

Freagairt don Dreachd Phlana Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig:

Draft National Plan for Gaelic

I would like to make the following comments on the National Plan for Gaelic which I welcome. While I am in broad agreement with the plan, I am concerned that it does not place enough priority on adult learners of Gaelic or on the status of the language as a national language. I also feel that the level of detail in the plan is insufficient.

I propose the following amendments to the national plan:

National Strategy for Adult Learners

In recognition of the fact that adult learners are the most important group strategically for the future of Gaelic, 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. This strategy should cover the following areas:

- o A target and action plan for the expansion of the numbers of fluent learners.
- o Coordination of Gaelic classes and courses at all levels.
- o Filling gaps in provision.
- o Funding mechanisms for Gaelic courses.
- o Funding for students wishing to undertake full time Gaelic courses.
- o A national training/certification system for language tutors
- o Measures to address the national tutor shortage.
- o Promotion and expansion of the Gaelic degree courses in the Celtic Departments including a "year abroad" equivalent scheme in a Gaelic environment such as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
- o Expand Gaelic as a subject for learners in secondary schools.
- o Develop a marketing programme for Gaelic learning.
- o The ULPAN system should be fully supported as part of this strategy.
- o Teaching Gaelic to non-Gaelic speaking teachers in order to tackle the national school teacher shortage.
- o Clì Gàidhlig and the University Celtic Departments should be included as primary players.

Gaelic as a National Language

The vision statement in the plan should be changed to state that it recognises Gaelic as a national language of Scotland - as one of Scotland's national languages with relevance to all of the country. This reflects the history and the present situation of the language and the future aspirations of the Gaelic community. The current wording that Gaelic is a "national asset and responsibility" is ambiguous and open to misinterpretation by those who believe that Gaelic is neither relevant, nor a responsibility, nationally. After all, a "national asset" is not necessarily national in scope nor a responsibility falling upon all areas of the nation.

The plan should also prioritise measures to increase the visibility of Gaelic nationally. This is very symbolically important and will reap rich rewards in terms of public awareness and will play a part in increasing numbers of Gaelic learners and GM pupils. This might include:

- o Encouraging bilingual names, logos and slogans for local and national groups.
- o Bilingual signs in main railway stations (e.g. Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central), airports (e.g. Glasgow, Edinburgh, Prestwick), ports, border roads, entrances to major cities and local authority areas.
- o Gaelic in sports grounds and on sport strips.

Gaelic communities in urban and lowland areas should be prioritised in the plan but barely rate a mention in the current draft. The creation of new communities (vitality: communities) should be prioritised. Key measures required to promote the language in the cities and urban communities include the creation of Gaelic community centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh. More Gaelic related employment should also be encouraged in lowland and urban Scotland.

Level of detail of the plan

The national plan should have more and more detailed targets and should explain in more detail what exactly is proposed, who will do it and what the outcome will be. There should also be longer term targets.

I would also like to suggest the following:

1. The National Plan, and indeed the Gaelic communities need a long-term vision and long-term targets for Gaelic and for Bord na Gàidhlig. I would like to suggest the following as targets for the 2021 census:

- a.. 200,000 with some ability in speaking or understanding Gaelic
- b.. 20,000 speakers of Gaelic within the 3-19 age group
- c.. 2,000 mother tongue speakers of Gaelic within the 3-19 age group

2. The Plan is a little long and difficult to read. Could Bord na Gàidhlig make a shorter version available? A version which is smaller, easier to read and gives information and recommendations on how people might make changes in their daily lives to help advance the cause of language.

3. I would like to see more emphasis placed on the importance of Gaelic-speaking communities. It is within those communities that Gaelic is spoken as a daily language of communication, though it is threatened in all of those communities. It is essential that the National Plan outlines what must be done to retain Gaelic as the language of daily life within these communities over the 10-15 years to come..

Is mise le meas,

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