



Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)
Written Deputation to Education, Children and Families Committee
Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 10am

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Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) represents families across Edinburgh and the Lothians. We campaign for the development of Gaelic Medium Education by liaising with families and advocating on their behalf. As part of this, we seek the views of GME families, listen to their concerns and amplify their voices. We are committed to working together with other organisations such as City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government.

As noted in our letter to City of Edinburgh Council on 26 November 2021, Comann nam Pàrant very much welcomes the communication from the Council as well as their ongoing collaboration with the Scottish Government on proposals for a new GME high school for Edinburgh.

We did, however, raise concerns and we reiterate these here. We also seek further clarity on additional information that has been released most recently. We include recommendations which we hope will create an opportunity for the Council to collaborate with GME families more fruitfully at this critical time.

We ask that you:

- Do not agree to a report which includes a proposed Statutory Consultation paper on the future of GME in Edinburgh being submitted to a special meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2022.
- Take the time required to develop a strategic approach with the Scottish Government to deliver the growth needed in GME at secondary level, guided by an objective to deliver the highest quality of education through Gaelic in the best possible setting.
- Prepare and present the detailed pre-consultation information and engage with families in a more comprehensive way, responding to their concerns and reflect on this diligently and objectively in any future proposals.

We firmly believe that there is insufficient time for the Council to achieve the second and third points above prior to 31 January 2022, the proposed date to start the public consultation period.

The Council states that ‘the planned development of the GME curriculum creates different education implications for the shared campus option when compared with the stand-alone option.’ We welcome the commitment to include a detailed Education Benefits Statement for each option in the proposed Statutory Consultation Paper although we would seek clarification around how such benefits were measured without a published education strategy for GME from the Council. We reiterate the need for GME families to fully understand the breadth of curriculum offered at each site, how this would be delivered in practice, the plans for staffing, and the way in which the Council is demonstrably committed to meeting the goal of immersion throughout the period of pupils' Broad General Education.

The Council's update also references rising rolls at James Gillespie's in direct relation to the timescales of each option. Comann nam Pàrant is fully sympathetic to capacity issues and the accompanying pressures they bring to the school. However, as we have highlighted throughout this process, the timeline for a new GME high school should be based on ensuring the best possible outcome for the generations of pupils this new school will serve. The need for a GME high school

should not be conflated with the rising rolls at James Gillespie's High School, nor with the progress of the design process for the Liberton high school; the issues are distinct. GME pupils should not be removed from James Gillespie's High School as an attempt to mitigate the problem of rising rolls, nor should pupil numbers at JGHS be a determining factor in the timeline for the creation of a new GME high school. The pupil numbers at JGHS are projected to be greater than the capacity of its main campus whether or not GME remains at JGHS in the medium term, hence the requirement for JGHS to access the Darroch Annexe from August 2022. The Scottish Government Gaelic Specific Grant has contributed a substantial portion of the funding for the refurbishment of the Darroch Annexe and this £4million sum was granted on the basis that the Annexe would be mainly used for GME. Taking into account that the capacity of Darroch is well in excess of the number of GME pupils at JGHS, the rising rolls issue should be considered entirely decoupled from the timeline of the development of a dedicated GME high school.

We see rising rolls cited again in the reference to the creation of new GME primary units. We are particularly concerned at the Council's recommendation to halt the growth of GME because 'there is not sufficient capacity at James Gillespie's High School to accommodate ever increasing pupil numbers.' GME families should not be put in the unenviable position of being asked to hastily agree to an insufficient proposal for secondary provision in order to protect the right of younger children to access Gaelic Medium Education at primary level or to solve a rising rolls issue.

In their outcome report published in 2021, the Council stated they would 'reflect the discussions, address all comments and questions received, and conclude which option(s) will be progressed to statutory consultation'. While the Council clearly prefers the shared campus Liberton option, they have reached this conclusion independently and without the backing of the GME community. We have seen no evidence in the informal consultation process held in 2020-21 that indicates a majority of GME families would support the Liberton proposal at a statutory consultation. Indeed, it is clear that a number of parents would actively oppose it.

We note from the Wave4 schools update that community engagement has already taken place and subsequently informed the strategic brief for the architects to develop the design of the Liberton High School rebuild. However, due to issues we have outlined over the past 12 months, such engagement could not have been undertaken with the GME families that the Council hopes will be part of this community. We are concerned by the Council's sequencing which appears to prioritise deliverability over educational benefit. This also seems to be reflected in the fact that, at present, the balanced 2022-32 Capital Budget Strategy has no provision for the Liberton GME option. It is unclear how the Council proposes to create a stand-alone school on a shared campus which meets the needs of GME families and serves a wider community purpose for Gaelic when not only has the Council progressed with design proposals without the involvement of the Gaelic community, but also made no financial provision for the GME school itself.

We note the recent statement by the Council that 'If the capital grant is not forthcoming then a GME secondary school, irrespective of the site, becomes undeliverable because the Council does not have the capital funding to deliver a GME secondary school by itself.' As we noted in our recent letter, this suggests an astonishing lack of planning in terms of budgeting for the development of GME in Edinburgh and the Lothians. It would therefore be preferable for the Council to take the necessary time required to explore and develop the expansive strategy for GME, as stated in the SNP manifesto, with the support of the Scottish Government and the GME community.

The most recent letter from the Council to Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills¹ displays inconsistency in the language used to describe proposals for a new GME school. In referring to the Liberton option, the Council describes a 'dedicated GME secondary school on a shared campus'. We ask the Council, again, to define the terms 'dedicated' and 'shared campus' as well as the term 'stand-alone' which has been used to describe not only Castlebrae and Royal Victoria Hospital but in the past has been used by the Council to describe the GME high school operating on the shared campus site of Liberton. Such mixed and unclear language must be avoided so that families can fully understand the options that are being proposed and the choices they face.

There are also outstanding issues which Comann nam Pàrant have raised repeatedly and which are still to be resolved. We are yet to receive detailed plans on how the Council plans to grow GME in Edinburgh, how it intends to progress the recruitment and retention of Gaelic speaking teaching staff or how the Council aims to increase the proportion of curriculum delivered through Gaelic. These are not merely issues we anticipate facing in the future, they exist now in the current provision of GME at James Gillespie's High School and are keenly felt by staff, pupils and parents.

Indeed, while GME at JGHS achieved a significant milestone in terms of Gaelic immersion in 2019/20, to which ambitions of ongoing progress were attached, the number of Gaelic speaking staff and the proportion of the S1/S2 curriculum delivered through Gaelic have unfortunately declined. We therefore seek greater clarity from the Council as to how their ambitions for staffing a GME high school might be realised. Importantly, we seek information from the Council as to how the financial implications of operating JGHS across two separate sites (Warrender Park Road and Darroch) will be addressed and what proportion of any additional budget will be directed toward the Council's stated intention to build GME staff numbers and develop a strong GME leadership team. Investment here is vital in order that a robust cohort of Gaelic speaking staff are in a position to lead a thriving dedicated GME high school at whichever site it is eventually located.

JGHS has been unable to deliver Advanced Higher Gàidhlig itself for the academic year 2021/22 due to a lack of qualified staff. This is a significant backward step, particularly considering the Council's oft-mentioned strategy for increasing the numbers of GME staffing is one of "grow your own". We would welcome detailed information as to how JGHS will be supported to urgently increase its contingent of qualified GME teachers in order to deliver AH Gàidhlig in the next academic year and also to ensure that there are sufficient, appropriately-qualified GME staff to provide a high-quality Gaelic immersion experience to the higher numbers of GME students expected to transfer from Taobh na Pàirce to JGHS in August 2022.

We welcome the Council's intention to increase GME secondary staffing allocations at James Gillespie's High School from August 2022 as the GME curriculum is expanded when the school begins to utilise the Darroch Annexe. We note too the proposal for the continued proposed expansion to ensure staffing is in place before the opening of a new GME high school. The Council must ensure that sufficient time is allowed to successfully achieve this. In terms of pressing ahead with plans for the new GME high school, the Council must refrain from moving at a speed which does not accommodate the necessary development and expansion of teaching staff and curriculum which must be in place to create a successful school and a smooth transition. At present, the Council has not articulated the educational benefit of removing pupils from James Gillespie's High School in the current timeframe. The driver here appears solely to be rising rolls, an issue which - as already mentioned - should not be tied to the timeframe of a new GME High School, especially given the move of GME pupils to Darroch.

¹ <https://cnpduneideannblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/11/city-of-edinburgh-council-letter-to-cabinet-secretary-shirleyanne-somerville-24-november-2021.pdf>

The Council has proposed that informal engagement with school communities takes place during the remainder of December and through January. Taking into account school term ending on 17 December and starting again 6 January, and that engagement could only start on 8 December, this leaves 8 working days in which to communicate with the GME community in 2021 and 18 working days in January. This is insufficient time to offer meaningful engagement, clarify information, or to allow the opportunity for questions to be asked and fully answered.

Engagement with GME families is particularly important given the re-introduction of Castlebrae as a potential site, an option which was not fully explored by the Council in previous proposals, was subsequently removed as an option by the Council, and on which GME families have little information. We also highlight here the Council's proposal to include the Royal Victoria Hospital, a site which has never been included in any previous proposals and which is dependent on financial commitment from the Scottish Government which, at this stage, has not been confirmed.

Since the last informal consultation, the Council has had ongoing communication with the Scottish Government around the potential financial support available to create a centrally located, stand-alone GME secondary school. These discussions are ongoing and need time to reach a conclusion.

We urge the Council to also consider the new academic year which started in August and brought with it new children and their families who have just begun their journey in GME. As such, there are now new GME families which need to be consulted. They deserve to be fully informed prior to any statutory consultation taking place.

We strongly recommend that the Council does not seek to proceed with a statutory consultation commencing 31 January. The Council cannot reasonably expect to establish, maintain and develop engagement with parents on such a crucial matter in such a short time frame of December and January. We also recommend the Council publish pre-consultation information well in advance of any informal consultation, that they provide robust data and clear criteria, share their Gaelic Learning Strategy, communicate and engage with parents more substantially, and provide an outcome report.

In light of the uncertainties which remain, in particular clarity on the SNP's manifesto commitments to GME in Edinburgh, Comann nam Pàrant believes it would be imprudent to proceed with any statutory consultation at this time. Our recommendation is that the Council continue to work with the Scottish Government, GME families and all relevant stakeholders to align with the ambitious national strategy for Gaelic as it relates to the development of secondary GME and the expansion of Gaelic in Edinburgh.

As we have highlighted in our most recent letter and in the past months, we request again that the Council fully addresses the concerns and questions that Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) raised in our deputation in May 2021, our informal submission in December 2020, our meeting with Julien Kramer Interim Director of Education, and in correspondence with both the Council and the Scottish Government.

GME families have the right to be fully informed and given the opportunity to reflect, ask questions and seek clarification on the proposed options for GME secondary education. Without providing these necessary steps, the Council risks losing the confidence of the families which then introduces real risk to the statutory consultation process. We encourage the Council to engage with families in a meaningful way to ensure the process is as inclusive as possible. This is vital to the success of any proposal brought forward by the Council.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) is committed to working with the Council throughout the process. We would like to offer our support in exploring opportunities to increase and sustain engagement and communication with families so that we might work together to secure a successful outcome. We look forward to collaborating further in this significant venture of establishing a GME high school which meets the needs of young people and their families, and fully realises the Council's ambition to recognise Gaelic language and culture as an integral part of the city.²

² <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/24286/gaelic-language-plan-2018-22>

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Summary report of Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann & Lodainn) 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

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- City of Edinburgh Consultation on Gaelic Medium Education Secondary School, 1 June 2021
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Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)

Submission to Informal Review for GME High School

11 December 2020

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Introduction

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn) (CNPDE)'s response to City of Edinburgh Council (CEC)'s pre-consultation information on the proposals for future Gaelic secondary provision in Edinburgh, December 2020.

In October 2020, City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) published pre-consultation information on the proposals for future Gaelic secondary provision in Edinburgh. In addition to the published information, in November 2020, CEC held two virtual Parent and Carers meetings during which additional detail about the proposals was provided.

CNPDE is a voluntary association, which aims to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Edinburgh and the Lothians. It is the representative body for parents and carers with children in GME. This report summarises the activities undertaken by CNPDE during this informal consultation and the outcomes of those activities.

This report aims to reflect the collective opinions of the families who engaged with the activities undertaken by CNPDE. CNPDE has also strongly encouraged families to submit their own responses to the proposals by email to CEC, as requested. We look forward to publication of the outcomes report for this informal consultation, which CEC have stated will “reflect the discussions, address all comments and questions received, and conclude which option(s) will be progressed to statutory consultation”.

Engagement Activities

2.1 Awareness-raising about informal consultation

Parents and carers with children at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (TnP) and James Gillespie's High School (JGHS) were informed about this informal consultation by emails sent from each school. In order to raise the profile of the consultation, it was also advertised through the CNPDE mailing list and social media pages, the TnP ParentMail system, the TnP Parent Council social media pages and the James Gillespie's High School (JGHS) Parent Council, to raise awareness about the consultation among the GME community in Edinburgh during the consultation period.

CNPDE's messaging aimed to encourage the community to engage with and respond to CEC's proposals by submitting their comments and questions to CEC and by attending the virtual public meetings organised by CEC. Typically, CNPDE would also focus on face-to-face activities including distribution of information leaflets to parents and carers at TnP. However, due to restrictions required to curb the spread of COVID-19, these activities were not possible during the informal consultation period.

2.2 CNPDE

CNPDE recognises that, in the main, CEC's proposals for secondary GME are likely to have the greatest impact on families whose children are currently in primary school. It is, therefore, difficult for these families to meaningfully appraise the proposals, prior to having detailed insight into the current GME arrangements at JGHS in terms of Gaelic immersion and subject choices, nor the complexities of secondary school curricula and examination arrangements.

CNPDE also recognise that, on the basis of statements made by CEC at a meeting with the TnP parent body in January 2020, many families had expected the pre-consultation documents to contain a fuller appraisal of the four potential options for GME secondary provision identified by CEC, including two possible sites for a stand-alone GME High School.

Taking these issues into account, CNPDE decided to undertake two activities in order to support and encourage GME families to engage with the proposals. These comprised (i) a survey in order to ascertain to what extent GME families feel that the current proposals align with the [criteria](#) for evaluating any proposal for secondary GME provision that were agreed with the parent body in 2019 following on from meetings and discussion that have taken place since 2015 and (ii) an interactive meeting which would provide an opportunity for discussion of various aspects of the proposals.

2.2.1 Survey

CNPDE created a survey using Survey Monkey and circulated this using the same email and social media channels as detailed in section 2.1. The questions contained in the survey are summarised below:

"CnP have consulted parents and carers of children in GME for many years, particularly throughout 2019 and 2020, on their priorities for secondary education. From these discussions, we agreed on priorities and criteria for provision of secondary GME in Edinburgh.

We would like to understand if these priorities and criteria are still current and relevant to our community. Please indicate below how you agree with them.

- Priority 1: A high-quality education in a well-managed school, with a broad range of subjects and extra-curricular activities offered, along with full support for learning.
Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree
- Priority 2: An enhanced Gaelic immersion experience as part of the above, with an aim to produce confident and fluent adult Gaelic speakers.
Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree
- Criteria 1: 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.
Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree
- Criteria 2: In terms of geography, the specific needs of a city-wide catchment need to

be carefully considered

Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree

- Criteria 3: Design and environment play a large part in successful education, and this should be fully considered; alongside considerations of impact on wider environment.
Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree
- Are there any other criteria that are important to you that you would like us to consider? [Free text]
- Did you attend either of the two virtual meetings on the 25th or the 30th November run by the Council to share information on their proposed plan? Yes, No
- Do you feel the Council's preferred location offers the scope to create a school that meets the priorities and criteria outlined above? Yes, No, Not sure. Please tell us why (optional) [Free text]
- From the information you have been given, do you feel that the current plan has the potential to achieve the successful delivery of GME at secondary level? Yes, No, Not sure. Please tell us why (optional) [Free text]
- Is the Council's preferred location suitable for a city-wide catchment area? Yes, No, Not sure. Tell us why (optional) [Free text]
- Finally, tell us what year in school you have children in?"

2.2.2 Virtual Meeting

CNPDE held a virtual meeting for families on Thursday 3 December 2020. The meeting was advertised using the same email and social media channels detailed in Section 2.1 above. A total of 48 families pre-registered and attended the meeting. At the meeting families were given the opportunity, in groups of 6-8 people, to address three questions relating to the proposal under consultation:

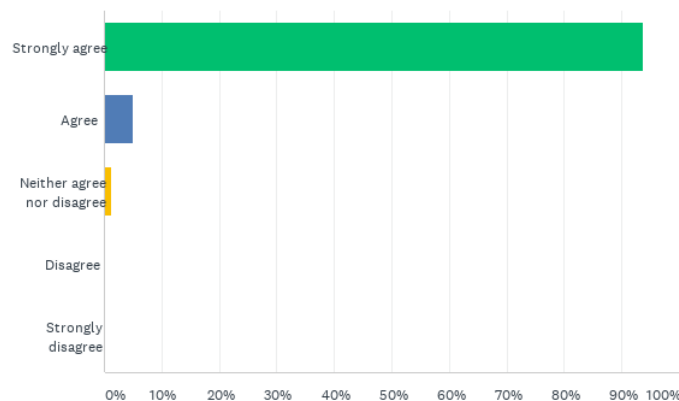
- What do we like about the proposal?
- What concerns do we have about the proposal?
- What measures might allay those concerns?

The outcomes of those small groups were discussed in the main meeting and are summarised below. This report – and, therefore, the summary of the outcomes of the meeting – were circulated to the meeting attendees for comment prior to submission to CEC. As such, CNPDE are confident that those outcomes are an accurate reflection of the opinions expressed by parents and carers who attended the meeting.

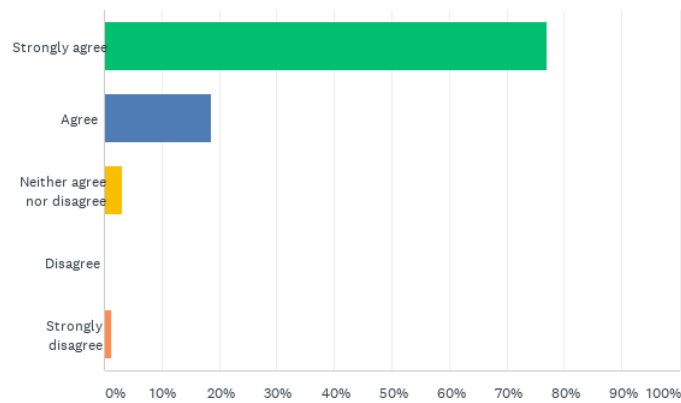
Survey Results

The survey had 157 responses.

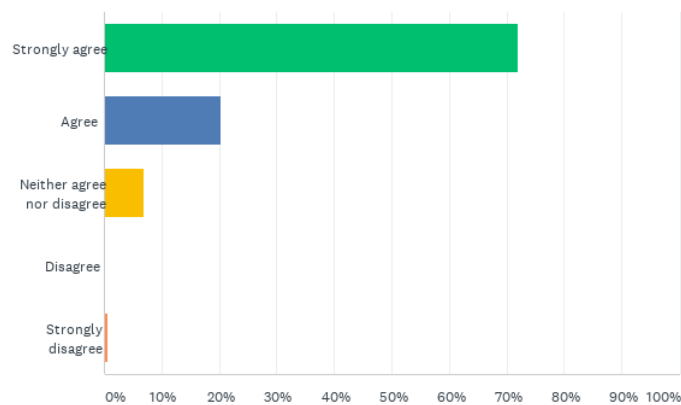
Q1 Tha Comann nam Pàrant Dhùn Èideann is Lodainn na buidheann airson teaghlaichean air feadh Dhùn Èideann agus Lodainn. Comann nam Pàrant Dùn Èideann (CnP) is an organisation that provides a campaigning voice for all families in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Edinburgh. We represent the views of parents, and are using this survey to inform our response to Edinburgh Council's ("the Council") upcoming consultation on the relocation of secondary GME from James Gillespie's Hlgh School to a new location. Points to note: - This survey will take a few minutes to complete- We will not capture any personal data -To find out more about thebackground to this consultation please see our blog Thank you for taking the time to give us your views. Priorities and CriteriaCnP have consulted parents and carers of children in GME for many years, particularly throughout 2019 and 2020, on their priorities for secondary education. From these discussions, we agreed on priorities and criteria for provision of secondary GME in Edinburgh. A document which outlines this in more detail can be found here: [An overview of GME priorities](#)We would like to understand if these priorities and criteria are still current and relevant to our community. Please indicate below how you agree with them. Priority 1: A high-quality education in a well-managed school, with a broad range of subjects and extra-curricular activities offered, along with full support for learning.



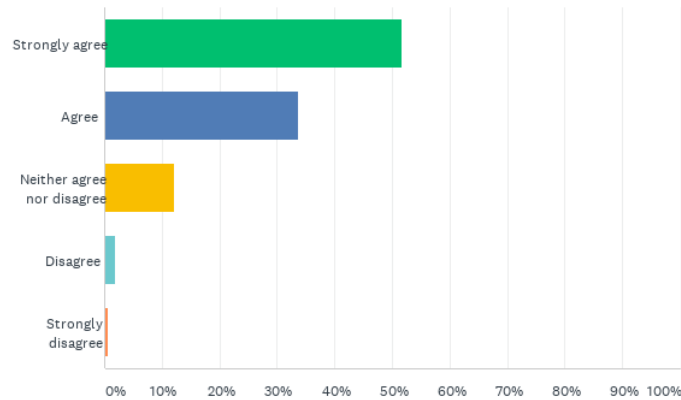
Q2 Priority 2: An enhanced Gaelic immersion experience as part of the above, with an aim to produce confident and fluent adult Gaelic speakers.



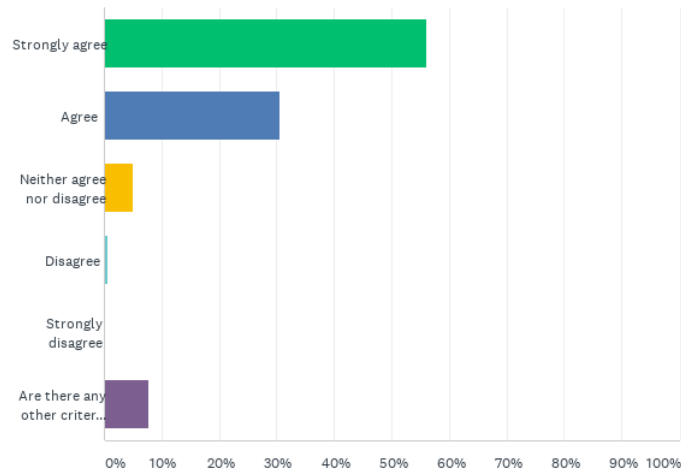
Q3 Criteria 1: That any location should support the educational aims of high quality education within a Gaelic immersion environment, and should provide a permanent home for GME secondary.



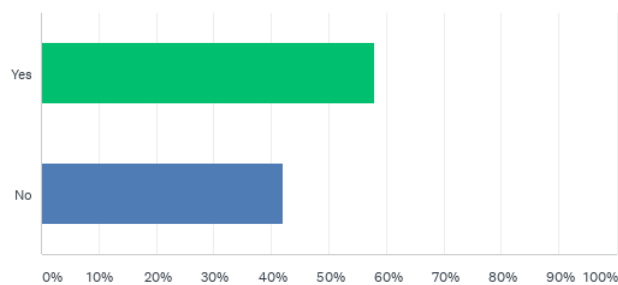
Q4 Criteria 2: In terms of geography, the specific needs of a city-wide catchment need to be carefully considered



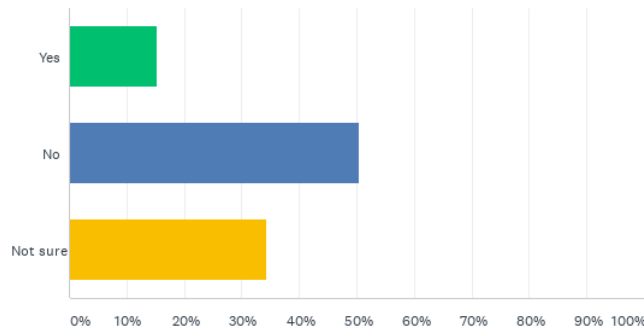
Q5 Criteria 3: Design and environment play a large part in successful education, and this should be fully considered; alongside considerations of impact on wider environment.



Q6 Did you attend either of the two virtual meetings on the 25th or the 30th November run by the Council to share information on their proposed plan?



Q7 Do you feel the Council's preferred location offers the scope to create a school that meets the priorities and criteria outlined above?



51% of the respondents **did not feel** that the Council's preferred location offered the scope to create a school that meets our priorities and criteria. Analysis of the feedback on this point offers the following themes:

- The most common concern was **over a joint campus** in terms of the quality of Gaelic immersion it offers and concerns about how the GME High School would integrate and engage with the EME school.

“Co-located school will not promote Gaelic education, culture and confident identity as much as an own-site campus could. Concern regarding GME pupils receiving a significant proportion of their lessons in the EME neighbouring school.”

- The **location was the next most common area for concern**. These related to Liberton not being considered central, the transport links not being adequate and the distance from the existing primary school.

“Liberton is not central. It's too far from the current GME primary school and therefore the location will be a big deterrent for many families, especially those whose children may not be able to cope with the long travel time (due to ASN). The location does not take into account sustainable transport plans for the city.”

- Other reasons for not feeling that the proposal offered the scope were:
 - Feeling that there was only one option being presented which did not allow for a proper assessment of the options and a feeling that the Council was pressurising GME into its preferred option.
 - Concern over transition plans, particularly in relation to the experience of the S1 and S2 cohort which could end up isolated and having a negative experience on a shared campus.

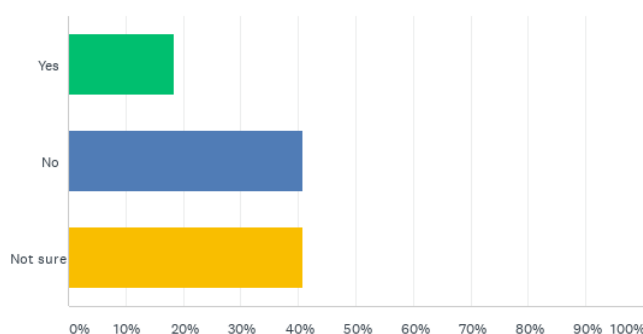
Of the respondents who were **not sure**, their reasons mirrored that of the “no” group. The additional theme in this group was that they did not feel they had enough information in the proposal to properly assess it.

“There has not been enough information to make an informed decision. There are MAJOR concerns and these have not been answered or addressed in the consultation exercise.”

15% of the respondents answered “**yes**” to this question. Reasons given for this were:

- The location was a positive thing and made GME more accessible for those in the Lothians.
- The solution was not perfect, but they were pragmatic about what was possible.
- Co-location with an EME school offered the positive option of a good range of subjects to support the curriculum.

Q8 From the information you have been given, do you feel that the current plan has the potential to achieve the successful delivery of GME at secondary level?



82% of respondents answered “no” or “unsure” to the question “from the information you have been given, do you feel that the current plan as the potential to achieve the successful delivery of GME at secondary level?”.

The reasons given for the answers were consistent across these two groups.

- **Co-location and the impact on language immersion** were the most frequently cited, as seen in the question above.
- **Lack of planning and that this seemed a “rush”** was the next most common comment from respondents. Concerns were around the lack of thoroughness in the planning, lack of data and the feeling that the Council are trying to rush this plan through to solve an estates problem.

“It is clear that the Council are trying to rush through a proposal purely on its financial merits and with the aim of getting us out of JGHS, without consideration of the long-term good of GME in Edinburgh.”

- **Recruitment and retention of teaching staff** was the next most common theme to emerge from these two groups. Concerns were that the location, sharing a campus and being so far from the primary school would not make this an attractive proposal for staff.

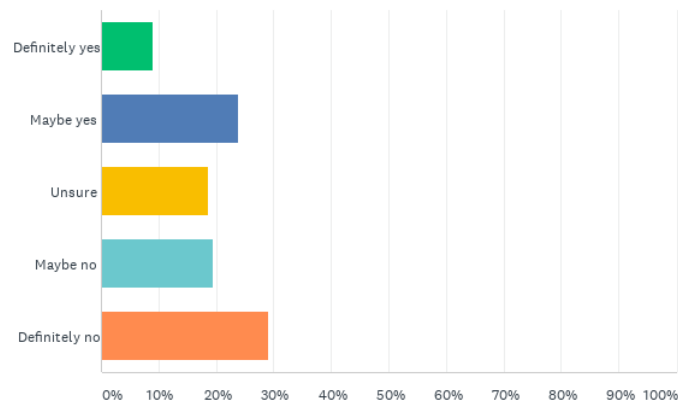
“Gaelic teachers are hard to source yet this proposal will require more teachers for opposite ends of the city instead of allowing for an easily accessible shared (Gaelic speaking) resource.”

- **The impact on the S1 and S2 cohort that first transitioned** was also mentioned. It was felt that the number of these children was not sufficient and that they were at risk of suffering educationally in the move, which might cause families to lose confidence and abandon GME. These comments were accompanied by suggestions that the **planning for a second GME primary school** was further considered by the Council alongside secondary planning.

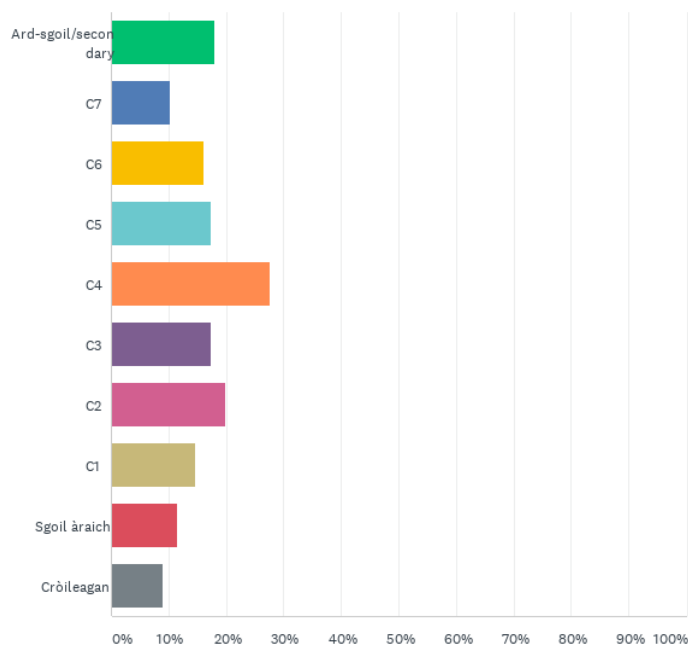
“In the lifetime of the current P3 and P4 students in particular, the information received to date provides little assurance that their (particular) needs have been considered and that the offer is better than what is currently available for GME students, or by moving the children into the standard catchment (English) secondary school.”

The 18% who answered “yes” to this question were optimistic that the planning would happen and the proposal could be made a success. The uncertainty was acknowledged and how that would impact the response. However, this group was also positive about the education opportunities offered by being co-located with an EME school.

Q9 Is the Council's preferred location suitable for a city-wide catchment area?



Q10 Finally, tell us what year in school you have children in



Feedback from CNPDE Parent and Carers meeting

The table below summarises and collates the comments reported by the various groups at the meeting on 3 December 2020.

Participants were split into 6 groups. The numbers in bold after the statement indicate the group or groups which made the relevant comments.

What do we like about the current proposal?
Substance
There is a proposal and it would give Gaelic a permanent, secure home, alleviating some uncertainty. (1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
The site is more central for the Lothians as a whole. It is reasonably accessible by public transport. (2, 3)
It may be the most central location available. If all GME pupils come together as one cohort rather than being in an EME school, they are at least travelling together. (6)
The site is large, allowing expansion and additional Gaelic facilities (including perhaps a primary school) and separation between the EME school and the GME High School. (1, 2, 3)
Minimal shared facilities with the EME school would allow for a Gaelic “language bubble”. (1)
There will be plenty of outdoor space and good sports facilities. (6)
The school would be a new build, avoiding the challenges that come with refurbishing an existing building. (6)
The shared campus which could help with curricular and extra-curricular support for a small cohort and would facilitate proper embedding in the community to form local relationships. (2)
Staff would be in one place and not as scattered as they are now. (2,6)
There is no realistic alternative. (2)
The centre of excellence for languages and Gaelic cultural hub both sound exciting. (4)
A shuttlebus would alleviate some of the concerns about links between TnP (and the community around it) and a GME High School in Liberton. (3,5)
The Council have managed to grow the number of GME teachers in place at James Gillespie’s (JGHS) and they will transfer to the new school. (1)
Process
The Council are committed to making the GME High School happen and to GME. (4,6)

We heard directly from the councillors. **(5)**

The Council have thought about the benefits for Liberton of having GME alongside them. **(4)**

The Council have engaged with the Parent Council CNPDE through the Gaelic Implementation Group, and this is reflected in the consultation report. **(3,4)**

There is an interim plan - Darroch - which shows a bit of thinking of how we get from A to B to C. **(1,4)**

This proposal, although not fully thought through, is more thought through than any previous proposals. **(3,4,5)**

There is recognition that GME is growing and of the need for a second primary. **(5)**

A leadership team is in place and the Gaelic Champion and Quality Improvement Officer have a better understanding of GME. **(5)**

Communication has been better in terms of positivity and commitment to GME. **(6)**

The Council want to consult parents and carers on questions of design. **(6)**

The following section covers the second two questions:

- What are our concerns about the proposal?
- What do we think might allay those concerns?

Relationship between the new GME High School and Liberton	
What are our concerns about the current proposal?	What do we think might allay those concerns?
<p>How would co-location affect immersion? Immersion is difficult to create even in ideal circumstances, but on a shared campus this would be more difficult. It would need to be a substantially different set up to that in JGHS for parents and carers to buy into the move. (1, 2, 3, 4, 6)</p>	<p>Maximising physical separation: it's a big site, do the two schools really need to be right next to each other as in the current designs? (2, 3)</p> <p>A primary school at the same location to boost numbers of Gaelic learners onsite and to encourage community involvement from people in Liberton. (3)</p> <p>The distinct management teams at the two schools need to build an effective relationship. (2)</p> <p>Clarity around the curriculum support expected from other schools. This would be less of a concern if the teachers were coming to the school rather than the pupils moving to other schools. (3,6)</p>
<p>There is a lack of clarity surrounding how co-location will look. What will be shared? Will it be one big 'superschool'? If sharing is done well, it could be positive, but more detail is needed. (1,4,5)</p>	<p>Clarity about the size of the site owned by the Council to show how much opportunity there is for expansion. (1)</p> <p>In order to allay concerns over co-location, more detail around how it will work is needed from the Council. (3,4)</p> <p>More opportunities need to be developed for using Gaelic outside school. (4)</p>
<p>The GME High School, certainly in the early years, would very much be the 'little sibling' to the larger school. How would the Gaelic pupils be supported as the minority? There are concerns about the Gaelic pupils being seen as 'different' because of the language and whether this might make them feel more exposed when the cohort is only 100 or so pupils. Is there an existing Gaelic community of any size in Liberton? (2, 3, 5, 6)</p>	<p>A primary at the same location would boost the numbers of Gaelic learners onsite and encourage community involvement from people in Liberton. (2, 3)</p> <p>The distinct management teams need to build an effective relationship. (2, 3)</p> <p>Gaelic being offered as a modern language for EME students on the site in order to cross-pollinate and register commitment to the shared site. (6)</p>

How will the pupils being separated send a positive message to young people about how to act as a community? (6)	
Some parents are still shaken by their experience with the Council's consultation relating to Drummond which was poorly handled and resulted in negative press coverage and unpleasant social media messages. Parents are concerned that history might repeat itself – how will the Council avoid this situation in the future? How has the council engaged with the Liberton community to date? (1, 5)	Council to deliver some engagement activities between the two communities including visits to Parent Council Meetings (1, 6)
Is there a risk that the GME pupils will be absorbed into Liberton High School if the roll drops? (1)	Clarity about what happens if the GME roll in the High School drops very low and about what would happen were the roll to become unsustainable. (1)
	Are there design elements that represent best practice that could be incorporated into the school? (1)

Relationship between the new GME High School, TnP and any other primary	
What are our concerns about the current proposal?	What do we think might allay those concerns?
There is a dislocation between the current primary school and Liberton. The demographics of TnP have changed (the recent end of day change for C1 and C2 reflects that far fewer of these pupils are taking buses than previously). While the new GME High School will have a city-wide catchment, not enough consideration has gone into location – the distance might put parents and carers of children in TnP off choosing GME for High School. (2, 4) Liberton is not very accessible for those living in the west of Edinburgh. (4)	Give firm assurances and more detail on shuttle buses. (2, 4)
Siblings will be split between Liberton and JGHS. (4)	
Continued support for shuttle buses is open to question in light of council objectives on traffic pollution. (5)	Give firm assurances and more detail on shuttle buses. (5)
What is the clear plan for Darroch? Some indications point to use as a second primary, others that it would be needed for JGHS in the medium term. (5)	Clarity and a detailed plan to be published for delivery of GME to 2035. (5)

Transition planning/curriculum	
What are our concerns about the current proposal?	What do we think might allay those concerns?
Will those currently in C4 be guinea pigs? What will their quality of education be like? (1)	There must be a well thought-out, well-prepared and structured educational plan to ensure that current C4 are not guinea pigs. A much clearer and more developed transition plan is necessary. More GME teachers and a much higher ratio of teachers to pupils is needed. (1)
The school will have a very small cohort in the early stages. (2, 3, 6) It was noted that there would be a lack of support for the S1/S2 cohort when the school opens, and that they would be isolated without older peers. This small, young cohort would also face challenges. (1, 3, 4, 6)	Embed in Darroch first for some years to build up to sustainable numbers. (2) Build a primary school on the Liberton site first, eventually providing us with a 3-18 campus. This would alleviate ongoing pressure on TnP ensuring we build numbers in advance. (2, 3) A coherent and explicit plan is needed to address this issue. (3) It was suggested that a strong connection between the two schools would be necessary. (1, 3, 4)
How do we offer a diverse wide curriculum with small cohort? (1, 2, 6)	Co-operation with EME school onsite (2) Primary opened earlier to help boost numbers. (1, 2, 3) More extensive exploration of how a stable teaching cohort was built up in Glasgow. (3)
The curriculum offer is still vague and parents would like more clarity from the Council on this. . Which model would be used at the new school – 3:3 or 2:2:2? Would e-Sgoil be used, and to what extent? e-Sgoil should not be relied on too heavily. (1, 3, 4, 5, 6)	A clearer plan with more explicit detail about delivery of the curriculum to be circulated ahead of any further consultation. (3,4) Clearer information on the use of e-Sgoil and on any evaluation on the use of e-Sgoil. (1)
Staffing: there is a lack of a staffing plan from the Council. (4,5)	A clear staffing strategy is required from the Council, alongside funding details for this. (1,3,4) More extensive exploration of how a stable teaching cohort was built up in Glasgow. (3)
Lack of clarity around the provision that would be made at Darroch in the interim. (3)	Clarification of how classes at Darroch would work, in particular the extent to which GME pupils would be sent to schools other than the JGHS. (3)

What provision would be made for the GME pupils above S2, who would continue at JGHS, after the GME teachers had moved? (3,5)	A clear plan. (3)
The school roll could be very low to begin with, since there will be no second primary until the secondary school opens. (1)	

Process	
What are our concerns about the current proposal?	What do we think might allay those concerns?
There is a lack of detail in the proposals: many elements are not laid out clearly enough to enable evaluation. (1)	
The proposal lacks ambition or any vision for Gaelic as being at the heart of life in the city. (3)	
There is no evidence of any effort to secure the additional funding which would be necessary for a stand-alone option. (5)	
There is a feeling that the council has not appraised each of the sites properly, especially with regard to their locations. (4, 5, 6)	<p>A better appraisal of all four options (rather than one which is weighted in favour of Liberton), particularly Castlebrae and Granton, which are stand-alone, in developing areas and have (or will have) connections to active travel and public transport networks. (5,6)</p> <p>Acknowledgement that Liberton is not central. (5)</p> <p>A positive case for the merits of the Liberton site that does not depend on budgets or deliverability. (3)</p>
The findings of the report by McLeod, O'Rourke and Simpson have not really been addressed. (6)	
The process appears to be rushed through at a funding low-point? (5)	Is the timeframe realistic for a successful transition? 2 or 3 more years at JGHS to allow the consolidation of the delivery of GME and to allow proper appraisal of all the options. (5,6)
	Clarity about the consequences of the Liberton option being turned down in light of the rising rolls at JGHS. (6)
	Can the Council offer tours of the site so that we have a clearer idea of what is planned and how much space there is? (1)

General accessibility	
What are our concerns about the current proposal?	What do we think might allay those concerns?
The site is not easily accessible by active travel for a large portion of the city. (3)	A more central location. (3)
The site is not well situated for access by either bus or train. (5)	

Conclusion

We welcome the prospect of a new, permanent home for Gaelic at the secondary level and thank the Council Officers and team for all their work on this proposal. After the last CEC engagement event in January 2020, the majority of parents/carers felt that they did not have enough information on which to make a decision based on the information provided for the four options that had been tabled. CNPDE has welcomed the opportunity over the last year to provide the CEC with feedback relating to parents and carers concerns and to request information that the parents/carers have requested to make an informed decision about their children's education. It is in this spirit that we draw our conclusions and recommendations.

Our survey indicates that the key parental priorities that we reported last year have been reaffirmed. There remains, however, substantial doubt amongst a large number of parents and carers about whether this proposal meets these priorities (see the discussion on Question 7 in *Survey Results*).

At this stage, only a minority of parents and carers positively support CEC's preferred option, with a much larger minority against and a significant number remaining unsure about the plan.

In our meeting with parents and carers we discussed what their particular concerns were and what steps, if any, could be taken to address them.

Key issues:

- **Concerns around a shared campus.** This can be separated into two key areas: a) concerns around protecting language immersion, and b) concerns around being a new, smaller school sharing a site with an already established school with a substantially larger cohort (the issue with the size of the cohort is compounded in the early years in particular- see below),
- **Concerns around the timescale and transition.** While there would likely be issues with a transition to any new site, some of these may be exacerbated by this particular proposal. The proposed timescale and transition would produce a very small cohort at first which will, in turn, result in a diminished overall experience for those students (e.g. with regards to staffing and over-reliance on EME and/or e-Sgoil).
- **Concerns around location.** While our survey has reaffirmed the community's position that the school has to be appropriately positioned for pupils across Edinburgh (and the Lothians), the results of the survey indicate that large numbers of parents and carers do not believe that the council's preferred option delivers this.

In response to these issues, a number of potential solutions were discussed (see *Feedback from CNPDE Parent and Carers meeting*) with the main ones listed below. While we cannot say that the adoption of the following points would be sufficient to attract majority support (still less a large

majority or even consensus position), we do think that the following points would need to be incorporated if CEC hopes to appeal to more parents and carers:

1. Early building of a primary school, perhaps as part of 3-18 campus. This would: a) embed GME in the local community in the same way that TnP has done in North Edinburgh, with more local families making use of it; b) quickly increase the numbers of pupils entering the GME Secondary thus addressing some concerns regarding having a small cohort; and c) increase the overall numbers of pupils in GME onsite countering some of the relative size disparity between the GME and EME schools.
2. Further consideration should be given to the layout of the site. While physical barriers would be undesirable, is greater 'breathing space' between the two schools possible than is indicated in the current plans (cf. St Augustine's and Forrester's)?
3. More detail on the facilities, including what exactly is to be shared (e.g. the proposal indicates that sports facilities will be shared but what does that include?).
4. Clarification of curriculum offer at the new Gaelic school in 2025 – and what curriculum support would be offered from Liberton and/or e-Sgoil. What would the proposed curriculum offer be to ensure pupils have the widest choice of options?
5. Assurances over staffing. When Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu was opened the council ensured that it was staffed to a level where it could offer a full curriculum in Gaelic despite its relatively small cohort in the beginning. Parent concerns around over-reliance on the neighbouring EME school or e-Sgoil could be allayed by a similar commitment from Edinburgh Council to staff the school to an appropriate level for a successful transition and not rely on the standard formula used to calculate staffing levels.
6. Assurances over transport from other parts of the city. Positive indications were given at the Edinburgh Council meetings that there could be emission-free shuttle buses to and from other parts of the city to address concerns about the distance and accessibility. A commitment to these and/or other similar measures would be welcome.
7. Extension of the timetable, bedding in at Darroch for a longer period of time which would allow GME teaching capacity to grow and for the establishment of a second primary school which could support numbers in the new secondary to ensure a thriving GME community from the beginning.
8. When Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu was set up, their Gaelic Development Officer (GDO) had a key role which was crucial in securing the confidence of parents and carers in the development of the plans. Similarly, when TnP was set up, the Gaelic Development Officer (who was a long-standing member of the Gaelic community) was there to provide information and support to parents and carers and to act as a conduit for questions and concerns. The ambition of Edinburgh is to deliver a GME High School and a second primary school, building staff numbers and utilising e-Sgoil, alongside developing early years to

deliver 1140 hours per child and running Cròileagan groups across the city. It would be beneficial to have a Project Manager to oversee the successful delivery of this growth strategy, working across CEC, TnP and JGHS as well as liaising with parents to build confidence ahead of the transition. It will also be important in the years ahead to have someone actively promoting GME across the city, to ensure that the number of pupils in GME continues to grow and therefore ensure the viability of the GME High School over time. The appointment of a person to this role ahead of a statutory consultation would be significant.

The growth of GME in Edinburgh has accelerated significantly, especially at secondary level, over the last couple of years. We would like to extend our thanks to the staff teams at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce and James Gillespie's High School, along with Council Officers and Councillors for their support in achieving this.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn) will continue to work closely with City of Edinburgh Council during what continues to be an exciting period of growth and expansion for GME in the city. GME parents and carers are committed to taking a collaborative approach towards securing a successful outcome for the education of our children.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn) 10 December 2020



SUMMARY REPORT
Meeting 25 March 2021

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann & Lodainn) 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.

As a result of a meeting in 2015 and reaffirmed at subsequent meetings over the years (particularly at a well-attended meeting on 20 March 2019), parents have identified the following vision for the development of a GME High School for Edinburgh:

1. Parents share the vision of a much enhanced and improved Gaelic-medium experience for our children at secondary school. This would include a greater percentage of the timetable to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic.
2. Parents share the vision of a growing Gaelic-medium community at secondary school, and the vision of this community staying together in one school.

With successful secondary provision delivering:

1. A high-quality education in a well-managed school, with a broad range of subjects and extra-curricular activities offered, along with full support for learning.
2. An enhanced Gaelic immersion experience as part of the above with an aim to produce confident and fluent adult speakers.

In terms of assessing the location and design, parents agreed the following:

1. 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.
2. In terms of geography, the specific needs of a city-wide catchment need to be carefully considered.
3. Design and environment play a large part in successful education, and this should be fully considered; alongside considerations of impact on wider environment.

As a result of the informal consultation, the Council received over 300 questions from parents. The Council's outcome report published on 19 March 2021 looked to address these questions and concerns.

Comann nam Pàrant held a meeting on 25 March 2021 to discuss the outcome report and to review the report.

- The meeting was hosted by Comann nam Pàrant via zoom on Thursday 25 March 2021 - 48 parents attended
- On Monday 12 April 2021, Comann nam Pàrant held a follow-up meeting for parents who had been unable to attend the evening meetign on 25 March – 8 parents attended
- There was representation from parents across the schools age range with classes 1-4 as the most well represented (see below)

What is the age(s) of your young person?

(Multiple choice as may have more than one child)

Cròilegan	4	4%
Sgoil-àraich	7	7%
C1	13	14%
C2	12	13%
C3	13	14%
C4	15	16%
C5	10	11%
C6	8	8%
C7	6	6%
Àrd-sgoil	7	7%
Total	95	100%

Areas of discussion

48 parents were split across three break out sessions on the 25 March and 8 across one break-out session on 12 April; each session covered the same topics. Discussion centred on re-examining the following question which had originally been posed as part of Comann nam Pàrant’s survey to assess parental response to the initial informal consultation report: *From the information you have been given, do you feel that the current plan has the potential to achieve the successful delivery of GME at secondary level?*

The following six areas were discussed:

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

Overview of discussions

1. Impact on language immersion

Parents remain committed to the principle of immersion. Parents need to be confident that the level of Gaelic received by pupils at secondary level will be a significant improvement on what is currently offered.

Parents were broadly supportive of the approach to immersion as outlined in the report and the emphasis on school culture and ethos. However, parents are still seeking more detail on how the curriculum will be structured and how the curriculum will deliver a depth and breadth of subjects from 2025. What is the suggested use of eSgoil and how heavily will this be relied upon? Parents want to see more Gaelic subjects become available faster than currently predicted.

If parents are to commit to significant travel times to the new school, they need to be confident that the Council will deliver a high-quality education and an enhanced Gaelic immersion experience that justifies the time that children spend travelling to receive GME.

The Council have reduced the emphasis on the shared site and refer to the school as a 'standalone' in the report: how will this affect the design as it has been previously been shown? Will there still be shared facilities, if so what are these and how will this work? How will the council and staff team integrate the new GME High School with a significantly smaller cohort onto the already established school site. How will the design of the campus be affected by the proposal that the Gaelic school will effectively be a 3/5-18 school, at least in the medium term?

One parent raised the issue of acoustics in the new building and asked that the Council ensure these are up to code. It is well documented that poor acoustics have a detrimental effect on language acquisition and there has been a long-standing campaign by parents to improve those at Taobh na Pàirce which is ongoing. Parents seek assurances that acoustics in the new building will up to code, and that any existing space to be used for new GME schools/units will be retrofitted correctly and brought up to code.

Parents welcome the commitment to increasing the primary and early years provision to support the development of GME across the city but are concerned about the deliverability and sustainability of this, particularly considering the existing concerns about the levels of immersion at Taobh na Pàirce due to staff recruitment and retention.

Parents would like more detail on the development of the additional primary and early years sites and their proposed locations. The use of the word 'units' feels like a retrograde step in the establishment of GME within Edinburgh and it would be beneficial for them to be identified as schools with their own identities from the start.

2. Location

Some parents reject the location of Liberton for the GME secondary given that a high percentage of families live locally to Taobh na Pàirce.¹ In addition, equalities was raised as an issue: splitting the GME community between Taobh na Pàirce and Liberton potentially puts GME families at a disadvantage compared to other families whose children attend city-wide catchment schools who have their primary and secondary school provision sited closer together.

Some parents would like to see a full evaluation carried out with respect to where families live today, and strategically where families live in relation to the whole of Edinburgh. Population density, current and according to CEC's 2030 development plan needs to be a part of this evaluation in order to understand the suitability of the Liberton site to best serve the service user population and ensure equitable access for children from across the city.

¹ In 2019, Taobh na Pàirce undertook a travel survey of families. There were 206 respondents, representing 296 children. Over half the respondents (119) lived within 2 miles of Taobh na Pàirce. The total roll in 2019 was 424 pupils.

For some parents, they recognise that choosing a location is not as important as ensuring the school delivers high-quality GME in an enhanced Gaelic immersion environment.

Parents are concerned about the travel time. Some parents welcomed the proposal for a non-stop bus to be provided from the primary locations, but some parents had concerns about the practicalities of the service; questions were raised about how the bus service could accommodate after school activities etc. Parents also had reservations over the sustainability of this service over time.

Parents felt a more central location would provide greater potential for growth. Any location would now also need to be viewed in relation to the additional primary sites as well as the existing primary school.

Some parents felt that a central location would also provide a more equitable solution for families across the breadth of Edinburgh (and the Lothians). They also felt that a central location offers better transport links thus making a GME secondary education more accessible to all. Some parents felt that a central location, coupled with proximity to Bun-Sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (and any further primary sites) was the best option in terms of building the school community and supporting a stronger, more sustainable one.

Parents are disappointed that the full options appraisal for four sites has not be forthcoming, creating concern about the provision of GME in the medium term if the Liberton proposal is unsuccessful. In the assessment of Granton, it was considered reductive and unhelpful to pit housing against a school for land use at one particular site.

The addition of primary and early years provision at the Liberton site received a mixed response, mainly because it was unclear why this was now being proposed having not been considered a possibility at an earlier stage. Parents would like more information as to how this will work.

3. Planning

Parents have been consistent in requesting that the Council develop and deliver a plan that centres on educational best practice and outcomes for the children. There was a concern that these latest revisions feel rushed and not rooted in educational best practice but rather in the requirement to move GME within the 2025 timeframe. That new early years facilities are proposed for 2021 and new primary schools for 2022 is extremely positive – but ambitious – and parents are concerned about the impact of any slippage in these timetables, especially on the success of the GME secondary school, whose timetable for delivery appears more fixed/established. Parents would like to better understand the rationale for how GME is being developed across the 3-18 site and what Edinburgh Council would do to mitigate issues such as lack of transition in a 3-18 school.

4. Teacher recruitment

Parents welcomed the increased detail on what GME subjects would be provided and the planned development of GME. Parents were concerned that the increase of subjects and qualifications was slow over the five-year period.

There were concerns over the low numbers of support staff and parents hope to see an increase in support staff ahead of 2025.

There were concerns over how sustainable the plan actually is given the current issues regarding recruitment and retention of staff and the lack of immersion at both high school and primary school. The plan gave no indication as to how this increase in staff was to be achieved other than to 'grow our own'. Whilst parents recognise the value in this approach, it is a long-term strategy that does not meet the immediate need for experienced fluent teachers across 3-18. Similarly, supporting high school EME teachers to develop their Gaelic in order to teach within GME is welcomed; however, these teachers will need time and support to reach a level of fluency that matches their pupils.

The issue of workload for GME teachers was raised in relation to creating Gaelic specific resources on top of their delivery as teachers. Is there a support structure that can be put in place to support teachers in the creation of resources for their classes to enable them to focus on the teaching aspects of their role rather than in the translation of materials.

5. Impact on S1 and S2 cohort (could a second primary be established sooner)

There continues to be significant concern about how the transition will be managed to ensure that the first cohort of GME pupils has a positive and engaging experience of high school.

Other than providing support to the S1 and S2, it was unclear what the educational benefit to the P7s of attending high school a year earlier than their peers would be and what would be provided for them at the new school. Several parents/carers actively rejected this idea while other parents/carers sought more information about the plans for this.

There was discussion as to how transition planning should be approached as some parents/carers have children who will be directly affected and other parents/carers whose children will not be affected. How does this affect the decision-making process?

Assuming a decision is made in November 2020 to open a new GME secondary provision in 2025 the educational pathway for children in GME primary will be determined in four different ways. This will have the effect of creating four different experiences for GME primary families:

1. Families with children in C5, C6 and C7 and no younger siblings will be given the certainty that they will continue their education at secondary in JGHS. It could reasonably be expected that the level of GME provision will not fall below the level it would be at in 2025.
2. Families with children in C3, C2 C1 and sgoil-àraich and no older children will be given the certainty that they will continue their education at the new GME secondary. It would be hoped that the level of GME provision would be at a minimum the same as JGHS in 2025 but would increase year on year as the new school grows.
3. Families with children in C4 will be asked to send their children to JGHS for one year and then to send them to the new GME secondary and it is uncertain if they will be given a choice even if they have an older or younger sibling or if they opt to stay at JGHS if they will continue to have a GME offer.
4. Families with children in the upper portion of the school and the lower portion of the school face having siblings in both schools.

Each of these groups need to be engaged with to ascertain the specific wishes and needs of these families we would urge the Council to set up a series of dedicated meetings to discuss the specific pathways for these families.

It was noted by a parent, that the Council refer to 'following the Glasgow model', but have not offered a key part of that model which was to provide S1 and S2 learners with their choice of setting in order to address the issue of parents having siblings in different schools.

Parents/carers need reassurance in the process and the establishment of the new school in order to opt-in to GME.

Parents were interested in the suggestion that older S5-S6 pupils from JGHS would travel to Liberton both to access their GME subjects and to act as older peers/mentors for the younger learners. They questioned whether this could be expanded to include S3-S4 learners, but worried that having to travel to Liberton might reduce the likelihood that the older JGHS learners would choose GME Nat 5, Higher and Advanced Highers, and how this might be mitigated.

Parents also need greater clarity on the curriculum that is proposed from 2026 onwards for S3/4 learners post-Broad General Education and the educational benefits envisaged by CEC compared to the offering at JGHS, to which those learners are currently entitled.

6. Any other issues

There was recognition from parents of the significant development of GME in recent years and the Council's commitment to further develop GME across the city, with particular reference to the work of Bethan Owen as Quality Improvement Officer.

Parents recognise the importance of Gaelic leadership roles within the Council and welcome the role of the Iomairtean Officer and the Gaelic Development Officer in the development of GME. Comann nam Pàrant would like to re-iterate that the Gaelic Development Officer (GDO) is crucial to the success of the development of a Gaelic High School: they must have a key role in the development of the plans and to secure the confidence of parents and carers in the development and implementation of the plans.

When Taobh na Pàirce was set up, the Gaelic Development Officer (who was a long-standing member of the Gaelic community) was there to provide information and support to parents and carers and to act as a conduit for questions and concerns. The ambition of Edinburgh Council is to deliver a GME High School and two additional primary schools, building staff numbers across these sites and utilise e-Sgoil, alongside developing early years to deliver 1140 hours per child and running Cròileagan groups across the city. It will be essential to have a Gaelic Development Officer appointed (in line with strategic priority 2 of the Gaelic Language Plan) to oversee the successful delivery of this growth strategy, working across CEC, TnP and JGHS as well as liaising with parents to build confidence ahead of the transition.

Conclusion

To conclude, Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann & Lodainn) has welcomed the opportunity over the last year to provide the CEC with feedback relating to parents and carers views and concerns, and to request information that the parents/carers have asked for in order to make an informed decision about their children's education. It is in this spirit that we continue to work with the Council towards a permanent home for GME at secondary level in Edinburgh.

We are grateful to the team at the Council for reflecting on the input from parents and addressing their concerns. We are pleased to see a positive response to the need to develop new primary schools as soon as possible to support the establishment of the secondary. However, the new plans for a 3-18 provision and the changes in plans for transition have raised new questions and concerns

amongst some parents. Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann & Lodainn) have, over many years, requested a strategic plan for the development of GME that would provide a clear pathway for the development of GME across the city. This is an action point within the Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2022. The outcome report refers to a Gaelic Learning Strategy and we would request that this is published as soon as possible so families can fully understand the educational rationale for how the proposal has been developed to support the education of GME learners.

Whilst we welcome the addition of two new primaries and increased early years provision there is concern over the sustainability and deliverability of this plan with the additional requirement for fluent teachers to deliver an immersion experience at multiple sites across the city. Therefore, we would ask that the Council provide detailed plans and assurances to parents and carers that the recruitment and retention plan can deliver on these ambitions at both primary and high school level.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann & Lodainn) would strongly recommend that the Council plan and publicise a series of engagement events with parents to look more closely at the specific issues for families. The proposal affects families in different ways depending on the ages and number of children in each family. We would suggest that the Council hold a series of events for groups of parents/carers that reflect the pathways outlined in the appendix 'Pathways for Year Groups' so that the specific issues relating to the transition of each year group at Taobh na Pàirce can be properly explored.

Many Taobh na Pàirce families live within 2 miles of the school. Whilst the non-stop bus was welcomed by some parents, other parents remain unconvinced that the location is suitable, and they remain seriously concerned about the impact on the local school community of the Liberton proposal.

The depth and breadth of curriculum remains a key concern for parents and carers. We would like to request further detail on the curriculum offer and how the Council plan to provide a depth and breadth of curriculum from 2025 onwards whilst the new school establishes itself. How will the school utilise surrounding EME provision and e-Sgoil to support that. The outcome report refers to the secondary school as a standalone but it is not clear what the impact of that is for the design of the school nor the education within in and how being on a shared site will be managed.

It was noted that the outcomes report did not reflect on the previous suggested plans to use 'Darroch and surrounding schools' in the delivery of GME. As noted in December's Comann nam Pàrant report, this interim measure is unacceptable in the delivery of GME and we continue to seek an assurance from the Council on their commitment that 'Every pupil from Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce, if they chose to do so, will move as one cohort to secondary GME provision which is currently provided at James Gillespie's High School'.

The growth of GME in Edinburgh has accelerated significantly, especially at secondary level, over the last couple of years. We would like to extend our thanks to the staff teams at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce and James Gillespie's High School, along with Council Officers and Councillors for their work. Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann & Lodainn) will continue to work closely with the City of Edinburgh Council during what continues to be an exciting period of growth and expansion for GME in the city. GME parents and carers are committed to taking a collaborative approach towards securing a successful outcome for the education of our children.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Eideann & Lodainn)
12.04.2021



cnpduneideann@gmail.com

By email

Shirley-Anne Somerville
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Scottish Government

26 May 2021

Shirley-Anne Somerville a charaid

Re. City of Edinburgh Council Consultation on Gaelic Medium Education Secondary School

You will be aware that the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) is due to consider proceeding to a statutory consultation around opening a new Gaelic Medium Education Secondary School in Liberton. The CEC Education, Children and Families Committee (due to meet on the 28 May 2021) will consider a recommendation to proceed to statutory consultation on the closure of GME at James Gillespie's High School from 2025 and opening of a new GME Secondary School on a shared site with Liberton High School.

The SNP Manifesto 2021 made detailed and specific reference and commitments around GME in Edinburgh. Parents, carers, the Parent Councils and Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn) would welcome clarity around the meaning of these commitments, quoted below, to ensure informed decisions are made concerning proposals for the future of GME in Edinburgh:

We will support the development of additional GME primary schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians as an important step towards the creation of a standalone GME secondary school in central Edinburgh.

A central location is necessary to ensure it is accessible from major public transport hubs to allow the new standalone school to serve the wider Lothian region.

ECC has taken forward important engagement on GME provision, but we will ensure that this is now incorporated within a new national strategic approach.

Of specific importance to parents and carers will be a full explanation around the SNP's understanding of 'standalone GME secondary school' and 'a central location', and how this reflects the new national strategic approach.

We would like to invite you to attend a meeting with GME parents and carers in June to explain how the Government feels the CEC proposal for Liberton aligns with the manifesto commitment and to set out the 'New national strategic approach' to GME. We are concerned that proceeding to consultation without exploring the specific issues raised by the manifesto risks the consultation process itself.

We remain committed to working with the Council. However, with the future of GME in Edinburgh at stake, we feel clarity is required from Scottish Government and the SNP around their manifesto commitments to ensure parents can make fully informed decisions around the future of GME in Edinburgh.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at your earliest convenience.

Le gach deagh dhùrachd,

Sharon May

Convenor
Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)

Copy to
Shona MacLennan, CEO, Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Gayle Gorman, CEO, Education Scotland
Ben Macpherson, MSP



cnpduneideann@gmail.com

By email

Shirley-Anne Somerville
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Scottish Government

1 June 2021

Shirley-Anne Somerville a charaid

Re. City of Edinburgh Consultation on Gaelic Medium Education Secondary School

I am writing to update you on the outcome of the City of Edinburgh Council's Education, Children and Families Committee (ECF) which was held on 28 May 2021. Comann nam Pàrant - Dùn Èideann & Lodainn (CnP) provided a deputation and submitted a short written report. At the meeting the Committee agreed:

- The Convenor of ECF Committee should write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to seek confirmation as to whether the proposal outlined in the draft statutory consultation paper aligns with the government's new national strategic approach for the growth of Gaelic Medium Education particularly in relation to the commitment to create a standalone secondary school in the centre of Edinburgh.
- The Convener reports back to the next ECF Committee meeting on 24 August 2021 on the outcome of these discussions before taking a decision on proceeding to the Statutory Consultation.

We specifically asked the Council to defer making a decision on proceeding to statutory consultation until the August meeting, in the expectation that after discussion with yourself and officials there should be greater clarity around the SNP manifesto commitments and how the council's plan aligns to the new national strategy for GME.

During the ECF meeting we underlined the lack of clarity around the Council's plans and their alignment to manifesto commitments and the new national strategy. We remain concerned that proceeding to consultation without exploring the specific issues raised by the manifesto risks the consultation process itself.

We would suggest that you could engage with a small group of parents, including representatives from CnP and the Parent Council of Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce to discuss these issues and hear directly from parents and carers in advance of providing your response to the Convenor of the ECF Committee. CnP would be happy to facilitate such a meeting.

If you are receptive to the suggestion for a small meeting, we can liaise with your officials and progress planning for a date in June.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Le gach deagh dhùrachd,

Sharon May

Convenor
Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)

Copy to
Shona MacLennan, CEO, Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Gayle Gorman, CEO, Education Scotland
Ben Macpherson, MSP



cnpduneideann@gmail.com

By email

Shirley-Anne Somerville
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Scottish Government

9 June 2021

Case numbers: 202100207665 and 202100210443

Shirley-Anne Somerville a charaid

Re. Briefing Paper on a Gaelic Medium High School for Edinburgh

We are writing to you to provide additional information on GME in Edinburgh. Please find attached a briefing paper which covers the background, the current proposal, the manifesto promise and its effects, and suggested next steps.

We would be grateful if you could take the time to appraise this short document and to attend a meeting with parents to discuss.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Le gach deagh dhùrachd,

Sharon May

Convenor
Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)

Copy to
Douglas Ansell, Scottish Government
Stuart Pescodd, Scottish Government
Gayle Gorman, CEO, Education Scotland
Ben Macpherson, MSP
Shona MacLennan, CEO, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Briefing paper on a Gaelic Medium High School for Edinburgh

Background

The current attempt to find the best solution for a Gaelic Medium High School in Edinburgh is the latest stage in a process that has been ongoing since the decision to open Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce in 2011.

Comann nam Pàrant has continually requested the development of a strategy for the development of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) from 0-18 years across the city, a strategy that puts education at its heart. This strategy has not been forthcoming, with the Council prioritising the rising rolls issue ahead of the need to develop a coherent approach to the development of GME.

However, the pressure of rising rolls at James Gillespie's High School has created the momentum for the Council to establish a Gaelic Medium High School in the city and we have been working with the Council to find a solution.

The current proposal

Following the collapse of the Drummond proposal in 2017/2018, the Council undertook, at a meeting with parents in 2019, to carry out an analysis of four potential sites for a Gaelic Medium High School - two standalone and two co-located. The process by which these four sites were identified and what other sites were considered is not clear to us, but parents were given the impression that a genuinely strategic options appraisal would be carried out. At a further meeting in January 2020, however, it was clear that Liberton was now the Council's preferred option.

The main reason given for this was "deliverability", a concept which was explained by reference to the cost of foregoing development opportunities at other sites and the availability of Scottish Government funding. Unfortunately, what is seen by some parents as a weak analysis of the initially-presented options has eroded parental confidence in the process. Doubts have been expressed as to whether the Council's strategy has any rational basis other than addressing the JGHS rising rolls issue in time and avoiding the consequences of a failure to plan for the financial demands of expanded GME.

Council representatives considered that Gaelic immersion could be achieved at any site. For that reason, questions of best practice for minority language provision played little or no role in the case for the Liberton site. No developed explanation of how immersion would be achieved or how a "Gaelic Language Bubble" would be protected was offered. Free public transport travel for secondary pupils was thought to address any concerns about accessibility of the site. (This was later supplemented by the offer of direct buses from Taobh na Pàirce.) Parents' concerns regarding the Liberton site focussed on three inter-related issues: the effect on Gaelic immersion of a shared campus; the vulnerability of a small GME school community sharing facilities with a much larger EME

school and the peripheral location of the site on the opposite side of the city to the existing primary.

The manifesto promise and its effect

The SNP manifesto commitment to “a standalone school in central Edinburgh” thus focussed directly on the points of concern which were most salient amongst the parent body. Before the election, 18% of parents supported the Liberton proposal with 41% opposing and 41% unsure and seeking more information from the council. The offer of a school that directly met with the parents’ long-established vision and priorities for a Gaelic Medium High School has been widely welcomed and has deepened the view that Liberton is not the solution that the manifesto presented being the best option for Edinburgh and the Lothians. An apparent retreat from the manifesto commitment since the election risks further embedding cynicism and lack of trust regarding political will for the support of GME and the Gaelic language.

Further, uncertainty about the Scottish Government’s intentions with regard to GME in Edinburgh has prevented City of Edinburgh Council from developing its own position. This puts additional pressure on an already tight timetable.

What is needed

In light of all this, clarity about the nature of the additional support to which the Scottish Government considers itself bound in light of its manifesto commitment is needed as a matter of urgency. Furthermore, we suggest that you meet with parents to explain the nature of the Scottish Government's offer and reassure them about the Government’s commitment to supporting Gaelic language and education in the nation’s capital.



cnpduneideann@gmail.com
By email

Shirley-Anne Somerville
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Scottish Government

28 June 2021

Case numbers 202100207665 and 202100210443

Shirley-Anne Somerville a charaid

Re: meeting with Julien Kramer, Interim Director of Education at City of Edinburgh Council

We are writing to update you on our recent meeting with Julien Kramer, Interim Director of Education at City of Edinburgh Council, which was held 25 June 2021 to discuss the statutory consultation for a Gaelic High School in Edinburgh. Here, we highlighted the significant and continuous concerns around the statutory consultation: lack of clear process and leadership, lack of strategy at local and national level, issues around the Liberton proposal itself (lack of clear communication and demonstrable experience in delivering a project of this scale, along with little understanding of the variety of needs and experiences of families) and the confusion created by the apparent alternative offer suggested by the SNP manifesto pledge. Due to these issues, we have strongly urged Julien Kramer to delay the date of the statutory consultation which is currently scheduled for 24 August 2021.

On 28 May 2021, Comann nam Pàrant made a verbal and written deputation at the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting held by City of Edinburgh Council. Our written deputation (attached) highlights the range of concerns regarding the current proposal for a Gaelic Medium High School for Edinburgh. It also emphasises the need for the SNP to provide clarity around their manifesto pledge, to articulate how the support for a 'stand-alone GME secondary school in the centre of Edinburgh' and 'a general presumption against co-locating GME schools with English medium schools' aligns with the proposal for a joint campus at Liberton.

We have also written to you on three occasions:

26 May 2021, City of Edinburgh Council Consultation on Gaelic Medium Education Secondary School, case number 202100207665

31 May 2021, Follow up - City of Edinburgh Council Consultation on Gaelic Medium Education Secondary School, case number 202100210443

9 June 2021, Briefing Paper on a Gaelic Medium High School for Edinburgh, case numbers: 202100207665 and 202100210443

We write again to stress the urgency of the issue. City of Edinburgh Council have asked their Convenor to write to you to seek confirmation on whether the proposal outlined in the draft statutory consultation paper (attached) aligns with the government's new national strategic approach for the growth of Gaelic Medium Education, particularly in relation to the commitment to create a standalone secondary school in the centre of Edinburgh. The Convener reports back to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 24 August 2021 on the outcome of these discussions before proceeding to the Statutory Consultation.

Parents and carers are entitled to make informed choices regarding their children's education. Your recent statement in support of the Liberton proposal has caused significant confusion and concern, creating an environment in which many families feel unable to assess the proposal. Until there is clear and sufficiently detailed information from the Scottish Government which directly and adequately addresses the issues raised by the SNP manifesto, the statutory consultation process itself is at risk. Without such clarity on this issue, parents and carers will be unable to participate in one of the most significant decisions around Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh in recent years.

We look forward to your response dealing with the issues set out in this and our previous letters.

Le gach deagh dhùrachd

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)



T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Sharon May
cnpduneideann@gmail.com

Our Reference: 202100211823
Your Reference: Gaelic Education in Edinburgh

15 July 2021

Dear Ms May,

Thank you for your email of 27 May and subsequent updates regarding the proposals by Edinburgh City Council for Gaelic provision at Liberton and the SNP manifesto commitments.

The Scottish Government has a strong commitment to the Gaelic language and our aim is to see an increase in the numbers speaking, using and learning the language. In support of this aim, the Government's is ambitious and keen to demonstrate our resolve to create a sustainable future for the language throughout Scotland, not least through our commitment to a GME secondary school in Edinburgh. We recognise that the City of Edinburgh Council and the parents who wish Gaelic medium education for their children have a key role to play and contribution to make in achieving this.

We are aware that Edinburgh Council also has ambitious plans for the future delivery of Gaelic medium education in the city. In this, it is essential that the Council proceeds with a clear understanding of the wishes of Gaelic medium parents. Having taken parental views into account it will be for the City of Edinburgh to consider options and to proceed to consultation following the process contained in the Schools (Consultation) Act 2010.

Throughout this process the Scottish Government is keen to work closely with the Council, to offer support where possible and to ensure good progress is made both with SG commitments and CEC ambitions. Our shared aim must be to promote and support Gaelic medium education within the city and to ensure that the high quality of provision continues to be attractive to parents in the Edinburgh area.

I would ask that parents continue to engage with Edinburgh Council as they develop their proposals.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot



I hope that this clarifies the position.

Yours sincerely



SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)

Written Report to Education, Children and Families Committee

Friday 28 May 2021 at 9am

Agenda item 4a) Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh – Statutory Consultation

Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh began through a small group of parents and children setting up a Pàrant is Pàisde playgroup and campaigning over many years for formal education in Gaelic to be introduced in the city. From that campaign, came the establishment of the GME primary unit and sgoil-àraich at Tollcross from 1988, followed by the creation of a successful and fast-expanding stand-alone primary school at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce in 2013. This has been accompanied by the flourishing of cròileagan groups across the city, bringing more and more families into GME. These developments have been achieved through the hard work and dedication of many people in cròileagan groups, in schools and in the Gaelic community, as well as by support garnered at Council and national level. Such accomplishments have come to fruition due to the energy and dedication of longstanding and ongoing parental campaigns which have driven and underpinned the expansion of GME in Edinburgh, as they have elsewhere in Scotland. Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn) has been representing and supporting families throughout this period in our goals of establishing, maintaining and developing Gaelic Medium Education in the city. Now, in working towards a Gaelic-medium High School for Edinburgh, we continue advocate for families throughout their journey in GME.

We have listened to the voices of parents, teachers and our children, and together we have collaborated in creating a vision for the development of a GME High School for Edinburgh. That is, a much enhanced and improved Gaelic-medium experience for our children at secondary school level, one which ensures a greater percentage of the timetable to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic. We seek a growing Gaelic-medium community at secondary level, and the vision of this community staying together in one school.

Families require a successful secondary school provision which prioritises delivering a high-quality education in a well-managed school, with a broad range of subjects and extra-curricular activities offered, along with full support for learning. We strive for an enhanced Gaelic immersion experience for our children with the aim of producing confident and fluent adult speakers.

The criteria set by families are: 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, that the specific needs of a city-wide catchment need to be carefully considered, and that design and environment play a large part in successful education.

This vision and these priorities – established and verified through open and repeated consultation with all GME families – remain the core principles guiding Comann nam Pàrant and the families we represent. They provide the framework through which we have engaged with the process set out by the Council, including the informal consultation in 2020 and the outcome report published in 2021.

The SNP's manifesto¹ reflects the vision and priorities of GME families for the future of GME. The manifesto states:

“Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is a key driver for ensuring that Gaelic continues to thrive and grow in both rural and urban areas. GME education is at its most successful when it is a fully immersive experience for pupils, and when an entire school career can be delivered through the medium of

¹ [SNP Manifesto 2021](#)

Gaelic.

To ensure that the GME experience is truly immersive we will have a general presumption against co-locating GME schools with English medium schools.

We will encourage the creation of new GME primary and secondary schools across Scotland, backed by investment to increase the number of teachers who can teach in the medium of Gaelic. This will be with a view to strengthening the range of subjects that can be taught in GME for both a broad general education and in the senior phase of secondary school.

We will support the development of additional GME primary schools in Edinburgh and the Lothians as an important step towards the creation of a standalone GME secondary school in central Edinburgh. A central location is necessary to ensure it is accessible from major public transport hubs to allow the new standalone school to serve the wider Lothian region.

Edinburgh City Council has taken forward important engagement on GME provision, but we will ensure that this is now incorporated within a new national strategic approach. This is essential if we are to see the faster rates of progress we seek for Gaelic."

The SNP pledge offered parents and carers a centrally-located, dedicated stand-alone GME High School, a result for which families have long advocated. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to expect parents to support the vision set out by the SNP in their manifesto which so closely reflects the vision and priorities laid out by parents over the last five years.

We are keen to see the new national strategic approach proposed by Scottish Government in the SNP's recent manifesto and how this fits with Edinburgh Council's strategy for the development of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) across the City. This is especially pressing given the recent statement made by Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, in which she stated that '[City of Edinburgh Council] have presented an excellent option at Liberton High and one that serves the community very well.' We are keen to understand how the co-located Liberton option aligns with the SNP's pledge of a stand-alone central school, and await further clarification.

In our response to the Council's informal consultation, Comann nam Pàrant's report² highlighted specific areas of concern:

- the impact on language immersion
- the proposed location
- the need for careful and detailed planning
- the recruitment and retention of teaching staff
- the impact on the S1 and S2 cohort

We welcome the Council's consideration of these parental concerns and look forward to further discussion and details about the new primary provision, including clarification on the future of Darroch, the rationale for the catchment areas and an assessment of the proposals for active travel and transport to the various school sites for the GME community.

However, there are substantial issues which remain unresolved and which, without solutions, will continue to create significant barriers for parents. We require detailed plans about recruitment and retention of teaching staff that can deliver on the ambitions set out by the Council. We request further detail on the proposed curriculum offer and how the Council plans to provide a depth and

² [Comann nam Pàrant \(Dùn Èideann & Lodainn\) Submission to Informal Review for GME High School 11 December 2020](#)

breadth of curriculum from 2025 onwards, and clarity on if and how any GME High School utilises surrounding EME provision and e-Sgoil. We also seek clarity around the definition of 'stand-alone', a term now being used by the Council to describe the GME High School operating on a shared campus site.

In our survey in December 2020, 41% of respondents answered "no" and 41% of respondents answered "unsure" when asked if, from the information given to them by the Council, they felt that the current plan had the potential to achieve the successful delivery of GME at secondary level. The reasons given for the answers were consistent across these two groups and the most common concerns being:

- Co-location and the impact on language immersion were the most frequently cited
- Lack of planning and that this seemed a "rush" was the next most common comment from respondents. Concerns were around the lack of thoroughness in the planning, lack of data and the feeling that the Council are trying to rush this plan through to solve an estates problem.

When asked about the specific location, 51% said the location did not offer the scope to meet the priorities and criteria for the successful delivery of GME at secondary level and 34% were not sure. The shared campus was the most common concern (in terms of the quality of Gaelic immersion it offers and how the GME High School would integrate and engage with the EME school) followed by location (Liberton not being considered central, transport links not being adequate, and the distance from the existing primary school). We are aware that these results were taken from parents in December 2020, prior to the offer of transport from Taobh na Pàirce to the new GME High School at Liberton which was announced in the outcomes report and noted in the consultation by the Council. We acknowledge that this offer made by the Council is a move towards addressing one of the concerns (travel times) around the location.

However, there is more to do: significant concern remains around the inconsistent language used to describe the new school, with terms 'stand-alone', 'co-located' and 'shared campus' all appearing in descriptions of the new school. These mixed and unclear phrases do not help parents who are seeking clear information to make an informed choice. We ask the Council to articulate the proposal using consistent language and to define these terms so that families can fully understand the proposal that is being made.

Since the publication of the Outcome Report of the Informal Consultation Process on Proposals for Secondary Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh in March 2021 and the original scheduled Committee meeting in April, there was not sufficient time for Comann nam Pàrant to survey GME families in a way that would reflect whether parents' position has changed based on the additional information in the Council's latest document. Comann nam Pàrant is waiting for clarification from the SNP prior to issuing another survey to assess the current parental position.

However, it is clear from our engagement with GME families since March 2021 that for a significant proportion of parents/carers uncertainty remains about the suitability of this proposal. This uncertainty can only be overcome by the Council sharing information and involving parents in a more significant and structured way in the planning and development of GME at secondary level.

Comann nam Pàrant has requested, over many years, the development of a strategic plan for the growth of GME across the city that is driven by educational best practice for a city-wide catchment 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. Comann nam Pàrant requests that the Gaelic Learning Strategy – referred to in the Council's outcome report – is published as soon as possible so that families can fully understand how the proposal has been

developed to support the education of GME learners, and how this aligns with the broader strategic plan for the development of GME across the city and with the new national framework.

We recognise the importance of Gaelic leadership roles within the Council and would like to re-iterate that the Gaelic Development Officer (GDO) is crucial to the success of the development of a Gaelic High School: they must have a key role in the development of the plans operating from a position of deep knowledge and advocacy for GME, from which they can secure a path of engagement between parents and the Council and to act as a conduit for questions and concerns.

The Council have stated that the outcome report would “reflect the discussions, address all comments and questions received, and conclude which option(s) will be progressed to statutory consultation”. While the Council have reached their conclusion as to which option they wish to progress to statutory consultation, significant work needs to be done in reflecting the discussions and addressing all comments and concerns raised by families. It is only by achieving this that any proposal has the opportunity to be met with enthusiasm and result in success. We reiterate that robust information, clear communication and active engagement with families is vital to the success of any proposal brought forward by the Council.

In terms of the recommendations made by the Council to the Committee we would make the following comments:

1.1.1 We have seen no evidence in the informal consultation process that indicates a majority of parents would support the proposals at a statutory consultation. Indeed, it is clear that a number of parents would actively oppose it. Given this, we cannot support the Council's preferred proposal going forward to statutory consultation.

1.1.2 We support the Convenor attempting to obtain clarification from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. Comann nam Pàrant has done likewise and has written to the Secretary in order to gain clarity on the manifesto pledge and to underline how these recent commitments have been enthusiastically received by parents, how this has an impact on the Council's proposals, and to push for Scottish Government's involvement in finding a satisfactory resolution.

1.1.3 We accept a decision on statutory consultation being delayed to August 2021 (the comments in 1.1.1 notwithstanding). However, we believe that continued contact with parents in the interim period is critical. The Council must discuss issues such as the curriculum offer, transition and immersion, all which will be of a concern wherever the school is located, and which would be useful in continuing to support parents and their families towards a solution that meets the best educational outcomes for their children.

The growth of GME in Edinburgh has accelerated significantly, especially at secondary level, over the last few years. We would like to extend our thanks to the staff teams at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce and James Gillespie's High School, along with Council Officers and Councillors for their support in achieving this. We appreciate that the work done to achieve the current improved position has been undertaken by all Council administrations and recognise the cross-party support that Gaelic Medium Education continues to receive.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn) will continue to work closely with the Council during what continues to be an exciting period of growth and expansion for GME in the city. GME families are committed to taking a collaborative approach towards securing a successful outcome for the education of our children. We look forward to working closely with the Council in securing a permanent home for GME at secondary level and an expanded provision at primary and early years.

We will continue to work together in achieving this ambition, ensuring it is one which reflects the vision and priorities of families, recognises Gaelic language and culture as an integral part of a connected, inspired, fair and thriving city³, and – above all – keeps the education and wellbeing of children at its heart.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)

27.05.2021

³ [City of Edinburgh Council, Edinburgh Gaelic Language Plan 2018-22](#)



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)



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)



cnpduneideann@gmail.com

By email

Shirley-Anne Somerville
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Scottish Government

20 September 2021

Shirley-Anne Somerville a charaid

Your Reference: 202100211823

We are writing in response to your letter of 15 July 2021 regarding parental concerns over the establishment of a Gaelic medium education high school in Edinburgh.

We understand that you have met with the Convenor and Vice Convenor of City of Edinburgh Council's Education Committee and we fully support the pausing of the statutory consultation while further analysis on alternative sites is conducted.

We welcome the remarks in your letter offering support "to ensure good progress is made both with SG commitments and CEC ambitions". Given the specific commitments given in the SNP manifesto for a "stand-alone GME secondary school in the centre of Edinburgh", families expect such an option to become available for their consideration.

We are pleased to see the Government's continuing commitment in the 2021/22 Programme for Government to "develop a new national strategic approach" to GME. We would welcome further information on what this strategic approach might mean to families in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Please also find attached our recent letter to the Convenor and Vice Convenor outlining a number of outstanding issues that are of concern to families.

This is a crucial, strategic decision for the future of GME in the capital. We completely agree that our shared aim is to promote and support the establishment, maintenance and growth of Gaelic medium education in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and we welcome your necessary practical support to achieve a high quality provision which meets with parents' long established [vision](#) and [priorities](#) for a GME high school.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)

Copy to

Shona MacLennan, CEO, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Gayle Gorman, CEO, Education Scotland

Ben Macpherson, MSP



cnpduneideann@gmail.com

By email

Alison is Iain còire

Re: GME Education - City of Edinburgh

Many thanks for sharing your most recent letter to Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, regarding proposals for the new GME high school, along with Cabinet Secretary's letter to City of Edinburgh Council from earlier in the month.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) very much welcomes the transparent communication from the Council as well as your ongoing collaboration with the Scottish Government in this urgent issue. We do, however, wish to raise concerns around the content of the correspondence, and we list these below. We also include recommendations which we hope will create an opportunity for the Council to collaborate with GME families more fruitfully at this critical time.

We understand that you plan to bring a report to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2021 which identifies sites, outlines costs and offers an appraisal of each option. We ask that you do not seek approval from the Committee to consider starting the statutory consultative process. Instead, we request that you take the time to prepare and present detailed pre-consultation information, to communicate and engage with families in a more substantial way, and to fully address the concerns which have been raised by Comann nam Pàrant in the past year.

Timescales

Your letter cited 'accommodation pressures at James Gillespie's High School' as a potential factor in determining the timescales for a GME high school. However, as parents we believe that the timeline for a new GME high school should be based on ensuring the best possible outcome for the generations of pupils this new school will serve. GME pupils are entitled to a GME high school which reflects the priorities and criteria that have been established and verified through open and repeated consultation with all GME families.

The need for a GME high school should not be conflated with the rising rolls at James Gillespie's High School: the two issues are distinct. GME pupils should not be removed from James Gillespie's High School as an attempt to mitigate the problem of rising rolls, nor should pupil numbers at JGHS be a determining factor in the timeline for the creation of a new GME high school.

Fettes site

In terms of timescales, we note that Fettes has now been removed as an option as it will not be available in the timescale to which you are working. The Royal Victoria Hospital site, however, remains as a possible option despite having an impact on your original 2025 deadline. We seek further clarity as to why the Fettes site could not also be considered.

Royal Victoria Hospital site

We seek clarification as to whether the Council would still seek approval at the committee meeting on 7 December 2021 to go to statutory consultation if there is not a response from the Scottish Government regarding the funding required for the Royal Victoria Hospital site.

Finance

We are alarmed by the statement 'If the capital grant is not forthcoming then a GME secondary school, irrespective of the site, becomes undeliverable because the Council does not have the capital funding to deliver a GME secondary school by itself.' This suggests an astonishing lack of planning in terms of budgeting for the development of GME in Edinburgh and the Lothians. We ask that the Council provide more information around this: if the Council have included the cost of a GME high school at all within their own budget or if a new school is entirely dependent on financial support from the Scottish Government.

The Best Educational Option

We understand the Council are of the opinion that the co-located Liberton site is 'the best educational option for the development of Gaelic'. However, it is not possible for families to agree with this view prior to any consultation. There is no detail available for a GME high school on any other site and therefore no comparison can be made at this stage.

In addition, we seek clarity on how 'best educational option' would be measured when making comparisons between sites. Here, we would also require information on how the Council plans to grow GME, such as progress in the recruitment and retention of Gaelic-speaking staff and increasing the proportion of the curriculum delivered through Gaelic. These are both current issues at James Gillespie's High School. GME families need to fully understand the way in which the Council is demonstrably committed to meeting the goal of immersion throughout the period of our children's Broad General Education (per Education Scotland: *Advice on Gaelic Education*, February 2015.)

We would also highlight again the SNP's manifesto which stated that '[to] ensure that the GME experience is truly immersive we will have a general presumption against co-locating

GME schools with English medium schools.’ It is unclear how the Council’s preferred option aligns with this approach.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Council does not proceed with the statutory consultation. Instead, we urge the Council to undertake an informal consultation, publish pre-consultation information well in advance with robust data and clear criteria, share their Gaelic Learning Strategy, communicate and engage with parents, and provide an outcome report.

We also ask the Council to take into account the following:

1. Discussions with the Scottish Government on the option of a site to support a centrally located, stand-alone GME secondary school are ongoing. These need to be allowed adequate time to reach a conclusion.
2. We have entered a new academic year and new children have begun their journey in GME. As a result, the parent body to be consulted has changed since the last informal consultation.
3. Engagement with families is crucial. In order to achieve a successful outcome to the statutory consultation, the Council must first listen to the concerns of families (which many feel have not been addressed), and respond to these in turn with the detail and diligence required. A further period of informal consultation will provide the opportunity for this.

We also advise that the Council fully addresses the concerns and questions that Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) raised in our deputation in May 2021, our informal submission in December 2020 and in correspondence both to the Council and to the Scottish Government in the past 12 months.

Pressing ahead without support from GME families would introduce real risk to the statutory consultation process. We encourage the Council to engage with families in a meaningful way to ensure the process is as vigorous, authentic and inclusive as possible. This is vital to the success of any proposal brought forward by the Council.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann & Lodainn) is committed to working with the Council throughout the process. We would like to offer our support in exploring opportunities to increase engagement and communication with families so that we might work together to secure a successful outcome. We look forward to collaborating further in this significant venture of establishing a GME high school which meets the needs of young people and their families.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd

Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)