

## Plana Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig National Plan for Gaelic

It is good to see such a wide-ranging survey of possible ways of improving the situation of Gaelic in Scotland. The following points are offered to some extent in support of proposals contained in the consultation document.

### **Education**

**School years.** (a) The provision of an adequate supply of teachers competent to teach through the medium of Gaelic is essential. At present, the good work done at primary school level may be lost if it is not possible for pupils to continue to learn through the medium of Gaelic. Ensuring such a supply entails support for university departments teaching Gaelic, and for training courses which are reasonably accessible. But creation and maintenance of the supply will depend on prospective teachers' perceptions of career prospects; and (unfortunately, a circular reaction) these perceptions will depend on the extent to which teaching through the medium of Gaelic is supported – by parents as well as by public authorities.

(b) At the same time, pupils studying through the medium of Gaelic must not have their opportunity to learn a major European language lessened or lost. (It goes without saying that their education in English must not suffer because they learn Gaelic.) As European citizens they should be competent in another major European language as well as in English. (Gaelic cannot yet be considered a major European language!) The school curriculum must be planned to cope with these important needs for language learning.

(c) The publication of Gaelic books to be read for pleasure by children and young people should be supported where possible, and appropriate publicity given to them. Similarly, television programmes should be further developed.

### **Adult and Life-Long Learning**

(a) Here also there is a great need to develop an adequate supply of teachers – some school teachers may of course work at this age level also. But appropriate training in how

to teach adults must be provided. Being a fluent speaker of Gaelic is not a sufficient qualification

(b) Universities and other institutions ready to provide for adult learning must be given conditions in which they can easily provide necessary classes. Thus provision should be financed even if the number in a class is small. Receiving financial support in providing for adults learning Gaelic should not be dependent on the willingness of these learners to subject their work to formal assessments of progress, or to try to gain a certificate of some kind. (Such certificates may of course be encouragements to learners in some cases; but learners should not be compelled to work for them.)

(c) Adult studies should not be limited to language alone. Discussions leading to knowledge of Gaelic literature and history are also to be fostered. Here also support might be given to supporting the publication of appropriate texts. (There are admittedly some admirable anthologies of Gaelic poems, with English translations, but these are possibly too weighty to encourage leisure enjoyment.) This wider approach is necessary if Gaelic is to be not simply a language but the way to enlargement of experience and enjoyment of another culture.

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I hope that these comments may be of some interest and I look forward to reading the decisions arrived at on the basis of the national consultation

Margaret B.Sutherland  
Professor (Em.) of Education.  
University of Leeds.

Home address: 46 The Scores,  
St.Andrews KY16 9AS

[mb.sutherland@virgin.net](mailto:mb.sutherland@virgin.net)