

SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM BILL

BÒRD NA GÀIDHLIG

Tha mi a' sgrìobhadh às leth Bhòrd na Gàidhlig, a tha a' cur fàilte air a' chòthrom pàirt a ghabhail sa cho-chomhairleachadh air Bile an Reifreinn (Alba).

Tha am Bòrd airson a ràdh gur e briseadh-dùil a bh' anns an fhreagairt sgrìobhte a chaidh fhoillseachadh air 25 Gearran a thaobh na Ceiste Pàrlamaid mu dheidhinn ceist dhà-chànanach am Beurla is Gàidhlig a bhith nochdadh sa phàipear baileit airson an Reifreinn air Neo-eisimeileachd, agus nach do dh'iarr Coimisean nan Taghaidhean air a' Bhòrd beachd a thoirt seachad mun chùis.

Fo reachdas Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005, tha e mar dhleastanas air Bòrd na Gàidhlig comhairle a thoirt do Mhinistearan, agus tha aig a' Bhòrd ri a chuid dhleastanasan a choileanadh "...agus inbhe na Gàidhlig a ghleidheadh mar chànan oifigeil an Alba, a tha a' dleasadh spèis cho-ionann ris a' Bheurla". Tha spèis cho-ionann co-cheangailte ri inbhe na Gàidhlig mar chànan oifigeil ann an Alba, chan e sin an aon rud ri mar a thuigeas luchd-bruidhne na Gàidhlig Beurla, a' cheist a bha fa-near do Choimisean nan Taghaidhean nuair a bheachdaich iad air a' Ghàidhlig.

A thaobh mar a thuigeas luchd-bruidhne na Gàidhlig Beurla, tha rannsachadh air mar a shoirbhicheas clann dà-chànanach am foghlam tron Ghàidhlig air sealltainn gu bheil iad buailteach a bhith nas fheàrr air Beurla nuair a tha iad dà bhliadhna dheug na tha clann ann am foghlam aon-chànanach: bidh àireamh nach beag de luchd-bhòtaidh dà-chànanach san reifreann aig am bi tuigse glè mhath air Beurla agus Gàidhlig. 'S e ìoranas a bhiodh ann agus cha bhiodh e ceart nas motha, nan deigheadh dearmad a dhèanamh air inbhe aon de na cànanan aca, a tha na chànan oifigeil ann an Alba, air sgàth 's gu bheil iad dà-chànanach.

I write on behalf of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on the Referendum (Scotland) Bill.

The Bòrd would like to express its disappointment at the content of the written reply on 25th February to a Parliamentary Question on the issue of a bi-lingual question in English and Gaelic in the Independence Referendum ballot paper, and the fact that the Bòrd was not consulted by the Electoral Commission on the matter.

Under the provisions of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, one of the functions of Bòrd na Gàidhlig is to provide advice to Ministers, and the Bòrd is required to exercise its functions "...with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language". The issue of equal respect relates to the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland, a different issue to the question of comprehension of English by Gaelic speakers which was what was tested by the Electoral Commission.

In relation to comprehension of English by Gaelic speakers, research into the attainment of bi-lingual children in Gaelic-medium education shows that they tend to perform better in English by the age of twelve than their monolingual counterparts: there will be a significant number of bi-lingual voters in the referendum whose comprehension of English and Gaelic will be more than adequate. It would be ironic as well as unjust if, by dint of their bi-lingualism, the status of one of their languages, an official language in Scotland, is marginalised in the context of the referendum ballot.

Na dhòigh fhèin bha Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005, nuair a chaidh i a stèidheachadh, na clach-mhìle nar n-eachdraidh, a' comharrachadh mar a thàinig co-aonta poilitigeach gu bith ann an Alba a bha cothromach, lèirsinneach, agus com-pàirteach. Bha iad ag aithneachadh an t-àite bunaiteach a th' aig Gàidhlig mar phàirt de dhearbh-aithne na h-Alba agus am feum a th' ann cor a' chànain a dhaingneachadh san ùine a tha ri thighinn, mar dhìoladh airson linntean de mhùchadh is dearmad. Thathar a' gabhail ris gur e baileat an reifreinn a' cheist as motha a tha air a bhith mu choinneamh a' phobaill an Alba o chionn trì cheud bliadhna. Nam biodh a' cheist sin ann an Gàidhlig agus Beurla, shealladh sin gu soilleir an t-adhartas a tha Alba air a dhèanamh o chionn ghoirid agus i a' togail bratach a cultair fhèin às ùr, agus shealladh e gu bheilear a' toirt aithne do Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005.

Sin as coireach gun deach molaidhean a dhèanamh do Bhuidheann Thar-phàrtaidh na Gàidhlig sa Phàrlamaid le buill na buidhne, agus mar thoradh air sin chuir Cathraiche na Buidhne Ceist sa Phàrlamaid.

'S e an tuigse a bh' aig a' Bhòrd gun robhar a-nis a' cur prìomhachas air cumhachdan Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba) 2005, co-cheangailte ri inbhe oifigeil agus spèis ch-ionann, an àite co-dhùnidhean a rinneadh roimhe a thaobh cleachdadh chànain ann an suidheachaidhean mar bhaileat. A' togail air Achd 2005, tha Plana Gàidhlig aig an Riaghaltas fhèin a-nis le geallaidhean taic a chumail ris a' Ghàidhlig.

Tha reachdas Achd 2005 a' stiùireadh na tha ann am Plana Gàidhlig Pàrlamaid na h-Alba, agus tha sin agus na puingeann gu h-àrd a' sealltainn carson a tha an fhreagairt a fhuaras sa Phàrlamaid air 25 Gearran – a thaobh Gàidhlig sa phàipear baileat airson Reifreann air Neo-eisimeileachd – na adhbhar-dragha don Bhòrd.

In its own way the establishment of Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was an act of historic note, emphasising the emergence of a fair, progressive, inclusive political consensus in Scotland, recognising the integral role of Gaelic in Scotland's identity and the need to consolidate it in the future, counterbalancing centuries of institutional repression and neglect. The referendum ballot is widely acknowledged to be the single most significant event in Scottish public life in three hundred years. Its articulation in both Gaelic and English would emphasise how far Scotland has come in recent years in reasserting its own identity, as well as recognising the significance of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

This is why representations were made to the Cross Party Parliamentary Gaelic Group by its constituent members, prompting a Parliamentary Question by the Group Chair.

The Bòrd's understanding was that the precedents of linguistic convention in matters like ballots had been superseded by the provisions of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) 2005 Act in relation to the official status of the language and the issue of equal respect. Following from the 2005 Act the Scottish Government has its own Gaelic Plan with commitments to support Gaelic.

The provisions of the 2005 Act underpin the Scottish Parliament's own Gaelic Language Plan, and, taken with the points made above, illustrate why the Bòrd is concerned about the negative response given in Parliament on 25 February to the question on the use of Gaelic in the Independence Referendum ballot paper.

Mar fhiosrachaidh air am faod sibh beachdachadh, tha mi air dreachd a chur an cois seo a' sealltainn cò ris a bhiodh Pàipear Baileit dà-chananach coltach airson an Reifreinn. Tha mi an dòchas gum bi seo na chuideachadh dhuibh.

Tapadh leibh airson sealltainn ris a' chùis seo, agus tha mi a' dèanamh fiughair ri ur freagairt.

Is mise le spèis,

Iain Aonghas MacAoidh
CEANNARD

25 Giblean 2013

For your information and consideration, I enclose a draft version of how a bilingual Independence Referendum Ballot Paper might look. I hope you find this helpful.

I thank you for your attention, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

John A MacKay
CEO

25 April 2013

BALLOT PAPER
PÀIPEAR BAILEIT

Vote (X) ONLY ONCE
Bhòt (X) AON UAIR A-MHÀIN

Should Scotland be an independent country?
Am bu chòir do dh'Alba a bhith na dùthaich neo-eisimeileach?

YES
BU CHÒIR

NO
CHA BU CHÒIR