

As a parent of a child in Gaelic-medium education and as a committed Gaelic learner, I would like to comment briefly on the National Plan for Gaelic (the Plan) and the Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans (the Guidance).

1. I wholeheartedly support Bòrd na Gàidhlig in its efforts to promote the future development of Gaelic language and culture throughout Scotland, and wish to congratulate the members of the Bòrd on the production of the Plan and Guidance.

2. Nevertheless, I am concerned that the Plan and Guidance are deficient in certain respects, and hope that the Bòrd will give consideration to improving upon both documents, drawing on the feedback that you will undoubtedly have received as a result of your consultation process. In particular:

(a) Despite their division into clear sections, and their attractive presentation, both documents are difficult to follow, particularly for the lay person. It is therefore hard for someone like myself, without inside knowledge of the processes that led to the Plan and Guidance, to see what real effect the two documents would have were they to be implemented as they stand, and it is equally hard for me to see where I, as a member of the Gaelic community, would fit into Bòrd na Gàidhlig's plans.

(b) Perhaps because I lack insight into the political processes involved, it is also hard for me to see the extent to which the Plan in particular is actually worthy of that name. While the document is full of worthy sentiments, it does seem to me to be short on substance in many areas, but this may be a reflection of the limitations of the Bòrd's authority.

(c) In the area of education in particular, I feel there is room for clarification. For one thing, there is an apparent distinction made in the Guidance between Gaelic education and Gaelic-medium education, though it isn't always obvious whether this is a real distinction. I would like to see more support for GME as such, and a serious commitment to providing GME up to secondary level in all areas of Scotland. Without this, I believe that Gaelic as a language will suffer tremendously in the years to come. I would also like the plan to include some mention of provision for adult learners, perhaps by endorsing the forthcoming Ùlpan method, which is based on the hugely successful Wlpan course used in Wales over the past 40 years or so. At the moment, the provision of classes for committed learners, even in major cities like Edinburgh, is patchy at best, and doesn't really meet the needs of those who could do so much to promote and revitalise Gaelic.

Duilich nach do sgrìobh mi mo fhreagairt anns a' Gàidhlig gu leir:
tha mi nam fear-ionnsachaidh, agus feumaidh mi sgrìobhadh anns a'
Bheurla air sgàth 's gum dhèanadh mi mòran mearachd nam sgrìobhadh mi anns a'
Ghàidhlig! (Tha mi an dochas gu bheil an rosg-rann seo soilleir gu leòr!)

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd,
Sandy Nicholson, Dùn Èideann