

Response to Language Plan Guidance and National Language Plan draft

Firstly I would like to mention that I have 4 children in GME and have been involved with Gaelic for about 9 years. I have been involved from Parent and Toddler to Secondary (now). We have lived in 3 different areas with GME and have now settled in Glasgow so that the children can attend the Glasgow Gaelic School.

I applaud what you are doing and hope that it will be workable and make a real difference. I did feel that it could have been easier reading in places. The National Plan was easier reading.

I am concerned that when I attended the last CnP meeting only one person had known about your consultation in Glasgow. I cannot stress enough how important the parents are in the Gaelic world. There is mostly mention of the parents of pre-school children. The parents need a lot more support in GME, especially if they are non-gaelic speakers. I agree that Gaelic needs to be spoken in the home so the linguistic confidence of parents is essential. Fluency is needed. Their needs must be met to make GME an even bigger success story.

I am also concerned that I was never sent the Language Plan when I requested it and nor did my father receive his. I hope that this does not reflect on how the plan will be implemented in the future.

Can I stress that this is a National Language Plan??!

Fantastic to have Gaelic more visible in Scotland. The concern for the other languages detracts from your message. I have heard of Sweden's fantastic work in the field of literacy, they do great work abroad and at home and at home you only see Swedish on their signs and paperwork and Swedish flags are everywhere. Of course we should respect other languages and cultures but on p.8 it is difficult to agree with the second point in your vision.

The percentages you mention weaken your stance and dream. The biggest problem for Gaelic is the Council Boundaries. Why do you need to adhere to them for this National Plan, especially when you talk about consistency yourselves? If you introduce certain facilities based on percentages in certain areas, once the population in other areas

take up Gaelic they are immediately disadvantaged. Perhaps all authorities could do something right from the start and some more than others. Look at education - when we were in East Ayrshire, where the GME school is, a lot of the Gaelic provision was in N. Lanarkshire. What was the point of that??

Education has suffered enormously from Council divisions - please use the guidance powers of the Bòrd to change that. One glowing example is the numbers game. The Scottish Executive gives a guidance for how many pupils to a class but the separate Councils have their own rules. Ultimately, there should be a teacher no matter how many pupils there are or you will never persuade parents to take up GME, if there is any reluctance or scepticism. I know teachers are thin on the ground, but I also know that teachers with Gaelic teaching in Mainstream have not been offered more money to move job or location, only probationers. Why? They have an extra skill and are essential to the success of GME nationally. It has to be accepted that GME might be overstaffed temporarily in some places no matter what the monetary cost.

Is it a matter of teacher's confidence? - I think your plans for retraining cover that and I hope that they are as radical as in Spain, where they gave very intensive training to teachers, even taking them out of teaching for a while to increase their language skills. They cannot all be lacking in confidence - offer them more money too.

You mention educating Heads. If a Head Teacher is not 100% behind GME, it never does as well in a school.

You mention pre-school quite a lot. The Glasgow Gaelic School, an example to follow, does not have room for a parent and toddler group. It is the ideal time to persuade parents of the benefits of GME and automatically you have children for the nursery and onwards. You also need to approach childminders - parents think about their children's education at a young age now, by nursery it is often too late. You also have to ensure that all pre-school is in Gaelic. My son went to a Gaelic nursery recently, it was mixed with the English nursery and just did not work. I suppose that is where the prestige comes in that you talk about.

Still on education and national guidelines - the transport to the Gaelic schools should not be split into Council areas either. It is inefficient, a waste of money and not very environmentally sound.

Sport in education is indeed an important issue. The Glasgow Gaelic School, an example to follow, does not have a gym. Can you believe it? It also does not have appropriate pitches for outdoor sport. Gaelic education would be more successful if it was taken away from Council rule altogether. It is a well known fact that the parents push for most things.

In order to have help in schools you will also have to train staff in qualifications like SVQ3 so that there is a bank of classroom help.

I agree that health is an important area but again would question the percentages. On Islay there are old people in hospital with no English. Who helps these people if your percentages are not met?

Funding could perhaps stretch to existing groups as well, or how are they to survive in lean times?

Print and Media are indeed very important. Why are the young children's programmes on when parents are doing school runs? There is often a lack of thought for parents with children at different ages. It also applies to language classes. Great provision for learning in Glasgow as long as you have no secondary children. What are you supposed to do with them??

Children do love their heroes. It would be great to have so much more translated into Gaelic. Did Bloomsbury ever agree to do Harry Potter for example? It is the same with on-line facilities. The Gaelic ones would need to match the English ones. Our children love music and humorous characters on-line.

Are more publishing houses needed? I wanted to try translating a child's book and was surprised that publishing was such a struggle. On the subject of language - as I have been trying to learn Gaelic I have come across very learned Gaelic teachers and I feel that it merits mention that Gaelic should not be changed too much or too quickly. They have often said that changes make the grammar more confusing.

I hope that your consultation will take the population's opinions on board. I hope you understand that, from a non-speaker's point of view, it is time that the people of Scotland took control of their heritage and culture. I even think that the children should learn about Scottish Geography and History in Primary and then diversify. I met an English woman promoting information about names and she was shocked that in Scottish schools the children do not study their own

names or even place names to any extent. Perhaps the GME children could meet more of the older Gaelic speakers and that would encourage the older generation to embrace Gaelic again. It was a problem on Islay to persuade the islanders to use Gaelic with the children. I fully understand your point on that issue.

We need you to change things and preferably a lot quicker than 2012. By then my children are mostly on their way out of school. Time is of the essence - or you have lost a generation again. You have so many good ideas. Act quickly.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

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From: elise kelly [elisebk@yahoo.co.uk]
Sent: 16 November 2006 11:46
To: Peadar Morgan
Subject: RE: Consultation on Draft National Plan

In reply to your email, it is alright to make my response public. There is no need for my name and area to be there as my response already says where I am from.

I hope you received plenty of feedback and that action will be fast enough.

I don't know whether you will read this personally, I hope so because I want to emphasise that the parents of GME should not need to campaign permanently for their children's education and the facilities. If that is the accepted way ahead, perhaps you should consider paying parents to campaign and they could do so more effectively. **I would be happy for you to add this point to your publication of responses.**

Yours sincerely

Elise Kelly