

# Gaelic For All

Edinburgh

The Draft National Plan for Gaelic – consultation response  
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We are an organisation representing Families of Gaelic Learners with an emphasis on children and parents learning Gaelic through Gaelic Language in the Primary Schools (GLPS), and also Gaelic Language in Secondary Schools (GLSS). As such, we are very pleased that the National Plan for Gaelic gives weight to learners of Gaelic both through Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and GLPS, as well as adult learners. It is very valuable to have GLPS supported as this will be a fundamental component in saving the language and normalising Gaelic as well as increasing the numbers of Gaelic speakers to help achieve the critical mass needed for survival.

However there are several areas where GLPS and adult learners seem to have been omitted from the spirit of the plan and we would like to draw attention to the different areas which we believe could be strengthened.

## **VITALITY**

### *The Challenge*

*Aim: To stabilise the number of fluent Gaelic speakers, to promote use and lay the foundations for growth.*

*Sectoral Project: Research, dissemination and implementation of strategies for acquisition and use of Gaelic in the home, community and workplace.*

Our comments: Part of a Gaelic friendly workplace is to ensure that access to learning Gaelic and improving on previous knowledge of Gaelic is readily available. Companies cannot have increased Gaelic essential/ desirable positions when much of the population (including children) is not able to access Gaelic learning – otherwise it may be perceived to be discrimination and result in antagonism towards Gaelic. If companies want to provide Gaelic essential or desirable posts, then there should be an obligation on them to demonstrate clear commitment to the language by offering Gaelic language training within the organisation (as currently happens in situations with British Sign Language (BSL)); and positions can be taken up by non-speakers who intend to learn, as supported by the company or organisation.

### *Workplace*

*Priorities: Promote the designation of all jobs with a direct impact on Gaelic medium events and environments as being Gaelic essential.*

Our comments: If we want to deliver this priority by 2012, then a lot more focus is required for Gaelic learning now perhaps supporting Ulpan and GLPS as well as GLSS – to encourage more learners to become fluent and recognise the importance of Gaelic. There are certain practicalities such as ensuring postal workers can understand Gaelic before Gaelic can be used in addresses on mail. Promoting an increase in Gaelic essential / desirable jobs amongst people who may not have had an opportunity to access learning Gaelic may

endanger the enormous goodwill there is towards Gaelic at the moment. It needs to become a lot more available and accessible so that Gaelic truly is a national language and then look towards increasing workplace Gaelic. And of course, courses in workplace language skills will help towards this but need to be emphasised that people without Gaelic could apply and learn the language aspect 'on the job'.

**It is necessary to define the definition of Gaelic speaker as required for any Gaelic desirable / essential jobs. Would this level be set at Standard grade or Higher grade as essential criteria in any job.** Applicants should be able to apply for positions, with this essential criteria as evidence of Gaelic and then should be assured they would not be subject to intolerance, prejudice or discrimination in any form (racism, sexism, homophobia, disabilism, ageism or faith/belief intolerance) – and this would also have to reflect the background, whether native speaker or learner of Gaelic. **There must be equal opportunity for all applicants regardless of origin, religion, sex, age, race, sexual orientation or disability in accordance with the equal opportunity legislation that exists within all public body policies – but this needs to be clearly set out in the National Plan for Gaelic to ensure there is no misunderstanding about the background learning of native speakers or learners.** It would not be realistic to expect every candidate applying for a Gaelic desirable or Gaelic essential position to have Gaelic to tertiary education level because otherwise it would not be possible to recruit sufficient numbers of administrative staff, as well as domestic staff, wardens, guides etc as recommended in the guidance for Gaelic Language Plans document. If staff then required ongoing training whilst working, this should be built into the workplace CPD or other specific training. So long as applicants for jobs could demonstrate they had Gaelic to a recognised benchmark standard such as standard grade or Higher grade, then they must be recognised as having achieved the literacy levels and fluency levels required for the positions. Further training should be offered on an ongoing basis in all public bodies, as a model of good practice.

#### *Corpus Development*

*Develop training for professional translation and interpretation, and for formal application of Gaelic in administration, education, design and public discourse.*

Our comments: We are confused as to why 'design' is mentioned because this is very vague, and does not merit particular emphasis surely or else a more comprehensive list of course development is required. In an important document such as this there needs to be more clarity.

#### **STATUS**

*Aim: To achieve the popular recognition of Gaelic as a personal and national asset.*

*Sectoral Project: Promotion of community and institutional support for Gaelic as a first language through community language plans and other initiatives.*

Our comments: In order to achieve 'popular recognition' as a 'national asset', projects should address the 'populace' in general, as well as existing language communities. It is essential that everyone in Scotland values Gaelic and is able to make a connection with the language and culture. We would therefore recommend that a second part should be added to the Sectoral Project description, along the lines of; “, and promotion through authorities and institutions across Scotland of access to Gaelic culture and Gaelic learning”. Gaelic should be more accessible to learn within communities of new learners – with particular emphasis on the central belt which now has greater numbers of Gaelic speakers than the Gaeltacht areas. These learners need to be nurtured and expanded and this could be done by increasing access for learning, perhaps with a central belt Gaelic college.

### *Awareness*

*Priorities: Promote awareness of, and access to information on, Gaelic in local, regional and national life and history.*

Our comments: It is of crucial importance that investigation in public awareness in different areas is carried out, to facilitate delivery of Gaelic for local needs and communities.

### *Support*

*Priorities: Promote support in the public and private sectors for the transmission of Gaelic as a mother tongue in the home, family and community.*

Our comments: There is a need to take cognisance of the urban environment of the central belt that now has higher numbers of Gaelic speakers than anywhere else. This is important in ensuring support and goodwill towards Gaelic in various communities. It would make sense logically if where there were more speakers / learners (whether fluent or not) of Gaelic, then it becomes more relevant in households and would result in greater support for Gaelic festivals/ events. More opportunities for using Gaelic in the community would increase the transmission of the language through generations as well.

## **EDUCATION**

*Aim: To expand the provision and uptake of Gaelic education at all levels.*

*Sectoral Project: Increase access to Gaelic medium education, and to the enhanced education experience of dedicated Gaelic schools.*

Our comments: Despite the aim of expanding provision of Gaelic education at all levels, the project seems too limited and makes no mention of support for Gaelic learning which is described in the same section as 'a valid and valued route to adopting the language'. This needs to be clearly set out as part of the sectoral project that the aim and the project are both to encompass all types of Gaelic learning at all levels to ensure the situation is clarified and not open to misunderstanding later on.

### *Early years*

*Outcome: continued growth in numbers of children in Gaelic medium pre school education..*

*Priorities: Expand and resource appropriately the provision and uptake of Gaelic medium pre school education.*

Our comments: There is a need to expand the priorities to include all nurseries if possible. There have been very successful pilots in nurseries that provide first contact with Gaelic culture and music, so that it becomes more normalised and can be seen as a way of encouraging children and preparing them for later learning in either GME or GLPS in schools. Councils should see the plan as encouraging early years learning of Gaelic across all pre school provision.

### *School years*

*Outcome: Accelerated growth in pupil numbers across the continuum of Gaelic medium education.*

*Priorities: Expand and resource appropriately the provision, uptake and continuity of Gaelic medium and Gaelic learning.*

Our comments: Although it is excellent to see that Gaelic learning is given parity in the priorities, it seems that the outcome should also include Gaelic learning in all forms, not just GME. To avoid misunderstandings, it is necessary to clarify in the outcome that the growth should include GME, as well as GLPS and GLSS in the outcome section and appropriately in the later sections. For example, it is necessary to increase Gaelic learning in secondary schools as a language subject for learners, so that it is universally available from S1 rather than from S3 by which time it is too late for most pupils to take on a new language subject. There should also be support available for Gaelic learners in primary and secondary schools and encouragement for schools to use Gaelic in as many areas of the curriculum and in extracurricular activities as possible eg sports day, school shows, choirs, history projects. GLPS needs to be expanded so that there is a new provision of GLPS, stage 1 (the first 2 years worth of curriculum) and also a GLPS stage 2 (for those learners keen to develop their Gaelic further). And the GLPS / GLSS development organisations should be included in the primary players section so they can offer informed guidance about how best to achieve their particular type of learning.

Equal Respect needs to be included for GLSS to ensure that schools will offer Gaelic as supportively as possible.

It is also crucially important to include CPD training for all teachers who are teaching GLPS and GLSS to give them encouragement and to support them in developing their own fluency levels in Gaelic, to benefit the children they are teaching. This seems to have been erroneously missed out of the action areas section. Wherever GME teachers are offered support and promotion pathways and increased access to Gaelic CPD opportunities, this must be reflected and include all teachers of Gaelic to ensure there is no discrimination and to ensure best levels of teaching Gaelic for all school pupils.

There also needs to be recognised standards of learning on a national level for children and adults, to form a joined up thinking strategy, and more effective means of training teachers of GLPS so it can be introduced.

### *Tertiary and Lifelong Learning*

*Outcome: Continued growth in numbers of students in tertiary Gaelic medium education.*

*Priorities: Expand and resource appropriately the provision, uptake and continuity of Gaelic immersion courses.*

Our comments: There needs to be clarification that this section includes a strategy for Gaelic learning in tertiary education, because at the moment it is very haphazard over the country and it is very difficult to find cohesive learning – perhaps to encourage a Gaelic college offering immersion learning opportunities for the central belt to enable people to learn without having to move home. The priorities need to emphasise the courses should be available and accessible in urban areas to recognise the concentrated number of learners living there.

### *Education Resources*

*Outcome: Sufficient staff and teaching resources to satisfy growth requirements in all sections.*

*Priorities: Develop new routes into Gaelic medium education and Gaelic teaching careers.*

Our comments: There needs to be clarification in the outcome to include all learners requirements, to avoid misunderstandings that these are for GME only – and to ensure that GLPS/ GLSS and adult learners needs are met, and to amend the priorities to include GLPS/ GLSS. Perhaps there is a need for to explicitly mention expanding GLPS teacher training and aiming to make this an option as part of teacher training for those who would like to take it up.

Expand the development of educational materials for all levels and all learners (should be amended to include the GLPS/ GLSS learners).

Perhaps there should also be a clause to promote tutors who can train teachers to teach GLPS (stage 1) and develop and promote GLPS (stage 2). And GLPS/GLSS developing organisations should be in the Primary Players list to offer guidance about ways of developing new routes into GLPS/GLSS.

CPD training clause should also include opportunities for GLPS/ GLSS teachers to be able to develop their language skills and areas of work, on parity with GME inclusion.

It is also crucially important to include CPD training for all teachers who are teaching GLPS and GLSS to give them encouragement and to support them in developing their own fluency levels in Gaelic, to benefit the children they are teaching. This seems to have been erroneously missed out of the action areas section. Wherever GME teachers are offered support and promotion pathways and increased access to Gaelic CPD opportunities, this must be reflected to include all teachers of Gaelic to ensure there is no discrimination and to ensure best levels of teaching Gaelic for all school pupils. The numbers of learners through GLPS and GLSS merit reciprocal levels of support and respect and encouragement.

## **CULTURE**

*Aim: To achieve wider use of Gaelic in Scottish cultural life.*

*Target: 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.*

*Sectoral Project: A marketing and promotion strategy for Gaelic cultural products and activities.*

Our comments: Central belt merits priority for understanding Gaelic history and cultural roots, as there is more likelihood that this area may be unaware of the important heritage and this is crucial for language transmission and for Gaelic to survive. There should be more bilingual projects to make Gaelic more normalised, as happens in Ireland where theatre productions can be part Gaidhlig and part English.

### *Cultural Activity*

*Outcome: Increased participation nationally in Gaelic language cultural activities.*

*Priorities: Expand the range of cultural materials in and about Gaelic for all levels and ages.*

Our comments: Need to be explicit about including GLPS/ GLSS cultural activities alongside GME to avoid misunderstanding.

### *Heritage*

*Outcome: Increased participation nationally in Gaelic language heritage activities.*

*Priorities: Increase Gaelic medium heritage materials and activities through strategic marketing and promotion.*

Our comments: These areas need to give parity to Gaelic learners in each situation because the majority of those participating in heritage activities are likely to be adult learners and families (4,500 children learning through GLPS in 2005) – often hillwalkers and other individuals taking part in outdoor pursuits (a recognised and increasingly important part of local and national tourism) become keen Gaelic learners and these are an obvious focus for developing Gaelic learning. Perhaps the priorities should be more explicit and take out the

reference to GME to replace with a more general statement – ‘Increase Gaelic heritage materials to encourage new learners, through strategic marketing and promotion’. Think that the section in Sport and recreation referring to ‘develop Gaelic medium tourism’ should be moved to this section and take out the reference to GME since this is not necessary and is an ideal opportunity to state that Gaelic tourism should be developed to encourage and attract new learners.

### *Sport and Recreation*

*Outcome: Increased participation nationally in Gaelic language sport and recreation activities.*  
*Priorities: Develop Gaelic medium sport, recreation and outdoor activities through strategic marketing and promotion.*

Our comments: Although it may be desirable to develop materials for healthy living within GME, the greater benefit of this section must be to use sport activities as a vehicle to bring more, diverse people into Gaelic learning and as such the targets here should be far broader and not limit the scope by reference to GME when Gaelic activities may be more encompassing of the population and therefore of benefit for developing Gaelic sport and recreation activities.

Think that the section in Sport and recreation referring to ‘develop Gaelic medium tourism’ should be moved to Heritage section and take out the reference to GME since this is not necessary and is an ideal opportunity to state that Gaelic tourism should be developed to encourage and attract new learners.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

*Aim: To achieve greater and broader access to, and presence for, Gaelic in all media.*  
*Target: 1.1% of those aged 3 or more in Scotland able to read Gaelic, as an indication of increased familiarity with textual communications in Gaelic.*

*Sectoral Project: A Gaelic television channel as a key part of an integrated Gaelic digital service.*

Our comment: Although having a dedicated Gaelic channel has been a key part of media development, it would be a great pity to lose Gaelic programming from mainstream channels and this should be defended whenever possible. It is important to make programmes, such as Eorpa that are such excellent programmes that viewers want to watch regardless of the language. It is excellent that recognition is given to the lack of materials for Gaelic learners, and perhaps this again could be more explicit to avoid misunderstanding that print, broadcasting and interactivity need to reflect the requirements of all learners GME, GLPS/ GLSS and adult learners. As the numbers of Gaelic learners grow, then the resources will become more mainstream and not need subsidy.

### *Print Media*

*Outcome: Increased Gaelic medium features and news content in print media.*  
*Priorities: Increase the availability and consumption of Gaelic print media.*

Our comment: The outcome is weakened by the limited reference to Gaelic Medium when this is another opportunity for expanding awareness and learners access to materials. If GME is mentioned then GLPS/ GLSS and adult learners need to be included as parity. As the numbers of Gaelic speakers increases then the priorities will be achieved and materials will become mainstream. More materials are urgently required for the 4,500 children learning

Gaelic through GLPS with very few print resources suitable for the age group and abilities. This is an area that merits urgent focus and prioritising.

### *Broadcasting Distribution*

*Outcome: A Gaelic digital service with universal access 24 hours, seven days per week.*

*Priorities: Secure the availability of a Gaelic digital service on all relevant digital platforms.*

Our comments: We are hoping there will be a commitment to inclusion on any Gaelic digital channel to make the service available to viewers who cannot speak Gaelic, in particular for deaf users who would require BSL interpretation for viewing. If the channel is wholly Gaelic then learners will have difficulty in following the programmes and viewing audience will be very small for 24/7 provision of programming. Can there be some statement about ensuring that all programmes will have sub-titling but also that programmes will be specifically targeted as well, for learners, through GME, GLPS/GLSS and adult learners at different levels and abilities – again for clarification.

### *Content Access*

*Outcome: A Gaelic digital service with an appropriate mix of original and archive material.*

*Priorities: Create a strong brand, develop audiences and retain loyalty for Gaelic broadcasting.*

Our comments: (as above) We are hoping there will be a commitment to inclusion on any Gaelic digital channel to make the service available to viewers who cannot speak Gaelic, in particular for deaf users who would require BSL interpretation for viewing. If the channel is wholly Gaelic then learners will have difficulty in following the programmes and viewing audience will be very small for 24/7 provision of programming. Can there be some statement about ensuring that all programmes will have sub-titling but also that programmes will be specifically targeted as well, for learners, through GME, GLPS/GLSS and adult learners at different levels and abilities – again for clarification.

### *Interactivity*

*Outcome: The harnessing of information and communication technology to the benefit of Gaelic and its culture.*

*Priorities: Promote the creation and consumption of interactive Gaelic language products.*

Our comments: To ensure that all learners are included, to avoid misunderstanding, to expand range of web sites for learners through GME, GLPS and GLSS as well as adult learners would be appropriate as an amendment.

## OTHER

There needs to be some funding set aside for a National Organisation for families learning Gaelic through GLPS and GSS because these families are unsupported and yet very keen to help their children. There is very little programming available at an age appropriate level for these children and the parents often do not have any Gaelic. If, as Ken McKinnon identified in his recent research, the key to success for Gaelic survival is through family and community transmission, then serious development of resources is required to support the learners through GME as well as GLPS and GLSS. At the moment there are 2,068 GME learners plus 981 GME secondary school children, a figure that has not increased radically in the last few

years. In contrast, the fastest growing sector of Gaelic learning is GLPS which has 4,500 children learning (it is not clear if this includes Highlands and Islands schemes which are a little different) plus 2,718 GLSS learners and if the obstacles were removed to learning Gaelic in secondary school (ie able to access learning from S1 rather than S3 as some councils set out), then the numbers may well be higher. This is an expanding area and merits respective investment and commitment to providing support and materials. Families need to be able to share information and to have a forum and newsletter to help them follow the curriculum their children are learning and funding should be ring fenced for this purpose.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss any of these issues in more detail and also in response to your question: how do you see yourselves contributing to the success of the National Plan?, we would be happy to assist with co-ordination of a national group of families learning through GLPS/ GLSS, to create a forum for discussion, problem solving and sharing experiences.

Perhaps it would be useful to have a one page executive summary highlighting the spirit of the plan and with progressive time frames of what should be achieved by 2012 and then hopefully by 2022 to give casual readers a sense of the inclusion, scope and intention of the plan.

Many thanks for taking the time to read our response.