

# **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 27 September 2006

Session 2

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## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

### 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2006, Session 2

#### CONVENER

\*Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)

#### DEPUTY CONVENER

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

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab)

\*Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (Sol)

\*Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP)

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

\*Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)

\*Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)

\*Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

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

Mr Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP)

\*attended

#### THE FOLLOWING ALSO ATTENDED:

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:

Allan Campbell (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)

Peadar Morgan (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Eugene Windsor

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Mark Roberts

#### ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Education Committee

Wednesday 27 September 2006

[THE CONVENER opened the meeting at 11:08]

### Items in Private

**The Convener (Iain Smith):** Good morning and welcome to the Education Committee's 19<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2006. We have a fairly busy agenda but, before I commence our business, I welcome Dr Sandra Krump from Bavaria, who is observing the meeting as part of a visit to learn about the Scottish education system. I hope that she finds the committee as entertaining as we do.

I have received apologies from Wendy Alexander.

Agenda item 1 is to consider whether to take items 10 and 11 in private. [*Interruption.*] As I said that, the blinds started to go down, but I am sure that it was coincidental. Under items 10 and 11, we will consider papers on our approach to the scrutiny of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill and the Scottish Executive's draft budget and consider potential witnesses. The committee's normal practice is to consider such items in private. Do members agree to take items 10 and 11 in private?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** We must also consider whether to take in private our draft report on the draft national plan for Gaelic, for the normal reason, which is that the report will be drafted initially by the clerks and it is easier to have a full discussion of the issues that are raised by that draft in private, given that it will not have been considered or approved by members. Are members content to take the proceedings on our draft report in private?

**Members indicated agreement.**

## Draft National Plan for Gaelic

11:10

**The Convener:** Item 2 is the draft national plan for Gaelic. Before we commence, I inform members that the headphones on the table are for those who wish to listen to the English interpretation of the Gaelic proceedings. Headphones are also available in the public gallery for members of the public who wish to follow proceedings.

Section 2(3) of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 requires Parliament to be consulted on the draft national plan for Gaelic. The Parliamentary Bureau has referred the draft plan to the committee. Representatives of Bòrd na Gàidhlig will give evidence in Gaelic. Simultaneous interpretation will be available on channel 1. I welcome Allan Campbell, who is the chief executive, and Peadar Morgan, who is the language planning manager, and I invite them to make an opening statement.

**Allan Campbell (Bòrd na Gàidhlig):** Madainn mhath, a chàirdean, agus mòran taing. Is mise Ailean Caimbeul, ceannard Bòrd na Gàidhlig. An toiseach, bu mhath leam a ràdh cho toilichte 's a tha mi a bhith aig an ìre seo de dh'adhartas le leasachadh na Gàidhlig. Bu mhath leam taing a thoirt dhan chomataidh airson na chuir a' chomataidh ri adhartas agus cruthachadh Bile na Gàidhlig (Alba), a tha sinn a-nis a' cur an gnìomh mar achd.

Nuair a thòisich an Riaghaltas seo ann an 2003, cha robh Bòrd na Gàidhlig ach air ùr stèidheachadh. Air Dihaoine seo tighinn, foillsichidh sinn an treas aithisg bhliadhnail againn agus an tè mu dheireadh mar Bhòrd Gàidhlig na h-Alba. Tha sinn mar Bhòrd na Gàidhlig ùr reachdail an sàs ann an cur an gnìomh rùintean Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005. Mar a tha fios agaibh, chaidh an achd an gnìomh anns a' Ghearran am bliadhna agus thàinig Bòrd na Gàidhlig gu bith mar bhuidheann ùr reachdail.

Anns an luchar, chaidh crìoch a chur air deasachadh "An dreachd Plana Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig" agus "An dreachd dhen Stiùireadh air Planaichean Gàidhlig". Thòisich co-chomhairle poblach air an dà dhreachd sin air 14 Lùnastal am bliadhna agus crìochnaichidh e air 10 Samhain. Tha am bòrd an dòchas an dreachd dheireannach fhaotainn chun a' mhinistear ro dheireadh na bliadhna.

Tha am bòrd air 30 coinneamhan poblach a chumail air feadh Alba, agus aon an ann an Lunnainn, gus fiosrachadh fhoillseachadh mu fheallsanachd a' phlana nàiseanta agus gus daoine agus buidhnean a bhrosnachadh gus pàirt

a ghabhail anns a' choluadar seo. Tha am bòrd glè mhothachail às na dleastanasan leasachaidh aige. Tha e cuideachd glè shoilleir gur ann an com-pàirteachas èifeachdach leis a' choimhearsnachd agus le buidhnean de gach seòrsa a thig amasan plana nàiseanta na Gàidhlig gu làn ìre.

Chaidh an dreachd den phlana nàiseanta a chonaltradh farsaing air feadh coimhearsnachd na Gàidhlig agus le buidhnean a tha air a bhith an sàs leatha fad grunn bhliadhnaichean. Chan eil na prìomh dhùbhlain a tha mu choinneamh na Gàidhlig air atharrachadh, agus leis a' phlana nàiseanta a-nis a' cuimseachadh nas mionaidiche orra, tha am bòrd misneachail à aonta ùr a leigeas dhuinn adhartas a dhèanamh còmhla ann an ùrachadh a' chàinain. Tha am plana nàiseanta a' cuimseachadh air na prìomh dhùbhlain fo chòig chinn àraidh, le "Spionnadh" aig an ceann. Tha adhartas a' crochadh air spionnadh, ann am beachd a' bhùird.

Tha mi air leth toilichte a bhith an seo an-diugh gus còmhraidh ribh mu na dreachdan de na h-irisean cudromach seo. Cuide rium tha Peadar Morgan, a tha na stiùiriche planadh càinain aig Bòrd na Gàidhlig agus a tha air a bhith an sàs gu mionaideach ann an obair dreachdaidh nan irisean seo.

*Following is the translation:*

Good morning, friends, and many thanks. I am Allan Campbell, the chief executive of Bòrd na Gàidhlig. I start by saying how happy I am that Gaelic is at its present stage of development. I thank the committee for its contribution to the development and progression of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill, which we are now implementing as an act. When the present Administration commenced in 2003, the bòrd had just been established. On Friday of this week, we will publish the third and final annual report of Bòrd Gàidhlig na h-Alba. As the new statutory Bòrd na Gàidhlig, we are now actively engaged in implementing the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

As you know, the 2005 act was commenced in February this year and the new Bòrd na Gàidhlig was established as a statutory public body. In July, the drafts of the national plan for Gaelic and the guidance on Gaelic language plans were completed. The public consultation on the two documents started on 14 August and will finish on 10 November. The bòrd plans to deliver the final draft to the minister by the end of the year. The bòrd has held 30 public meetings throughout Scotland and one in London to publicise the philosophy and aspirations of the national plan and to motivate individuals and organisations to participate in the consultation.

The bòrd is aware of its development responsibilities, but it is also clear that the national plan's objectives will be fully realised only through effective partnerships with the Gaelic community and a wide variety of organisations of all kinds. The draft national plan has been informed by extensive discussion over many years in the Gaelic community and with bodies that are involved in its development. The principal challenges that face Gaelic have not changed, but with them being refocused in a national plan, the bòrd anticipates new unity and progress in the revitalisation of Gaelic. The national plan focuses on the principal challenges under five headings, with vitality as the lead challenge. The bòrd believes that progress will be dependent on vitality.

I am extremely pleased to be here to discuss with you these hugely important documents. With me is my colleague Peadar Morgan, who is the language planning manager for Bòrd na Gàidhlig and who was involved closely with the drafting of the documents.

11:15

**Peadar Morgan (Bòrd na Gàidhlig):** Bu mhath leam rud beag a ràdh mun phlana. Fad na 20<sup>mh</sup> linn, tha leasachadh na Gàidhlig air a bhith stèidhichte air foghlam. Tha tòrr air a bhith ga dhèanamh ann am foghlam agus tha tòrr ri dhèanamh fhathast, ach tha sinn ag aithneachadh mar choimhearsnachd nach bi foghlam a-mhàin—foghlam leis fhèin—a' stèidheachadh ginealach ùr a bhios fileanta gu leòr agus misneachail gu leòr gus an cànan a chumail beò cho math ri beò. Tha an dreachd phlana a' dol leis a' bheachd aig eòlaichean eadar-nàiseanta gur e an dùbhlain as motha spionnadh a chur air ais anns a' chànan tron choimhearsnachd agus gu h-àraidh tron dachaigh. Tha e na bhrosnachadh dhuinn gun deach an dearbh theachdaireachd a thaghadh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd nuair a chùim iad co-labhairt a' comharrachadh 20 bliadhna de dh'fhoghlam tro Ghàidhlig. Airson cànan beag, chan e foghlam, foghlam, foghlam, ach foghlam, coimhearsnachd agus dachaigh.

*Following is the translation:*

I would like to say a little about the plan. For all of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the development of Gaelic has been based on education. Much has been done in education, but much remains to be done. As a community, we recognise that education alone will not establish a new generation that will be fluent and confident enough to keep the language alive. The draft plan agrees with the opinion of international experts that the biggest challenge is to revitalise the language through the community and, in particular, through the home. It is encouraging to us that Highland Council chose

that very message when it held a conference to mark 20 years of Gaelic-medium education. For a little language it is not about education, education, education, but about education, community and home.

**The Convener:** Thank you for your opening remarks. I remind members that we have received written evidence from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Glasgow City Council. Highland Council was invited to submit written evidence but has not yet done so. Members may wish to refer in their questions to the written evidence that we have received.

**Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I apologise that you will have to cope with having the light in your eyes because the blinds are too noisy for us to put them down.

Thank you for your opening statements and for providing the documents on which you have been working. It is clear that you must prioritise the traditional Gaelic heartlands. I am not sure whether that is stated explicitly in the documents. How do you envisage the bòrd supporting the plans of local authorities in the Highlands, as compared with the plans of authorities in areas such as East Renfrewshire, which I represent, which will not be priority areas but will rely on guidance from the bòrd when progressing their Gaelic plans?

**Allan Campbell:** Mar a tha fhios agaibh, tha dà iris aig a' choluadar seo—am plana nàiseanta fhèin agus an stiùireadh a tha a' dol gu na buidhnean poblach. Tha an achd a' cur dleasan air Bòrd na Gàidhlig taghadh a dhèanamh às na buidhnean poblach, agus airson an taghaidh sin tha sinn a' dèanamh measadh air na buidhnean poblach a rèir a' chomais a th' aca buaidh a thoirt air suidheachadh a' chàin. Tha am bòrd air taghadh a dhèanamh air na buidhnean poblach air am bi sinn ag amas anns a' chiad trì bliadhna, a' tòiseachadh leis an tè seo. Ged nach deachaidh litrichean oifigeil chun nam buidhnean fhathast, tha fhios aig na buidhnean air fad cò iad. Tha mi an dòchas gum bi litrichean oifigeil a' dol a-mach gu na sia buidhnean a bhios air an cuimseachadh anns a' bhliadhna seo fhèin. Faodaidh mi innse dhuibh gu bheil Riaghaltas na h-Alba aig bàrr na liosta sin.

A thaobh a' chuimseachaidh, tha sinn air a bhith a' measadh nam buidhnean an toiseach a rèir: dè a' bhuidhnean a bheir iad air suidheachadh a' chàin anns an dachaigh agus anns a' choimhearsnachd; dè a' bhuidhnean a bheir iad air foghlam aig a h-uile h-ìre; agus dè an comas a th' aca buaidh a thoirt air beatha agus coimhearsnachd na Gàidhlig. Anns an t-seagh sin, tha thu ceart a ràdh gu bheil sinn a' cuimseachadh air a' Ghàidhealtachd anns a' chiad ghluasad gu sònraichte, ach tha am bòrd cuideachd, anns na buidhnean air a bheil sinn a'

cuimseachadh anns an dara agus anns an treas bliadhna, a' sgaoileadh sin gu math nas fharsainge air feadh Alba, a' coimhead air buidhnean mar VisitScotland, Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba agus mar sin air adhart.

Anns a h-uile còmhraidh le buidhnean poblach air feadh Alba, tha sinn ag ràdh riutha nach eil sinn ga fhaicinn ciallach gum biodh e, can, 10 no 12 bliadhna mus bi a' bhuidheann phoblach a' toirt iomairt air choreigin air Gàidhlig. Rì linn sin, tha sinn gam brosnachadh a bhith a' gluasad air adhart le poileasaidhean agus le planaichean anns an eadar-ama—poileasaidhean agus planaichean neo-reachdail—agus bidh sinn gan cuideachadh ann a bhith a' dèanamh sin. Tha mi an dòchas gum bi an dà rud a' tachairt còmhla, gum bi planaichean oifigeil ann agus gum bi planaichean neo-reachdail ann cuideachd. Anns an t-seagh sin, bidh sinn a' toirt leinn Alba gu lèir, chan e dìreach a' Ghàidhealtachd.

*Following is the translation:*

As you know, two documents are being discussed here—the national plan and the guidance that will be issued to public bodies. The 2005 act places on Bòrd na Gàidhlig the responsibility of choosing from among public bodies. We are assessing public bodies in order that we can make that choice in accordance with their ability to advance the situation of the language. The bòrd has chosen the public bodies on which we will focus in the first three years, starting this year. Although official letters have not yet been sent out to those organisations, they know who they are. I hope that official letters will go out to the six public bodies on which we will focus this year. I can tell the committee that the Scottish Executive is at the top of the list.

We have assessed bodies according to how they can influence the language in the community and in the home; how they can influence it at every level of education; and their ability to influence Gaelic life and the Gaelic community. You are right to say that we are focusing on the Highlands in the first instance, but in the second and third years the bòrd will focus much more widely on all of Scotland and will look at organisations such as VisitScotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

In every discussion that we have with public bodies in Scotland, we say that we do not see it as sensible for a public body to wait for 10 or 12 years before doing something on Gaelic. We are encouraging them to make progress with non-statutory policies and plans in the interim. We will help them to do that. I hope that the two things—official plans and non-statutory plans—will move forward together. In that way, we will take with us the whole of Scotland, not just the Highlands.

**Mr Macintosh:** That is great and it is important that progress is made in that way. I see clearly how the plan applies to the Gaelic heartlands and even to an area such as Glasgow, which has a large number of Gaelic speakers, but I am trying to work out how we apply the targets to areas that have not yet reached a threshold of acceptance, if I may put it that way, and still need some persuasion or missionary work. Do you envisage your plans applying equally across the board or will some areas have to do more than others to meet the targets?

**Allan Campbell:** Nuair a bha sinn a' bruidhinn air a' bhile aig fìor thoiseach na cùise, bha beagan deasbad air an dearbh cheist seo. Aig an àm, bhathas a' gabhail mar eisimpleir buidheann nàiseanta mar Uisge na h-Alba. Bha a' cheist ann ciamar a bha a leithid sin de bhuidheann a' dol a thoirt plana air adhart a bhiodh a' coileanadh amasan na Gàidhlig, can, air na Crichean agus aig an aon àm ann an sgìre a bha gu math na bu Ghàidhealaiche agus na b' fhaighe air a' chànan, mar na h-Eileanan Siar. Tha caochladh ainmean air a bhith againn air seo, le feadhainn a' bruidhinn mu dheidhinn ceumannan—mar “graduated approach” no “layered approach”—ach chan eil e gu diofar. Tha sinn riarachtaichte gun gabh e dèanamh a bhith a' cruthachadh poileasaidh bunaiteach agus an uair sin a' neartachadh a' phoileasaidh sin a rèir neart a' chànan agus cuideachd—rud a chuir a' chomataidh seo fhèin a-steach dhan achd—a rèir an cothrom a tha ann airson leasachadh ann an sgìrean fa leth.

*Following is the translation:*

That question was discussed during the early stages of the bill. The question was asked how a national body such as Scottish Water would progress a plan to fulfil its Gaelic duties in the Borders at the same time as in a much more Gaelic area nearer to the language, such as the Western Isles. People have suggested calling that a graduated or layered approach, but it does not matter what we call it; we are just happy that it can be done. We are creating basic policy then strengthening it according to the strength of the language and—something that this committee put into the bill—the opportunity for development in each area.

**Peadar Morgan:** Tha seo a' tighinn às an stiùireadh seach às a' phlana nàiseanta. Tha an stiùireadh stèidhichte air dà fheallsanachd. Feumaidh sìor leasachadh a bhith ann, leis na h-ùghdarrasan taobh a-staigh a h-uile còig bliadhna ag ullachadh plana ùr agus ga chur a-steach. Tha sinn a' sùileachadh gum bi àrdachadh ceum air cheum leis an sin. Tha e cuideachd stèidhichte air sùbailteachd. Tha sinn ag aithneachadh nach eil a h-uile ìre, a h-uile seirbheis agus a h-uile buidheann a' tòiseachadh aig an aon ìre a thaobh

leasachadh na Gàidhlig. Tha sin ag obair dà rathad. Far nach eil mòran idir ann an-dràsta a thaobh leasachadh na Gàidhlig, is e a' chiad cheum a tha sinn a' sùileachadh cuideachadh nam buidhnean gus sin a dhèanamh. Aig a' cheann eile, far a bheil rudan a' dol leis a' Ghàidhlig agus far a bheil làthaireachd mhòr aig a' Ghàidhlig, tha sinn a' sùileachadh gum bi seirbheisean gu math làidir a' nochdadh anns na planaichean.

*Following is the translation:*

That is covered in the guidance rather than in the national plan. The guidance is based on two philosophies: development and the requirement on authorities to review their plans within five years. We hope that the plans will progress step by step and be flexible. We realise that not every service and organisation will start at the same level, so we are working along two roads of Gaelic development, but the first step is to help authorities. In areas where Gaelic is obvious and present, we hope that plans will provide for strong services.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con):** I wish you good fortune in working up the national plan. In remote areas with relatively few pupils who wish to study Gaelic and an insufficiency of teachers, does videoconferencing have a part to play, along with centres of excellence, to provide opportunities for Gaelic education and teacher training?

**Peadar Morgan:** Tha mi a' tuigsinn gu bheil comataidh a' dol air adhart mar-thà a' coimhead air na cùisean sin, agus tha sin a' tighinn a-steach anns an ro-innleachd foghlaim a tha mar phàirt dhen phlana nàiseanta. Tha iomradh air sin—mas math mo chuimhne co-dhiù—agus, seadh, is e sin an rathad air adhart gu h-àraidh leis na h-àrd-sgoiltean far a bheil àireamhan beaga mu choinneamh gach cuspair. Tha cothroman ann clas nas motha a dhèanamh agus na sgìlean aig na tidsearan a' sgaoileadh ann an sgìre fada nas fharsainghe tro video-conferencing agus a leithid.

*Following is the translation:*

I understand that a committee is currently looking at those matters, which come into the education strategy and are part of the national plan, as far as I remember. That is the way forward, especially in secondary schools where small numbers study each subject. Videoconferencing offers opportunities to have bigger classes and to distribute teachers' expertise.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Can we take it that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig will play a central role in your national plan as an educational centre of excellence? A large number of committee members went there, and we received a good



welcome and were impressed with the quality and range of services that it provided.

**Allan Campbell:** Chan eil teagamh nach bi Sabhal Mòr Ostaig agus Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd is nan Eilean aig cridhe a h-uile càil seo, agus gu dearbh nas fharsainghe na sin. Mar a thuirt mi na bu tràithe, ma tha na h-amasan a tha sinn a' cur romhainn anns a' phlana nàiseanta a' dol a thighinn gu ìre, tachraidh sin ri linn com-pàirteachas èifeachdach. Chan urrainn dhomh com-pàirteachas dhen t-seòrsa sin fhaicinn às aonais Sabhal Mòr Ostaig agus Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd is nan Eilean mar phàirt dheth, agus gu dearbh na h-oilthighean eile cuideachd.

*Following is the translation:*

There is no doubt that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the UHI Millennium Institute will be at the heart of all this. As I said earlier, the aims of the national plan will be brought to fruition in partnership. I cannot envisage such partnership without Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the UHI Millennium Institute and other universities.

**Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** My questions follow on from what Ken Macintosh talked about. A lot of the suggestions in the draft guidance are appropriate to areas where Gaelic is reasonably well developed already, but I wonder whether councils such as Dumfries and Galloway Council will feel dismayed by the guidance in that the council is not anywhere near the position that is outlined, because Gaelic is not spoken by many people in Dumfries and Galloway. The guidance does not seem to indicate to those areas with a low level of Gaelic awareness how they can get their toes on the bottom rung of the ladder. It seems to be directed at people who are much further on with or much more understanding of the development of Gaelic.

**Allan Campbell:** Tha sin ceart. Mar a thuirt Peadar Morgan an ceartuair, tha sinn uabhasach mothachail gu bheil caochladh bhuidhnean agus caochladh phàirtean de dh'Alba a' tòiseachadh aig ìrean gu math eadar-dhealaichte. Tuigidh sinn cuideachd gum biodh an stiùireadh seo, is dòcha, a' cur eagal air cuid de chomhairlean. Gu dearbh, nuair a bha sinn a' bruidhinn air a' bhile, bha sinn mothachail air an t-suidheachadh sin. Tha sinn a' tòiseachadh a' togail air na buidhnean far a bheil adhartas ga dhèanamh mar-thà. Tha sinn an dòchas gum bi na dh'fhoghlamas sinn agus an gliocas a thig a-mach às an sin na eisimpleir dha buidhnean eile. Aig an aon àm, tha sinn gu bhith a' bruidhinn ri comhairlean mar Chomhairle Dhùn Phris agus Gall-Ghaidhealaibh agus ag obair leotha airson obair tòiseachaidh air poileasaidh agus plana, an àite a bhith a' sparradh rudeigin orra a tha thar an comais agus thar an iarratais. Bidh sinn ag obair a' tòiseachadh aig an ìre a tha freagarrach dhaibhsan.

*Following is the translation:*

That is correct. As Peadar Morgan said, we are aware that different bodies in different parts of Scotland are starting at different levels. We also understand that the guidance will perhaps frighten some councils. When we were discussing the bill, we were aware of the situation. We are starting by helping the bodies where there has already been progress. We hope that the wisdom that we gain from that will be an example to other organisations. At the same time, we will work with councils such as Dumfries and Galloway Council on the policy and plans. Instead of coercing them into doing something that is not within their range of ability, we will start at a suitable level with them.

**Peadar Morgan:** Thoir an aire den chiad seantans anns an earrann a tha sibh a-mach air, air susbaint nam planaichean. Tha e ag ràdh:

"Tha na h-eisimpleirean a leanas a' toirt beachd air na dh'fhaodar a bhith ann am plana-cànain Gàidhlig."

Tha na faclan air an taghadh gu math faiceallach. Cha bhi dà phlana, tha fhios, coltach ri chèile. Bidh a h-uile plana a rèir de an sgìre, de an t-seirbheis, de an ìre de leasachadh a tha air a bhith ann thuige seo. Bidh gach buidheann a' coimhead air an t-suidheachadh aca fhèin agus air suidheachadh na Gàidhlig am measg an fheadhainn a tha iad a' frithealadh anns a' choimhearsnachd.

*Following is the translation:*

The first sentence in the guidance states:

"The following examples give an idea of what to include in a Gaelic language plan."

No two plans will be alike. They will depend on the area, services and existing level of development. Every organisation will consider the situation with Gaelic in their own community and for those whom they serve.

**Dr Murray:** Is it worth while having an example of guidance on the early stages of Gaelic development for those areas that have little use of Gaelic? It could be almost like a menu. You could make suggestions to places where little Gaelic is spoken, such as on offering Gaelic in schools or having Gaelic material in the library, which could be part of the initial stages of its development.

11:30

**Peadar Morgan:** Tha mi a' smaoineachadh gu bheil e ag ràdh anns an dreachd stiùiridh gu bheil sinn a' sireadh eisimpleirean de dheagh chleachdadh, agus sin an seòrsa rud a dh'fhaodadh a dhol air làrach-lìn Bòrd na Gàidhlig airson stiùireadh agus cuideachadh a thoirt do bhuidhnean.

Tha eisimpleirean ann mar-thà leis na tha air tachairt anns a' Chuimrigh, a tha bliadhnaichean air thoiseach oirnn. Tha plana Cuimris aig a' mhòr chuid de bhuidhnean—mura h-eil aig a h-uile buidheann—anns a' Chuimrigh, agus tha na h-Èireannaich air tòiseachadh air an aon rud ann an Èirinn. Anns a' Chuimrigh, fiù 's anns na h-àiteachan far a bheil an cànan aca fhèin gu math lag, tha na planaichean aca fada air thoiseach air dad a tha againn mar-thà san dùthaich seo.

Feumaidh sinn ceum air cheum a ghabhail ann a bhith a' togail suas eisimpleirean a bhios a' freagairt air buidhnean eile. Cha bhi sinn a' tòiseachadh, tha mi an dùil, le Comhairle Dhùn Phris agus Gall-Ghaidhealaibh. Mus ruig sinn a' chomhairle sin, bidh barrachd eisimpleirean agus eòlais againn fhìn air an t-seòrsa rud a tha a' dol a bhith freagarrach.

*Following is the translation:*

I think it says in the guidance note that we are looking for examples of good practice. These are the kind of things that can go on Bòrd na Gàidhlig's website to give guidance and help to organisations. The examples that are given are what already happens in Wales, which is years ahead of us, even in places where Welsh is not as strong as it is in other places. Most, if not all, organisations in Wales have a Welsh plan and organisations in Ireland are starting to have Gaelic plans. We must go step by step and demonstrate examples that will be suitable for other organisations. We will not be starting with Dumfries and Galloway Council. Before we reach that council, we will have more examples and more expertise about what can be suitable.

**Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP):** The national Gaelic education strategy contains quite specific action points but no timescales. Is the strategy a plan for action or is it a proposal for what you would like to happen? To what extent can you say that the strategy will happen?

**Allan Campbell:** Chan eil e ann an cumhachd a' bhùird aig an ìre seo a ràdh gun tachair a h-uile càil seo. Tha am plana air a dhol gu coluadar, agus tha e air a stèidheachadh air comhairle agus beachdan a tha sinn air a bhith a' cluinntinn agus a' trusadh thar ùine. Chan urrainn dhuinn a ràdh le cinnt gu bheil na rudan sin a' dol a thachairt gus am bi am plana air aontachadh gu foirmeil le ministearan—aig toiseach na bliadhna ùire, tha mi an dòchas.

Aon uair 's gu bheil an t-aonta sin againn, bidh rudan sa phlana a dh'fheumas tachairt. Tha fhios againn uile nach eil an cumhachd aig Bòrd na Gàidhlig airson seirbheisean foghlam a libhrigeadh. Tha na cumhachdan sin aig caochladh bhuidhnean eile, agus feumaidh sinne a bhith ag obair còmhla ris na buidhnean sin. Le

ùghdarras a' phlana agus an stiùireadh, agus le taic bhon chomataidh seo, bhon choimhearsnachd a-muigh agus bho mhinistearan, tachraidh na rudan a tha sinn a' cur romhainn.

Tha mi a' smaoinreachadh, ge-tà, gu bheil e cuideachd deatamach a ràdh nach eil duine againn a' sùileachadh gu bheil sinn a' dol a dh'atharrachadh an t-saoghail ann an ùine ghoirid; cha mhotha na sin a tha sinn a' dol a choileanadh a h-uile càil a dh'iarraim ann an còig bliadhna a' chiad phlana. Tha sinn ann am Bòrd na Gàidhlig air a bhith a' coimhead romhainn air trì planaichean. Tha sinn air a bhith a' coimhead chun a' bhliadhna 2020—dìreach air sgàth 's gu bheil 20:20 vision a' coimhead uabhasach math dhuinn mar slogan. Tha e ceart a ràdh gur ann thar ùine dhen t-seòrsa sin a gheibh sinn an seòrsa cinn-uidhe a tha sinn ag iarraidh. Feumaidh sinn tòiseachadh le lèirsinn shoilleir air càit a bheil sinn a' dol, agus tha mi a' smaoinreachadh gu bheil am plana seo a' tòiseachadh air an lèirsinn sin a chur romhainn. Ma gheibh sinn an taic, thig an uair sin an t-ùghdarras air chùl sin.

*Following is the translation:*

It is not in the power of the bòrd to say at this stage that all of this will happen. The strategy has been consulted on and, although it is based on consultation and opinions that we have gathered over time, we cannot say for certain that all of it will happen until the plan has been agreed by the minister, which we hope will happen at the beginning of the new year. As soon as we have that agreement, we will know that the things that are in the strategy will have to happen. At the moment, Bòrd na Gàidhlig does not have the power to have anything to do with education—different bodies have that responsibility and we have to work with them. If we get support from this committee, the community and, at the end of the day, ministers, all of the things that are in the strategy will happen.

It is important to say that none of us thinks that we will change the world in a short time. Neither can we fulfil everything in the five years of the plan. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has been looking at three plans and has in mind the year 2020—just because 20:20 vision looks good as a logo. Further, it is over that sort of time period that we will achieve the outcomes that we are looking for. We must start looking at where we are going to start and where we want to go. The strategy has that vision.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I think that the action plan on education is impressive because it has specifics in it. The challenge is to make those proposals happen.

The submission from the Western Isles Council says:

"In cities, parents are willing to have their children travel some distance for their education, but here in the Western Isles, some parents will not have their children travel a short distance for Gaelic Medium Education if it means that the school roll in their village school is compromised."

That suggests to me that there is a specific challenge to be faced. People are saying that if there is to be Gaelic-medium education in the Western Isles, there has to be some protection of school rolls. Interestingly, later on today we are addressing the issue of rural schools generally and we will be talking about capacity issues, which have an impact, particularly when Audit Scotland addresses the viability of schools.

Western Isles Council has asked for a comment on the matter to be included in the national plan. In order to ensure that parents do not feel that they are putting their local school at risk, there has to be some protection in relation to capacity issues. Are you prepared to add that to the plan at the request of Western Isles Council?

**Allan Campbell:** Bidh sinn ag èisteachd gu dùrachdach ris a h-uile comhairle agus beachd a gheibh sinn, agus tha sinn mothachail air an t-suidheachadh anns na h-Eileanan Siar agus ann an sgìrean dùthchail eile. Mar a tha sibh fhèin ag ràdh, tha daoine a' faicinn sgoiltean aig cridhe coimhearsnachd. Ma dh'fhalbhas an sgoil, tha iad a' faireachdainn gu bheil rudeigin air tachairt dhan choimhearsnachd nach gabh leigheas.

Tha sinn air a bhith a' bruidhinn ri Comhairle nan Eilean Siar thar ùine a-nis, agus tha còmhraidh inntinneach air a bhith againn. Tha sinn air a bhith a' sealltainn air dè an ìre a thèid aig a' chomhairle na h-amasan aca a choileanadh, gus am bi seirbheis foghlaim fo aois sgoile agus na bliadhnaichean tràtha air a libhrigeadh tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig gu h-iomlan—agus, far am biodh pàrantan a' sireadh seirbheis Bheurla, gum faigheadh iad sin. Bhiodh sin a' ciallachadh gun robh a' chlann anns na h-Eileanan Siar air fad a' faotainn an ciad fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig. Nan tachradh sin, tha mi a' smaoinichadh gum freagradh e an dearbh cheist a thathar a' togail anns a' phàipear sin, thoirleadh bhiodh e a' ciallachadh nach leigeadh a' chlann a leas siubhal airson foghlam Gàidhlig.

*Following is the translation:*

We will listen carefully to all the advice and opinions that we receive. We are aware of the situation in the Western Isles and other rural areas. As you say, people see schools as the heart of the community and, if the school goes, they feel that something has happened to the community that cannot be healed.

We have been talking to Western Isles Council for some time and our interesting talks have revealed the lengths to which the council will go to fulfil its aim to distribute pre-school and early years education totally through the medium of Gaelic. Children will get English education where their parents are looking for that, but children throughout the Western Isles will get their pre-school education in Gaelic. That answers the question in the submission, because it means that children will not have to travel to get Gaelic-medium education.

**Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab):** Page 31 of the draft national plan includes some laudable objectives for 2012. This might be covered in other documents or discussions, but will you explain how Bòrd na Gàidhlig will work with the National Theatre of Scotland? The NTS is relatively new but it has developed and made substantial strides in the past six months or so. What role will it play in articulating Gaelic culture as part of its menu of options? There is also potential, albeit time-limited, for the year of Highland culture to energise some issues. Will you expand on your views on those two projects?

**Peadar Morgan:** Tha e caran duilich a bhith a' coimhead air rudan sònraichte aig an ìre seo. Is e an dòigh a bhios am plana ag obair gum bi buidhnean aig a bheil pròiseactan rin cur air adhart gan cur air adhart ma tha iad a' freagairt air na prìomhachasan anns a' phlana. Ma tha buidheann drama nàiseanta airson rudeigin a dhèanamh leis a' Ghàidhlig agus airson dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil an t-airgead a tha a' dol thuca airson na Gàidhlig ga riaghladh gu feum a' chànain, dh'fheumadh e a bhith a' freagairt air na prìomhachasan a tha againn, no a bhios againn, anns a' phlana nàiseanta aig a' cheann thall.

Tha e cuideachd fìor gum bi Bòrd na Gàidhlig—agus, tha mi an dòchas, an nàisean—a' cumail sùil air na prìomhachasan airson dèanamh cinnteach gun tig pròiseactan air adhart a bhios a' freagairt air gach ìre de phrìomhachas. Nuair a thig am plana a-mach, tha sinn am beachd gum bi prìomh phròiseact ga chur a-staigh mu choinneamh gach fear dhe na 20 raon a tha againn. Mar sin, anns na h-ealain mar eisimpleir, bhiodh aon phròiseact ga ainmeachadh agus bhiodh Bòrd na Gàidhlig a' dèanamh cinnteach gun rachadh am pròiseact sin air adhart. Ach bha sinn ga fhaicinn iomchaidh gun a bhith a' cur nam pròiseactan sin anns an teacsa fhèin aig an ìre seo airson co-chomhairle, oir bha sinn airson togail air beachdan na coimhearsnachd air sin. Tha sinn air eisimpleirean a thoirt seachad aig deireadh a' phlana air an t-seòrsa rud a tha sinn a' sùileachadh a bhios ann, agus bidh e gu math inntinneach faicinn dè na beachdan a thig air ais air sin agus càit a bheil obair ann an dràma a' tighinn a-steach a rèir nam prìomhachasan sin.

Cuideachd, mas math mo chuimhne, tha dràma a' nochdadh anns an roi-innleachd foghlaim, airson dràma anns na sgoiltean. Mar sin, tha rudeigin sònraichte an sin cuideachd.

*Following is the translation:*

It is difficult to talk about specific projects at this stage, but the priorities are stated in the plan, and organisations that have projects can put them forward. For example, the National Theatre of Scotland might want to use the money that it gets for Gaelic to do something that relates to the priorities in the national plan.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the nation will keep an eye on the priorities and make sure that the projects that develop are suitable for each area of priority. When the plan is published, we will include the projects under the different headings. For example, when an arts project is named, Bòrd na Gàidhlig will make sure that it progresses. We do not think it appropriate to include the projects in the plan until we hear communities' opinions. However, at the end of the draft plan we give examples of the projects that we are looking for. It will be interesting to hear the opinions that come back to us. We will consider drama projects in relation to the priorities. If I remember correctly, drama appears under education as well, particularly in relation to drama in schools.

**Mr Adam Ingram (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I commend the bòrd for producing its draft national plan for Gaelic. It will be interesting to see the results of the consultation process.

One issue that has not been emphasised in the plan to enhance the vitality and status of the language is how language development can add value to economic development in the Gàidhealtachd. I have another issue to raise, but will you address that issue first?

**Allan Campbell:** Tòisichidh mise air an tè sin. Mura bheil sinn air a' cheangal sin a dhèanamh cho làidir is cho soilleir 's air a bheil feum, thèid sin a chur ceart thoireadh tha am bòrd gu math soilleir mu dheidhinn cho cudromach 's a tha an cànan mar mheadhan air leasachadh eaconamach. Ma tha Gàidhlig gu bhith buan agus a' dol a dh'fhàs, feumaidh a' Ghàidhlig a bhith air a fighe a-staigh dhan bheatha eaconamach cho math ri beatha nan ealan agus beatha shòisealta na coimhearsnachd, chan ann a-mhàin air a' Ghàidhealtachd ach air feadh Alba.

Tha e air a bhith na mhisneachadh mòr dhuinn an ìre gu bheil an raon phoblach, le aithne agus mothachadh air an achd, air a' phlana nàiseanta agus air na rudan eile a tha a' tachairt, a' gabhail poileasaidhean air Gàidhlig mar-thà. Ma thèid sibh a dh'àite mar an t-Òban, chì sibh na prìomh bhùithtean—Tesco, an Co-op agus a-nis Homepage—a tha uile dà-chànanach. Is e a'

bhùth Homepage sin a' chiad bhùth aca ann an Alba anns a bheil Gàidhlig, agus chan e a-mhàin gun do chuir iad Gàidhlig anns an Oban, ach tha iad air riaghailtean agus poileasaidh a chruthachadh dhaibh fhèin gus gum bi iad, bho seo a-mach, a' leantainn na h-eisimpleir sin air feadh na dùthcha le mothachadh air a' chànan. Tha sin a' toirt eisimpleir dhan raon phrìobhaidich. Tha e cuideachd a' toirt cothrom agus stiùir dha daoine òga a tha a' dol tro fhoghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig, a' dearbhadh dhaibhsan gu bheil an cànan gu feum taobh a-muigh saoghal foghlaim agus nach eil e dìreach airson daoine a tha an sàs ann an leasachadh.

A bharrachd air an sin, anns a h-uile plana a bhios sinn a' dèanamh cuide ris an raon phoblach, bidh sinn a' coimhead air mar a tha an cànan a' pòsadh a-steach dha leasachadh eaconamach agus dha saoghal eaconamach na dùthcha. Tha lomairt na Gàidhealtachd agus nan Eilean air tè dhe na ciad bhuidhnean air a bheil sinn ag amas anns a' bhliadhna seo fhèin.

*Following is the translation:*

If we have not made the link between language development and economic development strong and obvious, that will be put right because the bòrd is certain about the importance of economic development and language being at the centre of economic development. If Gaelic is to survive and the use of Gaelic is to grow, it will have to be knitted into the economic, artistic and social lives of communities not only in the Highlands, but throughout Scotland.

We have been encouraged by the lengths to which the public sector will go—we have been encouraged by its recognition of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and the national plan and the lengths to which it will go in considering policies, for example.

One can also see people's priorities in places such as Tesco, the Co-op and Homepage in Oban, for example, all of which are bilingual. Homepage was the first shop in Scotland to use Gaelic. Policies and rules have been created that mean that its example will be followed throughout the land from now on. What has happened provides an example to the private sector and opportunities for and guidance to young people in Gaelic-medium education. It proves that Gaelic is useful outwith education and is not just for people who are involved in development.

In each plan that we will work on with the public sector, we will consider how the language knits into the area's economic development. Highlands and Islands Enterprise is the first group that we are aiming at this year in that respect.

**Mr Ingram:** The point that I was making was to do with making the use of Gaelic an economic

advantage and giving people an economic incentive to retain and develop the language's vitality. There must be areas in which doing so can be focused on—I refer to the development of tourism, for example.

**Allan Campbell:** Gun teagamh, tha turasachd air tè cho cudromach 's a tha ann, ach tha na h-ealain cudromach cuideachd. Tha saoghal nan ealan air a bhith an dà chuid a' toirt cothrom cosnadh agus cothrom dha daoine feum a dhèanamh dhen chànan gu am buannachd fhèin. Tha e cuideachd air a bhith buannachdail dhan chànan fhèin le a bhith a' togail ìomhaigh a' chànan, chan ann a-mhàin san dùthaich seo ach gu h-eadar-nàiseanta.

Tha turasachd cuideachd na raon follaiseach, mar a thuirt sibh, thoiridh tha Alba anns an fharsaingeachd gu mòr an eisimeil air turasachd anns an t-saoghal a tha ann. Feumaidh sinn coimhead airson adhbharan sònraichte, airson rudeigin a bharrachd a thoirt dhan fheadhainn a thig a dh'Alba. Tha e follaiseach nach eil an cànan agus a h-uile càil a tha a' buntainn dhan chànan ri fhaotainn ann an àite sam bith eile. Ma thèid luchd-turais a Bharraigh, gheibh iad rudeigin eadar-dhealaichte bhon rud a gheibh iad anns an Eilean Sgitheanach. Mar sin, tha buannachd ann ge bith càite an tèid iad ann an Alba. Sin pàirt dhen adhbhar a bhios VisitScotland cho àrd air an liosta againn.

*Following is the translation:*

Indeed. Tourism is important in that respect, but the arts are also important. Both provide earning opportunities and opportunities for people to use the language to their advantage, but they have also been advantageous to the language itself in raising its profile not only in this country, but internationally.

As you said, the tourism industry is an obvious area in which to use Gaelic. Scotland depends on tourism. We must look to give something more to people who come to Scotland. Everything that is related to Gaelic will do that; people cannot find such things anywhere else. They will get different things in Barra and the Isle of Skye and different advantages wherever they go. That is part of the reason why VisitScotland is so high on our list of bodies to deal with.

11:45

**Peadar Morgan:** Tha e cudromach cuideachd coimhead air na cothroman a tha ann airson an cànan fhèin a thoirt air adhart tro ghnìomhan eaconomach. Tha cothroman ann airson togail air turasachd tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig a bhiodh a' cur ri spionnadh a' chànan agus ri foghlam anns na sgoiltean, a' leudachadh eòlas, briathrachas agus cothroman anns a' chànan fhèin.

A thaobh spionnadh, chan eil sinn air ainmeachadh fhathast—ach tha e anns na ceithir raointean anns a' phlana nàiseanta—an t-àite-obrach. Tha sin a' dol a bhith caran duilich, tha mi ag aithneachadh, a thoirt air adhart, ach is e pàirt mhòr de bheatha chuideigin aig a bheil Gàidhlig. Tha an t-àite-obrach na phàirt dhen choimhearsnachd, dh'fhaodadh tu ràdh, agus tha e cudromach gum faigh sinn dòigh, far an gabh e dèanamh, air Gàidhlig a thoirt a-steach dhan àite-obrach am measg an luchd-obrach fhèin a' conaltradh ri càch a chèile. Bidh e duilich, ach bidh clasaichean ann airson sin a dhèanamh gun a bhith a' cur bacadh air daoine eile.

*Following is the translation:*

It is also important to consider the opportunities that exist for progressing the language through economic endeavours. There are opportunities for building on tourism through the medium of Gaelic, which could add to the vitality of the language and of education in schools, expanding knowledge, vocabulary and opportunities in the language itself.

In terms of the vitality of the language, the workplace is one of the four areas covered in the draft language plan. I realise that that work is going to be a bit difficult to progress but the workplace is a big part of the community and of the life of anyone who speaks Gaelic, and it is important for us to find a way to bring Gaelic into the workplace so that workers can talk to one another. That might be difficult, but there will be classes.

**Allan Campbell:** Anns na còmhraidhean a bhios againn le Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd agus nan Eilean, le caochladh chomhairlean agus le Bòrd Turasachd na h-Alba, tha sinn mothachail gu bheil rudan air tachairt mar-thà. Tha sin na mhisneachadh mòr dhuinn agus tha sinn a' togail air deagh rùn. Mura biodh rudan mar sin, bhiodh an saoghal a' coimhead gu math na bu dorra dhuinn. Tha sinn air ar misneachadh leis gu bheil sinn a' faireachdainn gu bheil daoine ag obair cuide rinn. Mura biodh e mar sin, cha bhithinn-sa leth cho dòchasach 's a tha mi a' suidhe seo an-diugh.

*Following is the translation:*

It is also important to say that from our discussions with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other organisations, as well as from our discussions with VisitScotland, we are aware that some things have happened already. That is encouraging, and we are building on those things and on goodwill. If such things were not happening, the world would look very difficult for us, but we are encouraged. We feel that people are working with us. If it was not like that, I would not be as hopeful as I am today.

**Mr Ingram:** I have one other question on Gaelic learning outwith the core Gaelic speaking areas. In Ayrshire, I have had occasion to try to help groups who are trying to get support for Gaelic classes in local colleges, and I find that different local authorities take different approaches. For example, North Ayrshire Council employs a Gaelic development officer and runs a large number of classes throughout the local authority area. That is not a core Gaelic area; the island of Arran was, but there are no native speakers left there, unfortunately.

One reason that some local authorities give for not going down that road is lack of demand. However, there is a lot of latent and potential demand. How can we move from encouraging the North Ayrshire Councils of this world to continue—North Ayrshire Council itself does not need any encouragement—and spread that support to other parts of the mainland? Is that a priority for the bòrd's first few years, or will you be considering that further down the line?

**Allan Campbell:** Tha e sònraichte iomchaidh gu bheil sibh a' togail na ceist sin an-diugh thoireadh, dìreach anns an latha no dhà mu dheireadh, tha sinn air a bhith a' coimhead air an dearbh chuspair seo. Tha sinn a' tòiseachadh air còmhraidh mu na ciad planaichean aig buidhnean poblach. Mar a tha sibh ag ràdh, tha an trioblaid, no an dùbhlán, seo bitheanta anns a h-uile coimhearsnachd. Aig amannan, tha mi a' smaoineachadh gu bheil sinn uile ag aithneachadh gum bi comhairlean ag ràdh, "Uill, chan eil iarratas ann," agus iad an dòchas nach bi e ann, thoireadh ma bhios e ann tha e ag adhbharachadh trioblaid. Tha sinn airson suidheachadh a chruthachadh far nach bi eagal air na comhairlean à iarratas, far am bi an structar aca airson clasaichean Gàidhlig a libhrigeadh far a bheil iarratas ann, agus gum bi am bòrd gan cuideachadh airson sin a dhèanamh.

Tha dà dhùbhlán romhpa, ge-tà: an toiseach leis na clasaichean anns a' choimhearsnachd a-muigh; ach an uair sin leis an iarratas a thig orra bhon taobh a-staigh dhe na buidhnean aca fhèin, bho luchd-obrach a tha ag iarraidh Gàidhlig ionnsachadh agus luchd-obrach a dh'fheumas iad a bhrosnachadh gus Gàidhlig ionnsachadh. Tha sinn a' faicinn cothrom an seo air structar a chruthachadh, agus tha sinn a' bruidhinn mar-thà ri dà chomhairle mu dheidhinn template a bhiodh againn. Ma gheibh sinn sin ag obair leis an dà chomhairle sin, tha sinn an dòchas gun gabh sin toirt an uair sin mar eisimpleir dhan h-uile comhairle a tha ga iarraidh ann an Alba, agus gum bi am bòrd a' cur taic riutha gus gum bi iad air chomas clasaichean agus foghlam a thoirt dhan luchd-obrach aca, agus dhan choimhearsnachd, mar a tha feum.

*Following is the translation:*

It is particularly relevant that you raise that question today; in the past few days we have been considering that very subject. We have been talking about the first plans for public bodies. The challenge that you ask about is widespread in communities. Sometimes councils say that there is no demand—and they hope that there is no demand, because demand creates problems. We want to establish structures so that councils are not afraid of demand for Gaelic classes and can provide for that demand. The bòrd will help them with that.

There are two challenges for councils: to provide classes in the community; and to satisfy demand from within their own groups of staff. Councils should encourage their own staff to learn Gaelic in classes. We think that there is an opportunity to create a structure for that. Indeed, we have already talked to two councils about a template that could be used with those councils and then as an example to every other council in Scotland that wants it. The bòrd will support those councils so that they can provide classes for their staff and for their communities.

**Peadar Morgan:** Tha seo a' tighinn a-steach cuideachd fon roinn "Inbhe" anns a' phlana nàiseanta. Chaidh a ràdh rium dìreach a' tighinn a-steach an-diugh nach eil am facal "nàiseanta" a' nochdadh anns a' phlana idir. Is dòcha gun robh sinn cho faisg air a' ghnòthach 's gun robh sinn dìreach a' gabhail ris gun robh sin ann. Tha mi an dòchas gur e sin rud a thig às a' cho-chomhairle gum bi am facal sin a' nochdadh.

*Following is the translation:*

This question comes under the idea of "status" in the national plan. Earlier today, I was told that the word "national" is not in the plan at all; perhaps we were so close to the subject that we just accepted that it was there. I hope that that will be resolved during the consultation and that the word will be included.

**Allan Campbell:** Tha e air a' chiad duilleig.

*Following is the translation:*

It is on the first page.

**Peadar Morgan:** Tha e air a' chiad duilleig. Tha sin ceart. Sin freagairt dhan duine a thuirt sin rium.

Tha inbhe gu math cudromach ann an leasachadh cànan beag sam bith. Ged a tha e air leth cudromach gum bi an inbhe sin àrd aig na daoine a bhruidhneas an cànan no a dh'fhaodadh a bruidhinn, tha e cuideachd cudromach gun tèid sin a sgaoileadh a-mach dhan t-sluagh gu lèir agus gum bi inbhe nas àirde na tha an-dràsta aig a' Ghàidhlig. Tha e cudromach gum bi an sluagh measail air a' Ghàidhlig agus air eachdraidh ionadail a' chànan, ged nach eil ann a-nis ach ainmean àite às na linntean meadhanach. Tha e

cudromach gu bheil daoine a' mothachadh air na tha a' tachairt agus na cothroman anns an raon. Tha cothroman nàiseanta ann gus tòiseachadh air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh air astar.

Tha margaidheachd gu math cudromach, mar a tha làthaireachd dhan chànan—a' faicinn agus a' cluinntinn a' chànan—agus, mar as motha a bhios sin air àbhaisteachadh ann an seirbheisean bhuidhnean aig ìre nàiseanta agus ann an diofar sgìrean, tha mi cinnteach gum bi an t-iarratas ag èirigh dha rèir.

*Following is the translation:*

Oh—it is on the first page. You are right. That answers the point that was made to me earlier.

Status is very important for any minority language. The status of Gaelic should be high among the people who speak the language, but it is also important that the idea becomes widespread among all people, so that the status of Gaelic rises higher than it is at the moment, and so that people become fond of Gaelic and of its history—there is nothing left now but place names from the middle ages.

People should be aware of what is happening and of the opportunities that are available. There are national opportunities for learning Gaelic through distance learning. The language should have a presence. People should see it and hear it. The more the language becomes obvious within groups and bodies at national level, and within communities, the more the demand for the language will grow.

**Mr Macintosh:** I was encouraged by the example of Homebase in Oban, and I was pleased and surprised to learn that the Confederation of British Industry Scotland has recently come up with the suggestion of having manifestos in Gaelic next year. The CBI is not an organisation that I normally think of as inclusive in that way, but I am delighted with its suggestion.

The emphasis for you in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 is on your role in developing Gaelic among public authorities, and that is the focus of your plan. I take it that you will also be able to offer support and encouragement to private companies, cross-border public authorities and other organisations such as the Post Office, even if they are not at the core of your plan.

**Allan Campbell:** Tha sinne mar soisgeulaich sam bith. Tha sinn deònach a bhith a' searmonachadh an t-soisgeil dha duine sam bith a dh'èisteach, agus cuideachd ris an fheadhainn nach eil ag èisteachd.

Ged is e buidheann bheag a tha ann am Bòrd na Gàidhlig, mar a thuirt mi aig fìor thoiseach gnothaich an-diugh tha sinn a' faicinn gum feum sinn ruigheachd air a h-uile buidheann poblach

ann an Alba. Ge b' e dè an ìre aig a bheil iad sa chlàr againn, tha e cudromach gun ruig sinn orra agus gun tòisich sinn air còmhraidh riutha, an dara cuid tron luchd-obrach againn fhìn no tro a bhith ag obrachadh ann an co-bhonn le buidhnean eile. Tha an aon rud fìor a thaobh buidhnean prìobhaideach agus buidhnean saor-thoileach, thoireadh feumaidh seo tachairt ann an dòigh a tha coileanta air feadh na dùthcha.

Chan urrainn dhuinn, gu mì-fhortanach, dìreach a ràdh, "Dèiligidh sinn ri Gàidhlig anns na h-Eileanan an Iar an toiseach agus nuair a bhios sin againn ceart thèid sinn an uair sin dhan Eilean Sgitheanach." Uill, tha e ceart san Eilean Sgitheanach co-dhiù! Feumaidh sinn dèiligeadh leis an iarratas ge b' e càit a bheil e, agus tha sin a' ciallachadh gu bheil dùbhlann romhainn. Ach, mar a bha mi ag ràdh, tha sinn air ar misneachadh leis an ìre de dh'aithne a tha ann mar-thà air Achd na Gàidhlig agus an ìre gu bheil buidhnean phoblach, phrìobhaideach agus eile a' tighinn thugainn agus a' sireadh fiosrachaidh agus taic.

*Following is the translation:*

We are like any other evangelists: we are happy to preach the gospel to anyone who will listen—and to those who are not listening.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig is a small organisation but, as I said at the outset, we could see that we will have to reach every public body in Scotland, no matter what their level on our list. It is important that we meet and talk to them, perhaps working with their staff and with those in voluntary and private bodies. That has to happen in a way that is fulfilling throughout the land.

It is unfortunate to say that we should deal with Gaelic in the Western Isles first, before going to the Isle of Skye. We have to deal with demand wherever it is, and that means that there is a challenge ahead of us. As I have said, we are encouraged by the level of knowledge that people have of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and by the level at which private and public bodies have been approaching us for information and support.

**Mr Macintosh:** One of the commitments that I was most encouraged about was the decision to appoint a Gaelic teacher recruitment officer. That is clearly a vital area, which committee members all identified when we were looking into the matter. However, I was slightly concerned to see that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar says in its submission that that is not a priority for it. How will you take the process forward? You have the plan, which is out for consultation. What happens next? I take it that the areas of the plan that you have identified are open to amendment or change. What will happen following the consultation and after you have received the feedback?

**Allan Campbell:** Is e fear dhe na duilgheadasan a tha againn, mar a tha aig a h-uile buidheann a tha an sàs ann an coluadar dhen t-seòrsa seo, gu bheil a' chuid mhòr dhe na beachdan a' dol a thighinn a-steach aig a' mhionaid mu dheireadh no fiù 's seachad air a' mhionaid mu dheireadh. Tha e cuideachd uabhasach deatamach dhuinn, ri linn beatha na Pàrlamaid seo is ri linn taghaidhean an ath bhliadhna agus a h-uile càil eile, gur e an t-amas agus an creideas a tha aig a' bhòrd gum bu chòir a' chiad phlana nàiseanta Gàidhlig riamh a bhith a' dol an gnìomh anns a' bhliadhna 2007, a bhios na bliadhna cultar na Gàidhealtachd ann an Alba. Tha sinn mar bhòrd a' cur romhainn gun dèan sinn ar dìcheall gum bi an dreachd dheireannach dhen phlana a' dol chun a' mhinistear ro dheireadh na bliadhna.

Tha sin a' ciallachadh, nuair a chrìochnaicheas an coluadar seo air 10 Samhain, gum bi sinn an uair sin a' dèanamh spàirn gus measadh a dhèanamh air na beachdan a gheibh sinn, gus aithisg a bhith air a deasachadh a thèid chun a' bhùird againn a' moladh atharrachaidhean anns a' phlana a tha a' choluadar air a mholadh dhuinn. Thèid na h-atharrachaidhean sin agus toradh na h-obrach sin an uair sin chun a' mhinistear ro dheireadh na bliadhna. Bhithinn an dòchas, ri linn gu bheil an ùine cho goirid, gum bi sinn a' cumail conaltradh mionaideach agus fosgailte eadar sinn fhìn agus ar càirdean anns an Rìaghalas gus gum bi fhios againn dè tha càch a chèile a' smaoinachadh, agus gun ruig sinn deireadh na bliadhna le aonta air dè tha ciallach agus dè ghabhas dèanamh.

A thaobh a' mheasaidh fhèin, tha am bòrd gu bhith an sàs ann gun teagamh, ach tha sinn a' dol a dh'fhastadh sgioba neo-eisimeileach airson sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air na beachdan a thig a-steach gus gun urrainn dhuinn a ràdh gu h-onarach gu bheil sinn air comhairle a ghabhail, agus gu bheil sinn air seasamh ceum air ais bho na beachdan a thàinig a-steach air an rud a dheasaich sinne. Thoirleadh tha sinne cho faisg air a' phlana agus gum biodh e nàdarra gum biodh sinn dualach a bhith ga dhìon, fiù 's ged a bhiodh àiteachan ann far an gabhadh leasachadh.

Tha mi an dòchas gu bheil sin a' freagairt na ceist.

*Following is the translation:*

Like any other group that is involved in such a consultation, one of our difficulties is that the majority of opinions will probably come in at the last minute, or perhaps even after the deadline. However, this is an important matter for us to address during this session of Parliament—we are mindful of the elections next year. I mention that especially because of the bòrd's aim and belief that the first national Gaelic plan ever should be implemented in 2007, which is the year of

Highland culture. The bòrd will do its best to ensure that the draft plan goes to the Minister for Education and Young People before the end of the year.

When the consultation finishes on 10 November, we will try to assess all the opinions and prepare a report to go to the bòrd, changing anything that needs to be changed. The changes and the results of our work will go to the minister at the end of the year. We hope that, within a short time, there will be open consultation between us and our friends in the Executive so that we will know what one another's thoughts are and so that we can reach the end of the year in agreement on what is reasonable and what can be done.

As far as the assessment itself goes, the bòrd will be involved, but we will hire an independent group to investigate the opinions that come in, so that we can say with conviction that we have taken advice and that we are taking a step back from the opinions that have been voiced about what we have prepared. We are so close to our aim that we might feel a desire to protect the plan, even if there are things in it that could be changed.

I hope that that answers the question.

**The Convener:** It does. Thank you both for answering all our questions and for coming along to represent Bòrd na Gàidhlig. I also thank the interpreter in the booth, who has been providing a useful service for us all morning.

The committee will consider a draft report on the draft national plan for Gaelic at our first meeting after the October recess. Do members have any particular comments that they wish to be included in the report? If no thoughts immediately come to mind, perhaps members can let the clerks know in the next few days so that they can draft the report. Do members have any comments at this stage?

12:00

**Fiona Hyslop:** Adam Ingram made an important point on an issue that should be emphasised. I am keen that we should cover that in the report.

**Mr Macintosh:** The document seems to be comprehensive—I am referring to the consultation rather than any response to it—although it focuses only on certain areas and public authorities. The draft plan seems to focus primarily on the Gaelic heartlands, as I read it. That said, it covers all the areas that I would want to see addressed. An awful lot of work has gone into it and I am very impressed so far.

**The Convener:** The clerks will take those comments on board when they draft the report.

We move on to item 3. Under the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's language policy,



committees are required to seek approval from the corporate body to publish reports in languages other than English. It seems appropriate that we should publish in Gaelic our report on the draft national plan for Gaelic. Does the committee agree that we should seek approval from the corporate body to publish our report in Gaelic as well as in English?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Petitions

### Children's Services (Special Needs) (PE853)

12:02

**The Convener:** Item 4 is consideration of the four petitions on which we took oral evidence from petitioners at our previous meeting. The covering report from the clerks includes suggested recommendations.

Petition PE853 is from Ken Venters on behalf of the Carronhill action team. My recommendation is that we keep the petition open at this stage because we are awaiting the—hopefully imminent—issue of the good practice guide on school estate management that is to be published by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Obviously, we will want to consider the petition in the light of the good practice guide and the minister's most recent comments on the matter.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I agree with the recommendation, but I am not sure that we can be completely certain that the good practice guide will cover the specific issues that arise with special needs schools. A particular concern is that children who attend such schools are drawn from wider-than-usual catchment areas. With mainstream schools, it is much easier to assess which parents in a catchment area will be affected by a proposal, so the consultation process can be quite specific. It might be helpful to seek reassurance from COSLA that the good practice guide will address the particular issues that face special needs schools.

**The Convener:** I am happy to write to COSLA on that basis. If we need to write to COSLA on any of the other petitions, we can include all the issues in a single letter.

**Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (Sol):** It will be helpful to raise that issue. However, if we are not satisfied that the published good practice guide will cover special needs schools, we should be able to make further recommendations. I hope that we are not tying ourselves down to the guide.

**The Convener:** We are not tying ourselves down to anything. By keeping the petition open, we are saying that we are not satisfied that the matter has been dealt with. That is why the recommendation is that we should keep the petition open until we have seen the good practice guide.

**Mr Macintosh:** The difficulty with discussing a petition on a particular school is that it touches on wider issues. Clearly, the evidence that we

received was only about one school. I was not convinced that we had enough information about the extent of the problem and, indeed, whether a problem exists. Every piece of evidence and discussion that we have had in the past has suggested to me that there is not a problem.

When the petition returns to the committee, would it be possible to get some more information from the Scottish Parliament information centre or perhaps COSLA? When we ask COSLA to consider special schools, perhaps we should ask it whether it is aware of any developments, or is that outwith the remit of the petition, which focuses on one school?

**The Convener:** It is not necessarily outwith the petition's remit but, at some point before the end of the current parliamentary session, the committee will wish to produce a legacy report for the next parliamentary session's committee. We could say in that paper that, relatively early on in the next session, the committee should undertake post-legislative scrutiny of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the effectiveness of the policy. Obviously, the position of special schools and special units in schools would be a key part of that, so that might be a better approach.

**Mr Macintosh:** That is a helpful suggestion.

**The Convener:** Are members content with the recommendation to keep the petition open, subject to seeking information from COSLA as to whether the issues that affect special schools are included in its good practice guide?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** It may be that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education could provide more comprehensive information on that subject than COSLA because, I presume, it has been involved in advising ministers and has also been made aware of particular problems.

**The Convener:** I am not sure whether that would be the case or not, to be honest.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Would it be worth asking HMIE whether it could give us any readily available information?

**Fiona Hyslop:** As we are waiting for the good practice guide, there is no harm in doing that.

**The Convener:** I have no problem with asking anyone for information. I am just not sure whether HMIE would have anything useful to provide, but we can always ask.

### **Rural Schools (Closure) (PE872)**

**The Convener:** We move on to petition PE872 from Alexander Longmuir. PE872 is also on school closures but focuses on rural schools. I recommend that we keep the petition open

pending COSLA's production of the good practice guide.

**Mr Macintosh:** I take it that other members have received the helpful letter from Mr Longmuir, in which he raises a couple of issues. There is clearly concern that the date of issue for the good practice guide might slip, so we should push COSLA on when it will be produced. Some people are suspicious that there might be a stalling exercise. I do not think that that is the case, but it would do no harm to ask COSLA when it aims to produce the guide.

From his letter, Mr Longmuir is also concerned that COSLA has not consulted people such as him and groups that he represents. We are hearing only from Mr Longmuir and not from COSLA on that, but it is clear that the carrot of consultation has been held out to such people but has not been followed up. Could we draw that to COSLA's attention? The evidence that we heard from Mr Longmuir last week was helpful and informative, and it would do no harm for COSLA to listen to some of the evidence that he presented.

**The Convener:** I am happy to add that to our letter to COSLA.

**Fiona Hyslop:** It might be a bit of a long letter. We should also ask COSLA whether it will address the 60 per cent capacity trigger. The minister's previous letter to the committee was a helpful development and we should ask COSLA for its views on that letter and how it will interpret the cost benefit analysis of the value of small rural schools, as opposed to the analysis that Audit Scotland might apply. It might also be helpful if we asked Audit Scotland and HMIE what changes they anticipate in their activities and in their advice to councils as a result of the minister's letter. We can do that as we await COSLA's guide.

**The Convener:** There would be no harm in writing to Audit Scotland and HMIE to ask whether they have any comments on the minister's recent letter.

**Fiona Hyslop:** We should also ask what changes they anticipate making as a result of the letter.

**The Convener:** Okay. Are members content with the recommendation that we keep the petition open?

**Members indicated agreement.**

### **School Buses (Safety Measures) (PE892)**

**The Convener:** Petition PE892, which is from Ronnie Beaty, urges the Scottish Executive to amend the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 with regard to minimum standards on public transport. All members were moved by the harrowing

evidence that we heard from the petitioner about the tragic circumstances that led to the petition. However, we must be cautious, as the committee cannot intrude on what are, in essence, the local authorities' areas of responsibility. As has been pointed out to the petitioner a number of times, some of the points that are raised in the petition are not in the Scottish Parliament's remit.

We might want to include something in the committee's legacy paper to the effect that school transport guidance should continue to be reviewed annually. It might also be worth adding that to our letter to COSLA, which is initiating a study into the guidance that it issues on school transport. I understand that that study is due to be completed by the end of the year and published early next year, so it might be worth asking COSLA to advise us on the progress of that exercise. Beyond that, I am not sure that there is much else that we can do on the petition. My recommendation, therefore, is that we close the petition.

**Dr Murray:** There is something not quite right with the public petitions process. Mr Beaty first presented his petition in October last year; clearly, it is on a subject that is extremely painful, difficult and personal for him. In a sense, I feel that the process that the petition has gone through has held out false hope to the petitioner that the Scottish Parliament could actually sort out the problems, when in fact he should have been advised that his proposals for legislative change ought to be taken to his MP and pursued in the Westminster Parliament, where he would have a greater chance of success. I feel uncomfortable with the fact that the Parliament's petitions process has held out that false hope to somebody, particularly in such tragic circumstances.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I agree with what the convener said, and with what Elaine Murray said. Given that the matters in question are, strictly speaking, the responsibility of the Department for Transport, it would be appropriate if the information that we have on the petition were to be forwarded to that department. That would place the matter entirely under its jurisdiction. It could be argued that we have a duty to inform the Department for Transport, because the petitioner might not have been entirely aware of who had responsibility for dealing with those matters.

Without making any specific recommendation or conclusion, it is only fair that, as a matter of courtesy, we should inform the Department for Transport of what is in the papers for the petition, leaving it to that department's discretion how best to deal with those serious matters. That department may already be dealing with those matters in a different way—I do not know—and it may be reviewing the subject. We are not privy to that information, and it would be sensible and wise

to give the department that is responsible for the matter the chance to see the papers and to react as it sees fit.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I agree entirely that we should alert the Public Petitions Committee to our concerns about the process. I do not know whether we should close the petition, but we should certainly take responsibility for bringing the matter to the attention of the Department for Transport.

I feel uncomfortable with the fact that the Parliament has not done something about school transport in the past four years. We have reviewed the matter, but there seems to have been little progress or development. Twelve-year-olds now have to sit on booster seats in cars, but the school transport system still raises concerns. I was not at the previous meeting, but I read the *Official Report* and I found the petitioner's evidence very moving indeed. We have heard about other cases and concerns, and we keep returning to the issue. Our legislative burden means that the committee cannot give school transport a fair shout, but the issue keeps returning to us. Some matters have not been resolved satisfactorily—we can deal with some, but not with others. I feel strongly that school transport should be mentioned in the legacy paper.

12:15

**The Convener:** Indeed. We will return to the legacy paper. Given that the Executive and COSLA will tender on the basis of the best practice guide for school transport, which is intended to come into effect in 2007-08, it might be appropriate for the new committee in the next session to pick up on that issue and to examine practice immediately or after the guidance has been in place for a year or two.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I presume that the Executive and COSLA will consult the Department for Transport. Perhaps we can say in our letter to that department that we hope that productive and constructive dialogue will take place on the matter between the department and the Executive.

**Ms Byrne:** I agree with Fiona Hyslop and Lord James Douglas-Hamilton. It is frightening that our young people are vulnerable on school transport and that we have different practices. I share Fiona Hyslop's concern that although the legislation has been changed to require the use of booster seats and set height requirements when children use seat belts, we still allow children to travel on school buses often without signs or supervision. The petition is good, because it helps to start the process. It is a shame that we can do nothing about many of those matters. We need to get in touch with Westminster and to push the matter

forward; we need to make efforts to go further.

Do we know when the COSLA report will be published?

**The Convener:** I have suggested that we should check the timetable, but we understand that the guidance is intended to be in place so that local authorities can implement it from the 2007-08 school year. It will have to be issued by spring 2007 to be included in contracting.

**Ms Byrne:** We would have to recommend that the committee in the next session should scrutinise the guidance. We need to get out of the static situation with school transport. We are all expressing concerns.

**The Convener:** I accept your points, but it is important that we bear it in mind that the petition does not relate to an incident on a bus; the situation was that a child who was coming off a bus was knocked over. The signs issue relates to whether drivers are made sufficiently aware of school buses. Such aspects do not fall within our competence.

**Mr Macintosh:** I endorse my colleagues' comments. I emphasise what we can do rather than what we cannot do. The committee was engaged personally by the circumstances of the individual case, which were moving, but it is clear that school transport issues concern us. The continued growth in traffic is a concern for all parents. Safety on the way to school is a concern of the Executive, as is school transport.

Our response should be framed in terms of what we can do in the Scottish Parliament, through the Executive and through advice to COSLA and to Westminster, rather than what we cannot do. That does not stop us doing everything that we have agreed. We should write to our Westminster colleagues and forward to them the petition and our discussion of it. We should also write to let the minister know that the committee has a continuing concern about school transport, including all its safety aspects.

The Executive produces guidance. An issue that we could explore when the subject returns to the committee agenda is how that guidance is implemented and whether the Executive wishes to improve or strengthen its guidance. I agree that we should write to COSLA again, to emphasise that the subject concerns the committee, not least because of the particularly tragic circumstances to which the petition relates.

**The Convener:** Are members content to seek clarification from the Executive and COSLA about the timetable for producing the best practice guide; to consider suggesting in our legacy paper that the committee in the next session should review that guidance and general school transport issues; and

to forward various documents to the Department for Transport and to ask it to take account of them, because most of the matters are reserved to Westminster?

Finally, we will express concern to the Public Petitions Committee about the fact that a petition dealing with matters that are not within the powers of the Parliament has been allowed to run for quite so long. Do we agree to close the petition?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Will the petitioner be informed by the clerk?

**Eugene Windsor (Clerk):** Yes.

### School Buildings Strategy (PE957)

**The Convener:** Petition PE957, which is from Phyllis French, relates to the strategy "Building Our Future: Scotland's School Estate" and the siting of buildings on flood plains. Having considered the evidence that was given last week, I recommend that the committee should close the petition, as it relates primarily to planning issues rather than to matters that fall within the committee's remit. I am concerned that the petition, which relates to planning matters, was referred to us by the Communities Committee. The Public Petitions Committee is looking into the cross-referral of petitions from one committee to another; in this case, that should not have happened because it has led the petitioner to believe that the Education Committee can do something about a matter that is outwith its remit.

We have with us a guest, Alex Neil MSP, whom I welcome to the Education Committee. I understand that you wish to comment on the petition.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** The petition was referred simultaneously to the Communities Committee, because it related largely to a planning matter.

**The Convener:** The Communities Committee referred the petition to us.

**Alex Neil:** I thought that the Public Petitions Committee had referred it to both committees; that was certainly my recommendation.

What happened with the Uddingston grammar school planning application revealed a contradiction in the application of the guidelines at local level between the needs of education policy and planning policy. I am sorry that I was unable to attend last week's meeting of the committee, but in the evidence that she gave at that meeting Phyllis French outlined articulately the problems that arose during consideration of the planning application. Because of those problems, the process will be subject to referral to the

ombudsman. Due regard was not paid to “Building Our Future: Scotland’s School Estate” at the design stage, the proposal stage or the planning stage.

There needs to be more joined-up government in this area. The aspirations in “Building Our Future: Scotland’s School Estate” and planning guidelines need to be complementary as they affect the school estate. I accept that this is primarily a planning issue, but I suggest that it would be helpful if the committee were to draw the attention of both the Minister for Communities, in his role as planning minister, and the Minister for Education and Young People to the need to ensure that planning law and guidance and guidance on the implementation of “Building Our Future: Scotland’s School Estate” are properly co-ordinated and complementary. The two departments need to talk to each other to ensure that their policy is consistent and that the local implementation of policy is followed through, with the assistance of COSLA. There is a need for joined-up government. That did not happen in the case of Uddingston grammar school, which has highlighted the existence of a gap and, sometimes, a contradiction between the school building requirements that the Education Department has set and what planning authorities regard as important. It would be extremely helpful if the committee were to highlight the issue.

**The Convener:** Thank you for your comments. I understand your reasons for making them, but I still believe that this is not really a matter for the Education Committee. We can refer the relevant extract from the *Official Report* to ministers, who will then see your comments on the matter.

**Mr Macintosh:** Ms French was very articulate, and it is clear that she is unhappy with the decisions that were taken locally. However, no evidence was presented that indicated that the strategy clashes with planning guidelines. I feel strongly that this petition, even more than the previous one, should not have been referred to the committee. I am sure that Ms French did a lot of work in preparing to give evidence to the committee, but we have no role whatever in the matter, which is about planning only. No evidence was presented to us that the matter had anything to do with the school estate at the strategic level. I am disappointed for Ms French that we have to address the matter in that way.

**The Convener:** I agree.

**Dr Murray:** My understanding from last week’s evidence is that the issue is purely a planning matter, as Ken Macintosh said. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency did not object to the plans and the planning officials recommended acceptance of them, but that was not because education officials put pressure on the planning

officials or anything of that nature. The issue is a planning one about how the local authority dealt with an application to build on a flood plain—the project did not need to be a school, it could have been housing or other buildings.

Like the convener and Ken Macintosh, I feel that, as with the previous petition, it was a waste of the petitioner’s time for her to come here. We need to consider seriously the way in which the petitions system operates. We should not waste individuals’ time and effort, or raise their hopes, when we cannot do anything about their petitions.

**Mr Ingram:** I am not sure that I agree entirely with Ken Macintosh and Elaine Murray, although I understand where they are coming from. One of the big pushes that would have come when the council determined its position on the proposals would relate to the state of the school estate. Elaine Murray shakes her head but, in my experience, that is a major argument that is put to local communities when such projects are suggested. In essence, councils say that, although there may be a downside for public amenity, the educational imperative overrides that. There is a relationship between planning and education policies. Alex Neil is right to identify that gaps can arise and that we need education and planning policies to operate in parallel rather than for them to clash with or override each other. The petitioner raised a case in which one policy appeared to override the other.

At last week’s meeting, I raised my concerns about the role of statutory consultees, who often feel that they are under pressure to go with Executive policy in such cases, particularly with private finance initiative schemes. There is an educational aspect, so we should take a view on the petition.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I agree strongly that the matter is primarily a planning issue, rather than one for us. However, if we sent it back to the Communities Committee, we could make the point that it is not in the public interest for education to be disrupted severely, for example by flooding, and that that should be considered where such events are a likelihood.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I did not hear the petitioner last week but, to be fair to her, I do not think that we should be passing the parcel with the petition. I can think of a live example from my constituency in which the imperative to build a new school through a public-private partnership has led to questions about safety, because the nearest available space is on former mine workings.

The school estate strategy triggers such issues, although it does not necessarily resolve them because they are planning matters. If we think that a planning issue arises, we should ask the

Communities Committee to take on the responsibility and to address the issue. The relationship between the policies needs to be clarified. Given the extensive new build that is happening at present, we should ask the Communities Committee, as part of its work, to ensure that, when planning authorities consider where new schools are to be built, issues of safety and security are given parity with the issue of the lack of available ground to build schools. Many proposed new schools are in towns where, because of the sheer size of such buildings, there is no obvious place for them to go. We should get the Communities Committee to take on its responsibilities and deal with the petition.

12:30

**The Convener:** As the covering note indicates, the Communities Committee referred the petition to us for consideration of the education issues, saying that it would deal with the relevant planning issues in its consideration of the Planning etc (Scotland) Bill. My recommendation, on which I will ask the committee to vote in due course, is that as the petition does not raise any significant educational issues we should close our consideration of it. Indeed, I am not convinced that it should have been referred to us in the first place.

**Ms Byrne:** Our dilemma is that any issue that involves a school building must have an educational aspect. After all, the building is the child's learning environment and we should have some input into matters that raise questions about its safety.

Although I agree that the Communities Committee should look again at the petition, I feel that we, too, have a role in examining not only the specific issue that is raised in this petition, but the broader aspects of the school estate such as the environment in which schools are built and, for that matter, the kind of school buildings that are constructed. We need healthy schools and a healthy school environment. I realise that the issue might not necessarily be relevant to our discussion of the petition, but I certainly believe that the state of school buildings falls within the Education Committee's remit.

As a result, I think that we should follow the recommendation in paragraph 10 of the covering note to the petition. I agree that, in referring the petition back to the Communities Committee, we reinforce the importance of the planning elements. However, as paragraph 10 makes clear, we should also recommend that the Education Committee examine school estate renewal issues at some point in the future. As I have said, we have a role in that respect.

**The Convener:** It is certainly part of our remit to hold ministers to account with regard to education provision and the school estate strategy. However, the petition under discussion does not raise any significant educational issues. My recommendation is that the committee take no further action on the petition and that we close our consideration of it. We will return to the question whether our legacy paper should highlight the school estate strategy as an issue that a future committee should examine.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Can the safety issue be dealt with in the legacy paper?

**The Convener:** Frankly, the safety issue is a planning matter for the planning committee of the relevant local authority and for the Scottish Executive, which considers local authority planning applications. It is not up to the committee to consider individual planning applications or the situation in individual schools. If it so wishes, the committee can consider the wider issues that Rosemary Byrne has highlighted for inclusion in its legacy paper. That discussion will take place next February or March.

The question is, that petition PE957 be closed. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Convener:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)  
Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)  
McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)

**The Convener:** The result of the division is: For 5, Against 0, Abstentions 3. The committee has therefore agreed to close the petition.

In addition, we should draw to the attention of the Public Petitions Committee our concern that the matter was referred to us by the Communities Committee.

**Alex Neil:** Will you write to the minister with a copy of the *Official Report* of the meeting?

**The Convener:** We will do so. In any case, I am sure that ministers read it with bated breath every weekend.

## Subordinate Legislation

### Regulation of Care (Social Service Workers) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2006 (SSI 2006/453)

12:34

**The Convener:** Item 8 is consideration of subordinate legislation. The amendment order, which is subject to the negative procedure, contains three descriptions of social work service workers involved with day care. No member has asked for Scottish Executive officials to be present to clarify any points and the Subordinate Legislation Committee made no recommendations on the order.

As members have no comments, are we agreed that the committee has nothing to report on the order?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill

12:35

**The Convener:** Item 9 relates to our stage 2 consideration of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill, which will begin at our next meeting, on Wednesday 4 October. Following discussions about the fairly substantial number of amendments that we expect to be lodged and the helpful response that we have received from ministers, which outlines what action they intend to take in relation to our report, to enable the Scottish Executive to give effect to our recommendations it is proposed that we change the usual order of proceeding so that pre-adoption, adoption support and post-adoption services can be considered holistically. The aim is to try to cover sections 1 to 8, 47 to 63 and 79, and schedule 1, on day 1.

I move,

That the Education Committee considers the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill at Stage 2 in the following order: sections 1 to 8, sections 47 to 63, section 79, sections 9 to 46, sections 64 to 78 and sections 80 to 113 and that each schedule is considered immediately after the section that introduces it.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Is that doable? Has any other committee adopted such a procedure?

**The Convener:** Are you asking whether any other committee has considered a bill's sections out of order at stage 2?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Yes.

**The Convener:** Yes, it has been done before.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Was it satisfactory?

**The Convener:** I assume that it is doable; the clerks certainly think that it is.

**Fiona Hyslop:** There were no problems on the previous occasions on which that procedure was adopted.

**The Convener:** Any problem about whether we can cope with it is in our own minds. I suppose that it is possible that at the end of the process the bill's sections might be reordered into a logical sequence, but that is for the Executive to consider.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Convener:** Because we expect a substantial number of amendments to be lodged to the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill at stage 2, the committee will probably meet three times to consider those amendments, on 4 October, 1 November and 8 November. To give us sufficient time, I propose that we start the meetings on those dates at 9.45.

The committee's meeting in the week commencing 23 October is likely to take place on the afternoon of 24 October because plenary business has been scheduled for the morning of Wednesday 25 October, which is likely to include the debate on our early years report. That is the recommendation of the Conveners Group, although it is subject to approval by the Parliamentary Bureau. That will be a busy morning for us.

12:38

*Meeting continued in private until 12:55.*



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