



## Pàrantan Gàidhlig Dùn Èideann

### **Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)**

**Annual General Meeting Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2018**

### **Annual Report**

#### **Introduction**

Comann nam Pàrant Dùn Èideann (CnPDE) is the representative organisation for parents with children at all stages of Gaelic - Medium Education (GME) in Edinburgh and the Lothians. It aims to promote and develop GME throughout the region. All GME parents in Edinburgh and the Lothians are ordinary members of Comann nam Pàrant. The group is part of the national organisation, Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta (CnP Nàiseanta).

Comann nam Pàrant is a constituted voluntary organisation, with its activities funded primarily by Bord na Gàidhlig (BnG). Comann nam Pàrant is managed by a committee, including office bearers. The committee serves for a term of one year before standing down at each AGM. All committee positions are open for election at the AGM.

Comann nam Pàrant held open meetings during 2017 and 2018.

#### **Review and Developments May 2017-June 2018**

Demand for (GME) continues to grow in Edinburgh. Numbers entering GME are increasing substantially. With this success comes the issue of matching demand with teacher supply. The imbalance in the teacher/pupil ratio currently apparent within GME continues to have consequences for the quality of the immersion experience. CnPDE has campaigned for strategic decisions regarding the GME workforce to try to make this a priority for Scottish Government (SG), as well as other decision makers. Our focus this year, as in previous years, has been very much geared towards finding a solution to this challenge. In Edinburgh, we continue to represent parents in a joint process with Edinburgh Council to establish a strategic solution for GME development. Nationally, we continue to work with CnP (Nàiseanta) in discussions with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Scottish Government

## **Cròileagan**

Cròileagan Dhùn Èideann is made up of three separate groups, each managed by its own committee. Cròileagan play leaders are employed by Edinburgh Council to provide Gaelic activities at the playgroups. The role of these play leaders is crucial in the development of Gaelic throughout the city.

The three Cròileagan groups in Edinburgh are based at, Tollcross, Leith and Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (TnP). Cròileagan sessions and figures are stable with new families coming almost every week which replaces any that move on to Sgoil-àraich. There are around 120 children regularly attending and six sessions (unchanged for the last few years). The sessions at TnP and Leith have been particularly successful and the sessions at Tollcross have a regular attendance of families and though smaller in size allow for and achieve a greater use of Gaelic amongst parents, carers and children. It is apparent that of the estimated 120 children attending the sessions, the majority are local to. Numbers attending increase on a weekly basis.

The number of play leaders has increased during the last session with all sessions now supported by at least two Play leaders and some supported by three. This has increased the level of Gaelic being used at all sessions and allowed for better organisation and welcome innovations such as a weekly newsletter/activity sheet.

It needs to be remembered though that as CnPDE is dependant on parent/carer involvement the role of Croilegan committees needs to be fostered and encouraged by the play leaders.

Through the City of Edinburgh (CEC) Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) we have gained recognition that any expansion of GME will necessitate an expansion of Croilegan sessions in areas of the city where nursery and primary will be delivered.

## **Sgoil-àraich**

Demand for Sgoil-àraich exceeded supply so that a situation arose where over 25 children seeking and entitled to GME nursery provision were not allocated places. Campaigning by CnPDE means that partner provider provision using Oganan Dun Èideann is now being explored and will hopefully be in place by August. This will potentially be at TnP but other locations alongside future primary provision are also being considered in line with proposals in the GLP. Provision of nursery places for children not living in the city of Edinburgh remains an issue that needs to be addressed while the catchment for primary remains Edinburgh and the Lothians this is not the case at nursery. Given the importance of early years language acquisition this needs to be addressed.

We have a commitment in the GLP that nursery will be expanded alongside any future primary provision.

## **Primary**

The success of TnP continues to produce high admission numbers for entry to Clas 1. The intake for C1 is projected at 66 children. The pressure put upon teachers to sustain the immersion experience for the children is significant. Teacher supply continues to present problems at this level. High admission numbers create a need that can only be fulfilled by diverting resources from other areas of the school. The impact of this has become apparent in the levels of fluency sustained by those children who have received tuition from a non-Gaelic speaking member of staff. CnPDE is concerned about this development and is focused on finding a solution. Both at local level and nationally, CnPDE has communicated this concern not only to CEC but also to BnG and SG. We will continue to liaise with such relevant bodies until the situation is resolved.

Currently we are engaged through CEC Gaelic implementation Group (GIG) and the Short Life Working Group (SLWG) set up by GIG to bring forward proposals for the growth of GME and how that will be delivered by the recruitment and retention of GME staff.

At the first meeting of SLWG we were informed that the projected staffing levels for TnP are as follows:

21.4 fulltime staff required for next session

19.34 currently in place

20.2 staff in place including two supply teachers who will continue to deliver.

There is a current shortfall of one fulltime teacher.

This breaks down as

12.98 fluent speakers delivering GME

2.57 Gaelic learners delivering GME

2.2 Gaelic learners working towards delivering GME

2.2 Teachers with no Gaelic ability.

All PSAs currently employed are fluent Gaelic speakers.

How expansion of GME might proceed is currently under discussion and proposals include a second location for another primary school in the city. Proposed locations should be presented in August /September. This would naturally need teacher supply issues to be resolved satisfactorily.

We have maintained very close links with our CnP colleagues in Glasgow so that we may share experiences and information regarding expansion of GME in the primary sector. Glasgow is about to open a third primary school and discussion has covered how successful the process has been as well as looking at the challenges presented regarding teacher supply.

### **Secondary**

GME pupils in Edinburgh currently attend a mainstream high school James Gillespie's High School (JGHS). This school is the sole provider of secondary GME in Edinburgh with most of its GME pupils having completed their primary education at TnP.

### **Secondary Staffing**

Although the school benefits from having a very supportive Gaelic-speaking head teacher, Delivery of GME during the last year has been less than satisfactory. There are currently two teachers delivering Gàidhlig and no teachers delivering any GME subjects. One of these teachers is now on maternity leave and while cover has been found that teacher has not yet started.

Efforts made by CnPDE through GIG and SWLG have resulted in CEC focusing on immediate efforts to increase the number of GME staff. This will potentially result in increasing the number of GME staff from effectively one to six GME teachers by autumn.

Broken down as follows:

1. Current member of staff
2. Maternity cover for current member of staff
3. GME capable PE teacher currently not delivering to GME pupils
4. GME capable Art teacher currently not delivering to GME pupils
5. Use existing approved funding to appoint a GME certificated subject teacher
6. A 23-month secondment for a senior GME teacher with additional management responsibilities. This individual would begin the process of building up the GME unit at JGHS in advance of moving to any future provision.

We recognize this as a good beginning towards delivery of full GME immersion teaching at secondary but continue to exert pressure on CEC to improve this particularly in relation to curriculum expansion. Through GIG and SLWG we have been asking for other initiatives to increase the number of GME teachers and to retain teachers already working in Edinburgh. In addition we believe this it will require intervention from the Scottish Government to direct resources in a manner that allows this challenge to be overcome.

### **Capacity issues JGHS**

CEC have stated that by the August 2019 intake JGHS will have exceeded its current capacity of 1300. At a meeting of families from all feeder primaries to the school CEC gave a commitment that no catchment pupils would be refused a place and efforts would be made to increase the capacity of the school to allow for this. It was made clear that the catchment school for TnP is JGHS and GME pupils have this commitment in exactly the same manner as all other catchment pupils.

Further to this, a commitment was given by CEC that GME secondary provision would continue at JGHS until such time that an alternative proposal acceptable to GME families was brought forward.

To deal with capacity issues at JGHS a working group is being formed to investigate suitable proposals. GME representatives will be part of this group. It is envisaged that a solution providing permanent expansion of capacity either on site or off site will be found. As capacity will be exceeded before this can be achieved, a temporary solution will be in place by August 2019.

### **GME Growth and Development**

Following a meeting of GIG attended by BnG representatives, a Short Life working group has been set up consisting of Convener of Education, Senior Council officers, Head teachers, GME representatives, BnG director of Education, Oganan representative and is chaired by the Gaelic Champion and vice Convener of Education.

This group has been formed to look at teacher recruitment and retention and the growth of GME from 0-18. They will have an input into the strategic plan for future development of GME 0-18 in Edinburgh. The group has been set up along similar lines to the working group that has successfully delivered GME in Glasgow. As BnG stated at the time the success of the group in Glasgow was based on senior management buy-in and an understanding that this group would make decisions and that those decisions would be delivered. We continue to monitor the working of SLWG to make sure that this is the case.

Initiatives which have already taken place or are ongoing include:

- GME families' engagement event with Head Teacher and Parent representative from Glasgow to share how GME development is happening there.
- Leading a fact-finding delegation to Glasgow to try to learn from best practice that is delivering successful GME. This has already led to the acceptance by CEC of the need to have a 'grow your own' policy for teacher recruitment.
- A survey of all education staff to assess levels of Gaelic ability and interest in working in GME.
- Meeting between acting head of schools estates and GME representatives to discuss possible location of second GME primary and catchment implications for this.
- Setting up a partner provider arrangement with Oganan to allow for expansion of early years provision at TnP and other locations in the city.
- Continuing to campaign to have a corporate buy-in for Gaelic at the highest level in CEC to promote and make visible Gaelic in recognition that corporate support and community building initiatives make Edinburgh an attractive place for Gaelic speakers and in particular teachers to live and work.
- Creation of a senior Service Manager position within CEC to develop and deliver GME.

### **Consultation responses**

A great deal of the work done by Comann nam Pàrant both locally and nationally, concerns the review and subsequent response necessary to consultations issued by Scottish Government and responses to Gaelic Language plans which many organisations have a statutory obligation to produce. Development issues regarding GME must take priority and all responses must have parent consensus prior to submission. This year we have responded to the following consultations and attended workshops on relevant GME issues. All documents are available electronically.

This year we produced responses to two consultations and one informal consultation.

- Scottish Governments "empowering schools" consultation.  
This is proposal to bring forward legislation to increase the power of Head Teachers and to join up local education authorities into larger education initiatives. CnPDE's main response focused on the lack of clarity for GME within the legislation and potential conflict and confusion this might have for existing legislation. We asked that consideration be given to this before the legislation is brought forward.
- CEC Gaelic Language plan 2018-2022 (GLP)

Following publication of the CEC draft Gaelic Language plan and a series of engagement workshops with GME families. CnPDE committee drafted a response to the consultation. We called for significant commitments to be included within the GLP for GME and Gaelic. This was circulated to GME families and sent to CEC.

In addition to this we campaigned to ensure there was a high response to the consultation to indicate to CEC the level of support that exists for Gaelic. This resulted in nearly 600 responses with an 87% approval rate for the GLP. We express our thanks to all those who took the time to respond. Demonstrating our community's willingness to engage with these issues is crucial to convincing CEC and SG of the need to support Gaelic.

The GLP was approved at a recent Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee and has been sent to BnG for final approval. Campaigning and engagement in co-production by CnPDE has ensured that significant proposals for GME have been included in the plan. This strengthens the position of Gaelic and GME in Edinburgh and allows us to exert further pressure on CEC to deliver the commitments they have made in their own plan.

- Informal consultation on Secondary GME

This was not a very successful process. CEC brought forward proposals to relocate secondary GME to Drummond Community High School (DCHS) with a view to this location becoming a dedicated GME high school. As this proposal involved the closure of DCHS unsurprisingly it was met with considerable resistance from Drummond families. CnPDE engaged with DCHS PC throughout so that both sides were aware of the others position and the sensitivities involved especially around the many children affected by the proposal. The resistance to the proposal at times led to some un-helpful negative comments about Gaelic, GME, and the Gaelic community. While we are unfortunately well used to this type of distasteful commentary it was most disappointing that CEC failed to condemn this type of commentary.

Bowing to pressure from Drummond families, CEC gave them a guarantee that they would not close DCHS effectively removing the proposal within the informal consultation before it had even been presented to GME families.

At a subsequent meeting with GME families CEC agreed to produce a strategic review with concrete proposals for GME 0-18 in Edinburgh. That review is expected to be presented to GME families in August/September 2018 and will be brought to the Education and Families committee in October 2018.

### **Deputations**

In addition to regular meetings CnPDE also made three deputations on behalf of GME families to Council committees. Doing so is an opportunity for GME families to have their voices heard in democratic decisions that affect us.

Preparing consultations, written and oral responses to deputations takes up a considerable amount of time and is done entirely on a voluntary basis. This group of volunteers is small and urgently needs to be expanded if we are to achieve successful GME for all our children.

### **Social and Promotional Events**

A family barbecue was arranged in early August and was not very well attended although enjoyed by those who were there. While it is well recognised that community events like this are important not least as any extra-curricular event to help make Gaelic visible, if they are to be successful they require a level of organisation that may be beyond the current capacity of the active committee members not least given the current level of involvement with CEC.

Consideration should be given to seeking further committee members who are willing to take on organising social and Promotional events. No promotional events took place this year other than an address by Convenor to new C1 parents.

### **Communication and Media**

Facebook and Twitter continue to be most useful tools for contacting the parent body and sharing information regarding teaching vacancies and consultation responses. It is also useful for extending and maintaining links with the wider Gaelic community. We have also monitored Gaelic related articles in newspapers and have responded appropriately to these. We also respond to surveys relevant to issues surrounding GME. We effectively used these methods alongside word of mouth and flyers to increase responses to the Draft GLP consultation.

We have created a blog spot where documents and communications can be posted. This has proved a vital communication tool. It would benefit from some input from individuals with IT expertise to help improve and organise it. Any offers of assistance with this would be most welcome.

### **Meetings**

CnPDE has attended meetings at CEC, to represent parents. Within CEC, the Gaelic GIG continues to meet to focus on Gaelic and delivery of the Gaelic Language Plan and wider community participation is being sought to widen the representation of GIG and to strengthen its focus in terms of Arts and community .



GME representatives have presented Good parental representation is essential to ensure that issues are raised and addressed correctly. Successful expansion and consolidation of GME within Edinburgh remain key goals. CEC is currently preparing a draft strategy regarding the future of GME in Edinburgh.

We continue to support and liaise with the PC at TnP to ensure that expansion at primary level is carefully monitored and that the immersion quality for children remains high.

### **Finance**

Comann nam Pàrant is financed through grant funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and donations from specific fundraising events. Grant funding is extremely specific in nature and in this way we are able to support projects such as Sràdagan and those which involve the wider Gaelic community. Social events involving families may also fall under the Grant remit.

Funding must also cover communication costs incurred through domain hosting, email and printing.

It is also used to present a Gaelic dictionary to all S7 pupils as the leave TnP

The details of the current finances are included in a separate report prepared by our Treasurer, Wilma Laird.

### **National Gaelic Organisation**

Comann nam Pàrant has been represented at meetings of Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta) by Bob McGowan and Fiona Stephen. Fiona is our local representative and Bob has just stepped down as National Convenor. We would like to express our gratitude to both parties for attending meetings on our behalf. A summary of the Comann nam Pàrant (N) meetings will be provided by Bob, and a copy will be made available after the meeting.

### **Conclusion**

Since formation of the current committee much has been achieved.

A significant amount of work has been done to lay the foundation for enhanced GME 0-18 but nothing concrete has been delivered other than a guarantee that the status quo will remain.

The next year presents further challenges for CnPDE. Demand for GME continues to grow. As it grows we need to continue to work constructively with CEC to ensure delivery and in order to do that we ask for support of parents and carers through attending meetings involvement in the committee and practical offers of support and expertise. This, in combination with a coherent and cohesive approach with full parent consensus remains at the core of any successful campaign.