard grade level; it does not continue to the higher.

In the past 10 years, there has been little progress in Gaelic in secondary education. When Pam Talbot talked about technology, somebody referred to teleconferencing. I am interested in what will happen with that. Teleconferencing will perhaps affect children at the upper end of secondary education rather than in the first couple of years.

The Convener: Is there not an outward-looking aspect to Gaelic-medium education as well? It has been suggested that people who have experienced it are better at learning other European languages later on in school, because of their acquaintance with bilingualism. I wonder whether that is an important angle to build on—even just enhancing Gaelic-medium education to the wider curriculum—by promoting Gaelic-medium education's broader advantages. Have you taken up that angle?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha sin fìor. Is e sin a thug air deagh chuid de na pàrantan an cuid chloinne a chur dha na sgoiltean Gàidhlig. Nuair a thòisich sinn mu 20 bliadhna air ais a' coiteachadh agus a' strì airson foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, bha leabhran beag againn às a' Chuimrigh leis an ainm "Two Windows, Two Worlds". Rinn an leabhran sin an dearbh phuing sin, gun robh clann dà-chànanach nas comasaiche air gnothaichean fhaicinn ann an dòigh nas fharsainghe.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

What you say is certainly true. Many parents are well aware of the advantages of bilingualism and that is why they have opted for Gaelic-medium education for their children. When we started fighting for Gaelic-medium education 20 years ago, we had a small leaflet in Welsh entitled, "Two Windows, Two Worlds". It expressed that very point, which is that those who are bilingual are much more able to access further languages as they go on.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: You say in your written submission:

"There should be reference made in the Bill to the rights of persons appearing in a Court of Law to make representation through the medium of Gaelic.

In general, how great is the demand for such representation? Would there be a sufficiency of interpreters? What would the practicalities be? Would interpreters be supplied to all courts or just to some? Would such provision involve a great deal of extra resources? Or would there be only an occasional need for an interpreter? What is your view?

Iain MacIlleChiar: A-rithist, feumaidh mi a bhith onarach agus a ràdh nach ann tric a tha duine sa chùirt co-dhiù. Tha mise air a bhith ann dà thuras nam bheatha mar fhianais—seo an treas turas agam a' toirt seachad fianais—ach is dòcha gum

biodh sin na bu chudthromaiche anns an h-àiteachan far a bheil a' Ghàidhlig nas làidire, mar anns na h-eileanan.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Once again, I must be honest and say that it is not often that people with Gaelic are in the courts. I have been there twice in my life as a witness, so this is my third time. However, perhaps making representations in court in Gaelic might be important in places where Gaelic is stronger and a greater percentage of the population speak it—for example, in the Western Isles.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Could you submit a short paper on that point? If the facility existed in all courts in Scotland, it would constitute a massive upheaval. I think that you are asking for something more limited that could be applied much more easily. It would be helpful if you could provide us with a little more detail—not now, but in due course.

11:15

The Convener: You also seem to be making the case that learning Gaelic might be a better means of dealing with crime than the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 is.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Iain, you have said that you support distance learning and the use of high technology and videoconferencing. Would you be glad for that to be put into effect in distant parts of Scotland where Gaelic is not usually spoken and where there is great difficulty in getting a sufficient number of Gaelic teachers?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi a' smaoineachadh gu bheil sin air tòiseachadh mar-thà. Tha corra phròiseact ann far a bheil, mar eisimpleir, tidsear ann an Comhairle na Gaidhealtachd a' dèanamh conaltradh bhideo ri sgoilearan ann an Ìle. Chan eil mi mion-eòlach air dè cho math 's a tha sin ag obrachadh, ach tha mi a' smaoineachadh gu bheil e ag obrachadh gu math. Tha mi fhìn ag obair gu proifeiseanta ann an Oilthigh na Gaidhealtachd is nan Eilean, agus tha fhios agam gu bheil sinne ga chleachdadh gu tric aig ìre àrd-fhoghlam. Is e aois nan sgoilearan an aon dragh a bhiodh orm. Tha mi a' creidsinn gum feumadh fear-faire air choreigin a bhith ann aig aon cheann.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I think that that has already commenced and that there have been a number of projects. For example, a teacher in Highland region is involved in videoconferencing with pupils on Islay. I am not completely sure how well it works, but I know what happens at secondary and university level. I have been working at UHI, where we often use videoconferencing. My only concern relates to the age of the pupils. I suppose that someone would

have to be with them and to watch them at the other end of the conference.

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (SSP): I return to higher education. You said earlier that, at secondary school level, interest is lost and the ability to go forward to higher education courses is missing. Is there anything in the bill that reassures you that the system could be put right? It seems to me that if you offer good courses at secondary school level, through higher still for example, that is a simple way of saying that you are putting Gaelic higher up the agenda. Providing young people with access to that level of education would be one way of encouraging and enabling them to proceed to further and higher education and to teacher training. That would be one of the most positive things that we could do. Are you satisfied that there are moves to do that, or should the committee be encouraging that to happen?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Chan eil an dà dhòigh air. An-dràsta fhèin, tha uireasbhaidh mhòr ann aig ìre àrd-sgoile. Tha sinn ann an suidheachadh neònach ann an Alba, oir tha foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig againn aig ìre bun-sgoil agus tha Gàidhlig againn anns na h-oilthighean—ann an Oilthigh na Gaidhealtachd is nan Eilean agus aig a' cholaiste làn-Ghàidhlig, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig—ach tha beàrn anns a' mheadhan. Chan eil mòran foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig aig ìre àrd-sgoil, agus tha sin gar cumail air ais gu mòr.

Mar a thuirt mi, tha sinn a' call nan sgoilearan agus tha sinn a' call na feadhainn a tha a' falbh a thoirt a-mach ciùird no a' dol gu colaistean an dèidh na ceathramh bliadhna anns an àrd-sgoil. Mar eisimpleir, a thaobh an fheadhainn a rinn cùrsaichean spòrs is cur-seachad agus a tha a-nis ag obair ann an ionadan spòrs is cur-seachad, feumaidh iad a' Ghàidhlig aca ionnsachadh air ais, mar gum biodh, airson dèiligeadh le cloinn a tha a' tighinn a-staigh bho bhun-sgoiltean Gàidhlig a dhèanamh ghnòthaichean spòrs còmhla riutha. Is e gainnead luchd-teagaisg an cnap-starra as motha. Ma tha a' chomataidh a' coimhead air an sin, is e sin a' phuing as cudthromaiche.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

There are no two ways about it—there is a large gap at secondary level. We are in a strange situation in Scotland. We have Gaelic-medium education at primary level and at university and tertiary level—we have it at UHI and at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig—but there is a gap in the middle. There is not much Gaelic-medium education at secondary level and we are losing pupils at that stage. People move into other professions. Some people take courses in sports and entertainment and leisure, and have to relearn Gaelic to deal with children who have come from Gaelic-medium units

to take part in sporting activities with them. The bottom line is that there is a shortage of Gaelic teachers. That is the most important issue that the committee should examine.

Ms Byrne: The shortage of teachers is a knock-on effect of the fact that we are not teaching Gaelic to the required level in secondary schools and thus are not encouraging its being taught in further and higher education. How do we solve that problem? I have a lot of sympathy with your view that one aspect we have to get right is parents' access to Gaelic-medium education for their children. After listening to the evidence, I feel that if parents do not know that they have access to such education they will not ask for it. The committee needs to find a balanced approach and to encourage Gaelic education in the crucial secondary school stage—in fourth, fifth and sixth year—and in further and higher education. We need to get more evidence on that aspect so that we can move forward.

The Convener: Do you want to ask a particular question on that issue, Rosemary?

Ms Byrne: No. I simply wanted to make that comment.

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha reachdas dìon dàta ann a-nis, agus tha sin na rud eile a tha na bhacadh. Chan eil e furasta greim fhaighinn air na pàrantan mus tèid a' chlann dhan sgoil. Nuair a thòisich Comann nam Pàrant, bha e caran furasta faighinn a-mach co mheud pàrant agus co mheud pàiste a bha a' dol dhan sgoil agus càit an robh iad. Ach an-diugh tha e uabhasach doirbh an ruighinn mus ruig iad an sgoil, agus aon uair 's gu bheil iad air an sgoil a ruighinn, mura h-eil iad ann an sgoil Ghàidhlig tha sinn air an call.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Another obstacle is that, with data protection legislation, it is not as easy to get access to parents before the children go to school. When we started Comann nam Pàrant, it was slightly easier to find out how many children were going into primary school. It is difficult to reach those pupils once they have started school. Unless they go to a Gaelic-medium school, we have lost them.

Mr McAveety: My question is similar to an earlier question. How would you approach the issue of teacher supply?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Feumaidh mi aideachadh gur e tidsear cànan a tha annam ann an colaiste. Saoilidh mise gum bu chòir dha luchd-teagaisg a tha ann an dreuchd mar-thà a bhith air an saoradh a dhol air chùrsaichean cànan. Is sin aon dòigh a bhith ga dhèanamh. Sin an dòigh a thathar a' cleachdadh ann an tìr nam Bascach, mar eisimpleir, far a bheil an Riaghaltas nàiseanta a' pàigheadh a shaoradh luchd-teagaisg a dhol air

chùrsaichean cànan. An toiseach, thèid iad air chùrsaichean cànan san fharsaingeachd agus an uair sin air chùrsaichean mun chuspair shònraichte aca fhèin. Nuair a thilleas iad dhan sgoil, tha iad a' teagasg tro mheadhan na Bascais. Nan robh maoin ann airson sin, dh'fhuasgladh sin a' cheist gu mòr, an dà chuid airson luchd-teagaisg bun-sgoil agus luchd-teagaisg àrd-sgoil.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I suppose that I should admit that I am a language teacher in our college. I feel that teachers in other professions should be free to take language courses. For example, the Basque language has been protected because the national Government pays for teachers to be released to take a general language course to begin with and then a language course that is specific to their own subject area. After that, the teachers return to their schools and teach in the Basque language. Setting up a fund to tackle that would provide a solution to the problem of providing primary and secondary school teachers.

Mr McAveety: Have you found that local authorities all over Scotland are willing to talk about these issues? It seems to me that the bill's proposed language plans might provide space both to enhance the provision of authorities that are making good progress on Gaelic-medium education and to help authorities that are nervous about putting their toes into the water because of the potential costs. Perhaps any deliberations should centre on trying to create a more integrated approach that takes in new technology options, short learning courses, sending teaching staff on secondment for a short period and working with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Indeed, such an approach might reassure local authorities that they could introduce provision that would fulfil parents' reasonable aspirations while testing certain areas that are unfamiliar. That might provide a base on which to build the development of Gaelic.

Iain MacIlleChiar: Dh'fheumadh ùghdarras a bhith aig Bòrd na Gàidhlig agus oifigeach-foghlaim is a leithid airson sin a cho-òrdanachadh. Tha fhios agam gun robh an t-oifigeach-foghlaim a bha aig Comunn na Gàidhlig uabhasach soirbheachail ann a bhith a' tarraing nan comhairlean aig an robh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig ri chèile. Bha primary review group agus secondary review group ann, far an robhar a' cùmhnadh chosgaisean, le bhith a' foillseachadh stuth-teagaisg còmhla an àite gach comhairle bheag a bhith a' dèanamh an rud aice fhèin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Bòrd na Gàidhlig would have to have authority in the shape of an education officer to co-ordinate such matters. For example, Comunn na Gàidhlig's education officer was successful in working with

the local authorities that were involved in Gaelic-medium education and bringing them together in the primary and secondary review groups. As a result, instead of having one small authority deal with everything itself, the authorities pooled their resources and kept down the costs of publishing education material.

Mr McAveety: I agree with that. I was involved in the developments in Glasgow at a local government level. The natural inclination was to try to do something, although it was not clear what it was necessary to do; however, a couple of good examples built confidence and there is now much more coherent provision in the city than existed 10 or 15 years ago. It could be better, but Glasgow still provides a good model in Scotland. How can we create the space for people to be less nervous and defensive and more constructive and positive about the development of the language?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Ma dh'fhaodte gum b' urrainn dha na buidhnean sin cuireadh a thoirt dha na comhairlean nach eil mar-thà a' dèiligeadh le foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig na coinneamhan aca a fhriththeadh. A h-uile bliadhna, tha còmh-dhail nàiseanta aig Comunn na Gàidhlig—tha e a-nis aig Bòrd na Gàidhlig—far an urrainn do riochdairean tighinn ann agus greim fhaighinn air mar a tha an suidheachadh an-dràsta.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Perhaps the relevant organisations could consider including councils who do not have Gaelic-medium education at the moment. Every year, Comunn na Gàidhlig used to have an annual congress. Bòrd na Gàidhlig will take over that role, and there will be representatives from all areas to give an overview of the current situation.

The Convener: You are probably aware of the draft guidance on Gaelic-medium education that the Scottish Executive has issued. Have you formed a view on it yet? Perhaps the matter is too complex to ask for your views today. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill has to be read alongside the draft guidance to get the full picture. Perhaps you would be able to let us have more detailed comments about deficiencies, good things and bad things in the guidance to inform our consideration of the issue. Are you able to help us?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi a' smaoin eachadh gun tàinig an litir agus an stiùireadh sin a-mach an dèidh dhuinn ar fianais sgrìobhte a dhèanamh, dìreach seachdain air ais no mar sin. Tha e againn a-nis, ach cha robh e againn nuair a sgrìobh sinn am fianais againn.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

The letter and the guidance came out perhaps a week ago. We have the guidance now, but we did

not have it when we submitted our written evidence.

The Convener: Would you be able to give us something about it in writing, subsequent to the meeting and in your own good time? At first glance, the guidance looks to be quite a productive and helpful document. However, no doubt, on closer examination, there will be textual deficiencies and things that you will have concerns about. We would be interested to know about those, especially in so far as they relate to what the bill is trying to do.

Iain MacIlleChiar: Gu cinnteach nì sinn sin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Certainly. We will do that.

Ms Alexander: I raised a question on the funding issue with the previous witness. Are there any funding issues on which your organisation would like to comment? I know that it is not central to your mission, but it would be unfortunate not to give you the opportunity to say something on the funding side.

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha mi a' smaoin eachadh gu bheil dà rud daonnan ann far a bheil sinn gann de dh'airgead. Tha oideachadh luchd-teagaisg a dhìth, gu h-àraidh luchd-teagaisg a tha ann an dreuchd. Tha sin uabhasach cosgail, oir tha e cosgail cuideigin a shaoradh bho obair, cuideigin eile a chur a-staigh na àite agus cosgais a' chùrsa a phàigheadh. Glè thrì, feumaidh an neach a bhith a' fuireach air falbh. Is e cosgais gu math trom a tha sin. Cuideachd, tha cosgais ann a bhith ag ullachadh nan cùrsaichean sin airson luchd-teagaisg. Chaidh a ghealltainn dhuinn gum biodh cùrsa na b' fheàrr ann an 2004, ach cha do thachair sin. An aon rud a tha air tachairt, is e gu bheil e nas fhasa do mhnathan-pòsta, gu h-àraidh iadsan a tha a' fuireach mu thuath, cùrsaichean a dhèanamh aig an taigh, gun a dhol a dh'Obar Dheathain no a Ghlaschu a dh'fhuireach airson sia mìosan no mar sin.

Chan urrainn dhomh bruidhinn às leth Stòrlann, a tha ag ullachadh agus a' foillseachadh stuth teagaisg, ach tha mi cinnteach gum biodh iadsan glè thoilichte le maoin sam bith a bharrachd a gheibheadh iad.

A' bruidhinn air maoin, tha puig a' cur dragh orm fhìn nach eil buileach co-cheangailte ri foghlam ach a tha co-cheangailte ri oideachadh, agus is e sin oideachadh luchd-obrach ann am buidhnean poblach eile taobh a-muigh nam buidhnean foghlaim. Bha an t-suim a chaidh ainmeachadh anns a' bhile uabhasach ìosal, am measg nan sùimean eile a bha ann. Chan eil ach £5,000 sa bhliadhna ann airson gach buidheann. Bho leughadh nan notaichean a tha an cois a' bhile, tha mi a' smaointinn gun robhar a'

smaointinn air daoine a tha fileanta ann an Gàidhlig mar-thà agus beagan taic a chumail riutha, ach chan eil guth air daoine a tha ag obair aig buidhnean eile a tha ag iarraidh Gàidhlig ionnsachadh. Tha an aon cheist ann a-rithist, mu bhith gan saoradh bhon obair agus pàigheadh airson dol air cùrsaichean agus mar sin air adhart. Gu mi-fhortanach, chan eil na tha sin de dhaoine ann a tha fileanta ann an Gàidhlig.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

There are always two things to consider when there is a shortage of money. First, it is expensive to release teachers from their posts and to get someone else in to cover. There is also the cost of the course and, if they are staying away from home, there are subsistence costs. The process can be very expensive.

Secondly, there are costs in the preparation of courses for teachers. We were promised that there would be a better course this year, but that has not happened. The only thing that has happened is that it has become easier for married women who live in rural areas to undertake courses at home instead of going to Aberdeen or Glasgow for six months, because they can undertake a distance learning course. I cannot speak on behalf of Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, which prepares and publishes teaching materials; however, I am sure that it would be delighted to receive additional funding.

On the subject of funding, I have a point to make on the education of people in other organisations. The sum that is mentioned in the bill is low—I think that it is £5,000 a year for each organisation. From the notes that are appended to the bill, it seems that fluent Gaelic speakers will be given a little support; however, there is no mention of people in other organisations who want to learn Gaelic being released from work to go on courses. Unfortunately, there are not that many people who are fluent in Gaelic.

11:30

Fiona Hyslop: In your submission, you talk about the Gaelic language plans. You say that not enough emphasis is placed on training and that there is a need for substantial funding. You cite, for example, the Inland Revenue as an organisation that is not covered by the bill. Is there not a danger that limited resources that should be concentrated on teacher training and on releasing people from organisations in core Gaelic-language areas to learn the language might be diverted into training for organisations that might not be as important in the pecking order?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Is e puing eile nach eil a h-uile duine ag iarraidh a bhith na thidsear. Chan urrainn dhuinn a bhith a' sparradh sin air daoine

nach eil ga iarraidh. Ach, ma tha poileasaidhean Gàidhlig gu bhith aig na buidhnean sin, feumaidh daoine a bhith ann airson na poileasaidhean a chur an gnìomh. Chan eil mi a' smaoinichadh gu bheil daoine gu leòr ann airson sin a dhèanamh an-dràsta. Tha sinn a' bruidhinn air leudachadh exponential ann am fàs agus clann a' tighinn a-mach às na sgoiltean Gàidhlig. Tha sin air tachairt gu ìre le luchd-teagaisg. Tha a' chiad daoine a chaidh tro fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig anis air ais nan luchd-teagaisg anns na bun-sgoiltean. Tha e air tòiseachadh, ach tha an cunnart sin ann. Tha mi ag aontachadh leat ach, mar a thuirt mi, chan e a h-uile duine a dh'iarraas a bhith na thidsear agus a nì tidsear.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

Not everybody wants to be a teacher. We cannot force people to be teachers. If organisations are going to have Gaelic policies, they will have to have people to implement the policies. If there are not enough people—and there are not at the moment—we have to talk about expanding at an exponential rate as people come out of the Gaelic-medium units. That has happened, to a degree, with teachers. We have the first primary teachers from those who went through Gaelic-medium education; they are now back in the primary schools as teachers. I agree that there is a danger, but not everybody wants to be a teacher.

Fiona Hyslop: You use the word “exponential”. We hope that the bill will encourage and facilitate more Gaelic being spoken across a range of different areas. The problem is that we will have to find out, from the Finance Committee's report, whether the costs that are associated with the bill will be one-off costs, what the regular revenue will be for Gaelic and what rate of expansion is anticipated to meet the training needs, which will involve on-going costs as opposed to one-off costs. That is something for the committee to examine. If you have views on where the emphasis on training should be, it would be helpful for us to know them.

Iain MacIlleChiar: Nuair a tha sinn a' coimhead air fàs a' chànan, tha sinn a' coimhead air trì rudan: an àireamh de dhaoine aig a bheil a' chanan; am fàs air feadh na h-Alba, agus a bheil i ga bruidhinn ann am barrachd àiteachan; agus, an treas rud, dè cho math 's a tha an cànan a thathar a' bruidhinn, agus a bheil daoine gu tur fileanta. Glè thrìc, is sin far a bheil a' cheist seo a' tighinn a-staigh.

Chan eil fhios agam a bheil sibhse a tha ag obair ann an saoghal na Beurla a' tuigsinn buileach mar a tha cànanan mòra a' cur às do chànanan beaga. Is e gu h-àraidh a' Bheurla ach tha cànanan mòra eile ann, mar Spàinntis is Ruiseanais. Tha Beurla cho uile-timcheall oirnn 's

gu bheil e doirbh uaireannan bruidhinn mun chaochladh de chuspairean mar a dh'iarradh tu a chionn 's nach deach am faclair a leudachadh anns a' chuspair sin. Tha an suidheachadh rud beag coltach ris an àrainneachd, far a bheil creutairean is eòin is flùraichean a' bàsachadh fad na h-ùine. Tha sin a' tachairt le cànanan, tha an t-eagal orm. Tha cànanan a' bàsachadh a h-uile bliadhna.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

When we consider the growth of the language, we consider three issues: the number of people who have the language; the growth of the language throughout Scotland and whether it is spoken in more areas; and how well the language is spoken and whether people are fluent in it. I do not know whether those who work in the English-speaking world realise how the majority languages are doing away with the smaller languages. Not just English, but Spanish and Russian are big and important and surround us totally. It is difficult sometimes to talk about the variety of subjects that one would like to talk about because the dictionary has not been expanded to include them. As in the environment, where flowers, grasses and birds are dying out because other things are taking over, languages are dying out.

The Convener: There is very much a hierarchy of objectives: the survival of the language; the encouragement of the language; and the spreading of the language.

I am sure that the issue of equal status is the one that will give the committee, as I think it has ministers, the most difficulty. The fact that we are conducting today's proceedings in Gaelic—from your end if not at ours—is symbolic. I accept that there is a lot of symbolism involved in issues such as these. We have considered the use of Gaelic in the courts—Lord James Douglas-Hamilton touched on that issue—and we have rightly homed in on education. What other practical implications of a move towards equal status are there? Aside from the technicalities of the language, is it important to develop other aspects? I have in mind the ability to communicate with public authorities in Gaelic, for example people being able to go into a local authority office to ask for whatever they want or being able to speak to their doctor in Gaelic. There are many such examples in everyday life. How practical would that be outside the Western Isles or other such areas? How practical would it be in Glasgow or Edinburgh, where there are quite a lot of Gaelic speakers, or even in the Borders or Aberdeenshire?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Thug mi tarraing air an roinn phrìobhaidich, air nach eil, gu mi-fhortanach, guth idir anns a' bhile. Tha tuilleadh is tuilleadh pàirt aig an roinn phrìobhaidich nar beatha. Bha an t-uabhas dhe buidhnean leis an Riaghaltas nuair a

chaidh Bile na Cuimris troimhe 20 bliadhna air ais, ach chan ann leis an Riaghaltas a tha iad an-diugh. Cuideachd, is ann leis an roinn phrìobhaidich a tha mòran rudan làitheil a tha a' bualadh air ar beatha, mar rudan co-cheangailte ri bhith dol dhan bhùth. Is e an eisimpleir a tha agam daonnan, dè a' Ghàidhlig air cornflakes. Ma tha thu a' fuireach ann an Canada, tha fios agad dè an Fhraingis air cornflakes. Faodaidh tu tionndadh na pacaid agus tha e ag innseadh dhut. Ach chan eil Gàidhlig oifigeil againn air cornflakes, oir chan eil e sgriobhte air a' phacaid. Tha na rudan sin nar beatha làitheil fada nas cudthromaiche na còir a bhith agam seasamh ann an Cùirt an t-Seisein ann an Dùn Èideann agus cur asam fhèin.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

I previously mentioned the private sector. Unfortunately, no mention at all is made of the private sector in the bill, although it has more and more of a role in our lives. Many of the organisations covered by the bill that went through in Wales 20 years ago are not government organisations now.

Some things touch on our daily lives. The example that I always give is, when we go to the shop, what is the Gaelic for cornflakes? If someone lives in Canada they know what the French is for cornflakes because it is written on the packet, but we do not have an official Gaelic word for cornflakes because it is not written on the packet. Those matters touch on our daily lives and are far more important than having the right to stand in the Court of Session in Edinburgh and present myself in Gaelic.

Dr Murray: I have a follow-up question on priorities. Given that funding is finite, there could be a tension between providing signage in Gaelic and investing in Gaelic-medium education or courses for adult learners. What is the most important aspect of the survival of the language? Is it more important to encourage more people to speak Gaelic or to provide information in Gaelic for those who already speak it?

Iain MacIlleChiar: Mar Chomann nam Pàrant, tha sinn a' riochdachadh phàrantan. Mar sin, chanainn gur e, an toiseach, leudachadh an àireimh de chloinn a tha a' bruidhinn na Gàidhlig agus, an uair sin, an àireamh de dh'inbhich. Tha a h-uile rud ag èirigh às an sin. Ma tha gu leòr aca ann, iarraidh iad fhèin na seirbheisean sin, mar a tha air tachairt ann an dùthchannan far a bheil iad air an crìonadh a thionndadh agus far a bheil fàs ann a-nis. Mar eisimpleir, tha an ath ghinealach de dh'oileanaich anns a' Chuimrigh a-nis a' togail na strì airson achd nas làidire agus nas freagarraiche do shuidheachadh an latha an-diugh anns a' Chuimrigh.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

We represent Comann nam Pàrant and our priority would be to expand the number of children who learn Gaelic. Services for people who speak Gaelic and everything else arise from that. If there are enough of them, they will ask for such services. That is what has happened in other countries that have turned round the decline of their language. For example, in Wales the next generation of university students is raising the banners for a stronger act that would be more suitable for this day and age in Wales.

Dr Murray: On what is happening in Scotland, there could be problems if the bill appeared to imply to local authorities and other public bodies that they should spend a lot of resources on producing materials in Gaelic rather than on promoting the learning of the language. One of the issues that the Executive probably had to contemplate when it drafted the bill was how to encourage the most essential aspects of enabling the language to survive rather than get involved in what at this stage might be secondary issues, although, as you say, if more people end up learning Gaelic and more people are enthusiastic about it, there might be greater demand in future for other services to be provided in Gaelic.

Iain MacIlleChiar: Tha dà rud ann a tha ag obair còmhla: comas agus iarrtas. Mar is motha an t-iarrtas, is motha an comas a tha ann; mar as motha an comas, is motha an t-iarrtas. Far a bheil sinn ag aontachadh le prionnsabal a' phlanaidh, cuideachd, is e gu bheil e uabhasach cudthromach nach eil sinn a' struidhleadh ar cuid stòrais far nach eil feum air. Ach tha e cuideachd uabhasach cudthromach dè thachras dhan chloinn nuair a thig iad a-mach às an sgoil. Feumaidh obraichean a bhith air an cruthachadh far an urrainn dhaibh a' Ghàidhlig a dh'ionnsaich iad anns an sgoil a chur gu feum nam beatha obrach.

Following is the simultaneous interpretation:

There are two things that work together: the ability and the demand. The greater the demand, the greater the ability; and the greater the ability, the greater the demand. We agree with the principle of the language plans, because it is important that we do not direct our resources where they are not required. What will happen to children who have learned Gaelic when they come out of school? Jobs should be created for them that enable them to use the Gaelic language that they learn in school in the workplace.

The Convener: That is a helpful point at which to stop, if there are no more questions.

The evidence session has been useful. We have begun to explore some of the issues in greater depth. It is clear that Gaelic-medium education, not least in secondary school, is a central issue. I hope that the committee will reflect some of those

issues in its report. I thank you for coming today; it has been a helpful and interesting exercise for the committee.

I suspend the meeting for five minutes.

11:40

Meeting suspended.

11:53

On resuming—

Disclosure Requirements

The Convener: Item 3 is on disclosure requirements and follows up evidence that we heard from Disclosure Scotland on 27 October. We agreed to ask the Scottish Parliament information centre to look at current research on the impact of disclosure requirements on voluntary organisations and to consider where we might take matters further.

For the avoidance of doubt, I should inform members that we have a revised paper before us. A page was missing from the earlier paper. I am ashamed to say that I did not notice that when I read the paper, which seemed to read well.

We are to consider further investigation into disclosure requirements. Three options have been suggested to us—in paper ED/S2/04/23/7—which have different timescales and support needs. I would appreciate members' points of view on what we should do, but perhaps Martin Verity would like to say something first.

Martin Verity (Clerk): Paragraphs 15 and 16 are the crucial parts of the paper. We hope that they crystallise the aims of the research that the committee suggested should be considered. In paragraph 17, the options include a small-scale piece of work that could be done by SPICe, a longer piece of research that could be commissioned and a larger-scale survey that would involve quantitative and qualitative work. The three options are, respectively, small, medium and large, which would have results coming soon, a bit later or a bit later still. If the committee is happy with the terms of reference and the aims of the research, the question is what kind of research members would like to pursue.

The Convener: The fact that the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 is coming into force gives us a time constraint. I do not think that there has been an announcement about that yet, but I think that one is imminent. That means that, if we are to have any influence on events, we will need something sooner rather than later.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I very much support the principle that we should have further research and pursue option 1. There is a danger that we will be overtaken by events unless we have a short and effective piece of work that is produced within a reasonably tight timescale. I remember that, some years ago, one of the Westminster committees did a report on employment in Scotland, which took it a year. By the time the report was produced, it had been

totally overtaken by events, as the Government had introduced many measures that pre-empted its conclusions. A short, small-scale piece of work does not rule out further research, but it would allow us to make relevant recommendations.

Better guidance is needed for people who fill in application forms for Disclosure Scotland in order to avoid delays in processing. Moreover, the procedure for checking multiple applications is unsatisfactory. For example, it is not possible for an employee to transfer a disclosure certificate from one local authority to another local authority. There are good reasons for that in certain cases, but it seems reasonable to adopt a more flexible approach for individuals who move between authorities and carry out the same roles with the same age groups. I wonder whether it would be possible to issue a more general certificate of suitability to work with children that would be valid across local authorities. Those two issues might be considered.

The Convener: I wrote to the minister after the previous meeting, from which a number of urgent issues seemed to emerge relating to, for example, guidance to voluntary organisations, parent-teacher organisations and others, and whether there needed to be disclosures. We wanted to get a clearer idea from the minister about whether guidance could be revamped and whether something a bit more helpful could be produced; we did not want the guidance simply to say that it is up to people to make assessments, which is unrealistic for a PTA and similar organisations. We need a clear idea of when and in what circumstances people are supposed to look for disclosure and when they are not.

Fiona Hyslop: Our discussion of disclosures came out of our initial inquiry into child protection, one of the themes of which was the need for a public debate and for wider understanding about elements of risk. Perhaps the issue boils down to people being overcautious about what they perceive as a risk. A short-term qualitative investigation would help policy review and could help to inform the guidance. I agree that that matter needs to be dealt with most urgently.

The volume of disclosures arising from the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 is another issue. In relation to all the organisations that we have noted, we should operate a system in which we actively monitor on a month-to-month basis any problems during the first six months of the roll-out of the act. We could ask Disclosure Scotland to report to us and ask the umbrella groups for all the different organisations to let us know whether there is a volume problem that is impacting on the roll-out of the act.

Those are two things that we can do, the most important of which relates to policy. It would also

be useful for us to carry out a quantitative monitoring of the act's roll-out over the first six months.

The Convener: It would certainly be sensible to ask Disclosure Scotland to do that. However, the information that umbrella organisations provided us with would be a bit more anecdotal, unless they kept a very close eye on the situation.

Fiona Hyslop: We could ask them to do that; they might be more than willing to carry out such monitoring, because it is obviously in their interest to do so. I know that they have serious concerns.

The Convener: Voluntary organisations such as YouthLink and its associated bodies have been the driver in highlighting the difficulties. They are very concerned about some of the implications of the act's implementation.

12:00

Mr Macintosh: Although I echo some of the points that have been made, I come to a different conclusion. I totally agree with the convener that there is an urgent need for guidance and that we need to keep a sense of proportion through some sort of risk assessment. We mention risk assessment in relation to recruitment in paragraph 16, but that is not the type of risk assessment that was being referred to. We need to ask who needs disclosure checks, in what circumstances they need them and what guidance people can use and refer to. It is clear to me that people will need the comfort of Executive guidance because, if they are left to their own devices, they will always err on the side of caution. We have a duty to help people. We should not hang about, so I am glad that the convener has already written to the minister on the matter. We need to stress to the Executive the need to work on such guidance.

We know what many of the issues are, although I will not pretend that we know what all of them are. The suggestions in options 1 and 2, as outlined in paragraph 17, would give us a chance to develop those issues further and might provide us with more anecdotal evidence. To assess the impact of the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003, we need hard empirical figures on the legislation's effect on voluntary sector and private sector organisations so far. Has the act put people off? The fear that we all expressed was that our desire to encourage good citizenship would be undermined by our desire to protect children. We need hard empirical evidence to find out whether our fear was justified. I think that such a piece of work will require more time to produce, although it is still worth doing.

The funny thing is that the situation will change. There will have been an impact already. I would like to find out whether that impact has been

minimal and things have adjusted. The introduction of measures such as disclosure checks will have had an impact, but the situation might return to equilibrium after a while. Initially, the number of people who need a disclosure check will be huge.

The Convener: At one point, the figure of 500,000 was mentioned.

Mr Macintosh: The size of the figure could undermine the protection that is offered by disclosure. In evidence that we received two weeks ago, someone said that, by carrying out such a large number of disclosure checks, we undermine any guarantee of safety, because the piece of paper becomes less valuable.

The Convener: The process becomes nominal—it becomes a box-ticking exercise.

Mr Macintosh: Exactly. My point is that we need hard empirical evidence on the act's impact. That impact will change as the number of disclosure checks increases this year.

We should not wait, because there is a danger that we will be overtaken by events. We need to ask the Executive to produce guidance immediately. However, in the long term, we may need to revisit the legislation. The uniformed organisations—the Boys Brigade, in particular—suggested that. We must ask ourselves whether that is necessary, as we could not do so just on the basis of our fears and anxieties so far; we need harder evidence. That is why I would go for option 3. If we do not pursue that course of action, we should ask the Executive to do so, with a view to its guiding us the facts.

The Convener: To some extent, one option could lead to the other. The short-term inquiry could tell us whether we need to go much further. We can specifically ask whether the Executive is doing anything in that regard. That kind of assessment would normally be its ball-game.

Dr Murray: I was more attracted to option 3 than to the others, even though I was not able to read the complete set of papers. Which option we decide on depends on what we want to achieve by doing the research. Are we attempting to influence the implementation of the legislation? If so, what chance is there that anything that we do at this late stage will do that? I got the impression that the legislation was to be implemented early next year.

The Convener: That is right, but I think that there is a suggestion that the implementation will be phased. There is no way that 500,000 disclosures could be dealt with in the next three months.

Dr Murray: How much could anything that we do influence the process, given that the process is

about to start? Alternatively, are we conducting a piece of post-legislative scrutiny, in which case we would want to have more quantitative evidence and possibly consider whether there is a need to amend the law if it is not working well in practice. That is a different exercise.

The Convener: I think that we will have an influence on how the process is carried out. That might be more the case in connection with my letter on behalf of the committee than in connection with later work. You are right to say that the decision about what will be done will be made by early spring. At the same time, if the act is implemented in stages, we will have an opportunity to have an input with regard to how the process rolls out and what happens later on. The situation does not mean that we should not do some small-scale early work on the subject. You are right, however, to say that, beyond that point, we would be involved in post-legislative scrutiny.

Fiona Hyslop: If we find that there is an impact, which we already think that there will be, all we will be doing is reinforcing what we already know and, perhaps, giving it some scale. Ken Macintosh is right to say that we have had a reasonable steer so far. We are not assuming that the legislation needs changed—it might do, but that is a longer-term issue. The issue that concerns us is the interpretation of the current legislation.

The Convener: We can influence the guidance.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Those points of view can be combined with the point of view that I expressed. In each spending round—and I understand that decisions still have to be made for this spending round—the Executive considers what research projects will be undertaken. If we sent a letter suggesting that option 3 should be funded, I see no reason why the Executive should not do so. At the same time, it would be a pity if we were to lose out on the opportunity to gather input from option 1. If the worst came to the worst and the Executive told us that it wanted to fund other research programmes, that would not prevent SPICe from pursuing option 3 after option 1. Obviously, that would be a less desirable outcome, but it would meet Ken Macintosh's concerns and mine.

The Convener: That is a good suggestion. Do we agree to follow it?

Members indicated agreement.

The Convener: I will circulate the letter that I will write and we will follow up with the Executive the possibility of longer-term research. We will proceed with option 1 in order to get some early input.

Fiona Hyslop: As I said, the matter that we are discussing arose as a result of the child protection

inquiry. The Executive responded to the report of that inquiry. I met the health, social work and education authorities in Edinburgh yesterday in connection with the O'Brien report and would like to know whether we have bid for a debate on the subject. The issue affects a lot of people in Scotland.

The Convener: We have not done so, but it is conceivable that we could. There seems to be a shortage of options for committee debates at the moment and I think that we might be able to get a spot if we wanted to.

Mr Macintosh: Did we not have a debate on child protection the week after the O'Brien report was published?

The Convener: There was a ministerial statement; I cannot remember whether there was a debate. However, that was specifically on the issues arising out of that case, I think.

Mr Macintosh: On child protection.

Dr Murray: Yes, we had a debate on child protection.

Fiona Hyslop: Was that not some time ago?

Mr Macintosh: Well, yes. When was it?

Dr Murray: I think that it was before we did our inquiry.

The Convener: It probably was.

Dr Murray: It was prior to our doing our inquiry.

The Convener: That is right. I had a sense that, when we finished our inquiry, we had not added huge value in some areas to what was known already. Then, out of the woodwork, there began to crawl more of the Disclosure Scotland issues that led us to pursue our inquiry further. We now have the original report plus the Disclosure Scotland evidence and the information that we have gathered about the background issues. There is a wider dimension on which we could have a debate if we were so minded.

Fiona Hyslop: You are saying that we did not add a great amount, but the officials in Edinburgh to whom I spoke yesterday are saying that some of the continuing issues are the ones that we talked about in our conclusions. Issues on information sharing and systems are very real and current and I think that it would be helpful to the sector to have a debate. We have the legislation and we are not likely to have a report on anything else that we would want parliamentary time to debate. I just flag that up, as it may help to inform the contribution that we make on the disclosure issue.

The Convener: Okay. Personally, I would be in favour of that. There is plenty of information to

debate if we want to do that. We could raise that with the powers that be and see whether there is a slot for us.

Fiona Hyslop: We could also ask specifically about the research exercise.

The Convener: Yes. We will pursue that as well, but that takes us in a different direction.

Budget Process 2005-06

12:11

The Convener: The committee will not now move into private session, despite what it says on my brief, to consider its draft report to the Finance Committee on the budget process. The draft report is before us. I am constantly impressed by the ability of the clerks to turn our confused discussions into impressive prose. Once again, they have done a very good job on the draft report. I seek the committee's comments and input on it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have one tiny suggestion. The second sentence of paragraph 12 begins,

"Although reassured by the Minister's responses".

It might be worth adding "including his response on special schools". In the context of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, that would give some reassurance to parents and teachers.

The Convener: Okay. We can include that. I have a couple of suggestions. In paragraph 4, we talk about the minister's commitment to transparency, and so forth. We might add, "However, the committee believes that it should be possible to make education spending in Scotland much more transparent and accountable than at present." In a sense, that is the central statement, but it does not quite say that. Would that be all right?

Paragraph 11 states:

"The revision of the targets ... resulted in many of the timescales for delivery moving further into the future."

That is a slight overstatement. I think that only some of the timescales moved. It does not matter too much.

Mr Ingram: It was most of the timescales.

The Convener: Was it most of them? I did not think that it was.

Dr Murray: Some certainly did. Some were consolidated so that, instead of there being a year-on-year increase, there was an increase by end date. There were some changes.

The Convener: There were differences of scale. It does not matter too much; it was just a final thought. There is some disagreement on that point, so we will leave that paragraph as it is.

Paragraph 15 talks about the budgetary movements. I suggest that we add at the end of the paragraph, "Both these aspects"—that is, the budgetary movements up and down and the carry-over—"should, however, be routinely included as part of the budget papers." The difficulty was the fact that they were not.

There is a slight grammatical error in paragraph 16, which does not quite read properly. The words have gone slightly wrong.

With those comments, can we agree the report?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I will pursue further with the minister the question of drawing together the views of our advisers and the Executive's advisers on how we get deeper into the budgetary figures and so on to make the budget a bit more transparent. There is further work to be done. After all, at the previous evidence-taking session, we heard how far they had got on the matter. Subject to the minister's agreement, I will meet him and appropriate officials to find out whether we can reach a common understanding about where we are going and how the work will be carried out. We need to be able to go into the next round of committee budget scrutiny with a clear idea of how the money is spent, where it goes and so on.

Fiona Hyslop: Are you talking about drilling down?

The Convener: Yes. I realise that the issue of local authority expenditure also raises the question of local authority independence. However, I—and, I believe, the committee—hold the view that that is different from the question whether local authority expenditure is transparent and whether people are able to judge whether the Executive's intended outputs are being delivered. None of that goes against local authority independence, but it is vital to democratic scrutiny of the large spend on education in Scotland.

Ms Alexander: I am not sure whether your meeting with the minister will be the appropriate place to pursue the issues raised in paragraph 18, which refers to the fact that local authorities have to make efficiency savings of £150 million. Given that £100 million of those savings will have to be made in education and social work, will some of that money come from reducing teacher numbers? If not, where will it come from? I believe that we have two options: either we write to the minister, seeking clarity on the matter, or the issue is raised during your meeting with him. I do not mind which course we pursue, but we should choose one of those two avenues.

The Convener: I think that you have raised a separate issue that we should write to the minister about. I have to say that our file of correspondence with the minister is getting quite substantial.

Meeting closed at 12:16.

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