

## **North Lanarkshire Council : Education Department**

### **National Plan for Gaelic : Consultaion Response**

#### **1 General Comments**

- 1.1 North Lanarkshire Council has given strong support to Gaelic education and welcomes the publication of the national plan. It considers that the broadly based strategy has the potential to resuscitate the language and to promote developments.
- 1.2 It would be helpful to review the organisational structure of the plan, particularly the following issues.
- (i) the aims in each of the 5 action areas are likely to remain in place for a considerable time, certainly beyond 2012. Would it not be better to establish these aims for the long term without an allocated deadline?
  - (ii) the relationships between sectoral projects, targets, priority and outcomes are not clear. How will the national priorities guide the specific tasks to be undertaken by the public bodies?
  - (iii) there is a scattergun approach to the listing of primary players. Would a more focussed selection be better?
  - (iv) no attention has been given to the resource implications of the plan.
  - (v) the treatment of education is confusing because it appears as an action area and as a separate strategy. Further difficulties are associated with the different organisational structures adopted and inconsistencies in terminology. Perhaps a single education plan as a sub-set of the national plan would be better.
  - (vi) there is too much emphasis on projects, assuming these are defined as limited life initiatives. Most of the priorities associated with the development of Gaelic will require action on a long-term or even permanent basis.

#### **2 Responses to the 6 set questions**

##### **2.1 Q1. Is the vision of the draft Plan one in which you can share?**

The vision described in the plan, including the associated action areas, is appropriate and will provide the long-term strategic direction for Gaelic developments. It encourages inclusive values and positive attitudes towards Gaelic in the national consciousness, both important to the widening of interest in and use of the language.

However, the vision should give greater emphasis to partnership with other minority languages and communities, both to promote an outward looking perspective and to learn from good practice elsewhere.

**2.2 Q2 In the light of your response to the above question, are the proposed sectoral projects essential to the meeting of the action area aims for 2010? If not, why not?**

Greater specificity is required in this area. It is not clear how the sectoral projects fit the overall plan. For example what are the timescales, how do they relate to the specific priorities and who is responsible for undertaking them? Some projects are clearly tasks while others are more targets or aspirations and therefore sharper descriptions are required. In the education area, urgent attention should be given to the preparation of guidelines on the preferred models of Gaelic education taking account of good practice elsewhere. A spectrum of provision should be encouraged.

In general the sectoral projects deal with issues which are essential to the long term development of the language. However, the overriding priority which requires co-ordinated action is a hearts and minds exercise; to win general support for Gaelic across the Scottish communities and to establish it as the key element in Scottishness. This would provide a strong foundation for the practical actions and resourcing associated with the development and greater use of the language.

The monitoring procedures should be described.

**2.3 Q3 Are the outcomes for the twenty themes and the priorities for tackling them correctly outlined and prioritised? If not, why not?**

The 20 themes are appropriate. However, in the education area it may be useful to separate tertiary and life long learning and to link the latter with the vitality/communities theme.

As suggested above, there seems to be a scattergun approach to the listing of priorities. It would be better to focus on a smaller number for concerted action during the life of the first plan.

Specific comments on the proposed education priorities are listed below:

- (i) the emphasis in early years should be on the expansion of provision for the 3-4 age group where there is a statutory universal entitlement to places. The Sure Start programme for the 0-3 group is directed at vulnerable children and their families.
- (ii) the terminology "young couples and families" is not inclusive.
- (iii) In the school years theme, specific reference should be made to the expansion of Gaelic medium primary provision.
- (iv) the principle of individual entitlement should be established so that local continuity in provision should be available to any young person entering the early years or primary stages.
- (v) Greater priority should be given to community learning and support for parents with children in Gaelic education.
- (vi) Under education resources, the highest priority should be given to both teacher supply and the expansion of classroom resources. Indeed, perhaps all the resources produced by the national curriculum support agencies for English medium should also be published in Gaelic versions. Sustained

support rather than bid funding should be made available to Storrann as the major curriculum support agency to Gaelic education.

**2.4 Q4 In the light of your response to the above question, what projects do you view as being essential to implementing these priorities (some examples are offered in Appendix 1)?**

The projects considered as essential should be those which promote the agreed priorities. Not all those listed in appendix 1 fulfil this function. As already indicated, many of the tasks should be considered long life or permanent features rather than short life initiatives.

**2.5 Q5 And are the right organisations identified as being the primary players in implementing these priorities?**

The list of primary players is not useful because of the scattergun approach. It should be restricted to organisation and bodies and exclude services provided by these. There should be a differentiation between lead and supporting roles. In some areas there are notable omissions. For example in the education theme, the contributions of local school boards/parent councils, COSLA, ADES and Storrann are either missing or downplayed.

**2.6 Q6 If you are responding on behalf of an organisation how do you see yourselves contributing to the success of the National Plan?**

North Lanarkshire Council currently make Gaelic provision in its education, community learning and wider cultural activities. These include pre-school classes, a Gaelic medium primary school stream, selected Gaelic medium secondary school courses, a range of community learning, youth work and parent support activities, and traditional Gaelic culture initiatives. In selected areas, street names in Gaelic have been erected. Links with the Irish Gaelic community have been established.

In the first instance it is anticipated that these activities will continue and that the authority's Gaelic plan will focus on them.

It is suggested that a substantial restructuring of the education section of the national plan is required. In particular, the following issues should be given further attention.

- (i) it is confusing to have an education action area plan and a national Gaelic education strategy in the same document. The two should be consolidated into one.

The variations in structure, priorities, themes and terminology are further confusing.

- (ii) The 'background to Gaelic education' statement (p42-43) should be revised, particularly to give recognition to the roles played by Gaelic specific grant and local authorities in developments, and perhaps to identify the current challenges to continued progress.

- (iii) The development of advice on models of Gaelic education should be a priority.

- (iv) On generic curricular, learning and teaching issues the plan should fully reflect current developments in the wider Scottish education system, particularly the Curriculum for Excellence.
- (v) The themes to be included in the education action area/strategy should be reconsidered, perhaps following consultation with the key players.

## **North Lanarkshire Council : Education Department**

### **Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans : Consultation response**

The document is generally helpful and in most areas correlates closely with the national plan. However, it would be helpful for the guidelines to be periodically reviewed in the light of experience and feedback from public bodies.

#### 1. Equal respect (p8)

The interpretation adopted is not helpful and indeed suggests unequal treatment in some of the examples given. Perhaps “equitable treatment” is closer to the principle intended?

#### 2. Level of provision (P9-10)

The provision to be made by a public body should be realistic and take account of a wider range of issues, including the organisation’s function and the linguistic character of the area served. However, a general commitment to sustained development should also be expected.

#### 3. Triggers for action in policy areas

The quantification of benchmarks may generate disputes which detract from the overall objective. For example, what are civil parishes and do they correspond with service delivery boundaries? What is the justification for the selected % triggers? Although also potentially contentious, “significant numerical concentration” or “sustainable demand” are perhaps more useful.

#### 4. Education functions (p19)

(i) what is “standard provision” in relation to the education function(p19)?

(ii) early years and life long education provision should be included among the examples.

#### 5. Resources (p20)

The section on finance is not helpful. The potential costs of developing Gaelic provision are substantial, particularly if staffing is involved. Therefore, more detailed guidance should be developed on the level and sustainability of the support which will be available.