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A chàraid,

Draft National Plan for Gaelic – consultation response

As a Gaelic learner, I welcome the national plan for Gaelic and would like to make the following two main points on the consultation paper.

1. There is little about adult learners in the national plan and it does not reflect their central strategic importance to reversing language shift in terms of intergenerational transmission, numbers etc.
2. While the plan is called the *national* plan for Gaelic, I do not feel the plan currently treats Gaelic as a national language.

I believe that the national plan would be improved with the following improvements:

A **National strategy for adult learners** should be included in the national plan as the main project for the Education: Tertiary and Lifelong learning section. Despite being the most important group for languages in situations such as Gaelic (Fishman 1991), few of the many thousand Gaelic learners currently become fluent. A national strategy should tackle this through measures such as:

- A target and timescale for expanding the numbers of fluent learners.
- A national coordinating body for Gaelic classes and courses at all levels.
- Investigating funding mechanisms/weighting for Gaelic courses for adults.
- Investigating funding support for students wishing to undertake full time Gaelic courses irrespective of their previous educational qualifications.
- A national training and certificate system for language tutors and measures to address the national tutor shortage.
- Promote and develop provision for Gaelic degree courses in the Celtic Departments. This should enclose a “year abroad” equivalent scheme in a Gaelic environment such as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
- Expand Gaelic as a subject for learners in secondary schools.
- Develop a marketing programme to encourage Gaelic learning.
- The ULPAN system should be fully supported as part of this strategy.

- Teaching Gaelic to non-Gaelic speaking teachers in order to tackle the national school teacher shortage.
- Clì Gàidhlig and the University Celtic Departments should be included as primary players.

- Gaelic has a history of being spoken throughout Scotland, it is central to Scottish national identity, is today spoken throughout Scotland and a large proportion of GME pupils and over half of Gaelic learners live outside the Highlands and Islands. The plan's vision should therefore be amended to make it clear that Gaelic is a national language – a language with relevance throughout Scotland. Recognising Gaelic as a “national asset and responsibility” is not the same as saying this. Something (e.g. the Orcadian dialect) can be a national asset and responsibility without being relevant to all areas of the nation or being seen as a responsibility of all areas of the nation. Unless the current wording is changes, the vision in the national plan is in danger of reinforcing stereotypes of Gaelic as a Highland language and in strengthening the damaging view that Gaelic is not a national language.
- The visibility of Gaelic throughout Scotland is very important indeed for the development of the language. For example, national groups should be encouraged to adopt bilingual names and use bilingual logos. Bilingual signs in places such as main railway stations, airports, ports, border crossings, and entrances to major cities and local authority areas is also very symbolically important and crucial for reversing language shift.
- Gaelic in urban and lowland communities and the creation of new communities (vitality: communities) should be prioritised. Key measures are to promote the language in the cities and urban communities through measures such as Gaelic community centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Finally, the national plan should be far more detailed in terms of timescale and targets and should also have longer term targets.

Is mise le meas mòr,



Dr Maureen McCallum