

## SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT – CROSS PARTY GROUP ON GAELIC

Minute of the meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Gaelic held in Committee Room 4 The Scottish Parliament, Holyrood on Wednesday 31 May 2018 at 1pm

### Attendance:

Kate Forbes	MSP
Donald Cameron	MSP
Lewis MacDonald	MSP
Angus MacDonald	MSP
Dòmhnall MacNèill	Comunn na Gàidhlig
Carole Henderson	Parent
Magaidh Wentworth	Comann nam Pàrant
Stuart Pescodd	Riaghaltas na h-Alba
Linda Roberts	Riaghaltas na h-Alba
Mona Wilson	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Siobhan Mathers	Parent, Taobh na Pàirce
Rob Dunbar	University of Edinburgh
Alasdair MacCaluim	Pàrlamaid na h-Alba
Wilson MacLeòid	University of Edinburgh
Douglas Morrison	Comhairle nam Pàrant, Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu
Matthew MacIver	UHI
Dòmhnall MacGhillemoire	Stòrlann
Boyd Robertson	Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
Arthur Cormack	Pàrant / Fèisean nan Gaidheal
Antonella Sorace	University of Edinburgh / Bilingualism Matters
Maeve Mackinnon	Foghlam Alba
Dòmhnall Caimbeul	MG ALBA
Catriona MacPhee	Parent
Iain Moireasdan	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Cathy Johnson	ICC Ìle
Helen Mackinnon	Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta
Murchadh MacSuain	MG ALBA
Jennifer McHarrie	SQA
Murchadh Moireasdan	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Shona MacLennan	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Johan Nic a' Ghobhain	Bòrd na Gàidhlig – Simultaneous Translation

### 1. Welcome & Apologies

Kate Forbes MSP, CPG Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from the following: Joan Esson (Foghlam Alba); Jane Renton (Foghlam Alba); Iain MacAmhlaigh (CnaG); Ceitidh Moireach (Dun Èideann); Derek Mackenzie (SDS); John Morrison (An Comunn Gàidhealach)

### 2. Election of Cross-Party Group Office Bearers

**Convener:** Kate Forbes MSP was nominated by Lewis MacDonald MSP and seconded by Angus MacDonald MSP

**Kate Forbes MSP was elected Convener of the Group**

**Vice Convener:** Donald Cameron MSP was nominated by Angus MacDonald MSP and seconded by Lewis MacDonald MSP

**Donald Cameron MSP was elected Vice-Convener of the Group**

**Secretary:** Angus MacDonald proposed that Bòrd na Gàidhlig that should continue in the role of providing Secretarial support to the Group. The proposal was seconded by Donald Cameron MSP

**Bòrd na Gàidhlig agreed to continue in its role as Secretary to the Cross-Party Group**

### **3. Minute of Previous Meeting**

The Minute of the Meeting/AGM held on Wednesday 30 May 2017 was agreed. Lewis MacDonald MSP advised that his name should be added to the list of those present at the Meeting/AGM held on 30 May 2017. *This amendment has been made.*

### **4. Presentation: Shona MacLennan CEO Bòrd na Gàidhlig - Plana Cànan Nàiseanta Gàidhlig / National Gaelic Language Plan 2018 - 2023**

NOTE: Copies of this presentation are available for distribution. Please contact [murchadh@gaidhlig.scot](mailto:murchadh@gaidhlig.scot)

Shona MacLennan (SML) Chief Executive of Bòrd na Gàidhlig thanked the late John MacLeod for his work and commitment to the Gaelic language and culture through his involvement in various societies and organisations such as An Comunn Gàidhealach, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and within the Edinburgh community

SML outlined the context of the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018 – 2023:

- Consultation had taken place over a 3-month period
- The plan's timescale
- The remit and responsibilities of Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Plan was launched March 2018 by the Deputy First Minister who is extremely supportive of Gaelic
- A Gaelic Debate had taken place in the Scottish Parliament in April 2018 which included cross-party support for Gaelic and the Plan
- The style, content and layout of the Plan has been well received
- At the heart of the Plan – Gaelic should be used more often, by more people and in a wider range of situations. The Plan focuses on three headings:
  - Increasing the use of Gaelic
  - Increasing the learning of Gaelic
  - Promoting a positive image of Gaelic
- The Plan is for the whole of Scotland
- Communities, organisations and individuals all have a role to play
- The Islands Bill has been passed
- Lord Bracadale's review of Hate Crime Legislation includes a section on his view of Gaelic speakers as an ethnic group
- Economic
- and social context important for island and rural communities
- Co-operation essential

National Gaelic Language Plan 2018 – 2023 priorities for progress:

- Usage most important
- Growth in GME
- Growth in Gaelic teacher numbers
- Early Years Education
- Community
- Growth in economy through use of Gaelic
- Research into barriers to Gaelic use

## 5. Panel Debate: Gaelic Medium Education – Benefits and Opportunities

**Speaker: Professor Boyd Robertson:**

Developments to date:

- Runrig formation 45 years ago
- Also establishment of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
- Playgroups are the basis for Gaelic development
- Glasgow Gaelic School going from strength to strength
- Gaelic Medium Education has made great strides
- Also other developments such as Fèisean, Gaelic Act, National Plan, Gaelic Plans
- Most recently, a new Gaelic school in Portree

Challenges:

- Keeping Gaelic alive in communities where it is spoken eg Islay, Lewis
- Importance of employment – economy and culture
- New Gaelic communities on-line
- Teacher shortages
- Gaelic standards not as high as they should be
- Reduced numbers of students coming to eg SMO – through the impact of changes brought in by Curriculum for Excellence

Policy makers/politicians must act – Education Bill going through Parliament – Scheme of Specific Grants very successful

Universities/colleges offering places for students

Head Teachers getting more powers eg RIC's – Gaelic needs to be protected

He suggested that the Local Authorities network could be a RIC for Gaelic education.

Online opportunities should be developed, and there is more need for pupils to be taught history of Gaelic and the Gaels

**Speaker: Arthur Cormack – Parent / CEO Fèisean nan Gàidheal**

- A parent / Fèisean nan Gàidheal – informal education / Trustee of SMO
- Agree with Prof Robertson re progress
- Parental resolve is important re GME demand but need to fight
- Member of Comann nam Pàrant – brings parents together
- Highland Council – Portree parents fight to get Gaelic school – 10 years too long
- Some parents for Gaelic school / some not
- Numbers are rising as a result of parental demand

- No difficulties so far with teacher shortage in new school
- All parents agreed to move children to new school
- Was vital that parents kept going
- Need to revisit Gaelic for Learners – not getting opportunities as before and very important to support learners

Reasons for hope/optimism:

- Teachers being taught through Gaelic eg University of Edinburgh and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
- Language skills of young people and teachers

There is a need to review the priorities for Gaelic, for example why is there no STEM-type bursary for Gaelic teachers?

Disappointing sometimes that Gaelic respondents to Bills do not get a hearing such as happened with the recent Education Bill

**Speaker: Douglas Morrison – Parent and Chair, Parent Council - Glasgow Gaelic School**

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- Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu – the first 3-18 Gaelic school in the world
- Glendale open 2 years – now full
- Need for a 3<sup>rd</sup> school – discussions with Glasgow City Council re Cartvale location
- Opportunities in Glasgow:
  - 2 languages – immersion and culture
  - 80 out of 100 coming new to Gaelic – with no Gaelic in the family
  - Glasgow performing very well in league tables

Challenges:

- Teacher numbers – where are they coming from
- Progress comes from parent power
- Changes in education which affect Gaelic eg Education Bill
- Glasgow growth – need for more schools to meet demand – where will funds come from
- Need to look at adult fluency

**Speaker: Professor Antonella Sorace – Edinburgh University / Bilingualism Matters**

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- Not necessarily the case that multi-lingual families will lead to multi-lingual children – children need to hear the language
- Languages die if children don't learn them
- Need to know what's working in Education and what's not
- What children need in the family – exposure to the language/variety of speakers
- Language learning at school – teachers should be trained / results should be measured
- Bilingualism – vital for the transmission of a minority language across generations
- Language policy and intervention are often disconnected from the communities of speakers
- Enabling language revitalisation - Making the language 'real' for children as part of everyday life

- Bilingualism Matters – Areas of Engagement – Language learning in pre-school and primary school years / bilingualism and migration / maintenance of regional minority languages / language learning over the lifespan

**The Convener thanked all panel members who made presentations and opened the meeting to the floor.**

Donald Cameron MSP asked with regard to the Education Bill what can MSPs do to flag up concerns?

Douglas Morrison

- Signal the concerns of the parents
- Concerned that power for Head Teachers cuts across Local Authority representatives eg Gaelic teachers v English teachers
- RICs have been given the remit for improving attainment but there is no mention of Gaelic education within RICs, therefore it could fall off the agenda.

Arthur Cormack

- Consultations – aware of Gaelic concerns being raised but there is no notice being taken of them.

Angus MacDonald MSP

- Inter-authority Group on Gaelic – is there? a role for this group to highlight concerns?
- How does the Local Authority Inter-Authority Group feed in to the work of Government?

Boyd Robertson

- The Inter Authority Standing Group gave voice to Gaelic education, and Stòrlann came out of that group.

Shona MacLennan

- Stòrlann and Fèisean nan Gàidheal, as well as Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and others had responded to Education Bill consultation

Matthew MacIver

- 20<sup>th</sup> Century models of education to meet 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges
- Agreed there is need for a new look at education
- Very interesting and enjoyable session

Carole Henderson

- Been attending the Cross-Party Group since November 2011
- Same issues being raised – nothing has changed
- Lots of talk but no action
- Nothing has reached the children since 2011
- Getting treated worse now than ever before
- Concerned re new 3<sup>rd</sup> school in Glasgow – teachers not available for other schools
- GME IN Secondary schools does not exist – not enough subjects/teachers

Shona MacLennan outlined some of the developments which have taken place in recent years and but agreed there were challenges and need for greater development.

Arthur Cormack

- Depends where you are re your experience
- Definite lack of cover in schools
- Plenty Primary school teachers – by personal choice, they don't necessarily want to go where there are vacancies.
- e-Sgoil is very useful as a means to fill a gap.
- Should write to John Swinney regarding concerns on the Bill.

The Convener gave her apologies as she had to attend another meeting at this point, and asked Shona MacLennan to continue the meeting.

Douglas Morrison

- Agree with Arthur – teachers are there but not in the right places
- Solutions are in our communities – next generation of teachers – need for engagement
- Education reforms – Gaelic schools had responded to consultation – no engagement with Gaelic community

Boyd Robertson

- Had written to the Minister seeking a meeting re the Education Bill and the dangers for Gaelic
- There is an urgency to this as the Education Bill is progressing through Parliament
- Research required into subjects

Catriona MacPhee

- Quotas are a barrier into education

Boyd Robertson

- Not too aware of what happens in Universities eg Strathclyde
- What is the role of the GTCS?

Matthew MacIver

- Other countries are looking at Scotland re high standards

Dòmhnall MacGillemhoire

- National strategy / vision re Gaelic in High Schools required
- Stòrlann provides strong support re resources

## **6. AOCB**

Shona MacLennan on behalf of the Convener and the Cross-Party Group members expressed sadness at the passing of John MacLeod at the beginning of the year and a letter was to be sent to Mrs MacLeod and the family on behalf of the Group.

Carole Henderson

- Teachers post-training and living in the Outer Hebrides not being eligible for Distant Islands Allowance if they come from the islands to the mainland.
- Teachers of specific subjects require a Gaelic certificate
- There is a shortage of long-term employment on the islands

Stuart Pescodd responded to points raised by Carole Henderson

- There is a need for the teachers to discuss with representatives from GLAN and COSLA.
- Need to be GTC Registered

Mona Wilson responded to points raised by Carole Henderson

- Role of Local Authorities

Carole Henderson

- Teachers are registered and are looking but no jobs available where they are
- Lots of jobs in other areas – are they expected to commute?

Arthur Cormack responded to points raised by Carole Henderson

- Local Authorities on occasion meet the costs of temporary teachers
- Incentives for teachers

Rob Dunbar responded to points raised by Carole Henderson

- Time for a national policy for GME

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

Date of next meeting to be confirmed but will aim to tie in with the Finals of the National Gaelic Schools Debating competition 2018 in November.

Shona MacLennan closed the meeting by extending thanks to all for their participation and to Johan Nic a' Ghobhain for providing a simultaneous translation.