

# **EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 25 March 2003  
(*Afternoon*)

Session 1

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## EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

### 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2003, Session 1

#### CONVENER

\*Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)

#### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
\*Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
\*Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP)  
\*Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
\*Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP)

#### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
Fiona McLeod (West of Scotland) (SNP)

\*attended

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Martin Verity

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Susan Duffy

#### ASSISTANT CLERK

Ian Cowan

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 1



## Scottish Parliament

### Education, Culture and Sport Committee

*Tuesday 25 March 2003*

*(Afternoon)*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 15:06*]

**The Convener (Karen Gillon):** I call this meeting of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee to order.

**Michael Russell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** May I make a point of order?

**The Convener:** No.

**Michael Russell:** Please.

**The Convener:** Oh, okay, then.

**Michael Russell:** I am not entirely sure that it is a point of order, but you can wait until I have finished before deciding whether it is or not.

**The Convener:** I knew it—a bogus point of order.

**Michael Russell:** Many of us deeply regret that stage 2 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill cannot be held this afternoon and I am sure that you will give us the reasons for that being so, convener. The debate about the bill is now for another place, where I am sure it will be vigorous. However, I have a few things to say on the subject.

All the e-mails and letters that I have received about the bill in the past few months have pointed to the enormous contribution of this committee in the progress that the bill has made. Indeed, a number of people have said that when the bill is finally made law—as I am sure that it will be—the work that the committee did in raising the issues, discussing them and beginning to find solutions to the problems will be seen to have been invaluable.

On a personal note, as the member responsible for the bill, I feel exactly the same way and I am grateful for the enthusiasm, support, attention to detail and questioning of members of the committee. If we had been able to have stage 2 of the bill today, it would have been obvious that the work of the committee had made the bill much better than it otherwise would have been. I am grateful for that, as is the Gaelic community in Scotland.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much for your appreciation of our work. That was not a point of order, Mr Russell, but, as we all know, it is a

Scottish parliamentary tradition for points of order not to be points of order, so I see no reason why that should be any different in the final week before dissolution.

The bill could not proceed to stage 2 for two reasons: the decision that was made by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body last week; and the lack of a financial resolution.

I thank you for your comments and state that I believe that we have considered the bill in a fair way and have treated it as we would have treated any other bill that was before the committee. As you said, however, the fight is now for another day and another place.

## School Closures

**The Convener:** Item 1 on the agenda relates to school closures. Members have before them a sort of response from the Executive. I have to say that I do not think that it is what we were seeking. It is a disappointing response, given the time that has been invested in this issue by the committee and petitioners. There has been a failure on the part of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, initially, and the Scottish Executive in moving this issue forward in a reasonable time scale.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** I agree. I expected a better response and am extremely disappointed. There is still no clear guidance in relation to school closures. Where is the guidance on consultation of parents, teachers and others or on the way in which local authorities should conduct themselves? As long as that situation continues, petitions will continue to be sent to the Scottish Parliament and parents and teachers will continue to feel frustrated that they are not recognised in relation to school closures.

COSLA has had an opportunity to rectify the situation—you will recall that I suggested that it should examine the matter—but I am not sure that it is the appropriate body to do so, given its current make-up. I hope that members will consider placing something in the committee's legacy paper on this matter as the situation is not good enough.

**Michael Russell:** I concur with what has been said on this matter. The response is immensely disappointing, especially as it comes 15 months after the letter from COSLA that said that it could not proceed with the matter, which all of us were surprised at. The issue is much older than that, in any case, and was discussed by the committee at one of its first meetings. Since then, the issue has continued to bedevil the committee and the country.

The problem is that the number of closures has not diminished and that the potential exists for more closures, particularly in order to close the affordability gap with the introduction of public-private partnerships. Parents will be badly treated—and will resent that—because there are no standard national guidelines, as Cathy Peattie discovered when she made her important trip as a committee reporter to Argyll and Bute. The Scottish Executive has let down not only the committee but Scotland—particularly rural Scotland—by refusing to treat the issue seriously.

**Ian Jenkins (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** I concur with what has been said, broadly. National guidelines would serve everyone better. Parents would be better able to recognise the procedures that were followed and

local authorities would be able to say that they had conformed to a procedure that had been laid down. If people felt badly treated, there would be a structure for them to measure their experiences against. As it is, however, the lack of any benchmarks means that the field is open for people who feel aggrieved to dispute decisions. It would have been in everyone's interests to sort out this matter. I accept that funding methods have changed and that there has been big investment in schools, but the Executive must surely recognise that this is the time to get this issue sorted out. There should be no further delays.

**Mr Brian Monteith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** There can be no show without Punch, so I feel that I must say something, especially as this is the final time that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee will meet in this session. However, there cannot be much more to say than what has been said by Cathy Peattie already. Certainly, no one else could put it more eloquently.

It seems rather as if our letter to the Executive has been at the bottom of a pile and we have received a reply only because an official discovered it while tidying up their desk before the election. That is extremely disappointing. No doubt the committee—if not a newly configured Executive—will have to consider the issue seriously immediately after the election.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I do not want to add anything to the substance of what has been said but, in process terms, I note that the letter has come from a private secretary rather than the minister. Perhaps sending a letter to the minister would elicit a ministerial response that might, hopefully, be more favourable than the one that we have before us. In addition to adding this matter to the legacy paper, we should therefore drop a note to the minister.

**The Convener:** My understanding is that the initial letter went to the minister and that we have received a response to a follow-up letter that was sent. My initial letter to the minister has yet to be replied to. I will certainly write to the minister—so that the letter is on the desk of whoever is the minister on 2 May—to ask that the matter be taken forward as a matter of urgency because it has an impact on both rural and urban schools in Scotland. Some national guidance is needed on the issue.

**Michael Russell:** On an associated matter about responses, a response from the Executive was circulated to us today or yesterday afternoon on the technology teachers petition, which is more than a year old. That is an indication of, as Brian Monteith says, things being cleared off desks. Very little in the response makes any sense.

## Reporters' Inquiries

15:15

**The Convener:** I apologise to members for the late circulation of my interim report on football, but when I talk the committee through it I do not think that members will have difficulties with the recommendations within it.

We will deal with my report first. There are two issues, one of which is youth development. I concentrate on the senior clubs in Scotland, with which I had dialogue. An independent report by PMP Consultancy has been commissioned by UK Sport and the Scottish Executive and is due to be published at the end of April 2003. Therefore, my recommendation is that a future committee should have a presentation on that report and work with all the agencies. The independent report will be a fairly monumental landmark for the future of youth development in Scottish football and we need to move forward together on it.

The second issue is supporters' involvement, which arises from a petition that came to the committee some time ago; the petition was geared around the idea of supporters trusts. We have moved on significantly on that matter. The recommendation is that the incoming committee should continue to monitor the situation and should be kept informed of developments.

There are still issues to do with how some of the senior clubs in Scotland involve fans. There are different models; the key point is that no one model will suit every club in Scotland. We should not try to impose on people models that do not fit the situation in which they find themselves. Changes are taking place with supporters trusts, which on the whole are widely welcomed, but we must continue to monitor the situation in the months ahead. Again, that will be a matter for a future committee.

**Mr Monteith:** What I have seen so far of the convener's report on football is highly interesting and I concur with much of it.

In the light of the report by PMP Consultancy that is being commissioned independently and given that we are winding up at the end of the parliamentary session and that this is a matter of importance, I suggest that the future committee might consider taking oral evidence on it. Some interesting aspects of the youth game in Scotland require detailed representation from a number of groups. Oral sessions, which would generate a degree of public interest, would be useful. I recommend that we include that suggestion in our legacy paper.

**The Convener:** I am happy to do that.

We will move on to the report on early-years education from Ian Jenkins.

**Ian Jenkins:** Members will remember that I brought this subject up a long time ago.

**Michael Russell:** You were in the early years.

**Ian Jenkins:** Yes, I was.

I hoped that the subject would be taken on by the committee and that we would appoint a reporter and so on, but that has not happened. When I was asked to do the report myself, I thought that I would try, but I have failed miserably to get down to it—largely because it is a huge-scale project. The report is a starter paper and I hope that it is recognised as such.

I have outlined that I believe that there have been so many changes and initiatives in early-years education that it would perhaps benefit from someone standing back and considering the way in which the whole area is being dealt with and investigating whether the developments and projects cohere in a sensible way. I have outlined many areas that would merit investigation. As it happens, the Executive has just brought out a paper about integrated services for children in the early years, which clearly ties in with the report.

The report briefly mentions

"health promotion, physical activity and so on"

and there is now regulation of care. All such issues, which are not strictly to do with education, could be considered. The paper speaks for itself. The issue is complex and extensive. A future committee might pause before taking on the subject, but it is important and should be on a successor committee's agenda. If it were, a big investigation would be needed and advisers would have to be taken on to help.

**The Convener:** Thank you. The paper is helpful in progressing matters. If the issue is to be taken forward, an investigation would have to be on a similar scale to our investigation into special educational needs and would require substantial support from advisers as well as a substantial amount of committee time for visits and assessments of the provision that is currently out there.

**Jackie Baillie:** Ian Jenkins has produced a helpful starting paper. In the legacy paper, I would recommend an investigation by a future committee, but I wonder whether we should make slightly more explicit the issue of universality versus targeting disadvantage. Many of us have debated the issue of the first three years of a child's life affecting their life chances in the future. It would be useful simply to have a much closer look at how the programmes fit into tackling

disadvantage and securing equality of outcome. Currently, some provision is universally provided across the board.

**The Convener:** We proceed to traditional arts.

**Cathy Peattie:** I am sorry that there is a lot in the paper, but it just kept growing. The paper is clearly not a comprehensive outline of everything that is happening in Scotland, but is an effort to give a flavour of the good work that is under way.

A number of recommendations have been made as a result of issues that people have raised with me. It appears that we do not appreciate the value of traditional arts and their contribution to Scotland's culture. I hope that the report will make us appreciate and value that contribution.

It is clear that we are nowhere near recognising the importance of traditional arts centres in Scotland—I should remind members that one thing that the petitioner who is mentioned in the paper sought was a traditional arts centre in Edinburgh. Although a considerable amount of work has been done—most recently in the ceilidh culture project and other work that the arts officer has done in the Edinburgh area—there is still no commitment to an arts centre. However, the important issue for the committee is the work that is under way in schools, the different approaches that are being taken, and the work that has been done by voluntary arts projects through the fèis movement and so on. As one would have expected, there is a feeling that better resourcing might mean much more work being done or that the work that is done will be valued.

**Michael Russell:** I commend Cathy Peattie's excellent report, which gives a good snapshot of the current situation and useful pointers to the future. We might disagree about one or two recommendations and how to take things further through establishing a federated national company that is directly funded, for example. Having said that, I think that the report is excellent. Given that this is the final meeting of the committee, how can we ensure that the report is available to others? I presume that the reports will be on the web, but can we at least arrange to have the paper disseminated to the witnesses and others, and perhaps to a wider audience?

**The Convener:** I will ask the clerks to have the report circulated as appropriate and to have the matter placed in the legacy paper for a future committee.

**Cathy Peattie:** It is important that the petitioner and the people who have participated in the report have access to it.

**The Convener:** It will be posted on the web.

I thank all members who have produced individual reports for the committee over the past

four years. Given the pressure on our timetable, I think that they have helped us to develop areas of work that we might not have been able to develop if the issues had had to be addressed at full meetings of the committee.



## Sport 21

**The Convener:** Members will be aware that “Sport 21 2003-2007: The National Strategy for Sport” was launched this morning. It contains 11 key targets, which I certainly support—I hope that other members will be able to do so, too. It is important that the previous sport 21 document and the new one are used not as party-political tools but for the benefit of sport as a whole. We should all work together, whatever our perspectives, to try to meet the targets that have been drawn up using information gathered from a wide variety of sources and consultations. I believe that, if we work together, by 2007 we will see the fruits of that labour in our elite sport and in the participation of our children and young people in physical activity and sport. We saw two good examples this morning in Chris Hoy and Rhona Martin, who are excellent role models for our children and young people.

**Irene McGugan (North-East Scotland) (SNP):** I agree that a lot of useful work has been done in the past four years. It has been useful to identify the issues and to make appropriate links across portfolio areas in a way that perhaps had not been done before. Sport has been linked with health, social inclusion and education. Like you, convener, I do not disagree with any of the targets. The challenge for whoever finds themselves in the Administration in the next session is to implement those targets. We must ensure that the work has not just been a prolonged exercise to identify what we need to do; the strategy must be taken forward so that better health and sporting outcomes are delivered for Scotland.

**Ian Jenkins:** This is a strategy document, so I do not want to get into detail. I will mention a couple of points that were raised this morning in discussions before the launch. First, in drawing together all the strands—which is a good thing—by talking about social inclusion, health promotion and so on, we must remember that sport is sport; it is not only part of a pattern of activities relating to issues such as social inclusion. There must be partnership. Sport may be a way of achieving some of the other objectives, but it ought not to be subsumed by them.

The second point is that the document and the discussions about it show that the Executive and sportscotland have a great deal to do and will be reliant on partners such as local authorities. We must ensure that local authorities recognise their role and do not, for example, price sports clubs out of the market. As well as considering the economics, councils must take into account the benefits that arise from being generous and allowing clubs to use local authority facilities.

Other factors must be taken into account when facilities are priced for local use.

**Cathy Peattie:** Way back when there was a COSLA community services working group, it was always keen to say that local authorities play a key role in promoting sport. We must recognise that probably no agencies do more than local authorities to promote sport, especially given their role in education. Local authorities have often felt frustrated that their role is not clearly recognised.

15:30

**The Convener:** It is clear from the document that the partnership approach involves not only the statutory agencies and local authorities, but sports clubs, which are the backbone of sport throughout the country and provide volunteers, training, coaching and services in their own facilities and in local authority facilities. The partnership also increasingly involves the private sector. There is some recognition in the document of the private sector's role in the development of sport in Scotland. That is important.

The money coming in from the Executive needs to be channelled correctly. I agree with Ian Jenkins that sport is important in itself. I have held that position over the past four years. However, sport is bad at promoting what it can do across the range of other issues in the country. Whereas other areas have generated income and received support because of their ability to gear their funding applications appropriately and blow their own trumpet, sport has not been particularly successful in that regard. We need to address that, because sport is one of the key factors in attempts to deal with health, educational attainment and social inclusion issues.

The document is good and I look forward to the implementation of its recommendations. I also look forward to taking part in a bit more sport, as I fall into one of the age groups that is mentioned.

Finally today, I would like to thank everyone who has served on the committee. Some of you have been here since its inception in 1999 and all of you have worked hard to get us where we are today. We have done some valuable work.

On behalf of committee members, I thank our support staff—those who are with us now and those who have been with us in the past. A variety of staff have supported us in the past four years, including the clerks, our advisers, the Scottish Parliament information centre and the non-Executive bills unit. They all ensured that we were able to deal with the many challenges that have faced us.

I hope that we have produced something positive—I think that we have—and I look forward

to working with you all in any guise. Ian Jenkins is excepted from that, as he will not be returning to Parliament.

**Ian Jenkins:** You will be able to work with me somehow.

**Mr Monteith:** Perhaps Ian could return as an adviser to the committee.

**Michael Russell:** Three of us have been members of the committee throughout the session—Brian Monteith, Ian Jenkins and I, although Brian is the only one who has held his party's education portfolio for all that time. You have had two periods of absence, convener, but I pay tribute to you as an excellent convener and someone with whom it has been possible to work while, at times, failing to agree.

The committee has done significant work during the past four years. Some members present today have joined us as we went along. Cathy Peattie has been on the committee since the beginning but had an enforced absence. However, we got her back.

Regardless of all the differences—and there are many—between members, a great deal has brought us together. Serving on the committee has not only been one of the most pleasurable experiences of the past four years, but one of the more productive. I am sure that that is due to the diverse nature of the committee and to the high standard of support that we have had.

**Ian Jenkins:** It has been a pleasure and an honour to serve on the committee. I am delighted that we will be able to end the four years of the parliamentary session by dealing with the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, which is our committee bill and will stand as evidence of the work that the Education, Culture and Sport Committee has done for the children of Scotland.

**Mr Monteith:** I agree with the comments that have been made. I congratulate Ian Jenkins on being not only one of the three permanent members, as it were, but the member with the best attendance.

**The Convener:** Does that mean that he has a veto?

**Mr Monteith:** The committee has been one of those that have given the impression that the work of the committees is a good aspect of the Scottish Parliament. I am thinking in particular of our reports on the Scottish Qualifications Authority and the national companies, particularly Scottish Opera, which set a good standard for inquiries into the difficulties of our non-governmental organisations.

There have been a number of differences in the committee but, in the main, they have been

handled with good humour. That has made attending meetings enjoyable, even if, at times, we looked forward only to baiting each other. I thank my colleagues for putting up with me for those four years.

**Cathy Peattie:** I echo what has been said.

**The Convener:** Is everyone going to make a speech?

**Cathy Peattie:** I have enjoyed my time on the committee. It is important to highlight the role that the committee has played in showing how committee members can work together to achieve consensus where possible while acknowledging their differences. People have worked together in the way that families do. Everyone has had a role to play—including that of being the one who always wants to disagree.

**Michael Russell:** Why are you staring at Brian?

**Cathy Peattie:** When people talk about the way in which Parliament works, they often forget the role of the committees. However, the SQA inquiry is an excellent example of the good work that committees can do. We have been able to become involved in many areas through our inquiries and examine issues with greater focus than would have been possible if there had been no Scottish Parliament.

I thank all the staff who have supported us through that process. I am sure that, at times, they must have been in despair about what the hell we were going to say next and must have wished that we would shut up.

**The Convener:** I will finish up by asking people not to mention the Hampden inquiry, which was not our finest moment.

Are you indicating that you want to say something, Jackie?

**Jackie Baillie:** As the baby of the committee, I thought that we were all required to make a comment. I thank everyone who has supported the committee and note that we will all miss Ian Jenkins, who will not be standing again for election to the Parliament.

On a more serious note, the reality is that committees can perform a powerful and useful role in the work of the Parliament. On occasion, this committee has exercised consensual judgment, which I hope our successor committee will do as well.

I thank the staff of the official report for making us all sound terribly intelligent.

**The Convener:** Irene, do you want to make a comment? Come on, you might as well. After that, we will see if anyone from the audience wants to say anything.

**Irene McGugan:** There is little to add so I will continue to play the role of the committee member who speaks the least. I express my appreciation of the opportunity to serve on the committee and thank members for allowing me to be one of the two members who worked with the non-Executive bills unit on the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill. Not many members of the Scottish Parliament have had that privilege and I can say that the work was fascinating in every respect. The fact that the outcome of our work will be extremely positive makes it all worth while. As Ian Jenkins said, that legislation will stand as a legacy of the committee. I am sure that our successor committee will undertake many such good pieces of work in future.

**The Convener:** I thank everyone who has been involved in the committee and I hope that, tomorrow, we get the vote that we want on the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.

I close the final meeting in this session of Parliament of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. Goodbye.

*Meeting closed at 15:40.*



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