

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 29 November 2017 at 1pm

Attendance:

Kate Forbes MSP (Convener)
Iain MacLeod (An Comunn Gàidhealach)
Shona Nicllinnein (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)
Murchadh Moireasdan (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)
Cllr. John A MacIver (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)
Doileag NicLeòid (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)
Cllr. Tormod Dòmhnaillach (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)
Iain MacAmhlaidh (Comunn na Gàidhlig)
Donald MacNeill (Comunn na Gàidhlig)
Dòmhnaill Caimbeul (MG ALBA)
Murchadh MacSuain (MG ALBA)
Stuart Pescodd (Riaghaltas na h-Alba)
Linda Roberts (Riaghaltas na h-Alba)
Wilson MacLeod (Edinburgh University)
Jane Renton (Education Scotland)
Dòmhnaill MacGhillemhoire (Stòrlann)
Sheila Carvel
Carole Henderson
Eoin Cuimeanach, Pupil, Gairloch High School
Cameron MacLennan, Pupil, Gairloch High School
Iain Cuimeanach
Ceitidh Mhoireach
Dòmhnaill Morris (Spòrs Gàidhlig)
Katie MacInnes, Student
Shannon Cowie, Student

1. Welcome & Apologies

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

As the meeting room provided did not have simultaneous translation facilities, it was agreed to proceed with the meeting in Gaelic with the provision of short summaries in English where appropriate.

Apologies had been received from: Allan MacDonald (Bòrd na Gàidhlig); Mata MacIver; Joan Esson (Education Scotland); John Morrison (An Comunn Gàidhealach); Calum Alex Macmillan (Fèisean nan Gàidheal); Derek Mackenzie (Skills Development Scotland); Professor Antonella Sorace; Morag Campbell (Scottish Funding Council); Calum Iain MacLeod (Comunn na Gàidhlig)

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minute of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 30 May 2017 was agreed.

3. An Oigridh is a' Ghàidhlig / Young People's thoughts on Gaelic

The Convener advised that due to ill-health Professor Antonella Sorace was unable to attend the meeting. The Convener also advised that a panel of young people has been invited to attend the meeting of the Cross-Party Group and welcomed and introduced the Panel members:

Eoin Cuimeanach - Pupil, Gairloch High School
Cameron MacLennan - Pupil, Gairloch High School
Katie MacInnes, student, Glasgow University
Shannon Cowie, student, Glasgow University

The pupils from Gairloch High School had been taking part in the National Gaelic Schools Debate competition while Shannon Cowie and Katie MacInnes are both students at Glasgow University.

The Convener chaired the session which took the form of a Q&A with the young people to seek their views on Gaelic and its current status and future development and prospects

The Convener opened the discussion

How are you involved in the Gaelic world?

All the young representatives outlined their involvement in Gaelic which included participation in the National Gaelic Schools Debate competition; FilmG; the Royal National Mod and the Fèisean movement. Shannon Cowie also outlined the role that Taigh na Gàidhlig at Glasgow University had played in stimulating her interest in Gaelic and her role in the Ceangael project linking students in Ireland and Scotland.

What is appealing about Gaelic?

Responses to this question included reference to the opportunities available through having Gaelic; the sense of community and the welcome in the different communities; lots happening in Gaelic in Glasgow.

How to use Gaelic if there is no Gaelic in the family?

Comments included - it's your own choice to speak Gaelic to friends; events like FilmG and Deasbad nan Sgoiltean provide great opportunities to use Gaelic with other young Gaelic speakers and to learn from others.

How to change the use of Gaelic?

More opportunities/events should be available to get young Gaelic speakers involved

How do we change/encourage use of Gaelic in school?

Need to make sure that Gaelic in schools is interesting to pupils/young people; better links needed between schools and e.g Traditional Music and Gaelic culture; needs to be encouraged as a subject; need for encouragement to peak Gaelic in school

What messages would you send to organisations represented around the table ?

Schools coming together and doing activities through Gaelic is good; build stronger links eg with Ireland; better links between Gaelic in schools and Social Media

Where will Gaelic be in 10 years' time?

Gaelic will be an everyday language speaking to doctors, lawyers etc; normalisation of Gaelic; its part of everyday life; its normal to speak Gaelic

One thing that needs to happen?

Non-speakers need to stop putting Gaelic down; need for confidence for speakers; more opportunities to use the language;

The Convener opened the meeting to the floor for questions/points. These included:

How can normalisation be achieved?

More opportunities to work in Gaelic; increased engagement on Social Media; link with people who use Gaelic daily but perhaps are working in careers which are not the norm;

What difference would Gaelic hubs make?

Not sure if young people would use a hub; more hubs in places where Gaelic is not common would be useful and would show progression

A major obstacle – Gaelic is a language of choice rather than of necessity; Gaelic youth voice has been strong in past years; Ossianic Societies need to work together; young people need encouragement to get involved

Youth Clubs and groups – are they attractive?

Lots going on for young children eg Deasbad, Mods etc but other opportunities for 15/16 age groups would be good.

At the conclusion of the session the Convener thanked all participants for their contributions which were whose were warmly welcomed by those in attendance.

4. AOCB

- 4.1 Iain MacLeod (An Comunn Gàidhealach) outlined his involvement with regard to correspondence in relation to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Mr MacLeod provided copies of correspondence received from DCMS in London which advised that the UK Government “has no current plans to ratify the Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage”.

The Convener agreed to contact DCMS regarding this matter seeking clarification as to why there had been no ratification of the Convention.

- 4.2 Carole Henderson advised that a meeting with Director of Gaelic Education, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, had not yet taken place and expressed her disappointment regarding this situation. The Chief Executive of Bòrd na Gàidhlig said that she knew some discussions had taken place but could not comment further without more information. She undertook to follow up on this matter and to update the Convenor on matters.

- 4.3 Councillor Norman MacDonald (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar) congratulated the young people present on their presentations and commitment to Gaelic and encouraged continuing engagement with young people and the normalisation of Gaelic in their daily lives. He further commented that in his view any language normalisation in 16-25 year olds is towards English, rather than to Gaelic. He recommended that we support young people to voice their needs and aspirations so that we understand what they want.

Carole Henderson commented regarding the attitude of some teachers towards Gaelic which was causing resentment amongst children and supported increased understanding by English medium teachers as to what Gaelic medium education is.

- 4.4 Shona MacLennan (Bòrd na Gàidhlig) advised the meeting that consultation on Hate Crime legislation had closed and that both Comunn na Gàidhlig and Bòrd na Gàidhlig had responded to the consultation.
- 4.5 Dòmhnaill MacNèill (CEO Comunn na Gàidhlig) stated that in his view invective from certain media outlets was not acceptable and that we should aim to encourage young people to respond. He recommended that a seminar/conference, in the name of Gaelic Cross-party Group, should be considered to promote young people's views.

Shannon Cowie advised that Bòrd na Gàidhlig had undertaken a survey in Summer 2017 which had generated 200+ responses. However, it had not provided an obvious way to link with other Gaelic speakers at events.

Murdo MacSween (MG ALBA) advised that MG ALBA (Gaelic Media Service) was encouraging the creation of user-generated content as a means to enthuse people to take a new fun approach to Gaelic

- 4.6 Iain Cuimeanach (Gairloch High School) reported that in his view curriculum changes were affecting pupil choices with regard to languages, ie that most Local Authorities offered a choice of 6 subjects as S4, and that this had had a significant impact on the uptake of Gaelic.

Jane Renton (Education Scotland) responded to say that Modern Languages and Expressive Arts were also in a similar situation and that ES was fully aware of the problem.

Carole Henderson commented that in her view Gaelic being in with other modern languages in some schools meant some pupils were dropping Gaelic, and that the school her children attend offers a number of subjects in Gaelic but they are in the same column choice.

It was agreed that the Cross-Party would write to Scottish Government about the concerns raised.

5. **Presentation – Spòrs Gàidhlig – Update on progress to date**

The Convener welcomed Dòmhnaill Morris from Spòrs Gàidhlig to the meeting. Mr Morris is Project Manager at Spòrs Gàidhlig and provided those present with an update on progress to date with the initiative.

The update included:

- Project started September 2017
- 3 members of staff, 2 are trainees on a 1-year placement aimed at delivering qualified instructors for outdoor adventure education
- Based Glenmore Lodge Aviemore
- Targeting all schools / working with Outdoor Centres
- 75% of Under-18s in Scotland have no access to Gaelic
- Spòrs Gàidhlig will contribute to the Scottish Government attainment challenge
- Opportunities exist for fluent and learner Gaelic speakers through the Spòrs Ghàidhlig initiative

Following the presentation Dòmhnaill Morris took some questions/points from those present

Wilson MacLeod (University of Edinburgh) – How does Spòrs Gàidhlig envisage using Gaelic with children who have no Gaelic?

Dòmhnaill Morris – use of key phrases linked to positive experiences and achievements

Carole Henderson reported that her children had been on a cycle trip to Western Isles and, while originally reluctant, had come back very enthused and had a wonderful experience and have subsequently maintained contact between themselves

The Convenor thanked Carole for that glowing endorsement of Spòrs Gàidhlig and thanked Dòmhnaill Morris for the presentation

6. **Date of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed but likely to be at end May 2018 and linked to the AGM of the group.