



cnpduneideann@gmail.com
By email

31 August 2021

Alison is Iain còire

Re: Examination of new sites and delay to commencement of statutory consultation

Thank you both for meeting with Shirley-Anne Somerville and for sharing your letter with us. Collaboration between the Scottish Government and City of Edinburgh Council in relation to the new school is very welcome indeed, particularly in light of the SNP's manifesto commitment. We welcome both the decision to consider the two additional sites and to delay commencement of the statutory consultation until these have been properly examined. Thank you also for meeting with representatives from Comann nam Pàrant and the parent councils of Taobh na Pàirce and James Gillespie's High School on 16 August 2021.

We look forward to receiving further information, both on the new potential sites and on the project overall, including information on the educational offer, evaluation criteria, finance and timescales.

Educational Offer

As mentioned in our written and verbal reports to the Children, Education and Families Committee in April 2021 and highlighted on many occasions prior to that, substantial issues remain unresolved regarding the educational plans for a new GME high school. We require detailed plans about recruitment and retention of teaching staff to deliver on the ambitions set out by the Council. Details of the proposed curriculum offer and how the Council plans to provide a depth and breadth of curriculum from 2025 onwards are also required but have not been provided. Comann nam Pàrant has requested, over many years, the development of a strategic plan for the growth of GME across the city so that parents can identify the rationale for the decisions that are being made about their children's education. We see this as critical to the success of GME in the long term and crucial for parents to be able to make an informed decision as regards the best site for the proposed GME school.

We welcome the inclusion of the Education Improvement Plan 2021-2024 in the agenda of the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on Tuesday 24 August 2021. The Plan includes the GME-specific outcome of "Expansion of and improvements in the delivery of Gaelic Medium Education" and we would like to request that progress on this outcome and interim reporting be part of the Gaelic Implementation Group meetings on a regular basis.

Evaluation Criteria

We reiterate that any proposal requires sufficient detail in order that families understand the choice they are making and therefore engage with the process. Parents need to have information on the

Council's assessment criteria around each of the sites – what these criteria are, why these criteria are used and the rationale for the scoring of each site against the criteria. Parents are entitled to detailed information about the educational offer and timescales, as well as fair and unbiased assessments of the sites, in order to make an informed choice. This information should be easy to understand and appraise. Transparency in the Council's decision-making process, alongside adequate information and clear communication, would contribute to families engaging with the statutory consultation.

We would like to highlight here that Comann nam Pàrant, in collaboration with teachers, families and children, already created a [shared vision, set of priorities and criteria](#) in June 2019 for the development of a GME High School for Edinburgh. We reiterate that these remain the core principles guiding Comann nam Pàrant and the families we represent and provide the framework through which we engage with the process.

Finance

We would welcome greater insight on the financial aspect of the project, such as the available budget and the projected costs for a new school (including the build and any potential additional land costs for each site). We also seek clarification regarding the £10m allocated for GME at Darroch and how this will be used to support GME at any proposed new site.

We would also request greater clarity on the budget which is being provided to JGHS to support the expansion of GME staffing at JGHS and how that will be developed over the coming years to allow the increase in staff numbers set out in the Council's plans to take place in practice. This will be key to the development of GME at secondary level.

Timescales

We would be grateful for details of the revised timetable. The report submitted by the Council to the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 24 August suggested that that primary provision will be pushed back by a year. We seek clarification on the timescales concerning the expansion of nursery and primary provision. As you are aware, such provision offers a significant opportunity for growing the GME secondary school cohort and facilitating the critical mass necessary for the success of the new school.

Fairness of Spend

We wish to highlight our concern around repeated use of the term 'fairness of spend' when referring to the cost of a new GME high school. Looking at the March 2021 Report of the Social Justice and Fairness Commission "A Route Map to a Fair Independent Scotland", there is no mention of Gàidhlig language support and it is conspicuous by omission. We would welcome clarification as to what is meant by "fairness of spend" in this case and how fairness is assessed and applied, especially when referring to the provision of education in Gàidhlig, a language that has historically been underfunded and overlooked, and as such is long overdue proper investment.

Please be assured that we will continue to work with all partners and families throughout this process to achieve our collective ambition for Gaelic education in Edinburgh.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd,

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)

