

29 AUG 2006

Mr Peadar Morgan  
Language Planning Manager  
Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Dear Mr Morgan

### National Plan for Gaelic

Having been learning Gaelic for about 40 years and with considerable experience of bilingual societies in other parts of the world, I beg to offer the following observations on the National Plan.

#### Identity (p. 4)

In his Introduction Matthew MacIver describes Gaelic as "an integral, indispensable element of Scottish identity". Both Gaelic and Lowland Scots are among the fundamental defining factors of Scottish nationhood. Both are unique to Scotland and both are under threat. The same cannot be said of ethnic minority languages which are all spoken by tens of millions of people in the respective languages' home countries.

#### Gaelic Plans (p. 19)

The fundamental flaw in the Plan is the strategy of working through Gaelic language plans prepared by public bodies. The use of Gaelic if perceived simply as an instrument of Government policy will never carry any conviction. On the contrary, language development must take place through the private sector and private individuals. It is therefore necessary to identify a Gaelic middle class who will provide a lead to the *coimhearsnachd* in promoting the use of Gaelic in the course of their daily lives.

#### Prestige (pp. 18-19)

How will language planning lead to enhanced prestige for Gaelic? This can only come from individuals using Gaelic in high status situations. But when I visited the flagship hotel in the Western Isles, the Caberfeidh in Stornoway, the receptionist could not speak Gaelic. Has the Bòrd considered this?

#### Home (p. 14)

The Plan seeks to promote language use in the home, but if more Gaelic were used in everyday outside situations, this would build up confidence in the home.

This leads on to the question of confidence in Gaelic. This is very low at present and indeed Gaelic is not taken seriously as a means of communication. Confidence can be built up by using Gaelic in bed and breakfasts, shops, cafés, &c as I do when visiting the Gàidhealtachd. **Purchasing power** can be used to encourage Gaelic in business and in addition it is vital that we work for recognition of Gaelic as a language of **public speaking**. I was at a meeting on windfarms in Back, Lewis in April 2005 and I was told I had to make my point in English. What is the Bòrd's view of this?

Finally, although I have written this in English, if you are in any doubt about my proficiency in Gaelic I would refer you to my publications:-

- (i) *Comhradh mu Mhorair le Dòmhnall Tairbeart*, Gairm, 173, Winter 1995 - 96, pp. 36 - 43. An interview with a retired crofter relating to the history of his local area in North Morar.
- (ii) *Agallamh eadar mi-fhìn is Mgr Gilleasbuig MacUalraig, Carnoch, Gleann-Chomhann*, Gairm, Autumn 1998, pp. 367 - 68. Five short stories covering aspects of the history of the Ballachulish slate quarries.
- (iii) *A'Chailc*. A self-published 2500 word booklet which describes the history of the diatomite industry of Loch Cuithir, Staffin, Skye. I have published it in both Gaelic and English and it has been on sale in the Aros heritage centre and in Fraser MacIntyre, Portree, Skye.
- (iv) *'Se am muinntir fhéin a shabhaileas e!* Published in *The Scotsman*, 31 October 2003. An essay showing how any Gaelic revival must depend on the efforts of individual Gaels and cannot be achieved by simply appealing to the Government.
- (v) *Naomh Pòl ann an Aithne*. Greyfriars Tolbooth and Highland Kirk, Edinburgh, Autumn Magazine, 2005, Issue 3, pp. 13 - 14. A discussion of St. Paul's experiences in Athens, based on the book of Acts, chapter 17.

Leis gach deagh dhúrachd

Richard DeLéna