



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01322

Name of petitioner

Jacqueline Campbell on behalf of Residential Provision Parents' Group

Petition title

Support for dance

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to demonstrate how it will ensure the viability and future of dance teaching and coaching in schools and colleges across Scotland and through a national centre of excellence.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

The setting up of a face book group page to feed back and organise parent information at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=176817876697

Individual lobbying of Glasgow City Councillors and MSPs by parents on the specific issue of the future of Dalrymple Hall which has resulted in motion S3M-5241, by Robert Brown (www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/businessBulletin/bb-09/bb-11-23f.htm).

Four representatives of the parent sub-group met with 2 representatives of GCC Education Services on Friday 12 February. The meeting was a very positive first meeting with the Council. The outcome is that there are two main issues—

- Property: Glasgow University the owners of Dalrymple Hall wish to sell the building and there is no obvious alternative and
- Funding: GCC claim they find themselves in a shortfall situation with regard to the funding they receive for the Dance School of Scotland from the Scottish Government.

Their position is that they are keen to engage in a consultation with all stakeholders on the future provision of accommodation for the pupils who attend the Dance School of Scotland. They are particularly keen to enter into discussion with the Scottish Government to find a long term solution. Mr Bill Butler MSP for Anniesland also had a meeting with Mrs Maureen McKenna, Education Services Director and Cllr Jonathan Findlay on 25 January. The outcome of this meeting was similar to the one with the parents. In addition Mr Butler managed to gain reassurance that the lease would be signed for Dalrymple Hall for the year to July 2011. However, it is important to note that if the economic climate were any more favourable Glasgow University would be pushing to sell Dalrymple Hall much more quickly. The conclusion from both meetings is the need to engage in discussion with the Scottish Government in order to secure long-term provision.

- The setting up of an online petition (<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/dalrymple/signatures>). At the time of writing this petition currently has 1232 signatures.
- Seeking of support from celebrities and ex-pupils who have left Dance School of

Scotland and made successful careers in Musical Theatre and Dance. Officially we now have written letters of support from Craig Revel Horwood (Strictly Come Dancing), Brian Friedman (choreographer – X Factor) and Dame Judi Dench. We have received indications of support and are currently awaiting letters from Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber, Sir Cameron Mackintosh and John Barrowman.

- The creation of a sub-group (9 parents) which was elected at a whole parent meeting on 21st December 2009. The sub-group have been charged with looking for solutions to the current situation i.e. the possible reduction/withdrawal of residential accommodation. The subgroup have now met twice.

We are at the beginning of this process. As an organised sub-group our only dealings with MSPs to date have been to meet with Mr Bill Butler MSP to voice our concerns. The result of this meeting was the aforementioned meeting between Mr Butler and Mrs Maureen McKenna from GCC. As individual parents many of us have written to or visited our MSPs to voice our concerns over the future uncertainty of residential provision. The result has been several letters of support from MSPs and a letter from Steven Horan of the Schools Directorate advising that:

“I have been advised by Glasgow City Council that any measures eventually put in place to reduce overall Council spending will not lead to them discontinuing the Dance School of Scotland as a national resource. Children from across Scotland will continue to be encouraged to attend to benefit from the excellent teaching and state of the art facilities the school has to offer”.

Our plan as a sub-group is in the next couple of weeks to send a letter to every MSP together with a short DVD that has been produced by the pupils of DSS.

Petition background information

The Dance School of Scotland is a National School of Excellence fully funded by the Scottish Government. It provides dance and musical theatre training for especially gifted pupils from all over Scotland (see attached sheet) who are admitted to the school by audition. The catchment area for the school extends from Shetland down to the North of England.

The school depends on being able to provide residential accommodation for pupils because it would be impossible for them to travel to school on a daily basis from where they live. Some 90% of pupils at the Dance School are residential for this reason. Therefore, the withdrawal of accommodation will affect talented pupils from every part of Scotland.

As with other centres of excellence, the Scottish Government has delegated the financing of the dance school to the local authority, in this case Glasgow City Council. Up until 2007/8 the Scottish Government provided funding which was ring-fenced; however since then the funding has been rolled up into a local government settlement. Instead of carrying out the duties on behalf of the nation as expected by the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council is now considering closing or restricting access to the residency for the school, Dalrymple Hall.

In order to pursue a career in dance or musical theatre pupils have to commence their specialist training from S1 (dance) or S3 (musical theatre). They cannot access this level of specialist training and a curriculum that integrates both academic studies and dance/musical theatre anywhere else in Scotland. Over the last 26 years the Dance School of Scotland has gained an international reputation for providing excellent dancers and performers from all over Scotland.

Despite the fact that Glasgow City Council is currently leading the consultation with parents, staff and others regarding the issue of funding and the future provision of residential accommodation, The Dance School is a national resource. It is important that the Scottish Parliament is aware of what is happening to Scotland's only national centre for Dance and Performing Arts, and ensures that this highly valuable national

resource is not lost.

- The National Dance School of Scotland is situated within Knightswood Secondary School in Glasgow. Pupils combine academic studies within the school with dance or musical theatre training.
- Dance students usually commence their training at the beginning of S1 and Musical Theatre pupils enter the school at the beginning of S3 (preparatory theatre course) or S5 (musical theatre course).
- As well as training within the school day, pupils train to 5.50 pm each day and from S3 onwards often train on a Saturday.
- There are currently 77 dancers (55 who live in Dalrymple Hall) and 43 musical theatre pupils (25 who live in Dalrymple Hall). There are also 10 music pupils living in Dalrymple Hall who attend the Music School at Douglas Academy in Bearsden.
- The pupils live in Dalrymple Hall during the week and return home at weekends and holidays. Pupils come and have come from every local authority in Scotland to attend the Dance School. At present there are pupils from Aberdeen, Angus and Fife as well as across Central Scotland.
- In the recent past there have been pupils from as far away as the Shetland Islands as well as overseas and north England. The Dance School of Scotland is a Centre of Excellence and the only place in Scotland where talented pupils can gain access to the level of training they require to make a career in dance or musical theatre.
- In order to gain a place at the Dance School, pupils go through a rigorous audition process which includes a medical. There are often hundreds of prospective pupils who audition for a place at the school but few gain access because the provision is for those who are especially gifted.
- During the time pupils are at the Dance School they continue to be assessed and in dance there are 2 assessed exit points at the end of S2 and the end of S4 for pupils who do not come up to standard. Dance pupils sit Royal Academy of Dance vocational ballet exams on an annual basis as well as exams in modern dance and tap from S3 onwards.
- Entry points for Musical Theatre are at S3 and S5 and exit at S6. Musical theatre pupils sit ATCL (Trinity) exams and often achieve the highest exam results in the country.
- In addition to their vocational training Dance School pupils integrate into normal academic classes within Knightswood Secondary School. Dance School pupils tend to achieve higher than average academic results and it is known within the school that they have a very positive impact on the ethos of the classes they are in.
- This has a positive effect on the mainstream pupils of the school who also benefit from the high level of dance training and dance facilities that are available in the school. The positive relationship between pupils is demonstrated every year when mainstream pupils attend the annual dance and musical theatre shows at the Theatre Royal and Citizens Theatre.
- The Dance School has been in existence for over 26 years. The school held its 25th Anniversary Show at the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow in November 2008, see motion by Bill Butler MSP www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/businessBulletin/bb-08/bb-11-14f.htm).
- During this time it has produced many students who have gone on to forge very successful careers in Dance and Musical Theatre all over the world.
- The success rate of pupils is very high with every pupil (which is the almost all) who wishes to pursue a career in dance or musical theatre gaining a tertiary place at establishments such as Royal Ballet or Mountview in London.
- There are many examples of successful pupils such as dance pupil Jennifer Leung who has recently appeared in the Mama Mia film and the film Nine or dance pupil Ross Clark who along with his older brother Russell attended the Dance School of Scotland before finishing their training at the Royal Ballet School and continuing to have successful dance careers. Also, Ian Mackay is the youngest ever principal ballet dancer (Birmingham Royal Ballet Company) to be appointed in Britain.
- In addition, musical theatre ex-pupil Gayle Rankin is currently in her third year at the

prestigious Juilliard School in New York. In her letter of support she states that “It is not only within the walls of the school that the personal and artistic development and nurturing goes on, Dalrymple Hall provided me with a safe, creative and focused environment where I could work, create and learn with my peers and collaborate with other students from different divisions”.

- The Dance School of Scotland has a national and international reputation for providing talented performers for many of the further education and dance establishments and colleges in England and more recently for the newly created degree level course at the RSAMD in Glasgow.
- Glasgow University now wants to sell by 2011 Dalrymple Hall which is leased to Glasgow City Council.
- Glasgow City Council has produced a financial paper which suggests that they may be unable to provide residential accommodation after 2010/2011 and will be reviewing the need for residential accommodation. The financial paper suggests that there is a parallel with the Glasgow School of Sport but this is more of a regional school rather than a national school because there is no residential accommodation and applicants mainly come from the former Strathclyde area.
- The Dance School has often been described as a “jewel in the crown” of Scottish Education and has provided so many outstanding performers who are now working in theatre and dance companies all over the world and acting as ambassadors for Scotland.
- Glasgow City Council has provided the finest studio facilities in the school along with very professional and gifted teachers. We the parents are extremely concerned that this situation may mean the eventual closure of the only National Centre of Excellence for the Performing Arts because if the residential accommodation is no longer available then it follows that pupils from all over Scotland can no longer access this very special provision.
- We understand that these are difficult financial times but the residential provision is integral to the success of the National School. We urge the Petition Committee to consider the following:
 - That the concordat should allow a degree of flexibility so that budgets can support national centres of excellence.
 - That if a guarantee were given that the budgets will continue for approximately 20 years, then this would allow a mortgage to be acquired in order to either buy Dalrymple Hall or build a new residential facility on the site available at Knightswood Secondary School.

Benefits across Scotland of the teaching of dance are—

- A survey of more than a thousand children across Britain revealed that more than 10% of youngsters are getting less than 30 minutes of exercise each day. Dancing can be a way to stay fit for people of all ages, shapes and sizes. Dancing has a wide range of physical and mental health benefits.
- “Regular dancing will reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and cancer. Dancing also helps to reduce the risk of osteoporosis. The dips, turns and side-to-side movements in dance routines make good use of your muscles and joints, helping to delay the progression or osteoarthritis” (BUPA Website).
- Dancing currently has a high profile. As a result more than 13% of the population either engage in or attend dance performances regularly. Ten million people regularly watched the BBC’s Strictly Come Dancing, and a recent survey of over 50,000 14 year olds showed dance was the second most popular physical activity after football.
- Dancing provides young people with something worthwhile to do and therefore the more undesirable ‘activities’ which are so often in the press portraying today’s youth as being inconsiderate and loutish are of no interest to them.
- Teaching Dance allows children to express themselves with confidence in a way which will benefit themselves and their community.

Closure or diminution of the Dance School of Scotland will have the following impact;

- Talented young people across Scotland will have no choice other than to take their

talents to schools in England or abroad. Dance pupils need to begin intensive training from age 11. If there is not a centre of excellence in Scotland talented youngsters will not be discovered until it is too late for their full potential to be realised.

- The result of this is that pupils will be less likely to return to Scotland to teach and nurture the next generation of talented performers. A number of the teachers at the Dance School of Scotland are former pupils. In addition there are ex-pupils in Scottish Ballet and other dance companies based in Scotland.
- Pupils from local dance schools across Scotland aspiring to attend the Dance School of Scotland will no longer have a focus (despite the adverse publicity regarding the uncertainty of residential provision the number of applicants for entry into the Dance School of Scotland for August 2010 has increased).
- There will be a reduction in strategic dance teaching provision of c. 50% across Scotland which will deplete resource available to supplement the industry in Scotland and further afield. RSAMD have just started a BA in Modern Ballet which has come about as a result of years of campaigning and funding from the SFC. The success of this tertiary course depends on the supply of well trained pupils from the Dance School of Scotland.
- World class dance provides an inspiration for others to enjoy the social, physical and mental benefits of participating in dance. If Scotland does not have training at the level provided by the Dance School of Scotland this inspiration will be lost.
- There is a reputational issue here for the Scottish Government in that closure of the Dance School of Scotland would make a clear statement from them that they are NOT supporting excellence in dance & musical theatre.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01322>

Related information for petition

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

15851

Closing date for collecting signatures online

N/A

Comments to stimulate online discussion