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A'charaid:

National Plan for Gaelic

I refer to the above and make the following comments;

The plan is very wide ranging and examines the potential for Gaelic development in many areas of life. The Bord is to be congratulated on the depth of its research, vision and understanding of the work that needs to be done in the years ahead,

While a good foundation has been laid, I do not believe that the plan has been given a clear, focused and robust form that will ensure its successful implementation.

Targets

Targets are identified on national level to be achieved across a time frame of years. These are very abstract and remote from peoples' everyday experience.

There is a very real danger that top-heavy monitoring and control mechanisms will divert much need resources from "the front-line", however if the targets are too abstract or loose, there can be no mechanism for monitoring their implementation effectively and projected outcomes will never be achieved.

There are widely varying needs and requirements across not only Scotland, but also the Highlands and Island communities. Even within the same communities there will be divergent needs such as those between the native Gaelic speakers and those who are learners. It is therefore important that meaningful targets are identified, not at a national level, but at a level much closer to those of the communities where they are more tangible and where the communities can recognise when real progress is being achieved.

This is recognised in the Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans, but there is a danger that the lack of clarity in the targets and monitoring identified in the national plan, will set a precedent that Local Authorities will adopt in their own plans with the result that no definitive targets will ever be put in place at any level.

If the national plan was much more rigorous in identifying its own requirements, it would be more likely that this would translate into stronger more hard edged targets within Local Authorities.

Monitoring

The Plan indicates that monitoring will be undertaken through contractual mechanisms and through the implementation of individual Gaelic Language Plans. Unfortunately there is no explanation or clarification in the National Plan for how this monitoring will work.

Monitoring is vital, Bord na Gaidhlig must not keep monitoring at arms length and must not delegate or push responsibility for monitoring on to others nor should they allow Local Authorities or other bodies to do so.

Co-ordination of Gaelic Language Plans

It is not clear in the National Plan how individual Gaelic Language Plans are to be co-ordinated or integrated. Regionally/community specific targets must be co-ordinated at a national level and must still be developed through the national body. They cannot be achieved if they are fragmented across many individual Gaelic Language Plans and individual organisations.

Key players are suggested for some development areas, however there is no clear definition of what the specific role these players shall have and what their responsibilities will be for delivering aspects of the plan. Nor is there any indication given for how these groups will be expected to interact with one another. Professional Gaelic organisations such as CLI, CNSA, Comunn na Gaidhlig, etc are grouped together with commercial organisations, Local Authorities and voluntary bodies such as Comann nam Parant without recognising the huge variation in capacity, or availability of suitable resources within these organisation that might enable them to deliver aspects of the plan.

These bodies are not antagonistic towards each other and I am in no doubt that they all have a sympathetic view to the aims of the national plan, however gaps exist between these organisations in terms of their abilities, resources and internal objectives. These gaps will remain, even where they are compelled to prepare there own Gaelic Language Plan, and there is a real potential for the aims of the National Plan and the tasks that it has identified to fall through these gaps and become lost to the communtiy.

There is also a danger of precious resources being wasted through duplication of tasks and administration or even rivalry/competition for resources, as currently happens.

There is a real requirement for greater analysis and study on how the integration and co-ordination of these many organisations can be achieved in practice.

Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans

The content proposed for Gaelic Language Plans in the guidance is excellent but it is fatally flawed because as you have stated in the text they are only illustrations.

The Individual Gaelic language plans are expected to have regard to the aims of the National Plan which, as stated above, is far too vague. If the individual plans follow the example of the National Plan, they too will be vague.

Le durachd,

Calum Maclean