



**Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)
Annual Report
2021**

Convenor's Report

Introduction

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) (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.

The following report is a summary of the work Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) has undertaken on behalf of all GME parents and young people. It has been an exceptionally busy year for a small group of parent volunteers.

Activity this year

In November 2020, only a few weeks after the AGM, the GME community was presented by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) with a 'pre-consultation' document on the development of Gaelic Medium Education. This offered a time-limited opportunity to provide feedback on the proposals and options to support the Council in deciding what proposal may be taken forward to statutory consultation. The document restated much of the information parents had received in January/February 2020 with additional information and considerations given to possible proposals. The development of a GME High School was an opportunity the parents had been campaigning for and this report picked up the conversations which started pre-Covid-19.

As part of the 'pre-consultations', two public meetings were held by the Council to offer further detail around the possible proposals. In addition to the Council-held meetings, Comann nam Pàrant held a parent meeting early December 2020. This was an opportunity for parents to come together and express their views on the three questions we posed:

- What do we like about the proposal?
- What concerns do we have about the proposal?
- What measures might allay those concerns?

In addition to the online meeting, Comann nam Pàrant ran a survey which received a total of 157 responses. From the information received from parents at the meeting and the survey, a report for submission was created. This can be found on our website.¹ What was clear was a concern about transitions, location and shared campus. Overall, between the parent meeting and survey results, the parent body was far from believing that the offers within the 'pre-consultation' document met the priorities for a GME offer for our young people.

¹ <https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/comann-nam-parant-submission-to-informal-review-for-gme-high-school-11-december-2020.pdf> accessed 16/11/21

Following the 'pre-consultation', a summary report was published by the Council in February 2021 which was a brief document outlining some of the areas which would be covered in a more expansive report. The final report for the 'informal consultation' was published in March 2021. It was detailed and answered many (though not all) questions that parents had. However, the report also raised additional questions.

Comann nam Pàrant held a further meeting late March 2021 to reflect on this outcome report of the 'informal consultation' and hear from the parental body how the report had been received. At this meeting, the focus was on the following six areas:

- Impact on language immersion
- Location
- Planning
- Recruitment and retention of teaching staff
- Impact on S1 and S2 cohort (could a second primary be established sooner)
- Any other issues to be raised as a result of this report.

Comann nam Pàrant provided a written summary of the meeting and the parental concerns to the Council, requesting further consultation, engagement and discussion with the parent body before any decisions were taken about a move towards a statutory consultation for a GME high school.²

In April 2021 the Council planned to put forward a proposal to move to a statutory consultation on the potential for a new GME High School at a site in Liberton. Preparations were made to express the concerns from the parent body and, whilst supporting the building of a GME High School overall, parents wanted further discussions with the Council, as well as an education strategy and development plans, before committing to a statutory consultation.

In the meantime, the Scottish National Party (SNP) manifesto was published in the run up to the parliamentary elections (which took place in May 2021). The manifesto contained several strong statements around GME in Scotland and specifically Edinburgh, with explicit mention of a stand-alone school in a central location, as well as a general presumption against co-location. The manifesto also stated that the development of GME should be part of a national strategic plan.³

While the Council sought clarity on the implications of the manifesto commitment (by way of correspondence with the newly appointed Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills), the Council's Education, Children and Families Committee meeting was postponed until the end of May (as mentioned above, it had originally be scheduled for April). Comann nam Pàrant also wrote to the Cabinet Secretary during this period, seeking clarification and further information.

No responses were received from the Cabinet Secretary before the rescheduled Education, Children and Families Committee meeting in May, where the Council sought to move to statutory consultation on a school on the Liberton site. Comann nam Pàrant submitted written and verbal deputations to the meeting stating that, on the basis of the information provided by CEC to date, Comann nam Pàrant could not support the move to a statutory consultation on Liberton at this time. We highlighted that clarification was required from Scottish Government about the manifesto pledge and that Comann nam Pàrant supported the postponement of a decision until August, with a

² <https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/summary-report-of-meeting-held-25-march-2021.pdf> accessed 16/11/21

³ SNP Manesfito pp 65/66 accessed 11/11/21

https://issuu.com/hinksbrandwise/docs/04_15_snp_manifesto_2021_a4_document?mode=window

view that this time could be used to open up additional dialogue with parents around the proposals for a GME High School.⁴

Comann nam Pàrant representatives were questioned extensively by Committee members and were thanked by the Committee for their thorough and well-prepared deputation. The Committee decided to postpone the decision as to whether or not to move to statutory consultation until August 2021 in order to allow time for clarification to be sought from the Cabinet Secretary and for the Council to engage further with the GME parent body on their proposals.

Comann nam Pàrant wrote again to the Cabinet Secretary, inviting her to meet with GME parents to discuss the SNP plans for GME in Edinburgh. We also invited Julian Kramer (Interim Executive Director of Education and Children's Services) to a meeting with parents in order for him to find out their views and consult directly. At the end of June, Julian Kramer agreed to meet with Comann nam Pàrant to discuss parental concerns and issues around the GME High School. We followed this up with a summary of the meeting and we also updated families via email on 22 July 2021.

In mid-August, the Council wrote to the Cabinet Secretary indicating that two other sites, the Police Headquarters at Fettes and the Old Victoria Hospital in Comely Bank, were being considered as to their suitability for a standalone GME High School, but that significant financial support would be required from the Scottish Government in order to secure and build on either site⁵.

Comann nam Pàrant followed this letter up with communications with councillors⁶, members of the Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG) and Scottish Government. The decision at the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting in August was to wait for a response from the Government on what governmental support could be offered towards the feasibility of either of the proposed sites. At the time of writing there has yet to be a response from the Government in relation to these alternative sites.

We know there is another Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 7 December 2021. Comann nam Pàrant wrote to the Council on 8 November 2021 to seek clarification on the earliest possible date that the Council could feasibly propose a statutory consultation. We await a response and look forward to working with the Council in 2022 and beyond.

Other Comann nam Pàrant work

In addition to the activities and meetings outlined above, Comann nam Pàrant has written multiple letters on the GME high school issue, for example, following up decisions and communication from the Council or Scottish Government and requesting further information, clarification or a meeting. Correspondence has included letters to the Scottish Government, GIG Membership, and Education, Children and Families Committee convenors.

Comann nam Pàrant held Election Hustings at the end of April 2021 and we had candidates from most political parties across Scotland join the debate. Feedback on the event was very positive and we will look to run these again as the opportunity arises.

⁴ <https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/written-report-to-education-children-and-families-committee-27052021-5.pdf> accessed 16/11/21

⁵ https://mcusercontent.com/9db9997f05e2731f69081512d/files/c742ffa0-1b70-d870-77d2-b79ba6701e6c/letter_to_SAS_120821_.pdf accessed 16/11/21

⁶ <https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/letter-to-alison-dickie-and-ian-perry-31-08-2021-3.pdf> accessed 16/11/21

Àrd-sgoil Sheumais Ghilleasbuig / James Gillespie's High School

In recent weeks a new Curriculum Lead for Gaelic, Donna MacIver, has been appointed at James Gillespie's High School. Comann nam Pàrant will continue to work with Ms MacIver and the Gaelic team to support the development of a strong Gaelic offer in the school. We were involved in discussions with the school and Council about the lack of Advanced Higher in Gaelic this year and looking for alternatives to delivery. There is still much more work to do in this area, especially around the development of Gaelic teaching at the High School, and we will continue to work with the Council in seeking further resources and funding to ensure our young people are offered the very best education possible. This will become increasingly important in the coming year as the move to Darroch is finalised for the GME pupils. The plan as it stands from the online parents' meeting (held 10 November 2021) is that S1/S2 pupils will be at Darroch from August 2022. This will be a significant change to the GME offer and Comann nam Pàrant will continue to monitor the situation.

Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG)

Comann nam Pàrant are members of the Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG). GIG is attended by the Convener of Education, councillors, senior Council officers, head teachers, GME representatives, Bòrd na Gàidhlig representatives, Scottish Government, Òganan representatives, Taobh na Pàirce Parent Council chairs and other stakeholders. It is chaired by the Gaelic Champion and Vice Convener of Education. Comann nam Pàrant role is to represent the views of parents and young people in GME.

GIG meets every three months and each meeting is focuses on one of the three priorities in the Gaelic Language Plan: Education; Arts, Culture and Economy; and Corporate. Every meeting has an educational update. However, the GIG meetings cover not just education but Gaelic development across the city.

There are regular updates from the full-time Gaelic Development Officer (GDO) for Edinburgh Council. This post came to an end mid-year and has been re-advertised, funded 50% by the National Library and 50% by the Council. To date, this role has focused on community development work including staff awareness training at the Council and the creation of the fantastic Donald Smith exhibition at the City Art Centre. We continue to campaign for a GDO to take a strategic role in the development of GME from 0-18 across the city.

We have asked for a written Education update prior to meetings to ensure we can capture the key information. The GIG meetings provide a good opportunity to ask direct questions to Council staff and hopefully receive responses. Comann nam Pàrant has taken full advantage of this during the year and will continue to do so. Our plan will be to continue to request for educational updates and strategic planning around the development of GME.

National support

In terms of a national role we have to play, we have contributed where we can to consultations and proposal. The most recent was a response to to Aberdeen City Council GME zoning 2021 consultation.⁷

Media

Comann nam Pàrant has provided press statements as well as participated in radio and TV interviews. These have largely been focused on the ongoing developments and announcements related to the statutory consultation process. These provide excellent opportunities for us to promote GME and to reflect the voices of those we engage with. However, media queries do highlight our lack of confident Gaelic speakers within the committee. We will therefore be seeking support in this area from native, fluent or confident speakers from the GME community in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Finance

Comann nam Pàrant is financed through grant funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and donations from specific fundraising events, although none have been held this year. 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 they leave Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce. The details of the current finances are included in a separate report prepared by our treasurer Orla Hobson. We are grateful for her hard work and continued support. _

Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta

Fiona Stephen represented Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) at meetings of Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta as well as having a role on the national committee. We would like to express our gratitude to Fiona for attending meetings on our behalf. Last year the outgoing convener suggested we had a second representative to support attendance at Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta as Fiona was taking on an additional role on the national committee. This has not been possible due to the capacity of our current committee. There will be an update on the activities from CnP Nàiseanta shortly.

In summary

It has been an incredibly busy year in the life of Gaelic Medium Education and Comann nam Pàrant Dùn Èideann. There are between 10-12 actively engaged members who work on behalf of the parent body. We attend meetings, write letters, read Council papers, plan campaigns and events, draft papers and responses, speak to the press and media, as well as debate, advocate for and promote the importance of Gaelic Medium Education and the rights of children and young people to access this. I would like to thank all of the members of the committee this year for their support and commitment. Without them we would not have come this far.

There is significant work to do in the coming year, much of which will be informed by the response from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and the impact this has on the Council's position on a statutory consultation (which we anticipate will be confirmed 7 December 2021). The statutory consultation will bring a range of work for Comann nam Pàrant, including parental engagement, potential surveys and data capturing, meetings with the Council and other parties, media representation, research and report writing, presentations and more.

⁷ <https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/response-to-aberdeen-consultation-october-2021.pdf> accessed 16/11/21

As well as our work on the statutory consultation, we will continue to seek a strategic plan for Gaelic development from the Council, particularly - but not limited to - education, as well as the ongoing expansion for GME for ages 0-18. We will also continue our involvement around discussions on the use of Darroch and we plan to set up a sub group dedicated to supporting Gaelic at secondary level, at James Gillespie's High School overall but also in supporting families with any transition to Darroch.

Local elections in May 2022 will offer additional opportunities to raise the profile of GME within Edinburgh and to advocate for GME being part of the discussions and initiatives from prospective parties.

In addition to the above is our ongoing work which encompasses monthly internal meetings, external meetings with key stakeholders and partners, gathering feedback, sharing information, supporting families and promoting wider Gaelic activity taking place across Edinburgh. We are committed to providing support for families with children in GME, representing their views and advocating for the development of GME across Edinburgh and Lothians. We also know that such developments rely on the work of families and supporters in our community.

We are now at a crucial stage where Comann nam Pàrant will once more need the vital support of families in order to make our voice heard. The forthcoming statutory consultation on a GME high school for Edinburgh will be the most significant campaign in Comann nam Pàrant history since the establishment of Taobh na Pàirce.

However, our committee of volunteers can often be stretched beyond capacity. As a small group of individuals, each with their own significant commitments outwith their voluntary role, Comann nam Pàrant is in critical need of help in order to continue delivering across our priorities for the coming year. The organisation will be seeking additional volunteers, including those wishing to join the committee, individuals who can give their time on an ad hoc basis, or those who have specific skills they wish to use throughout the year as and when they are required. We are in need of skills across a range of areas, such as communications, research and translation, including researching, writing, survey creation, drafting reports and also Gaelic speakers willing to participate in media interviews. We also welcome any individual who is able to offer their time and skills, whatever they may be, to contribute to the development of GME.

In addition, Comann nam Pàrant seeks greater engagement from families and supporters who cannot volunteer their time. We will be encouraging all families to take part in the statutory consultation process and to encourage others to do the same. Our aim is that all families make their voices heard during the process in order that we might share an outcome which fully reflects the richness and diversity of the GME community in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

We know there is a range of views and our aim is to reflect this breadth of experience but, crucially, to find common ground. We believe we do have shared goals: we want GME to thrive, our children to be supported and for families to have the right to access quality Gaelic education at all stages.⁸ By coming together, we can advocate more forcefully, work strategically and make our position even stronger. This is essential if we are to build relationships with key partners and campaign successfully. Comann nam Pàrant will continue to work on behalf of all families with children in GME throughout the coming year, in what we expect to be a demanding and challenging time.

⁸ For further information on Priorities and Criteria agreed by GME families, visit: https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2019/08/comann_nam_pa_rant_criteria_for_evaluation_paper_final_01.pdf accessed 16/11/21

Treasurer's Report

The opening balance in the Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) (CnPDE) bank account on 1/4/21 was £12,073. During the period April 2020 to March 2021, CnPDE did not receive any income. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, there were no fundraising events/activities, nor did CnP apply for any grants during this period. Expenses incurred by CnPDE during this period comprised:

- University of Edinburgh research on GME secondary school provision (£4,000)
- The provision of Gaelic dictionaries to the Bunsgoil Taobh na Pairce Clas 7 leavers (£618.81)
- The annual cost of the CnP Zoom account (£143.00)
- A one-off cost of using Survey Monkey to carry out a survey of the TnP parent body during the City of Edinburgh Council Informal Consultation on GME high school provision in December 2020 (£99).

The closing balance in the CnPDE bank account on 13/3/21 was £7,221.19. £1,389 of these assets were ring-fenced for spending in line with a grant received from Bord na Gaidhlig in February 2020.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dun Eideann & Lodainn)		
<i>Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31/03/21</i>		
Income		
Total Receipts		-
Expenditure		
Joe Simpson - GME secondary provision research (interim invoice)		3,000
Joe Simpson - GME secondary provision research (final invoice)		1,000
Clas 7 dictionaries x 43		618.81
Zoom account		143.00
Survey Monkey - December 2020		99
Total Expenditure		4,860.81
Surplus (Deficit) for the Year		- 4,860.81
Assets		
Opening balance		12,073.00
Plus surplus for the year		- 4,860.81
Closing Balance		7,212.19
Assets represented by		
Bank		7,212.19
Cash		-
Total		7,212.19

