

## **SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT – CROSS PARTY GROUP ON GAELIC**

**Minute of the meeting & AGM of the Cross Party Group on Gaelic**, held in Committee Room 5, Parliament Building, Holyrood on Wednesday 25th June 2014, at 1pm.

**Present:** *Angus MacDonald MSP, (Convener); Jamie McGrigor MSP; Dave Thompson MSP; John Finnie MSP; Jean Urquhart MSP; Lewis MacDonald MSP; Donald MacNeill, (Secretary); Allan Esselmont (MG Alba); Iain Aonghas MacAoidh (Bòrd na Gàidhlig); Ceitidh Mhoireach; Ashley Powell (Oilthigh Obair-Dheathain); DJ Mac an t-Saoir (CLÌ Gàidhlig); Mata MacIver (UHI); D Laing (BBC ALBA); Diane MacIntyre (Scottish Parliament); Donald Morrison (Stòrlann); Archie MacLullaich; S Pescodd (Scottish Government); Carole Henderson; Anne Dessey; Finlay MacLeod (Moray Language Centre); Alasdair MacLeòid (Facal – simultaneous interpretation)*

Prior to commencing with the published Agenda, those attending were reminded that an electronic election had been conducted for the positions of Office within the Group. Nominations had been received for Angus MacDonald MSP (Convener); Dave Thompson MSP (Vice Convener); and Donald MacNeill (Secretary). There having been no further nominations by the due date, these candidates were duly elected to these positions. Members of the Group were thanked for their participation in the electronic election process.

### **1. Welcome & Apologies**

The Convener thanked those MSP in attendance.

Apologies had been received from: Rhoda Grant MSP; Claire Adamson MSP; Donald Campbell MG Alba; John Morrison (An Comunn Gàidhealach); John MacLeod (An Comunn Gàidhealach); Kenny Smith (Falkirk Gaelic Forum); John Newton (Falkirk Gaelic Forum).

### **2. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting, held in the Scottish Parliament Building, Holyrood, Edinburgh on Wednesday 27th November 2013 were approved.

### **3. Matters Arising.**

Mata MacIver raised the issue of a paper to be circulated relating to Gaelic education in North Lanarkshire. Stuart Pescodd from the Scottish Government informed the meeting that the matter had been addressed by the Council.

Mata MacIver asked about the formulation of the meeting agenda and the opportunities to recommend topics. The Convener said that Members should contact him with agenda suggestions or requests.

### **4. Annual Report of CPG 2013/14:**

A draft Annual Report of the CPG's business for the 2013/14 session had been circulated. This was approved for submission to the Parliament's Cross Party office.

(Given their closely related nature the following two items were heard and considered together.)

### **5. “An Audit of Additional Support Needs (ASN) in GME”**

A presentation by Report author, Consultant Psychologist, Archie MacLullaich  
&

### **6. New classroom and support resources for ASN in GME.**

A presentation by Donald Morrison, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig.

Introducing the first presentation the Convener said it was very good to see progress on an issue which had been previously highlighted and discussed by the CPG.

(The full ASN Audit report and presentation is available on the Stòrlann website – [www.stòrlann.co.uk](http://www.stòrlann.co.uk))

Presenting on the findings of the Audit Mr MacLullaich highlighted some key points:

- That there was strong evidence of good, committed, GME staff;
- That the sample size of 1063 closely reflected the national profile; and that there was a strong need for appropriate resources;
- That the coming together of Scottish legislation had had an exceptional effect over previous 20 years with a strong focus on children's needs. Overall it was required to create a situation locally where professionals were enabled to work together.
- Solutions and support needed to be locally-based, with peer review.
- That the case was strongly made for early-years intervention and good parenting having a positive impact in later life.

Donald Morrison explained Stòrlann's facilitating role in the area of ASN:

- That they hoped to create a strong interface for parents to express their views via online platforms;
- Outlined the list of resources they had begun to create, in association with experienced ASN practitioners;
- The holding of an ASN event in Edinburgh the previous Monday;
- Close working with Associated Health Professionals and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.

A wide ranging debate followed the presentations, including the following points:

That it would be important to use the skills and abilities of all those Gaelic speakers with ASN / SLT experience;

That tools to screen children were about to be researched and piloted. These would allow teachers to do more screening and then refer to professionals for further support as necessary;

That a practically-focussed working group on the issue, established by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, would be maintained, and that it was important to recognise the progress made;

The importance of engaging with teachers at all levels;

That it was important to continue developing tests to screen children in Gaelic, and that this was being done in association with research into the Irish and Welsh experience.

Summing up, the Convener said it was clear that while there was room for improvement, it was encouraging to see progress being made. He undertook to write to Minister for Health, Alex Neil MSP and Minister for Scotland's Languages, Alasdair Allan MSP to inform them of progress and to urge their support for further development.

## **7. GME and Census data:**

A presentation by John Angus MacKay, Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

This presentation mirrored that which had been successfully highlighted to MSPs during the recent Gaelic promotional activity within Parliament. It included the following key points:

- That while the number of Gaelic speakers recorded in the Census had declined from 59k to 58k it was clear the rate of decline was slowing – an important reason for this was the growth in GME;
- GME data shows P1 intake climbing from 404, to 428, to 486 over the last three years – a significant increase;

- Overall (including PS, HS, GLPS and pre-school) there were some 16,000 children learning some Gaelic in school;
- That parental demand was fundamental to this growth and that it was important people understood that parents needed support.
- That strong cross party support for Gaelic development was important in underpinning further activity and progress.

A discussion followed in the importance of securing an adequate recruitment of teachers to both primary and secondary Gaelic education if this level of growth and parental demand was to be sustained. The importance of the secondary provision in positively completing childrens' Gaelic school education was stressed.

#### **8. A.O.C.B**

Stuart Pescodd highlighted to the Group that a formal consultation of parental rights to Gaelic education was to be carried out by the Scottish Government and was due to go live in the following week.

#### **9. Date of next meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place during a lunchtime/early afternoon slot, and would be arranged to coincide with the final event of the BT Gaelic Schools debate in November 2014.

The Convener thanked those present for a good meeting.