

GME Update Meeting at Taobh na Pàirce 22 January 2020

The meeting was chaired by Kevin Leetion, Convenor of Comann nam Pàrant

Presentations were given by:

Bethan Owen – Quality Improvement Officer 3-18, City of Edinburgh Council

Crawford McGhie, Acting Head of Operational Support, City of Edinburgh Council

Wilson McLeod– University of Edinburgh, Bernie O'Rourke, University of Glasgow and Joe Simpson, University of Edinburgh

Donald MacDonald, Headteacher and Seonaidh Charity, Curriculum Lead: Gaelic, James Gillespie's High School

Bethan Owen – Quality Improvement Officer 3-18, City of Edinburgh Council

Bethan Owen highlighted the work that was currently being undertaken at the Council this included:

Future planning for the expansion of Early Years, the development of a second primary school, a dedicated secondary school and the development of Gaelic in community and the creation of a Gaelic Community Hub.

The Council are engaging with the National Framework – Faster Rate of Progress and are developing national and local authority links to develop GME with a focus on:

- Teacher recruitment and retention
- Community engagement
- Digital and media
- Economy and labour market
- Participation

Previously, teaching staff in Edinburgh were surveyed to evaluate Gaelic language skills and interest among EME teachers within the local authority. Agreement has been reached that staff in other local authorities can also be surveyed.

Corporate Gaelic Development Officer (GDO) Ann McCluskey is now in post.

Strategic Leadership Forum was established in December 2019. Bethan also mentioned a GME Leadership Team.

We have requested the slides from her presentation and will send a link to these if it becomes available.

Crawford McGhie, Acting Head of Operational Support, City of Edinburgh Council

Crawford updated the meeting on the current situation and timeframe:

Feb 2020: Sites/Locations for secondary school identified, funding identified, statutory consultation

Nov 2020: Design, development and construction begins

Aug 2024: dedicated GME Secondary opens

Site options are:

Co-location: Liberton and Wester Hailes Education Centre

Standalone sites: Granton Waterfront and Castlebrae

Aug 2019 – temporary classrooms at JGHS installed (now completed)

Aug 2021 – Aug 2024 – Darroch as a short medium term solution with a Gaelic focus (work on this is underway).

Assessment of the four options

The Council are confident that the parental criteria can be achieved at any of these locations. (The parental criteria paper for the evaluation of a secondary location can be viewed on the Comann nam Pàrant website:

<https://cnpduneideannblog.wordpress.com/documents/>

For reference the key parental criteria were:

- *That any location should support the educational aims of high quality education within a Gaelic immersion environment and should provide a permanent home for GME secondary.*
- *In terms of geography, the specific needs of a city-wide catchment need to be carefully considered.*
- *Design and environment play a large part in successful education, and this should be fully considered; alongside considerations of impact on wider environment.*

The Scottish Government has released a national strategy for estate facilities being community assets. (The Learning Estate Strategy is online at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-learning-estate-strategy-connecting-people-places-learning/>) Learning environments should be considered in terms of the wider space – ie: shared access for the community. Different zones with a site should provide shared access – theatres, sports facilities, dining halls can be used in a dedicated way but the learning/education estate should be viewed as a community resource

Assessing the site suitability for a city wide catchment

All were considered peripheral except Liberton which was considered central as it is

on a strategic travel route for 2030. Liberton was considered the best site for a city wide catchment.

Assessing the design and environment criteria

The Council feel these are achievable at all locations. Environmental issues are top priority, energy efficiency. etc. There will also be the opportunity for more sporting facilities and more outdoor space at the new site than there currently is at JGHS.

A Gaelic hub can be achieved at any site – at a larger site this becomes easier to accommodate larger numbers of people at events.

Another guiding principle from the Scottish Government is to see further and higher education institutions integrated into the site and could be considered as part of the campus.

Assessing the site deliverability:

Liberton the best opportunity. The Council has land at Granton but it will incur an additional cost to the council to use the land which has already been earmarked for housing – similar at Castlebrae. An additional £5 million pounds would need to be found to pay for the lost revenue from the sale of the land for a standalone.

Scottish Government view Liberton as more aligned with their thinking on creating community hubs than Wester Hailes.

An Initial design for the co-location site at Liberton was displayed, with the caveat that it was only indicative of what can be delivered.

Liberton school building is replaced but the sports block remains

There are three buildings; Liberton School on one side, with a shared community zone in the middle (with library services, café and other options), and the GME School on the other side.

There would be three distinct entrances.

It would be a three storey building. They are looking at flow of people around the spaces.

It would promote faculty based learning with access to outdoor space for outdoor learning.

Assessing the financial implications:

The estimated cost of standalone for 800/900 pupils - £40million

Estimated cost of Liberton redevelopment = £50million

Total = £90million

Co-located site estimated at – £75million

ie: a standalone would incur an additional cost of £15million

The Officer indicated that the Scottish Government are not supporting a standalone option. They are keen to fund a number of projects which are shared campus/co-located. Therefore, for the Council to go with a standalone option would be to move 40million from other projects or borrow 40 million at a cost of 2.6million per annum which would require cuts to other services to accommodate this additional loan.

A slide was shown outlining the next 10 year capital investment projects for education. A Gaelic High School was not listed on this. It details projects worth £451.612 million over ten years.

We have requested the slides from his presentation and will send a link to these if it becomes available.

Wilson Macleod– University of Edinburgh, Bernie O'Rourke, University of Glasgow and Joe Simpson University of Edinburgh

A presentation was made on the interim report on Best Practice in Language Immersion and the Issue of Co-Located Schools Summary

The interim report can be read on the Comann nam Pàrant blog:
<https://cnpduneideannblog.wordpress.com/documents/>

The interim report concludes:

Though not definitive, evidence suggests that the ideal model for an immersion school would be a stand-alone institution so as to maximise the immersion experience and to ensure maximum levels of exposure to the language. The international literature on language revitalisation highlights the importance of creating 'breathing spaces' (Fishman 1991) for the minority language – spaces in which there is less pressure for speakers (who are also speakers of the dominant language) to switch languages (see Cenoz and Gorter 2017 for Basque; O'Rourke 2019 for Galician). As such, while this need not imply that a hypothetical co-location model would not be successful, careful planning would be required to ensure that the school remained a 'breathing space' for the immersion language.

No two sets of co-located schools are the same. The extent to which facilities and spaces are shared varies from site to site. However, a recurring theme in co-located schools in Scotland is the co-location of a Roman Catholic school alongside a non-denominational school, where one of the express intentions of the co-location model is that the interaction of the two school communities will foster cohesion. This is a markedly different aspiration to that of minority language revitalisation and will be an important variable in considering the potential impact of co-location for the Edinburgh GME high school.

The interim research recommends that if a co-located site is selected, the design should follow a model similar to a school in Wales (Gwent Is Coed - where the two schools remain completely separate) to preserve the immersion environment and provide 'breathing spaces' for Gaelic.

Donald MacDonald, Headteacher James Gillespie's High School

Donald MacDonald asked for us to pause for thought and not forget children who will be transitioning to high school in the intervening years. There are currently 130 GME at JGHS and this will be closer to 200 when the new school opens in 2024 and we must not lose sight of the children transitioning between now and 2024

Current P3s will be the first year to go to the new school.

He spoke of the history of using Darroch as an annexe and the anxiety caused by this approach. However, when Darroch was last used as an annexe the converse happened and attainment rose.

The transition planning to the new school is underway and discussions on Curriculum, staffing and indeed uniform all will need to be discussed. The focus tonight is on the Curriculum.

Seonaidh Charity, Curriculum Lead: Gaelic, James Gillespie's High School

There are now 10 staff delivering GME at JGHS.

In S1 + S2 they receive:

Gaelic, RMPS, Geography, History, Modern Studies, Science, Drama, PE and Art

S3/4 – Gaelic, History, Modern Studies

S5+ Higher Gaelic / Advanced Higher Gaelic.

They are focusing on incremental expansion. They don't want to move too quickly, to ensure that attainment doesn't drop and that the teachers and pupils are ready for the developments.

There is no blueprint for developing a secondary curriculum at High School. Glasgow is currently Scotland's only standalone Gaelic school so they are sharing information and working towards developing the curriculum.

The input of Comann nam Pàrant in encouraging History through the medium of Gaelic at the S3/S4 level helped shape the curriculum. The success of History through Gaelic at S3/S4 has shown the importance of seeking input from parents and pupils.

They are working with the Scottish Qualifications Authority on qualifications. There are currently not many subjects that can be taken through the medium of Gaelic. However, you can still have Gaelic speaker teaching for an exam set in English.

There is a National lead on the development of subjects so they move smoothly in the senior phase.

James Gilliespie's has a good reputation nationally and is seen as an attractive place to work. Teachers are provided with additional development time to develop their own resources in Gaelic. They are working with Stòrlann to develop material and resources ahead of developing qualifications.

Eleven EME teachers at JGHS have joined a Gaelic class – enthusiasm is spreading.

Professional learning

They are growing a body of work in developing professional learning -and they are working together with Taobh na Pàirce on development days to meet the different learning needs of the teaching staff. They need a number of pathways to fluency for staff and to increase pedagogy in fluent speakers.

S1 Feedback on term 1

Having fun!
Nice teachers
Good range of subjects
Some subjects more difficult than others.

The transition plan with TnP means JGHS can plan for interests and needs before the P7s arrive. S1 has been a smooth year as a result.

Going forward they are focusing on:

- The 'why' of GME – children need to see the value of it so they are confident in using the language going forwards outwith the school environment.
- Support For Learning & Support For Pupils
- Extra-curricular programme. They are keen to develop this and would like to hear from parents who could help with this.

The shared vision for GME is very exciting. There is a great journey ahead of us.

We have requested the slides from his presentation and will send a link to these if it becomes available.

Questions from the floor

How did you reach the decisions about whether the criteria were green/orange/red on the site options?

Crawford McGhie: The Council believe that the criteria can be delivered at any location.

His experience regarding funding indicates that Liberton can be delivered whilst the other locations will prove to be problematic.

To what extent has where current children live been taken into account – if there are more kids from north Edinburgh in the school should that be considered?

Crawford McGhie: Just looking city wide. They have not looked at postcodes. There is a build-up of children from Leith in the school but the catchment is city wide

Second primary option where would this be?

Crawford McGhie: Intention is that Darroch becomes the second primary school over time. Another statutory consultation would need to be taken and outline transition arrangements between the schools.

Can we have the Welsh option on the Liberton site?

(The Welsh model was part of the research interim report. It comprised two completely separate schools on the same site.)

Ian Perry: The Welsh model can't be recommended. It's not appropriate for the site. Liberton needs to be a Hub which is why the Scottish Government will give it the money as it provides other services too.

Ian Perry: Council need to know fairly soon if the GME community are supporting the Liberton option so the Council can secure the funding. They have allocated the money to start the process and the Scottish government have given a clear sign that they would support a co-location.

If parents want a different site that is private it needs to be purchased and that will cost even more.

The only way to deliver one of the standalone options is to take the money away from one of the schools on the 10 year investment list or for the GME community to lobby all the political parties to secure an increase in borrowing to find the additional funds to build a standalone.

The chair called the meeting to end with a commitment to have a follow-up meeting soon to continue discussions.