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I'd like to submit a response to the draft national plan for Gaelic in the form of some specific personal scenarios and pose the question "Will the National Plan be powerful enough to help these situations?"

I recently joined a Gaelic Learners group in Falkirk which has been running for about 6 years with little help and indeed some obstruction from the local Falkirk council. When we heard that the Mod was coming to Falkirk in 2008, we felt it might be an opportunity to improve the situation and wrote a nice letter in poor Gaelic to the council. We got no reply. Subsequently two new people joined the class from Perthshire and suggested that a Gaelic Development Officer might be what we should ask for from the council. We felt that Falkirk was likely to make significant financial gain from the Mod coming and that the Council's motivation was in large part commercial, but that perhaps they owed something in return to the development of the Gaelic language locally.

My reading of the plan is that different levels of support for Gaelic will be expected from councils depending on the demand from local Gaelic speakers. Now in lowland Scotland the demand must come primarily from Gaelic learners and will not have a very loud voice. I wonder therefore if a Gaelic development officer might be provided for a larger geographical area taking in for example 3 or 4 neighbouring counties. I have also been attending a Gaelic learners class in Bathgate, West Lothian and wonder for example if a Gaelic development officer might cover Falkirk district, part of West Lothian, and say part of Lanarkshire. So this is the first scenario I wonder if the plan would be helpful with.

Mention of West Lothian leads me to the second scenario. We are expecting a new baby in November and want him to be educated through the medium of Gaelic. At present West Lothian's policy is to send children to the Gaelic medium unit at TollCross School in Edinburgh, involving a round trip of 50 miles, by public transport (if you can get them in. Some years ago an older child was refused admission, since she did not come from a Gaelic speaking home.) So our second question of the plan is "Will it have the teeth to deal with this kind of situation?" Our reading of it suggests that there are too many opt out clauses and those local councils such as West Lothian, which gives Gaelic a very low priority, will be able to get away with continued shoddy provision.