



cnpduneideann@gmail.com

By email

**25 June 2021**

Julien a charaid

**Re: follow up to meeting held 25 June 2021**

Thank you for meeting with us to discuss the statutory consultation in more detail, for taking the time to listen to our concerns and for acknowledging the complex nature of the situation. We welcome the approach of working through problems and resolving misunderstandings, and the aim of building consensus amongst the parent body.

We write to you now to give a brief overview of our concerns and your responses. We would welcome additional information you wish to add at this stage.

**Process and leadership:**

There is the view that this is a failing process that lacks centralised leadership and demonstrable experience required to deliver a project of this nature and scale.

You have noted that you will steer the process as Interim Director of Education. You have mentioned the creation of a new implementation unit comprising Council officers, parental representation and headteacher representation, as well as a contact from Sgoil Ghàidhlig Glaschu to provide additional knowledge and experience. This board would report to the Life Chances Board of which you are Chair.

**Strategy:**

We seek, as a matter of urgency, a strategic approach from the Council. Many of the concerns that parents have highlighted since the Council first proposed the Liberton option (such as immersion, staffing) as well as current issues (rising rolls at JGHS and Taobh na Pàirce, reduced Gaelic provision at JGHS) are all aspects which we would expect to be addressed strategically rather than reactively.

You have acknowledged that the process has appeared ad hoc and that this should have started with a clearer vision from the Council, one which goes beyond the school gates and encompasses the broader Gaelic community and culture within the city.

You have requested the Vision, Priorities and Criteria referenced by Comann nam Pàrant. Please find these attached. These were created following a series of meetings with parents in 2015, mediated and facilitated by Comann nam Pàrant. We worked with parents on multiple drafts, sharing these and taking on board feedback until agreement was reached. It is this Vision and these Priorities and Criteria which have since informed our discussions around a potential GME High School in Edinburgh. They are the prism through which any proposal would be viewed.

### **Liberton proposal:**

In the past, this has been presented to families as a project being led by Estates Department at the Council with the focus seemingly being on the logistics of building a new school to address rising rolls. Instead, this should have been presented as a project led by Education / Gaelic Leadership with an understanding of the needs of the GME community and how to best create enhanced GME provision. While we acknowledge that the Council have since used different language in discussing the project (for example, better discussion around minority language issues and the need for immersion), this has unfortunately come too late. Parents do not hear authenticity in this approach and view this with varying degrees of caution and cynicism. This is, in part, due to lack of communication from the Council as to how the Liberton proposal meets the needs of GME families (see point 3 re strategy) but also due to the lack of demonstrable experience in leading a project such as this, ie creating a new GME high school for the city. There is also a lack of understanding of how the proposal impacts different families depending on the age of their child/children. This includes children who are not yet in primary school. We seek a meaningful approach rather than quick fixes.

You have noted that there needs to be a defined approach to teaching and learning, as well as a clear conceptual framework in which a proposal is created presented and delivered, in order for parents to have confidence in the proposal. You acknowledged that the proposal will only be supported by parents if they associate it with success. You also noted that there is a high level of jeopardy if there is not support from parents and acknowledge that there needs to be a deeper understanding of the views of those who are opposed to the proposal.

### **SNP manifesto pledge:**

The SNP have presented an offer which very closely reflects the vision and priorities agreed by parents and set out by Comann nam Pàrant. As a result, there are parents who now hold this pledge as a potential opportunity for an alternative to Liberton. While Shirley-Anne Somerville stated she was in support of Liberton, parents do not see this option as fulfilling the SNP pledge. Parents have reacted strongly to that which was proposed in the manifesto and it will be difficult to suggest to them now that they should pursue an option they are opposed or indifferent to given they are of the view that a better option might well become available.

You noted that both Ian Perry and Alison Dickie have written to Shirley-Anne Somerville and requested clarification on the SNP pledge.

### **August 2021:**

Given the above points, along with our own survey results, the feedback we have received throughout the process and the significant changes since the process began in November 2020 with the initial proposal from the Council, we are concerned there will be overwhelming rejection of the proposal by GME parents in August. We therefore advise that the Council does not take this forward. Instead, we recommend a delay so that the Council can work through the above points and create a strategic approach to GME provision in Edinburgh, ensuring the hard work undertaken by the Council, by Comann nam Pàrant and by all those invested in the process does not go to waste in an unsuccessful consultation. Comann nam Pàrant are here because we are committed to a new GME High School but we cannot support a statutory consultation where there is not backing from the families for which this school is being created. If the consultation goes ahead and is unsuccessful, the Council puts the future of GME at risk for another five years (the Council are prohibited from undertaking another consultation in this timeframe when it involves a school closure, ie JGHS). A delay to the consultation would mitigate this.

You noted that if going to statutory consultation on 24 August 2021 is not the preferred pathway, another route needs to be sought. We believe a delay would offer the Council the opportunity to take the necessary time to consider and address these significant concerns we have raised, and to present a proposal which meets the needs of the GME community. A strategic and informed proposal is a pre-requisite for the consensus needed to achieve a successful outcome.

### **Next steps:**

We understand you are interested in the work that has already taken place and keen to find out more. Please find attached:

- Written Deputation to Education, Children and Families Committee, 28 May 2021
- Summary report of a meeting with parents and carers to discuss City of Edinburgh Council's outcome report of the informal consultation process on Proposals for Secondary Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh, 25 March 2021
- Submission to Informal Review for GME High School, 11 December 2020
- Comann nam Pàrant Criteria for Evaluation, June 2019 (Priorities and Criteria)
- Summary of Parents' Views on Secondary GME, November 2015 (Vision)

All our documents are available to view at <https://cnpduneideannblog.wordpress.com>

Thank you again for taking the time to speak with us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Gyda phob dymuniad da / Le gach deagh dhùrachd

Comann nam Pàrant  
(Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)