



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Education, Children and Young People Committee

**Wednesday 29 June 2022**

**Session 6**



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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**EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2022, Session 6**

**CONVENER**

\*Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)

\*Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)

\*Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP)

\*Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green)

\*Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP)

\*Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab)

\*Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Con)

\*Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Mairi MacInnes (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)

Iain MacMillan (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)

Jim Whannel (Bòrd na Gàidhlig)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Stephen Herbert

**LOCATION**

The Robert Burns Room (CR1)



## Scottish Parliament

### Education, Children and Young People Committee

Wednesday 29 June 2022

[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:45]

### Bòrd na Gàidhlig

**The Convener (Sue Webber):** Good morning, and welcome to the 20th meeting in 2022 of the Education, Children and Young People Committee. Our first item of business is an evidence session with Bòrd na Gàidhlig on the “Draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28”.

I welcome Mairi MacInnes, the chair; Iain MacMillan, the director of development; and Jim Whannel, the director of education. Good morning to you all.

Mairi MacInnes will make an opening statement. Before I invite her to do so, I would like to make a few comments. The Scottish Parliament is committed to facilitating the use of the Gaelic language in its proceedings whenever possible. We were keen that Bòrd na Gàidhlig be able to give its opening statement in Gaelic, and we sought to make arrangements to support that. However, we were unfortunately unable to secure an interpreter for this morning’s meeting.

I am grateful to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for working with the Parliament’s staff to find an alternative option, and I am grateful to Mairi MacInnes for agreeing to deliver the opening statement in Gaelic—which is welcome—before repeating it in English. The Parliament is arranging for the *Official Report* of the meeting to be translated into Gaelic so that it will be accessible to those in the Gaelic community.

I invite Mairi MacInnes to make her statement in Gaelic and then in English.

**Mairi MacInnes (Bòrd na Gàidhlig):** Madainn mhath a neach-gairm a mhnathan is a dhaoine uaisle air a’ chomataidh seo agus cuideachd fàilte air duine sam bith a tha a’ coimhead agus ag èisteachd. Is mise Màiri NicAonghais, cathraiche Bhòrd na Gàidhlig. Còmhla rium tha Seumas Whannel, stiùiriche foghlaim aig a bhòrd, agus Iain Mac a’ Mhaoilein, stiùiriche leasachaidh aig a bhòrd.

’S e urram agus cothrom a th’ ann dhuinne a bhith air ur beulaibh an-diugh, agus tha e gu h-àraid cudromach gu bheil sinne ag èisteachd ris na th’ agaibhse ri ràdh, agus fiosrachadh a thoirt

dhuibh air ar dreachd phlana nàiseanta airson na Gàidhlig.

’S e buidheann phoblach le dleastanasan mòra a tha ann am Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Tha an sgioba gu math beag ach is sinn a’ chiad bhuidheann reachdail ann an 400 bliadhna le uallach airson leasachadh na Gàidhlig, cànan a dh’fhuiling le lagh às dèidh lagh fad nan ginealaichean.

Le sin, tha na h-amasan agus na dùilean a tha nan laighe air a’ bhuidhinn air a bhith mòr agus daonnan a’ fàs; ach tha sinn daonnan deònach air n-aghaidh a chur orra sin.

*Mairi MacInnes continued in English.*

Good morning, convener, committee members and anyone else who may be watching or listening. I am Mairi MacInnes, the chair of Bòrd na Gàidhlig. I have now been the chair for more than four years. With me are Jim Whannel, director of education for Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and Iain MacMillan, our director of development.

I am the seventh chairperson of the bòrd, which has now been in existence for round about 16 years. Bòrd na Gàidhlig is a public body with significant responsibilities and a very small team to deliver them. It is the first statutory body in 400 years with responsibility for developing Gaelic, a language that has suffered from unhelpful legislation in the past. As such, the aims and the expectations that Bòrd na Gàidhlig carries are significant and continue to increase.

In providing evidence to the committee around the draft plan today, I am pleased to say that Bòrd na Gàidhlig is—as the Auditor General recently noted—a hugely different organisation from that which received a very challenging audit report several years ago. At the turn of this year, the bòrd was considered an example of best practice by our own auditors.

We value the committee’s input today into the national consultation. We are taking the draft plan around the country for people at every level to input into the consultation. Today is a huge opportunity for us, and we also see it as a very important and huge opportunity for the committee to feed into the draft national plan. The new national plan will run for the next five years, starting in 2023. I will now hand over to the committee so that we can continue with the discussion.

**The Convener:** Thank you. Ruth Maguire, as you are attending remotely, you might not be able to catch my eye. If you have a supplementary question or there is anything that you want to chip in with, please put an R in the chat box. The clerks will monitor that, and I will bring you in when I can.

The first question is from Michael Marra.

**Michael Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I thank members of the bòrd for attending. The early years of devolution, post-1999, were marked by a level of anxiety about the long-term future of Gaelic as a key component of our national culture. That led to the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which established the bòrd in 2006. How has the bòrd performed against the desired outcomes that were set out in the 2005 act?

**Mairi MacInnes:** The bòrd is still young—it has been in existence for 15 to 16 years. With regard to the law, the 2005 act and development, that is a relatively short time. The bòrd takes a variety of approaches, including in how it engages with the wider country and all its stakeholders.

The bòrd has taken time to settle. It is no secret that the 2018-19 audit report was very challenging. As a result of that report, there was a serious implementation plan—a huge improvement plan—and that has all been signed off. Today, the bòrd is a very different organisation. It is completely focused, has a clearer understanding, is closer to its communities and, in many ways, has strongly grasped the opportunities of technology, particularly during lockdown, when we saw a big shift in how the bòrd acted and communicated with the communities that it serves. Therefore, there has been a huge step change.

With regard to the 2005 act and what it allows the bòrd to do, we are becoming increasingly conscious that more needs to be done. In our view, the act and the bòrd's powers need to be strengthened, particularly with regard to language plans. The national plan belongs to the country, but the bòrd has the responsibility for writing it, preparing it, consulting on it and presenting it to the Government. The national plan is the big picture, but, underneath it, there is the need for a much more concerted effort at the planning level across the country to achieve faster and richer improvement in Gaelic.

**Michael Marra:** That is useful. I would appreciate hearing observations from the other witnesses, to set the scene on the long-term prospects of the Gaelic language. Increasing the use of Gaelic is at the core of your functions, but where are we, as a country, with regard to not just preserving but promoting and enhancing the use of the language?

**Mairi MacInnes:** I will make my colleagues work as well, today. It is an exciting time for Gaelic. The new plan is timely. There is huge ambition, with probably two or three key aspects to it. A prime aspect is education, which is of big interest to the committee. Jim Whannel will expand on that shortly. Another is around general development, community and the process of the plan itself, which I will call on Iain MacMillan to say

a bit about. There is a very important report coming out today called—what is it called?

**Jim Whannel (Bòrd na Gàidhlig):** It is the Scottish social attitudes survey.

**Mairi MacInnes:** The survey contains very positive messages.

With your permission, I will call on Jim to give a very quick summary of where we have got to on education.

**Jim Whannel:** I have an instruction to be very quick, and Mairi is the chair, so I will do this as quickly as I can.

We can see progress from the early 1980s, when a handful of children were in Gaelic-medium education. That was seen as revolutionary and something that was not even particularly tested in this country. We have moved on now.

It is interesting that Gaelic-medium education now features in the statistical evidence in Scotland, with 1 per cent of all children in education in Scotland being educated through the medium of Gaelic. We need to make more progress on that. When I say “we”, I mean Scotland, the country. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has a very narrow ability to influence the big issues. The provision of education resides with local authorities, and we promote and encourage local authorities to provide more opportunities for Gaelic-medium education. The majority of local authorities either have Gaelic-medium education or are developing it, and we are seeing new authorities coming on stream. Provision of Gaelic-medium education in Renfrew will begin in August, and East Renfrewshire will be the next local authority to provide it, next year. We are working with Fife Council, and we are confident that it, too, will come on stream.

There has been a huge growth in the number of learners, and learners have moved from traditional delivery through night classes to a much greater level of online access. SpeakGaelic footfall is just under 400,000, which is massive for the language when we consider the percentage of people with Gaelic language skills in our country. Duolingo has been a huge success, including comparatively with other languages internationally. Planning has developed such that all but two local authorities either have a Gaelic language plan or are in the process of developing one. Our view is that significant changes are required in Gaelic language planning nationally, and we have a number of ideas around that.

Visibility of the language has changed completely—just look at organisations such as Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service, and at the railway system. We note from young kids in Gaelic-medium education

throughout the country that they now see Gaelic as part of their lives. That is something that we heard anecdotally from young kids in Kilmarnock. They said that, for the first time ever, they had seen Gaelic in Kilmarnock, which they had not really thought about before. Sadly, they did not know that the name of the place where they live, “Kilmarnock”, is a Gaelic word. That is quite common, including in Glasgow.

Visibility of the language has increased, Gaelic-medium education has increased and, for the first time ever, Gaelic-medium education is available internationally. The first Gaelic-medium service opened in Mabou, in Nova Scotia, in 2021. We provided a lot of support to develop it. That shows international confidence in the language as well, which is really gratifying.

**Mairi MacInnes:** I call on Iain MacMillan to quickly outline the Scottish social attitudes survey, which is being issued today.

**Iain MacMillan (Bòrd na Gàidhlig):** There is evidence of improvement—the Scottish social attitudes survey shows significant improvement. The last time the survey was run was in 2012, and there has been significant change since then. For example, more than half of those who were surveyed—55 per cent—believe that all children in Scotland between the ages of five and 15 should be taught Gaelic as a school subject for between one and two hours a week. Nearly two thirds of those who were surveyed said that they would like to improve their Gaelic skills, and 70 per cent stated that learning Gaelic gave people a sense of achievement and contributed to the wellbeing agenda.

As Jim Whannel said, the proportion of adults who have seen Gaelic signage and who are aware of Gaelic through the media has been growing significantly. The proportion of adults who say that they can understand a little bit of Gaelic has increased from 25 per cent to 41 per cent, and the proportion of people who say that they can speak some words of Gaelic has doubled from 15 per cent to 30 per cent. Therefore, there is evidence of movement in the right direction.

10:00

However, it is also safe to say that there is more work to be done and that there is probably a need to do different work in different areas, particularly in the areas of the country where Gaelic has its traditional heartlands. There is a challenge in those areas, in particular, because of the economic and other challenges that are faced by those communities.

The interesting point is that, although Gaelic might have been considered to be a marginal, or more marginal, issue in those communities in the

past, it is moving to the centre of the challenges—or, rather, to the centre of the solutions that are available for our traditional Gaelic communities. Although we recognise that there is a big challenge, there is also a big opportunity for us to do something different in addressing it.

**Michael Marra:** The word “opportunity” is probably my reading of the social attitudes survey. It seems that there is demand in the population and a welcome acceptance of Gaelic as a part of national culture, with people feeling that it should be promoted, which is very positive. However, do we have the resources, and do you, as the bòrd, have the authority to meet that demand?

**Mairi MacInnes:** I think that you probably know what I am going to say. Gaelic needs more resources. The bòrd gets a very small percentage of the whole Gaelic budget, but all of Gaelic needs more resources. We are also conscious that resources are tight at the minute, so we need to look at ways of developing and moving forward without always looking for more resources.

One of the tools that we have is in how the plans can be used. The national plan gives the big picture, but the real tools are the plans that all the national bodies and local authorities will have. Our ensuring that they are smarter and that there is clear understanding of what is expected of them would be a very clear and definite way forward. At the moment, the bòrd does not have responsibility for, or ownership of, the plans. If targets are not met and ambitions are not achieved, we refer bodies to the minister—we have started doing that for the first time. We have developed over time, and we are beginning to realise that we really need to take a hard line on many things, because at various levels things are not moving fast enough.

We also have thoughts on how that will look, particularly around strengthening the powers of the bòrd through the legislation. We are conscious that reviewing the “functions and structures” of the bòrd is in the list in the programme for government. It is therefore a good time to be looking at that.

My answer to Michael Marra’s question is that we need more resources but we are pragmatic. We need to look at other approaches, and we have thoughts about that.

**The Convener:** I have a follow-up question on that. You spoke about strengthening the powers of the bòrd. What would you like to see developing in that respect?

**Mairi MacInnes:** I will call on Iain MacMillan to answer that.

**Iain MacMillan:** That is what you call a hospital pass.

I have worked in the public sector for nearly 40 years and have yet to come across a public sector body that could not do with more resources in order to do what it wants to do. However, the biggest challenge for Bòrd na Gàidhlig at the moment is that we are required to work collaboratively with a wide range of organisations and people, and there are sometimes very conflicting priorities in those groups and communities.

Where we have a planning mechanism, for example, we need to be able to strengthen it. I apologise for maybe being cheeky in making the following point, convener, but it is a good example. As the convener mentioned at the beginning, we are not able to conduct today's meeting in Gaelic. We will probably be subjected to a lot of criticism for what we say or do not say today, but the biggest criticism that we will face will be about the fact that, in this meeting about the Gaelic language, we did not speak in the language. Although the Parliament has an approved language plan that allows the discretion of the convener in relation to the use of Gaelic in giving evidence, when we conduct business about Gaelic and when Gaelic is the subject, there should be no discretion. If we are going to take Gaelic seriously, such discretion should not be exercised when the subject is Gaelic. That is not a criticism; it is just the reality of where we are.

We need to take a step forward and a step up, and we need to make the best use of the tools that we have. We have been trying get that message across at the consultation events. There is criticism that the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 is not strong enough. There are many opinions on that, but we have to make sure that we use the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 to the fullest extent and that the Gaelic language plan for the next five years is as robust and practical as it can be.

We need to use the existing regulations, and we need to strike the right balance between working collaboratively with partners and using the legislation and regulations. In the past, we have tended not to use the regulations but have instead relied more on collaboration and trying to discuss things in order to reach a conclusion. We have found it to be very effective in discussions with other public sector organisations that we are able to say that, if we cannot come to an agreement within the required timescale, we will have no option but to refer the matter to the minister. That works for most situations but not for all of them. We need to focus more on using all the tools that we have—we are learning more about that.

We have had more younger people coming to our consultation events on the next Gaelic language plan. The next generation of people, or

the generation after that, are perhaps not quite as polite as our generation has been. They are not as accepting, and they expect a lot more from us as a public body, from the Parliament and from the Government. We must respond to that. The communities that we work in and represent are also becoming more vocal and their expectations are getting higher.

**Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Green):** I will go back to publication of the plan for the current period, 2018 to 2023. An implementation plan was supposed to be published with it, but that has not happened, although your corporate plan resembles an implementation plan in some respects. Has the lack of an implementation plan stymied your ability to fulfil all the ambitions of the current national plan?

**Mairi MacInnes:** No—I think that it reflects a different understanding of how we work. The corporate plan came out of the national plan, and out of that came the operational plan. It is becoming clearer across the country that the national plan belongs to all the country and that the operational plan is the part that Bòrd na Gàidhlig delivers with partners. There were targets in it and they have been met. It is being evaluated now, and the work is not yet finished. We are at an interim stage, and the plan runs until the end of this year.

**Iain MacMillan:** I would like to come back in on that. I understand the comment about the implementation plan, and I think that the intention was that the faster rate of progress initiative, which was led by the Deputy First Minister, would be put in place. The purpose of that initiative was to bring together the bodies that are required to collaborate in order to deliver outcomes from the plan. Because the implementation plan does not concern only one body, it is not straightforward, so the approach needs to be a bit more holistic. The faster rate of progress initiative was put in place for that reason. I do not know whether it has been successful in delivering the outcomes; that is another question.

**Jim Whannel:** The faster rate of progress initiative is a key element in terms of the much greater understanding that is needed that Bòrd na Gàidhlig, with a staff team of around 25 people and 19 per cent of the budget, cannot deliver the national plan and should not do so, because it is the national plan, not Bòrd na Gàidhlig's plan.

With 30 of the 32 local authorities having Gaelic language plans or being in the process of creating them, we definitely have a role to play in working with them in relation to, for example, education, which is delivered by them. There is a target in the national plan to increase the number of young people in Gaelic-medium education, but neither Bòrd na Gàidhlig nor the Scottish Government can



order that to happen. A group of organisations—the General Teaching Council for Scotland, local authorities, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, which is the national agency that considers issues around Gaelic-medium resources, and a variety of other organisations—are charged with delivering the increase, and that creates quite complex issues.

Without making any comment on whether it is right or wrong, I note that Glasgow City Council has decided to put a cap on Gaelic-medium education. Approximately 180 children have applied for Gaelic-medium education in primary 1, but the cap is 140. I make no judgment on whether that is right or wrong; it is simply a matter of fact. However, that impacts on the national plan, because, although the national plan says that we should increase the opportunity for people to access Gaelic-medium education and a range of Gaelic facilities, that will not happen above a certain level in Glasgow because of a decision of the council.

I am trying to be careful not to comment on the internal reasons for that cap, because I think that there are balanced arguments around whether it is a good thing or a bad thing, but it is a fact that the bòrd is not able to say that there cannot be a cap or to dictate what authorities must do. The decision on the cap is based on the Gaelic language plan for Glasgow, which will come up for review.

Another example involves learning the language. We are working with local authorities on targets for the L3—third language—that is taught in schools. Gaelic has experienced a decline in L3, so we need to reflect on our performance as a country, in comparison with Wales or Ireland, in learning our languages, because we do not do well in that regard. We therefore work with local authorities through their Gaelic language plans, which is practically the only way that we can work.

For example, recently—in the past month or two—through some quite challenging discussions with North Lanarkshire Council, a target of 40 per cent for L3 was agreed. That means that, during the lifetime of the current Gaelic language plan in the area, just over 50 of the local authority's primary schools will develop Gaelic as an L3. That is a huge advance for the language in North Lanarkshire. It is a big task and a very challenging target for the local authority, so hats off to it for ultimately agreeing to it. That will require a set of organisations—Education Scotland and a range of others—to support teachers with resources and training to enable them to do the work. Those things are quite complex, but they influence each other. North Lanarkshire is a particularly good example, which we will use in working with other local authorities on targets for L3.

10:15

In the end, if an authority, mar a thuir an catharaiche, as the convener said, is not willing to meet the challenges that North Lanarkshire has met—and there are currently some live examples of that—our only recourse is to refer the matter to the Scottish ministers. There are no enforcement powers or anything like that as there are in other countries. It is a question for Scotland to reflect on: should there be enforcement powers, and, if so, where should they lie?

**Mairi MacInnes:** I hope that the committee is getting the picture that Gaelic development is a very complex landscape. The consultation on the next national plan is open until 26 July, and we would really welcome your contributions—either as individuals or as a committee, or under any other hat that you would like to wear—being submitted online. Again, I thank you, and we would be happy to hear your suggestions today as well.

**Ross Greer:** What struck me, in particular, from the latter part of Jim Whannel's answer was the importance of the local authorities' GLPs to the success of your ambitions. I presume that there is no synchronisation there, however—local authorities are setting them at different times in the cycle. How does that impact on what you are doing? You have a relatively standardised five-year rolling plan to develop. How does the fact that 32 local authorities are setting plans for different periods of time at different points in time impact on your ability to set a five-year national plan?

**Mairi MacInnes:** That is a really difficult question. I will get Iain MacMillan to answer that one as well. [*Laughter.*] He is new in the job.

**Iain MacMillan:** Give the new guy all the difficult questions.

There is a challenge in that regard, but there is also an opportunity. A lot of it comes back to the hope that we are actually starting to see a change in attitudes and knowledge among people. More and more people now want to see the learning of Gaelic increase and improve. That should, in a way, put some pressure on individual public authorities, as should the plans.

I worked in local government long enough to know that peer pressure is quite significant and a useful tool, if it is used in the right way, for encouraging growth and increase. There are opportunities within the different timescales to grow and crank things up year on year.

There may not previously have been the same hope and expectation among the people of Scotland as there is now, so there may be an opportunity to use that as encouragement. Jim Whannel gave the example of North Lanarkshire.

In reality, that should give us a spur. My experience has always been that, if one local authority takes action, other local authorities will look to improve and to go one step further. We should be looking to make the most of that opportunity; we just have to work with whatever cycles the other public bodies are working to. Although there are challenges, there are opportunities.

**Mairi MacInnes:** Over the lockdown period, in particular, the bòrd worked closely with key Gaelic organisations, and the Deputy First Minister, MSPs and the cross-party group reached out in a way that had not happened before. As we have been going around the country with this consultation—we have been far and wide—we have been getting the message from our community that people, particularly young people, are really sitting up and taking an interest. That includes people who have come through Gaelic-medium education themselves and see the wider view.

That goes back to the traditional communities. Gaelic as a language does not stand alone: it needs a house, it needs a ferry, it needs a road, and it needs a strong economy. Gaelic probably glues all those things together. Gaelic life is normal life. It is important that we listen, that we hear that from people, and that we take those messages to the Government and to the Parliament. There is a huge opportunity for us and for you to feed that into the national plan, because the language needs everything else in order to move forward and develop.

**The Convener:** Ruth Maguire joins us virtually.

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** Madainn mhath. Tha e math gu bheil sibh còmhla ruinn an-diugh. Tha ceistean agam mu dheidhinn foghlam Gàidhlig.

*The member continued in English.*

Good morning. I am really glad that you are with us today. I have some questions about Gaelic education. Before I begin those, I agree with the comments about the use of Gaelic in the Parliament. I am sorry that you have not been able to give your evidence in Gaelic. It is not good enough that Scotland's Parliament cannot conduct its business in Scotland's language.

*The member continued in Gaelic.*

Tha mi duilich mu dheidhinn sin.

*The member continued in English.*

I am sorry about that.

One of the great successes of Gaelic-medium education has been its growth. I declare an interest in that both of my children—although they are now grown up—were educated at Sgoil

Ghaidhlig Ghlaschu for primary and secondary school. I am an Ayrshire MSP, and I am delighted that we have bun-sgoil Pàirc Whitehirst, a primary school in Kilwinning. Parents drive that growth, not bodies. Parents start the nurseries and playgroups, and demand grows from the community, which is part of the success.

What is the overall goal for the breadth of access to Gaelic-medium education? Jim Whannel spoke a little about the role of the bòrd. Will you expand on that?

**Mairi MacInnes:** Iarraidh mi air Jim freagairt a thoirt.

**Jim Whannel:** Mòran taing airson sin. Tha mi a' smaoineachadh—I will continue in English, but bha sin math.

*Jim Whannel continued in English.*

Our vision is simple and clear: everybody who wishes to have their child educated through the medium of Gaelic should have that opportunity. That is not complex or difficult. The complexity is in the delivery. Our view is that there should be a much wider realisation across Scotland that we deliver education through the medium of two languages and that parents make a decision—normally when the child is five—on which language they would like their child to be educated in. They have two choices: English or Gaelic.

Consequently, a set of national agencies have tasks and responsibilities for ensuring that that is deliverable, as do local authorities across the country. There should be no postcode lottery in the accessibility of Gaelic-medium education. As I have said, a majority of local authorities either are delivering or are preparing to deliver Gaelic-medium education, and other things are happening that require a lot of focused attention. The development of the teaching force is a key element. We see that in places where there is demand for Gaelic-medium education—for instance, in rural areas where, as Mairi MacInnes mentioned, housing and transport are important.

In Applecross, for example, there is an application under the statutory guidance. The local authority has advertised but has not been able to appoint, and it is about to readvertise. A majority of parents in the local community are seeking Gaelic-medium education for their children for the first time—in fact, I am meeting those parents tomorrow night. We support that, and we will continue to support and encourage that development. However, the creation of Gaelic-medium education in an area such as Applecross is not simple. It requires a person to be attracted to a relatively remote part of Scotland; it requires there to be housing and other support in place; and they must be prepared to go there, which requires some additional thought. Comhairle na

Gàidhealtachd—the Highland Council—is actively involved in promoting that and in trying to address those issues, but it is not as easy to deliver there as it might be in Glasgow or Edinburgh. Glasgow and Edinburgh have specific difficulties with the large number of people who are seeking Gaelic-medium education.

One of the issues to be completely cognisant about is the fact that responsibility for the delivery of education lies with local government, and that is the key mechanism in ensuring that Gaelic language plans are in place. The ability and willingness of local authorities needs to be obvious to us all.

The bòrd responds to public consultations, and we have become much more active in doing that over the past number of years. If anybody wants to see the large amount of work that we have done on public consultation, it is all on our website. There are many examples of that, one of which is our response to all the public consultations on recovery from Covid-19 with a specific focus on Gaelic-medium education and on what we would expect, support and encourage local authorities to do. In January, the GTCS conducted a public consultation on the registration of teachers. That raised some important issues about additionality for our Gaelic-medium workforce, which does not have recognised additionality in terms of registration according to the GTCS. We made some specific proposals in relation to that. Professor Ken Muir has also done a massive amount of work in his reports on things that are happening within the national framework of education organisations. We have responded to all consultations and we will continue to do so, to ensure that there is an understanding that Gaelic-medium education is part of the Scottish national delivery of education.

When any organisation—for example, the new qualifications organisation—is set up, it is crucial that it has the perspective of delivery through both the medium of English and the medium of Gaelic. That is the prism through which we should look at all development. There should be a firm understanding that young people and families who are seeking education in Scotland should have the ability and competence to choose either Gaelic-medium or English-medium delivery. That raises some challenging questions for authorities such as Edinburgh and Glasgow, which face difficulty in delivering those responsibilities. Nevertheless, we are here to provide professional advice and support about that whenever we can.

**Ruth Maguire:** How close are local authorities to ensuring that Gaelic-medium education is delivered in the

“50 civil parishes with 5 per cent or more Gaelic speakers?”

**Jim Whannel:** It is currently delivered in 83 per cent of them. Obviously, parish boundaries and school catchment boundaries are not the same, so our statistics officer recently looked at that and updated it. The current statistic of 83 per cent means that Gaelic-medium education is available either within those parishes or close by. However, that still means that 17 per cent of local communities do not deliver it, and we encourage them to consider doing so.

Applecross is a nice example, because we have a situation in which the local authority, the bòrd and the local community are actively seeking to develop a new service in a challenging and remote part of Scotland. If you know the road into Applecross, you will be aware that, in the winter, it will be difficult for somebody to get there even if they live quite close by. We are all working together to deliver that service, but it is still a challenge. The complexities around housing, transport and the willingness of people to relocate there are issues that we must face.

10:30

Ardnamurchan is another area where there is a demand for Gaelic-medium education but there are significant staffing gaps. There are also significant staffing gaps in Glasgow—I am not saying that the issue does not arise in urban local authorities, because the supply has to be referenced against the demand, which is high in some urban local authorities.

However, in response to the specific question, as I said, Gaelic-medium education is delivered in 83 per cent of those areas.

**Ruth Maguire:** Are more than 5 per cent of the population of Applecross Gaelic speakers?

**Jim Whannel:** I would need to check. I am 98 per cent certain that that is the case. The statistic would come from the 2011 census, not the current one, and I am sure that Applecross is one of those areas. If it is not, it is beside them.

**Ruth Maguire:** Can you say a bit about the discrepancy between the number of adult learners that were reported by the bòrd in the reports from 2015 to 2019 and the number that were reported in relation to online resources?

**Jim Whannel:** That is quite a complex picture. You can see the numbers for adult learners in the 2015 to 2019 period, but the acquisition of statistics in adult learning and Gaelic-medium education has been quite complicated. We conducted what was, in essence, a national survey of Gaelic-medium education that threw up some interesting things. For instance, one year, a local team might make a personal decision to register a child as being in Gaelic-medium

education although they were also attending English-medium early years provision—they might have morning sessions in Gaelic and afternoon sessions in English. However, the following year, whoever registered them might change their mind and register them as being in English-medium education, so it would look as though there had been a decrease in Gaelic-medium education although that was not the case.

The uplift of the statistics came about through surveys that the bòrd conducted. However, we are moving away from that and are now working with the Scottish exchange of data division of the Scottish Government—ScotXed—on national statistics, so the national statistics that we produce will be ScotXed material. ScotXed did not always uplift the materials that we needed, but the team has been open to changing that. That means that there will be a period in which we will have an interim report using ScotXed GME statistics but, subsequently, we will refine that. ScotXed has agreed to that process.

The picture with online Gaelic learning is similar. Those statistics resulted from research that we did across local authorities, so they are dependent on local authority uplifts, because registration does not happen in the same way for online learning. That is always going to be difficult to do, because it is dependent on the accuracy of services in local authorities that are sometimes no longer local authority services. For example, Glasgow Life would run evening and weekend Gaelic courses and would record certain statistics around that. That picture is repeated across the country in different local authorities.

Other sources, such as SpeakGaelic, which has a footfall of about 400,000 across social media platforms, measure how long people spend using them. The fact that the longevity of the stay can be measured means that the statistics do not include what we might call accidental entries. LearnGaelic also has statistics that are encouraging—it showed a big increase during lockdown. It is interesting to see that, when people had the time and the opportunity, they were up for learning in that way. Things changed when the lockdowns came to an end, but it was interesting to see the uptake at that time.

One of our reflective challenge questions for the country is, how do we capitalise on that clear evidence that people want to learn the language online, and how do we give them other opportunities to do so, including face-to-face learning, which is sometimes more difficult to deliver, because it is dependent on the availability of tutors and so on? We know that local authorities are having difficulty in recruiting enough tutors to keep up with demand, as is the case with teachers and early years workers. Again, there is a

challenge for local authorities in seeking support from us, as the specialist agency, and looking for additional resources.

**The Convener:** Kaukab Stewart has some questions on that.

**Kaukab Stewart (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** That is the perfect point for me to come in at, because I want to pick up on that issue. You have talked about the challenges with the recruitment of teachers. Could you give us some information about what is being done to attract and train people in order to increase the number of Gaelic teachers?

**Mairi MacInnes:** That is definitely a question for Jim Whannel, as our director of Gaelic education.

**Jim Whannel:** Bòrd na Gàidhlig runs a number of initiatives, which I will tell you about, but I will preface my comments by saying that the responsibility for recruiting and employing all teachers lies with local authorities, the responsibility for registration lies with the GTCS and the responsibility for support and development lies with agencies such as Education Scotland and the SQA. A range of responsibilities come out of the national plan—it is absolutely crucial to establish that from the outset. As I have said, although we can provide expertise in relation to important developments, an organisation of 25 people cannot reverse 400 years of decline in the Gaelic language. So, that is the big picture: those major organisations have responsibility for delivering the national plan.

The bòrd runs an education grant scheme whereby anybody who registers for a Gaelic-related course can apply for attractive funding from us. The uptake of that scheme continues to be healthy, and any student teacher on an initial teacher education programme can apply for that grant.

Strathclyde University has recently been funded to provide an additional teaching qualification pilot scheme, which involves modern languages teachers from Glasgow, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. One of the teachers is from St Peter the Apostle high school in West Dunbartonshire, six of the teachers are from various secondary schools in Glasgow and two of them are from secondary schools in North Lanarkshire. On successful completion of the course, they will be able to register as teachers of Gaelic as part of the modern languages component in their schools. We fully funded that pilot on the condition that all the schools and local authorities involved agreed to include Gaelic in the curriculum offer. That will enable a national deficit to start to be addressed, because, if we get more young people in our schools acquiring national 5 qualifications in Gaelic and Gaelic (Learners),

some of them will get degrees and will, hopefully, go on to get jobs in Gaelic-medium education, which will help local authorities to fill their vacancies. We need a second wave.

When visitors from Wales and, particularly, Ireland visited Scotland, they were quite jealous that the vast majority of our workforce in Gaelic-medium education have Gaelic as a first language. When we went to Ireland and Wales, we were quite jealous that they had a significant proportion of Irish and Welsh learners in their workforce, because they had attracted two labour markets into their workforce. In Scotland, we have, historically, not been able to do that well, but we hope that the ATQ pilot scheme at Strathclyde University will help in that regard.

We also support, through a funding scheme, immersion courses for teachers. There are three immersion facilities, which are at the University of Glasgow, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Lews Castle College in the Western Isles, which now has a new name. Those facilities run year-long immersion courses. If a local authority has an English-medium teacher who has beginner-level Gaelic, we pay 80 per cent of the supply costs for them to come on that course for a year, on the guarantee that they move into employment in Gaelic-medium education straight away thereafter. That provides another opportunity for local authorities.

Every application for immersion has been accepted and delivered, although the numbers are quite small. Covid-19 has impacted on that, because some authorities have not permitted any teacher to come out for a year to go on an immersion course. We hope that the numbers will return to greater health as Covid-19 recedes.

That is just an example of some of the things that the bòrd is doing. The big picture is that the responsibility lies with local authorities.

**Mairi MacInnes:** I live in a very small community in Uist, in the Western Isles, where recruitment and retention are a serious problem, particularly with middle to upper management. If there are vacancies across the country—there are many at present—we become fearful that someone from our community will leave, because, as Jim Whannel said, it is increasingly difficult to recruit people to remote communities.

That goes back to the point that one size does not fit all, which applies not only in teaching but in various other jobs for which Gaelic is essential, such as management jobs. We see that at the bòrd—there is a difficulty in recruiting enough people who are skilled. If you take someone from one place, you leave a hole somewhere else. That is a problem and a challenge. We would certainly

like to hear any input that you have that might help us to find a way forward on that.

**The Convener:** Bob Doris's questions continue on that theme.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (SNP):** The deputy convener asked about staffing and recruitment, and Jim Whannel talked about demand outstripping supply, not just with staffing but with infrastructure. As a Glasgow MSP, I was interested to hear that there were 180 requests for primary school placements but that only 140 places were available. I know that Glasgow City Council has a draft Gaelic language plan out for consultation at the moment and that a fourth primary school will come online in 2024. What relationship does the bòrd have with the 32 local authorities in relation to their forward planning to ensure that there is sufficient staffing and infrastructure? As a constituency MSP, every year, I get requests for letters of support for appeals in relation to placement requests, particularly for Gaelic-medium primary school education. As a Glasgow MSP, I would find it helpful to hear any comments that you have on that relationship with the local authorities and on the support, the communication and the quality of the forward planning of each local authority to meet that demand and interest.

**Mairi MacInnes:** As that question is on education, Jim Whannel will answer.

**Jim Whannel:** There is a whole range of things. We provide continuous professional support and advice—that is one of our roles. We work closely with Glasgow and a range of other local authorities. We work with Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta, which also organises local groups such as Comann nam Pàrant Ghlaschu, which we work with as well. Obviously, our role is to provide professional support and advice. We have no power to instruct a local authority to do anything; we simply encourage.

Further to encouragement, we can give local authorities opportunities and advice on what might be the way forward. For instance, the current issue in Glasgow went to statutory review under the statutory guidance, and to a full assessment. Part of our responsibility as an organisation, along with Education Scotland and Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta, is to provide a response to the local authority, and we provided a very in-depth response in that case. The local authority decided to do something else, which was not necessarily in synch with the formal responses from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Education Scotland and Comann nam Pàrant, but it is our role to provide a response.

There are complexities in the Glasgow situation, and we will continue to work with the local authority on those. However, the local authority is

fully aware that the bòrd does not agree with caps on Gaelic-medium education.

10:45

**Bob Doris:** I want to check one thing. When the fourth school comes online in 2024—on schedule, I hope—will that meet the current demand retrospectively? I get the point that, when 2024 comes along, the demand may be greater again, so the local authority will always be playing catch-up on infrastructure in relation to demand. Will the current demand be met in 2024?

**The Convener:** I ask you to be really brief with your answer. We have a list of other members who want to ask questions.

**Jim Whannel:** The answer is no, because more needs to be done. The local authority has cited reasons to do with capacity in the secondary sector, from S1 to S6. In short, local authorities that are very successful in developing Gaelic-medium education need to continue that success, so the fifth school needs to be planned at this point.

**The Convener:** I have questions on this subject from Stephanie Callaghan before we move on to the other members.

**Stephanie Callaghan (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP):** I thank the panel for being here this morning. As the constituency MSP for Uddingston and Bellshill, I am delighted to hear the positive talk about North Lanarkshire Council. It is great that the council has committed to such challenging targets. A lot of local people might not recognise that names such as Airdrie and Glenboig come from Gaelic—and people in the area predominantly spoke Gaelic in the 11th and 12th centuries. People in the central belt forget that.

I am interested in the commitment in the NLC documents to equal respect—

**The Convener:** I am sorry, but could you come to a question, please?

**Stephanie Callaghan:** Yes. There is a commitment to equal respect for Gaelic and English. Jim Whannel has said that everyone who wishes to have their children educated in Gaelic can have that and that that is the aim. How far along the road do North Lanarkshire Council's plan and commitments take us if the council is successful in achieving that? How far does that plan get us towards the aim of parents being able to choose for their children at the age of five?

**Jim Whannel:** It absolutely does that as far as Gaelic-medium education is concerned. I met Comann Nam Pàrant Lannraig a' Tuath—the North Lanarkshire Comann Nam Pàrant group—

and one of the key things in the North Lanarkshire plan is that the council will work with parents and with Comann Nam Pàrant Lannraig a' Tuath. That will be a key element. There are a number of commitments from the council in the plan, and their full realisation will take place only if the local authority works in partnership with Comann Nam Pàrant Lannraig a' Tuath. We will support the local authority and Comann Nam Pàrant Lannraig a' Tuath to deliver that. The plan includes things that will definitely move Gaelic-medium education on if the commitments are delivered in the manner that I have described.

**Stephanie Callaghan:** Just to be specific, do you expect that, once the current plan concludes, the next plan will actually allow parents to have that choice for their children from five years of age? Do you expect things to move that quickly, or will things take a bit longer?

**Jim Whannel:** No—I expect that to move. In our view, if a family in North Lanarkshire selects Gaelic-medium education, they have the ability to get it. That might entail travel, however, which might be a disincentive. If there are more services in North Lanarkshire, as is the case in Glasgow, where there is a whole range of services, the need for travel will decrease. Therefore, the services themselves will become more attractive and the numbers will go up, as we have seen in Glasgow. There is a higher number of people in Glasgow wanting to access services that are more attractive, and that is the challenge for North Lanarkshire. New services that are developed will become more attractive and more people will access them. That will be good for the language, and it will be good for North Lanarkshire.

**The Convener:** Great. Thank you, Stephanie.

We will now move on to questions from Willie Rennie.

**Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD):** Thanks for what you do for the language. I can tell by your passion and enthusiasm this morning that you are great advocates for it.

I think that we all feel a bit uncomfortable that we are not conducting this session in the language—I think that it is a bit of an insult. To be honest, you should not need to repeat things in English. If I were you, I would be a little less diplomatic about that. Nevertheless, let us move on.

I am interested in the wider community engagement. I understand that we are making good progress in getting more learners but that we are not making much progress in people speaking the language at home. What can you do to make sure that we make that kind of progress?

**Mairi MacInnes:** You are looking at me.

**Willie Rennie:** You are in charge.

**Mairi MacInnes:** A lot of it is about confidence. It is also about success. Success breeds success, and the things that we are hearing about today are all about success. However, with success comes challenge and then comes opportunity, and so on.

There is no straight answer to your question, but, as more and more people are educated in the language, they will have that confidence. One of the challenges is the learner versus the native speaker scenario, which is the Jim Whannel versus me type of scenario. There needs to be a balance, and there needs to be a balance in the communities as well. We have been talking to many communities across the country, who respect and value each other. The rural communities, which are very sparsely populated, need people but they also need policies that will make that change. It is about the economy, it is about the impact of Gaelic, and it is about developing those communities so that they have confidence. With that confidence, they will be speaking the language, singing the language and seeing the economic impact of it. We see that particularly in our rural communities. The bòrd has about 50 officers, most of whom are at work in the Western Isles, and they are speaking the language with the young people. We think that we are breaking the back of it, and we are getting a better understanding, but more needs to be done. The bòrd is also getting closer to the communities, which means that we can bring messages from the communities to the Parliament—as we are doing with you today.

It is a progressive thing; there is no straight answer. I think that it is a case of keeping going, building confidence, showing where the difference is and telling the stories.

**Willie Rennie:** Do you think that there is a bit of a tension between people in those traditional communities and those who are learners? On the initiative to spread the language across the country, you talked about potentially losing a teacher from your community, who would go off and teach elsewhere. Is it resented locally that somehow people lose out because of the success of the language elsewhere?

**Mairi MacInnes:** Iain is itching to get in here, so I will let him have a go.

**Iain MacMillan:** You asked whether there are tensions, and I think that tensions are being created. Are there differences? Yes, there are differences.

Gaelic is a very interesting language, and there is an interesting discussion when it comes to learners and native speakers. I, too, am from a Gaelic community and Gaelic is my first language. Like a lot of people, I was not working in Gaelic

until very recently. For someone who was brought up in the language, in a community and with a tradition in which we were told constantly that, to get on in life, we had to get up and get out—we had to set the language aside and focus on English—there was a lack of confidence. I know that from my own experience. I was intimidated by people who had learned the language and who knew more words than I did—who knew the vocabulary and the various technical bits, which I still do not know and never will. However, I can speak the language comfortably and, as I use it more, I am becoming more used to doing that.

We have people in the same position as I was in—intimidated by people who have learned the language—and we have people who have learned the language but who are intimidated by people like me, because we have no problem with the sounds and we can speak to our heart's content and are quite comfortable with speaking the language. There is this strange situation whereby you have two sides who both think that the other side is better off and better than them. It is the only language that I know of in which people are obsessive about correctness when speaking it. If we were as obsessive about our use of English, none of us would speak it.

There is definitely a need to do something different in our traditional communities in order to increase confidence, but it is connected with everything else. It is not that there is a tension; it is about finding a way of encouraging people to relax so that we can use the language. I know that we are at the education committee and that the focus is on education, but there can be an assumption that the focus is always on learning, whereas those of us who were born and bred with Gaelic need to learn something different. We do not need to learn the mechanics of the language or the sound; we need to learn that there is value in what we have.

I still live in Stornoway, and I know an awful lot of people who will understand absolutely every word of Gaelic but who will not utter a word of it because they are petrified that, if they do, they will be criticised because of the culture that we have developed. We need to break away from that, move on and understand the value of using Gaelic—and it is valuable.

**Willie Rennie:** Surely, there cannot be anything more intimidating than Mairi MacInnes. [*Laughter.*]

There was a proposal—on Skye, possibly—for a community or a housing development just for the speakers of the language. Would you support something like that? Do you think that it would be a positive development?

**Mairi MacInnes:** We need to be very careful about things like that—very careful indeed. We

need to be very careful about how we attract people to the islands as well, and about how land is acquired and so on. I would say that it needs to be not about ruling anyone out, but about bringing many more in.

**The Convener:** Thank you for those answers. Looking at the clock, I am very aware that Graeme Dey has a couple of questions as well.

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** I will shrink them to one question and cut to the chase. My question follows on from Willie Rennie's line of questioning.

Mairi, you mentioned ferries. You will be aware, no doubt, that one of the many criticisms of the ferry delivery organisation is that none of the directors lives in the islands that they serve. There are also criticisms that some of the staff whose roles are not geographically specific are not based in the islands. How many of the people who are involved in your organisation are embedded either professionally or personally in the traditional Gaelic heartlands?

**Mairi MacInnes:** That is a complicated one. I was a teacher, so I will use the example of teaching. I know teachers who do not have any children but who are very good teachers. You do not have to be doing something yourself to know how to do it.

Scotland is really quite a small place, although it is surprising that people in the central belt know so little or experience so little in relation to travel issues. You have all been suffering from the train strike recently, which has been an awful thing for travel. However, that sort of situation is daily life in my community. I come away a lot, and, every time that I go away, I have to download the app and check it every day to see what is happening. I am open about the question of whether things would be different if those people lived in the islands.

However, I really feel that the system is broken in terms of the ferries, in particular, and that something needs to be done. People in the islands know what they want. Many of them are mariners and are experienced in lots of ways, but they are not being listened to—or they are being listened to, but nothing is changing. We need to see change.

11:00

**Graeme Dey:** Perhaps I did not pitch my question sufficiently clearly. My question is about your organisation. I recognise that we are talking about a national plan to deliver the language across Scotland, but, for my understanding, what percentage of the individuals who are involved in the bòrd are actually embedded in the traditional communities? I see that you have offices in

Stornoway, Inverness and Glasgow. What is the geographic spread of the people who work for the bòrd?

**Iain MacMillan:** Four of our officers are now working in Lewis, but the only one who is actually in Stornoway is me. We have taken advantage of the challenges that we experienced with Covid, with everybody working from home. All four have been recruited since then. There are now more opportunities for people from Gaelic communities to work for Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as we are no longer restricted to our offices in Inverness and Glasgow. I would say this, I suppose, but I would look to encourage that. I think that it is better for us to have more people embedded.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig itself represents only a part of what we use the funding for. Of the funding that comes to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which is 19 per cent, less than half is spent on Bòrd na Gàidhlig itself. At one point last year, we were funding 59 officers in Gaelic roles, and half of those were in the traditional communities but working for other organisations and Gaelic bodies. One of the challenges that we have relates to collaboration and ensuring that we are working well together, and it helps us if some of our officers are located in the same communities. It is all very well having the organisational relationships, but I would emphasise that the personal relationships add significant value. We are moving in the right direction on that, and we will have opportunities to extend that in the future.

**Mairi MacInnes:** One interesting collaboration involves our work with Community Land Scotland, which very much impacts on the traditional communities. We are working with it closely to have more impact on rural communities.

**The Convener:** That is great. Thank you for that.

Mairi, you gave us an advertisement for your consultation earlier, and you encouraged us all to take part, so I take this opportunity to ask—looking at the draft national plan—what measures will be in place to determine whether there will be an increase in the use of Gaelic and in the learning of Gaelic. What levels of increase would you consider to be a success?

You said that only 19 per cent of the funding for Gaelic comes to the bòrd, so lots of other activities obviously go on. How will the bòrd evaluate the contribution of all the various activities in the plan, including your individual activities, in delivering your overall aims? I know that that is a massive last question to lay on you, but, if we could get some sort of feedback from you, that would be great.

**Mairi MacInnes:** Iain MacMillan is a mathematician, so I will hand over to him.



**Iain MacMillan:** It is tempting to respond to that by pointing out that it is the Government's plan, not ours, and that the Government approved it. One of the things that we have to do, which I think is mentioned in the briefing from the Scottish Parliament information centre, relates to measuring outcomes. That is very easy to say. I can say from my experience in the public sector that we have been talking about outcomes for a long time. To be honest, we have got nowhere close to identifying and measuring what those outcomes are. One of the challenges that we have is the timescale in which we plan and the timescale in which we measure outcomes. With the plans that we have at the moment, we have a lot of things in place, but is five years long enough to be able to judge the impact of the plan in relation to outcomes?

The social attitudes survey is one way of looking at measuring those outcomes. The interesting thing there is that the timespan between the two comparative surveys is nine years. In the legislation, is there a need to set out that our planning needs to be over the longer term? Do we need to have something that is overarching?

We have to become much more focused on what we achieve with the money that we spend. We need to move the focus away from the money. Yes, everybody wants more money, and we could do with more money, but seeing the change in attitudes should give us a bit of hope that we can maybe be a bit bolder in setting those outcomes.

I will do the same as I have done in all the consultation events that I have been involved in: I will put your question back to you, because it is a consultation process. Are there things that you, as a committee or as individuals, believe that we should be measuring? Are there measures that are important to you individually or as a committee? We have been asking our communities the same thing.

It is not a case of just plucking things out of the air and saying that we have talked. When we talk about outcomes, our natural instinct is always to resort back to what we know and understand, such as the number of pupils in Gaelic-medium education or the number of teachers in Gaelic-medium education and their availability. However, those are not outcomes; they are outputs. In some cases, they are inputs. We have to move our conversation on so that we can develop real outcomes.

We have been talking about this at the bòrd and have been looking to work with the Government to develop some of our ideas. On the question of how we reach a judgment, at the end of the day, we have two prime aims: to increase the number of people who use Gaelic and to increase the number of people who are learning Gaelic. We just

need to find measures for those two things and the right timescale over which to show progress. There is little point in our setting outcomes for a one-year period or a five-year period if it is going to take us six, seven, eight or nine years to achieve those outcomes. We need to develop that conversation—and it is a conversation.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Iain. I am very encouraged to hear that you are genuinely interested in listening to people's views and suggestions in your consultation exercise. I am really pleased to hear that, so thank you very much.

With that, sadly, the clock has chimed and we have reached the conclusion of our session. Thank you all for coming along and for your time today. The public part of our meeting is now at an end and we will consider our final agenda items in private.

11:08

*Meeting continued in private until 12:24.*



This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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