

Education Committee Report

SP Paper 657

ED/S2/06/R11

11th Report, 2006 (Session 2)

Draft National Plan for Gaelic

Remit and membership

Remit:

To consider and report on matters relating to school and pre-school education, young people and social work and such other matters as fall within the responsibility of the Minister for Education and Young People.

Membership:

Iain Smith (Convener)
Wendy Alexander
Rosemary Byrne
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Deputy Convener)
Fiona Hyslop
Mr Adam Ingram
Mr Kenneth Macintosh
Mr Frank McAveety
Dr Elaine Murray

Committee Clerking Team:

Clerk to the Committee

Eugene Windsor

Senior Assistant Clerk

Mark Roberts

Assistant Clerk

Ian Cowan

Draft National Plan for Gaelic

The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

INTRODUCTION

1. Section 2(3) of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 asp 7 requires Bòrd na Gàidhlig to consult the Parliament in preparing a draft national plan for Gaelic. The draft national plan for Gaelic¹ was referred to the Education Committee by the Parliamentary Bureau on 29 August 2006.

2. The Education Committee took evidence from Allan Campbell (Chief Executive) and Peadar Morgan (Language Planning Manager) from Bòrd na Gàidhlig at its meeting on 27 September 2006 (the minute and extract from the Official Report of that meeting are attached as Annexes [A](#) and [B](#)). The Committee also received written evidence regarding the draft national plan from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Glasgow City Council².

THE DRAFT NATIONAL PLAN FOR GAELIC

3. Bòrd na Gàidhlig published its draft national plan for Gaelic on 14 August 2006 and is consulting on it until 10 November 2006. Thirty public meetings have been held to publicise the philosophy and aims of the plan.

4. The draft national plan sets out a vision where Gaelic is the language of choice for an ever increasing number of Scots and others, has an expanding core of mother-tongue speakers and has a dynamic culture in a diverse language community.

5. The plan also identifies five key areas for action, specifies an aim to be achieved by 2012 for each area and a measure of success to be based on the 2011 census. These are summarised in [Table 1](#) overleaf.

Table 1: Five areas for action

Action Area	Aim	Target in 2011 census
Vitality	Stabilise the number of fluent Gaelic speakers, to promote use and to lay the foundations for growth	1% of those aged 3 and over in Scotland able to speak Gaelic and 50% of children able to speak Gaelic in families in which the census reference person is able to speak Gaelic, as an indication of reversing language shift and of increases intergenerational transfer of Gaelic
Status	Achieve the popular recognition of Gaelic as a personal and national asset	2% of those in Scotland with some Gaelic knowledge, as an indication of increasing national contact with, and interest in Gaelic
Education	Expand the provision and uptake of Gaelic education at all levels	1.2% of those aged 15-24 in Scotland able to speak Gaelic as an indication of effective education leading to an increase in the number of parents with Gaelic
Culture	Achieve wider use of Gaelic in Scottish cultural life	3.5% of those aged 16-74 with some Gaelic language activity in Scotland employed in culture, media and sport occupations, as an

		indication of increased vitality in the cultural sector
Communications	Achieve greater and broader access to, and presence for, Gaelic in all media	1.1% of those aged 3 or more in Scotland able to read Gaelic, as an indication of increased familiarity with textual communication in Gaelic

6. Within each of the five action areas, four themes are identified, each with a desired outcome and priorities for action. Bòrd na Gàidhlig believes that, taken together, these elements will ensure the delivery of the national plan for Gaelic and secure its vision. Examples of possible projects within each of the twenty themes are presented in the Appendix 1 of the plan.

7. The Committee notes the progress which has been made to date in developing the draft plan. The Committee would like to put on record its support for Bòrd na Gàidhlig and its efforts to promote and develop the Gaelic language and welcomes Bòrd na Gàidhlig's vision and the identification of the five action areas.

8. The Committee also notes that the draft plan identifies priorities and key tasks across the five action areas. 'Primary Players' and 'Providers and Facilitators' are also identified. The Committee urges Bòrd na Gàidhlig, in the final version of the plan, to be more specific regarding timescales and the organisations which are seen as having primary responsibility for taking the priorities and key tasks forward. Given that Bòrd na Gàidhlig will have to work through partner organisations to secure its aims and objectives, the Committee believes that the national plan for Gaelic should be strategic in taking into account of the existing plans and capabilities of partner organisations.

9. The Committee recognises the key leadership role that Bòrd na Gàidhlig has to play in securing the long term future and recommends that, by the end of its second year of full operation, Bòrd na Gàidhlig should set out in more detail what it sees as its own role in delivering the national plan for Gaelic in the medium term (3 – 5 years).

NATURE OF GAELIC LANGUAGE PLANS

10 Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 asp 7 enables Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require public authorities to prepare a Gaelic language plan. The Committee notes that Bòrd na Gàidhlig has identified³ (17 October 2006) the organisations that will be required to produce Gaelic language plans over the next three years (see [Table 2](#) below).

Table 2: Public authorities to be required to produce Gaelic language plans between 2006-07 and 2008-09

2006-07	Scottish Executive, Scottish Parliament, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar,
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	Highland Council, Argyll and Bute Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise
2007-08	Scottish Arts Council, Learning and Teaching Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, UHI Millennium Institute, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd, Scottish Natural Heritage, HM Inspectorate of Education, VisitScotland, Crofters' Commission, NHS Western Isles and NHS Highland and Argyll
2008-09	Cairngorms National Park Authority, City of Edinburgh Council, Forestry Commissioners, Glasgow City Council, Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd., Historic Scotland, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, NHS Greater Glasgow, North Lanarkshire Council, Northern Constabulary, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, sportscotland and Stirling Council

11. [Table 3](#) summarises the types of organisations identified by Bòrd na Gàidhlig as being required to produce a Gaelic language plan.

Table 3: Types of public authority to be required to produce Gaelic language plans between 2006-07 and 2008-09

Central government (2)	Scottish Parliament, Scottish Executive
Local government (9)	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland Council, Argyll and Bute Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow City Council, North Lanarkshire Council and Stirling Council, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority
Education and skills(5)	Learning and Teaching Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, UHI Millennium Institute, Scottish Qualifications Authority, HM Inspectorate of Education
NHS (3)	NHS Western Isles, NHS Highland and Argyll and NHS Greater Glasgow
Companies wholly owned by Scottish Ministers (2)	Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd. and Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd.
Environment, culture and tourism (7)	Forestry Commissioners, Crofters Commission, Historic Scotland, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, sportscotland, VisitScotland and Scottish Arts Council
Others (2)	Northern Constabulary and Highlands and Islands Enterprise

12. The Committee believes that it would be helpful if the national plan for Gaelic contained an explanation of how Bòrd na Gàidhlig's overall strategic objectives relate to the specific rationale behind the identification and selection of these organisations.

13. The highly variable levels of Gaelic usage across Scotland (ranging from 70.4% of the population in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar local authority area to, for example 0.67% in the Dumfries and Galloway local authority area⁴) means that national organisations (see [Table 3](#) above) will have to adopt a “graduated or layered”⁵ approach to their language plan, as what will be appropriate where Gaelic usage is comparatively high may not be suitable in other areas where Gaelic usage is lower. A similar graduated or layered approach is likely to be required across all 32 local authorities—a language plan appropriate for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will probably be very different, for example to, what is appropriate for Dumfries and Galloway.

14. The Committee notes that Bòrd na Gàidhlig is “... happy to preach the gospel to anyone who will listen”⁶ and will be striving to work with public authorities which do not operate in areas of Scotland which are traditionally Gaelic speaking. However, the Committee believes that the draft national plan would be strengthened by greater emphasis on how Bòrd na Gàidhlig intends to identify potential Gaelic usage. Indeed, the Committee recommended amendment of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill to this effect in its Stage 1 report⁷ (paragraph 14). The Scottish Executive accepted the Committee’s recommendation and amended the Bill (section 3(3)) at Stage 2. The Committee notes the existence of guidance associated with the draft national plan to assist public bodies in the development of language plans but believes that, in order for the plan to be a truly national plan, there needs to be additional focus in the guidance on areas where there is low Gaelic usage, to show what steps can be taken to encourage demand for Gaelic services. In making this recommendation, the Committee stresses that it sees Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s role as being to encourage and respond to demand for Gaelic rather than to insist on compulsion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

15. The Committee notes that Highlands and Islands Enterprise will be among the first suite of public bodies which will be asked to produce a Gaelic language plan. Nevertheless, it believes that the draft national plan for Gaelic does not sufficiently emphasise the role that the development of Gaelic may play in providing Scotland with economic opportunities. The Committee welcomes Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s statement that: “If we have not made the link between language development and economic development strong and obvious, that will be put right because the bòrd is certain about the importance of economic development and language being at the centre of economic development”⁸.

EDUCATION

16. In its Stage 1 report on the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill, the Committee argued that “a comprehensive national strategy for the delivery of Gaelic education (from preschool through to further and higher education) is an essential component of developing Gaelic in the longer term” (paragraph 39).

17. The Committee is therefore pleased that the plan recognises the essential role of education as one of the five action areas. The Committee also welcomes the inclusion of a national Gaelic education strategy, with an extensive range of key tasks, in the draft national plan for Gaelic.

18. The Committee is also pleased that Bòrd na Gàidhlig has identified critical issues in relation to training, recruitment and support of Gaelic teachers. However, the Committee notes that it would like to see more detail in the national plan about how and by whom the stated priorities are to be taken forward. The Committee notes that the only timescale for change in education is the overall 2011 target on education (see [Table 1](#) above).

19. The Committee recommends that, before finalising the plan, Bòrd na Gàidhlig consider establishing timescales (where appropriate) for the completion of the tasks identified with the national Gaelic education strategy, and identify more clearly which organisations are to be asked to take responsibility for achieving the priorities and key tasks.

20. The Committee notes the written evidence provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar which remarks on the tension that may exist between a desire for Gaelic medium education and the sustainability of a local school – “...some parents will not have their children travel a short distance for Gaelic medium education if it means that the school roll in their village school is compromised”⁹. The Committee encourages Bòrd na Gàidhlig to work with local authorities, the Scottish Executive and any other relevant agencies to reconcile the tensions that may exist between demand for Gaelic medium provision and the wider school estate strategy.

GENERAL

21. When the Committee considered the general principles of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill¹⁰, it was “... particularly struck by the fragile state of the Gaelic language and the need for immediate action to protect and develop it” (paragraph 8).

22. The Committee supports the draft national plan’s vision as described in paragraph 4 above and encourages Bòrd na Gàidhlig to continue to lead and support the use of Gaelic across Scotland. The Committee believes that the national plan for Gaelic could be more detailed in setting what Bòrd na Gàidhlig believes needs to be done to promote and develop Gaelic. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that Bòrd na Gàidhlig adopts an urgent tone in the plan to stress the need to develop a dynamic momentum in the promotion and development of Gaelic.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES

18th Meeting, 2006 (Session 2)

Wednesday 13 September 2006

Present:

Ms Wendy Alexander

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton
(Deputy Convener)

Adam Ingram

Mr Frank McAveety

Iain Smith (Convener)

Ms Rosemary Byrne

Fiona Hyslop

Mr Kenneth Macintosh

Dr Elaine Murray

Also present: Richard Lochhead and Nora Radcliffe.

The meeting opened at 10.03 am.

Draft national plan for Gaelic (in private): The Committee agreed its approach to scrutiny of the draft national plan for Gaelic

The meeting closed at 12.15 pm.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES

19th Meeting, 2006 (Session 2)

Wednesday 27 September 2006

Present:

Ms Rosemary Byrne

Fiona Hyslop

Mr Kenneth Macintosh

Dr Elaine Murray

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton
(Deputy Convener)

Adam Ingram

Mr Frank McAveety

Iain Smith (Convener)

Also present: Alex Neil.

Apologies were received from Ms Wendy Alexander.

The meeting opened at 11.08 am.

Items in private: The Committee agreed to take items 10 and 11 and future consideration of its report on the draft national plan for Gaelic in private.

Draft National Plan for Gaelic: The Committee took evidence from—

Allan Campbell, Chief Executive, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Peadar Morgan, Language Planning Manager, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Draft National Plan for Gaelic: The Committee agreed to seek approval from the SPCB to publish its report in Gaelic.

The meeting closed at 12.55 pm.

[Official Report 27 September 2006](#)

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

EXTRACT FROM MINUTES

21st Meeting, Session 2 (2006)

Tuesday 24 October 2006

Present:

Ms Wendy Alexander

Ms Rosemary Byrne

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton
(Deputy Convener)

Fiona Hyslop

Adam Ingram

Mr Kenneth Macintosh

Dr Elaine Murray

Iain Smith (Convener)

Apologies: Mr Frank McAveety

The meeting opened at 2.07 pm.

Draft National Plan for Gaelic (in private): The Committee considered a draft report on the draft National Plan for Gaelic.

The meeting closed at 16.14 pm

Footnotes:

¹ Available at: <http://www.bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk/nationalplanforgaelic.html>

² Both these documents are contained in the papers for the Education Committee's meeting of 27 September 2006 which are available at: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/education/papers-06/edp06-19.pdf>

³ See press release at: <http://www.bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk/Default.aspx.LocID-006new011.RefLocID-00600f006.Lang-EN.htm>

⁴ Scottish census 2001, Table UV12, General Register Office for Scotland.

⁵ Campbell, Education Committee, Official Report, 27 September 2006, column 3459.

⁶ Campbell, Education Committee, Official Report, 27 September 2006, column 3474.

⁷ Published on 26 January 2005 and available at:
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/education/reports-05/edr05-02-02.htm>

⁸ Campbell, Education Committee, Official Report, 27 September 2006, column 3468.

⁹ Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, written evidence. See link in footnote 1.

¹⁰ <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/education/reports-05/edr05-02-02.htm>