

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT – CROSS-PARTY GROUP ON GAELIC

DRAFT Minute of the meeting of the Cross-party Group on Gaelic held in Committee Room 6, The Scottish Parliament, Holyrood, on Tuesday 18th June 2019 at 1pm.

Attendance:

Alasdair Allan	MSP
Donald Cameron	MSP
Rhoda Grant	MSP
Joan Esson	Education Scotland Foghlam Alba
Jane Renton	Education Scotland Foghlam Alba
Rob Dunbar	University of Edinburgh
Wilson McLeod	University of Edinburgh
Gille-Chriost MacGillEòin	Misneachd
Stuart Dunmore	University of Edinburgh
Shona MacLennan	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Martin MacLure	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Joanne McHale	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Lewis MacAskill	Office
Dòmhnall MacGhillemoire	Stòrlann
Matthew MacIver	UHI
Ailean Caimbeul	An Comunn Gàidhealach
John Morrison	An Comunn Gàidhealach
Magaidh Wentworth	Comann nam Pàrant
Jill MacPherson	Education Scotland
Stuart Pescodd	Scottish Government
Sarah Buchanan	Scottish Government
Marilyn Waters	SQA
Dòmhnall Caimbeul	MG Alba
Felix Esche	Futures Forum
Rob Littlejohn	Futures Forum
Murdo MacSween	MG Alba
Dòmhnall MacNèill	Comunn na Gàidhlig
Carole Henderson	Parent
Niall O' Gallagher	BBC
Mark McNeilly	The Scottish Parliament
Gillebride MacIlleghaill	Simultaneous Translation

1. Welcome & Apologies

Dr Alasdair Allan MSP welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from the following: *Angus MacDonald MSP, Lewis MacDonald MSP, Alasdair MacCaluim, Alasdair MacFhionghuin, Calum A Macmillan, Calum Iain MacLeod, D J MacIntyre, Daibhidh Boag, Derek MacKenzie, Doileag NicLeoid, Hugh Dan MacLennan, Iain Macaulay, Jennifer McHarrie, John A MacIver, Maeve Mackinnon, Margaret Mary Murray, Sheila Carvel, Uisdean Robertson*

2. Election of Cross-Party Group Office bearers:

Whilst proposals for Convener were put forward Dr Allan stepped aside, and Shona MacLennan chaired the first part of elections. Dr Allan was the sole candidate put forward and agreed by Donald Cameron MSP. Dr Allan proposed Donald Cameron MSP as Vice Convener and this was agreed. Bòrd na Gàidhlig were happy to continue as Secretary.

Convener: Dr Alasdair Allan MSP

Vice Convener: Donald Cameron MSP

Secretary: Bòrd na Gàidhlig

All elected parties were congratulated on their positions. Subsequently Carole Henderson challenged the election of Bòrd na Gàidhlig as Secretary. However, this challenge was rejected by the Convener as not being timely.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting:

Carole Henderson wished to emphasise (under point 7 AOCB) that the purpose of the Group is to provide information to MSPs.

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 November 2018 were agreed, proposed by **D W Morrison** and seconded by **Prof. Rob Dunbar**.

4. Presentation: New Legislative Developments in Wales and Ireland

Speaker: **Prof. Rob Dunbar, Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh.**

Dr Allan welcomed Prof Dunbar, who has recently been on a sabbatical to research on new legislative developments in Wales and Ireland, to present some of his findings. The research will form a new book on law and policy for Celtic languages.

In Summary:

- Linguistic Legislation and other important legislations
- Language Commissioners instead of Boards
- Language Standards instead of Language Plans
- Holistic Approaches
- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) act 2015
- Well-being Goals

NOTE: Copies of this Presentation are available for distribution. Please contact: fios@gaidhlig.scot.

The Convener thanked Prof Dunbar for this short presentation and invited questions/points.

D W Morrison commended Prof Dunbar for this interesting presentation and questioned how implementation results should be shared. Prof Dunbar responded that under the Gaelic Language Act, Bòrd na Gàidhlig currently reviews how Gaelic Plans are implemented and the various ways they are put into action. The main difference compared to Wales and Ireland is that they both have moved to a system whereby there are dedicated Commissioners who closely monitor implementation of each language plan.

Ailean Caimbeul commented that the way the Act was established, it recognised the challenges of the small number of Gaelic speakers and the variation in dialects. Prof Dunbar responded by stating that

even with a detailed guidance paper of over 150 pages in Wales, they too have regional differences and challenges. Shona MacLennan also added that Bòrd na Gàidhlig's view on this that two current developments, one being the recent conference which saw the main Gaelic organisations which BnG funds, come together for a development event and BnG would welcome suggestions from them on developments; and that Bòrd are launching a consultation on the [Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Language Plans](#) later that week for the public to comment on the updated guidance. Further information on this will be available on Bòrd na Gàidhlig's website.

**5. Presentation: Gaelic in the Senior Phase,
Speakers: Joan Esson and Jane Renton, Education Scotland**

Dr Allan welcomed Joan Esson and Jane Renton to the meeting and for presenting information on Gaelic in the Senior Phases in High Schools.

In Summary:

- Education Scotland are in partnership working with other bodies to form a strong strategy for Gaelic in the Schools
- There has been a vast increase in Gaelic in primary schools over the years, although there are areas for improvement in High School provision
- There have been significant developments in E-Sgoil and the Foundation Apprenticeship in Social Services: Children and Young People taught through the medium of Gaelic
- Education Scotland are also engaging in various events and surveys with Teachers and Schools, promoting information sharing and experiences

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The Convener thanked Joan Esson and Jane Renton for this presentation and invited questions/points.

Shona MacLennan added that a meeting is planned for December, with the Deputy First Minister, SG representatives, Education Scotland, Directors of Education and Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which will consider the main opportunities and challenges for future development of Gaelic education.

Carole Henderson questioned the number of Gaelic Teachers and current Local Authority advertisement for teachers and recommended educating them on clarification of adverts. Joan Esson responded by referring to the Statutory Guidance and offered to speak further with Carole Henderson regarding a certain matter after the meeting.

Maggie Wentworth asked if there could be more done with Local Authorities and schools, to clarify the Statutory Guidance and understanding of what Gaelic Medium Education is and what parents expect from this.

Matthew MacIver commented that there has been little information presented on parents' views on why pupils are not choosing GME in secondary. It was noted that the term Senior Phase refers to S4, S5 & S6 in secondary education. It was also clarified that Education Scotland work with colleges, and the example of Education Scotland and Bòrd na Gàidhlig have been working with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig on Foundation Apprenticeships. These currently involve one local authority and two secondary schools, and later this year this course will be expected to involve a further two schools and local Authorities.

6. Presentation: DASG and the new Gaelic Grammar Guidance

Apologies were received on the morning of the meeting from Mark McConville who hoped to present on DASG (Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic) and the recent Guidance on Gaelic Grammar. Dr Wilson McLeod was happy to provide some information on both topics. The work was commissioned by Bòrd na Gàidhlig in delivered by a partnership including Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, University of Edinburgh, and University of Glasgow. It set out to identify from Gaelic users what the 10 key grammatical challenges were and guidance prepared to advise to these. This guidance has been published in the DASG website.

Dr Allan and other MSPs left the meeting to attend Parliamentary duties and Shona MacLennan chaired the remainder of the meeting.

D W Morrison commented that with the support of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Stòrlann are putting together a simplified version of the guidance and will then be available on their website and circulate to teachers, schools and other bodies for wider use of this.

Shona MacLennan thanked Wilson McLeod for the information about the new Grammar Guidance.

7. AOCB

Four Points were raised:

1. A request was received from The Scottish Parliament's Gaelic Development Officer regarding the new Gaelic translation of the New Testament in contemporary Gaelic and recommends it as an appropriate subject for a Time for Reflection. The request for the CPG is to recommend someone from the team who translated the New Testament to deliver Time for Reflection.
2. **Rob Littlejohn** from Futures Forum spoke briefly about an event they hope to run on 6th December 2019 looking at the Future of Gaelic. Copies of this paper are available for distribution. Please contact: fios@gaidhlig.scot.
3. **Misneachd**: Gille-chriost MacGill'Eòin (a Misneachd representative) spoke about their recent publication, 'The Decline of Gaelic: 5 Key steps to tackle the crisis'. In Summary, the 5 key points of the paper are:
 - Acknowledge the crisis facing Gaelic.
 - Funding for Gaelic as a home and community language.
 - Locate more senior Gaelic jobs in the Hebrides.
 - Towards a stronger Gaelic Language Act.
 - Integrated strategy for education from early years to tertiary level.

Misneachd are also currently encouraging people to respond to the public consultation regarding the Islands Plan.

D W Morrison commented on this information and asked how learners fit in to the recommendations Misneachd are putting forward. Gille-chriost commented that learners are important and see them as part of the new Gaelic families and equally important to encourage them to live in Gaelic communities.

Matthew MacIver commented that the points put forward would be appealing to many and suggested that there was an opportunity to review current Gaelic Education provision and further support for families and communities.

Shona MacLennan commented that Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes these and other suggestions which further enhance the support for Gaelic. She referenced the National Plan which states that different communities require different strategies; for island and rural communities there are additional challenges which need to be taken into consideration, such as the economy, Brexit, and a strategy is required to support these various aspects, including housing issues, labour market and travel as examples. Without these challenges being addressed, populations in these areas will be negatively affected. This is important as this affects Gaelic communities. She also welcomed the suggestion of further funding which would be beneficial should that be made available.

4. At the start of the meeting, **Carole Henderson** had expressed her views on the current set up of the Cross-Party. She felt the meetings were not happening as often as they should, and that they were becoming shorter. She also questioned suitability of holding them in the Parliament and requested information about the meetings need to be published earlier.

Shona MacLennan responded by stating that it is challenging to hold these meetings outwith the Parliament and looked at holding the CPG at the recent Celtic Media Festival (as an example) but that proved to be unsuitable due to the dates of the festival and parliament business. Shona MacLennan also commented that the next meeting will be held in December, on the same day as the final of the National Schools Debate which will be held in the Parliament. Carole Henderson also commented that the timing of the meetings should be looked at as MSPs numbers are low and the main point of the CPG is to share information with MSPs. Shona MacLennan commented that this will be brought up with them regarding a suitable time.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is **Thursday 5th December, at the Parliament.**

Gillebride MacIllemaoil was thanks for simultaneous translations during the meeting.

The meeting closed at 14.24.