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Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)

Summary of responses to
Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)'s survey
of Gaelic Medium Education families
on The City of Edinburgh Council's proposals
for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh

January 2022

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Summary of responses to Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)'s (CnP) survey of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) families on The City of Edinburgh Council's ('the Council') proposals for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh – January 2022.

Executive Summary

- On 1 December 2021, the Council shared its updated proposals on GME secondary school consultation, including two additional sites for consideration, and indicated its aim to commence a statutory consultation in January 2022. In order to inform discussions about these proposals that were due to take place between CnP and the Council on 14 December 2021, CnP conducted a survey of families in GME. We were already aware that many parents felt that they did not have enough information from the Council and a new survey provided the opportunity for us to further understand from them the areas of crucial information they found unclear or absent from the proposals.
- The initial findings from the survey were used in CnP's discussions with the Council on 14 December 2021. The summary below presents further detail of the information that was gathered using the survey.
- The survey received 125 individual responses, incorporating almost every current GME year group. Year groups that would be most affected by the proposals, ie C3, C4 and C5, were particularly well-represented. This summary outlines the results of the survey and provides recommendations based on its current findings.
- Across each of 12 topics relating to the proposals, a majority of respondents indicated that they required further information about 11 of the 12 topics. 81% of respondents indicated that they require further information on the topic of Curriculum. The topics with the next highest proportion of respondents indicating a requirement for further information were Location (76%), Timescales (73%), Staffing (70%) and Transitions (69%).
- Detailed breakdowns of the frequency with which important themes were mentioned are provided for each topic, as well as examples of particular questions raised by respondents.
- The results of this survey strongly indicate that the vast majority of GME families continue to lack sufficiently detailed information on almost all aspects of the Council's proposals to allow them to meaningfully appraise the options. It is also clear that the majority of GME families do not believe that the Council has carried out sufficient meaningful engagement with the GME community in order to garner confidence in its ability or motivation to deliver a successful outcome to this important project for young learners.

1. Background

On 1 December 2021 the Council shared a report on updated proposals for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh. The report described two new potential sites (the former Royal Victoria Hospital and the former Castlebrae High School) for consideration in addition to the site that was described in the Council's informal consultation (which took place in December 2020). The report also includes copies of correspondence between the Council and the Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in relation to potential sites for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh and the SNP's May 2020 election manifesto on this topic. The Council indicated that the report would be presented at a meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2021 and that, at that meeting, approval would be sought to present a draft statutory consultation report to a special meeting of the Committee in January, with the intention of commencing a statutory consultation on 31 January 2022.

CnP submitted a written deputation to the Committee meeting highlighting - as it has on previous occasions - the longstanding concerns and unanswered questions of GME families relating to the Council's proposals.¹ CnP's deputation recommended that, rather than bring a draft statutory consultation report to a Committee meeting in January 2022, that the Council take the time to prepare and present detailed pre-consultation information, to communicate and engage with families, and to fully address the concerns raised by CnP in the past year.

At the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 7 December 2021, the Committee voted for the motion to present a draft statutory consultation report to a special meeting of the Committee in January, despite proposed amendments from the Scottish Green Party and the objections raised in CnP's deputation. Committee members stated its belief that the GME community had sufficient information about the proposals and, as such, the Committee felt it appropriate to progress towards a statutory consultation.

On 2 December 2021, members of CnP, along with the Chairs of the Parent Councils for Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (TnP) and James Gillespie's High School (JGHS), were invited to attend a meeting with the Council representatives, to take place on 14 December. Despite written requests from the Chair of JGHS Parent Council, the format of this meeting was not clear. Nor was it clear whether this meeting formed the entirety of the informal consultation with the GME community proposed in the Council's recent report, scheduled to take place 'during the remainder of December'².

Given the short timescale between the release of the updated proposals and the potential commencement of a statutory consultation, as well as the lack of clarity around the extent of any informal consultation in advance of a statutory consultation, CnP agreed to carry out a survey of GME families in order to inform its contribution to the meeting on 14 December. The purpose of the survey was to find out from GME families whether there were aspects of the updated proposals on which families required further information, and to provide examples of such information gaps, so that these could be reflected by CnP in the meeting with the Council.

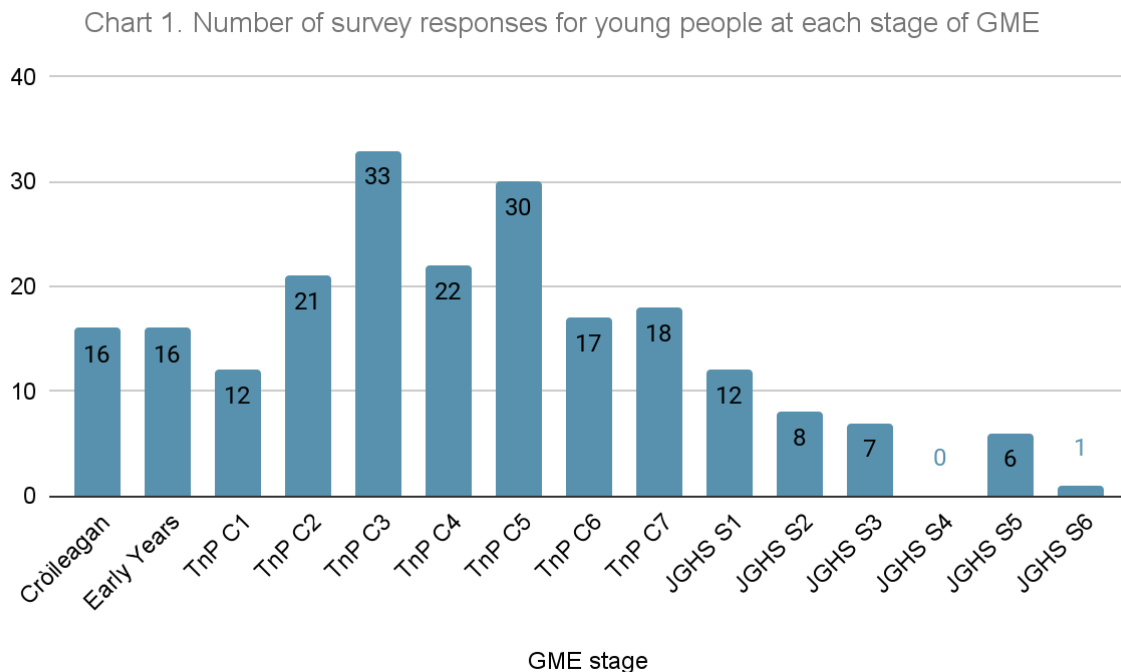
¹ [Comann nam Pàrant \(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn\) Written Deputation to Education, Children and Families Committee Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 10am](#)

² [City of Edinburgh Council, Update on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation](#)

The survey was conducted using Google Forms. It was launched on 8 December 2021 and was advertised through CnP’s mailing list, Classlist, various TnP/JGHS class-specific WhatsApp groups as well as CnP and TnP’s Facebook pages. The survey ran until 12 December. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix 1.

2. Responses to Survey

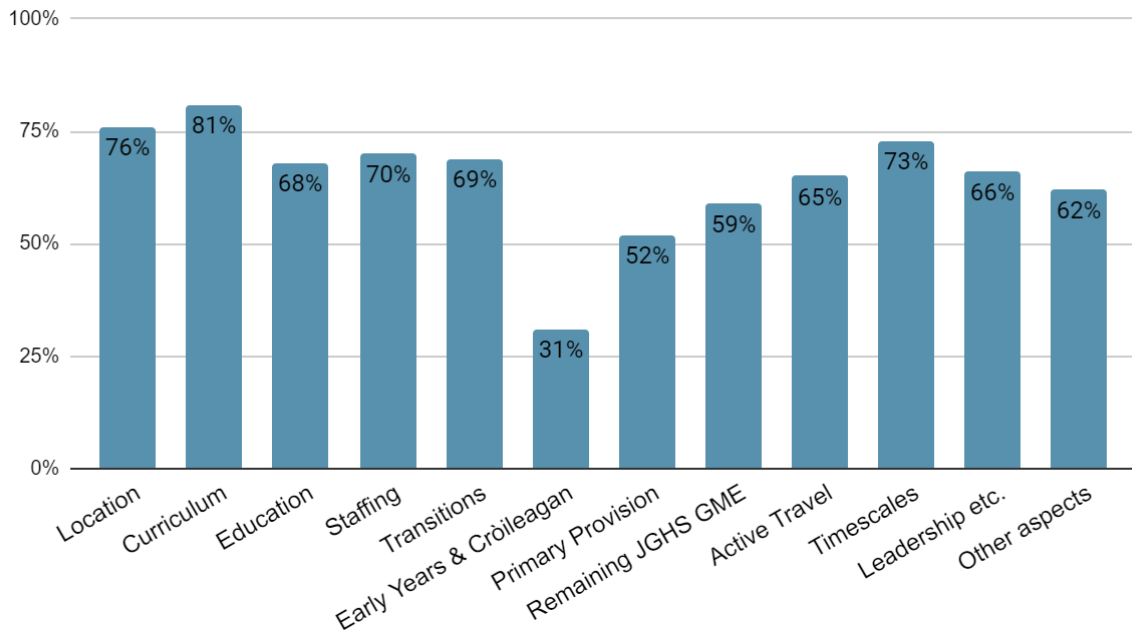
A total of 125 individuals responded to the survey. Responses were received from families with children at almost every stage of GME from Cròileagan (0-3 years) to JGHS S6. The year groups that would be most affected by the proposals for GME secondary provision, ie C3, C4 and C5, are particularly well-represented. See Chart 1 below of the numbers of survey responses for children and young people at each stage of GME.



Each respondent was asked whether they required further information (in addition to that contained in the Council’s report) on a range of topics. See Chart 2 below for the proportions of responses indicating that further information is required on each topic.

The majority of respondents indicated that they required further information on all but one of the topics (impact of proposals on early years and cròileagan). 81% of respondents indicated that they require further information about the curriculum at the proposed options for GME secondary school provision. The topics with the next highest proportion of respondents indicating a requirement for further information were Location (76%), Timescales (73%), Staffing (70%) and Transitions (69%).

Chart 2. Proportion of responses indicating further information required on each topic



The following sections 2.1 to 2.12 provide further detail as to the type of information that respondents feel is required from the Council in order to meaningfully appraise its proposals for GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh. Comments and questions in the responses for each topic were grouped into themes. The frequency with which each theme arose is reflected in the table for each question.

2.1 Information Required about Location(s) of proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Location Assessment	44
Standalone/Co-located	15
Council's Criteria	12
Support a Gaelic Community Purpose	9
Design and Facilities	9
Scottish Government/SNP Manifesto Commitment	8
Centrality	8
Dropout Risk (due to excessive travel times)	6
Role of JGHS Rising Rolls	5
Shuttle Buses	3
Climate Impact	3

A detailed **Location Assessment** is still sought for each proposal, including illustration of the impact on travel times and methods, characteristics of each site, suitability for a city-wide catchment, and ability to serve the Lothians. Questions in this theme centred around the lack of detail to support the suitability of any location. Responses also asked for justification of locations with respect to the existing GME primary school and, more broadly, how it would support a community purpose specific to Gaelic. Parents would like more clarity on why earlier site options were discounted. Questions and comments included:

- *'I would like an impact assessment of locations against the council's own 20 minute neighbourhood principles, taking into account where the children of Edinburgh live.'*
- *'How much capacity for growth is there at any location?'*
- *'How well does the location support active travel?'*
- *'How well does it support children arriving in Edinburgh by train?'*

Questions related to the nature of a **Standalone/Co-located** campus included requests for the rationale for choosing one model over the other, how would the the quality of Gaelic immersion differ, would the quality of education change, how would each option enable the delivery of broad general education and a full curriculum, and what would the nature of the relationship with local EME schools be in terms of curriculum delivery. Questions and comments included:

- *'What are all the options both for a standalone school or a shared campus? We have heard about Liberton shared campus. But now there are the possibilities of a stand-alone school at the Royal Victoria site and Castlebrae.'*
- *'What will the differences be if [the]campus is on its own site compared to a joint campus?'*

Parents sought information on the **Council's Criteria** that are driving the timescales and the preferred location, and asked questions such as *'why would the Council progress to statutory consultation while so much uncertainty remained?'* Parents also wanted to understand if lowest cost was the driving criterion, and why the upcoming Council elections should be a factor in making a decision on educational benefit.

A recurring theme was how any location would **Support a Gaelic Community Purpose**. Responses focused on how easy it would be for any site to maintain links between primaries and secondary, and how the Gaelic community would be embedded in the local community of any location.

- *'How do each of these locations support the idea of a Gaelic hub, or community, or Gaelic speaking? Having more Gaelic being spoken in a neighbourhood is the most educationally effective way of ensuring the continuation and growth of a minority language. Diluting the language by spreading the locations far apart is not in the best interest of sustaining a minority language.'*

Design and Facilities questions relate to the nature of the design process, for example, if the school would be a new building, what facilities would exist in each location. In a shared campus model, parents sought greater clarification on the nature of the shared resources and shared areas.

- *'Would any site include a new GME primary and what is the intended capacity of the primary and secondary?'*

Parents wanted to understand how any location was compatible with the **Scottish Government/SNP Manifesto Commitment** to a standalone, centrally-located site. Respondents also wanted to know what was required to develop this option and if the Council would take the time to develop this and work with the Scottish Government on this outcome.

- *'Would any site include a new GME primary and what is the intended capacity of the primary and secondary?'*

Parents' responses concerning **Centrality** requested more information on the central locations proposed and also clarity on how sites in seemingly peripheral locations were categorised as central by the Council.

Dropout Risk was raised, and questions centred on whether the Council acknowledged the risks of families withdrawing from GME if a location which introduced excessive travel times was progressed.

Respondents would like to understand why the **JGHS Rising Rolls** is used as a factor by the Council, and several requested that this not be used as a factor in determining timescales.

Respondents asked questions on the offer of **Shuttle Buses** linking primary and secondary sites, and how long this commitment would continue.

Climate Impact was raised in relation to **Location Assessment**, but there were also specific questions regarding the impact on climate of any location with respect to increased needs for transport by car and bus.

2.2 Information Required about Curriculum at proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Breadth of curriculum	28
Curriculum through Gaelic	27
Staffing and Recruitment	20
Curriculum Delivery/Relationship to Surrounding Schools	15
Plan for Curriculum Growth	8
Educational Benefit	8
Breadth of curriculum - Non Academic	6
Transition of Staff	5
Darroch Curriculum	5
Staff Professional Development	3
Travel to other sites	2
Transition of Pupils	2
Impact on Immersive Curriculum at Co-located Campus	2
Comparison to Glasgow	2

Parents raised significant concerns around the **deliverability** of the **breadth of curriculum** in a new high school, whether co-located or standalone.

- *‘How will the offer be equitable or better than the current offer?’*
- *‘How many subjects will be offered in the new school?’*
- *‘What will the reliance on EME be to ensure breadth of offer?’*
- *‘What examination model will be followed?’*
- *‘What subjects will be offered?’*
- *‘Will there be a full choice?’*
- *How will our young people not be disadvantaged given the smaller numbers initially?’.*

There was also a significant amount of questions and responses around the breadth of the curriculum.

Alongside this were questions around the **delivery of the curriculum in Gaelic**, including multiple comments linked to ability of staff and **subject choices**. There were many observations about a lack of staff who could teach in Gaelic and queries around plans to ensure there were increases to **teacher numbers**. With regards to GME, there were a number of parents who raised questions around the SQA exams and delivery of examination subjects in Gaelic and English, as well as questions about extracurricular activities, and what

would be offered and how would this be in line with other offers in high school.

- *'How much of the timetable would be in Gaelic?'*
- *'What model of examination would be followed?'*
- *'What about facilities and the deliverability of arts and non academic subjects?'*

Following this were several comments around what the **options for the curriculum** would be in the different locations and its structure which are proposed for statutory consultation. Resources, such as the library and a full support staff, were also raised.

- *'How would the offer differ between sites?'*
- *'Would our young people be travelling between sites for subjects?'*

Transition during the change to a GME high school was also raised as an area for consideration, as well as asking the Council if they had consulted with the Glasgow City local authority.

Parents asked to understand fully the **options for the education and curriculum** of the different sites proposed and how these curriculum models would be delivered in the different scenarios. Parents wanted to know how the Council would ensure that what was offered was **equitable to the current offer**.

2.3 Information Required about Educational Benefits associated with proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Educational Benefits of Co-location	26
Educational Benefits of Standalone	22
Educational Benefits Specific to Gaelic	11
Comparison to JGHS	7
Consideration of Minority Language Best Practice Research	7
Educational Benefits Statement and Criteria	6
Plan to achieve a Beneficial State	3
Impact on Educational Benefits due to Travel	3
Extra Curricular Activities	3
Outside Expertise	2
Educational Benefits for initial cohort	2
Conflation with Rising Rolls	2

Under several sub-themes, responses from parents to this question emphatically illustrate the need for detailed and clear information, including an **Educational Benefits statement for both a co-located and standalone option** to understand the criteria against which the educational benefits of the options are being measured and assessed. It was further recommended that the educational benefit analysis should be undertaken by a third party with experience in this area.

Parents frequently requested further information as to the **Educational Benefits of Co-location** and justification as to why this is the Council's preferred option. Parents also requested a more complete exploration of the **Educational Benefits of Standalone**, which many parents see as preferable. Parents frequently commented on the need for clearer statements around the educational benefits of the two sites and the ways in which they differ.

- *'How does a stand alone site compare to a shared campus?'*
- *'What are the differences in the educational benefits between all the options, particularly stand-alone compared to a shared campus?'*

Parents queried how the educational benefits could be the same at each site (as the Council have claimed is the case) given that a stand-alone school provides clear benefits specifically to GME and the Gaelic community. Parents also sought clarity around the curriculum offer, noting that the curriculum subjects delivered in EME would differ depending on the EME school with which the new GME school was linked.

Parents are seeking further information on the **educational benefits specifically in relation to GME**, something they feel the Council has not articulated to date. It was also noted that, in order for there to be a shared understanding of the educational benefits, the Council must undertake significant engagement with the GME community.

Parents requested a **comparison between the benefits of the tabled options and the existing JGHS provision** to demonstrate the Council's assertion that a new co-located school would indeed be better than the current provision at JGHS. On a similar theme, parents asked for more clarity about what constitutes an educational benefit in the Council's appraisal, and also what criteria will be applied to measure this Educational Benefits Statement and Criteria. Parents asked for a **Plan** as to how such a **Beneficial State** would be **achieved** and also voiced concerns that the educational benefits were assertions rather than being based on a clear plan of action or evidence of actions already taken.

Parents asked how the Council is applying **Minority Language Best Practice Research** and how these benefits would apply to a shared location and standalone location. A number of parents were interested in the provision of more research and evidence to back up the Council's proposals. Parents keen to understand what consideration has been given to this area by the Council and how it has informed its decision-making. Parents feel the Council must provide evidence around best practices to support its preferred option of Liberton and that the Council has to date failed to do so.

- *'How would [the Council] safeguard against watering down immersion on a co-located campus as has been empirically demonstrated happens in other minority linguistic contexts?'*
- *'What analysis of existing academic surveys of success of co-located schools where one school is a dedicated language school the Council has undertaken when planning Liberton; any evidence of best practice in devising national language schools?'*

Parents reiterated that the offer from the Council must be **demonstrably better** than current GME provision at James Gillespie's High School / GME provision at Darroch. To some, the co-located option seems to provide no greater educational benefit than is currently available to GME pupils and it was noted that any difference must be articulated. Elsewhere, there was support for a co-located school, citing access to a potentially wider range of facilities.

Information on access to facilities, **extra-curricular activities** and social aspects also need to be considered in parents' views. There was concern around extra-curricular activities; specifically in relation to **travel** and the impact this might have on accessing after-school activities if the school is not centrally-located. Travel was also cited in relation to the perceived toll and educational detriment of long travel times on pupils. Parents additionally expressed the feeling that external issues, such as **rising rolls** at James Gillespie's, financing and timescales, were being placed above/prioritised over educational benefit when determining the outcome of the new GME high school.

2.4 Information about at proposed options for GME secondary provision

Theme	Frequency
Recruitment plans for GME teachers	44
Fragility of GME Provision at JGHS	9
Staff required to deliver Breadth of Curriculum GME and EME	8
GME Staff Numbers	7
Transition of GME Staff from JGHS	6
Staffing levels for each option	5
Specific Strategies for Recruitment and Retention in Edinburgh	5
Robustness of plans	4
Pupil Teacher Ratio	3
Best practice from external agencies	3
Staff required to deliver Breadth of Curriculum in GME	2
Protection of GME Immersion	2
Additional Support Needs Staffing	2

Parental concerns in this area focused significantly on the ability of the Council to deliver **sufficient staffing** for a GME High School. The concerns were around training and finding new teachers, immersion, curriculum choices, number of teachers, confidence in the level of Gaelic of the teaching staff, and queries around where these new teachers will come from.

Parents' concerns were significant with regards to the steps being taken by the Council to **train and recruit more teachers** for GME. There was a real concern around the over-reliance on a 'Grow Your Own' model. Parents noted that there are already issues around training and recruitment with one fully-immersive GME primary school and questioned how the Council will provide sufficient teachers across three primary schools and a high school. Parents asked if there will be incentives for new teachers. They also raised the possibility of an impact from Fife Council developing its GME offering, especially when considering that the cost of housing is cheaper in Fife.

- *'Where are these teachers coming from?'*
- *'Where are they now?'*
- *'If there are insufficient teachers how will this be addressed?'*
- *'Is work being undertaken to recruit from other areas?'*

In addition to seeking more detail on what additional steps will be employed to recruit teachers, many sought clarity not just on the steps for finding new teachers, but how recruitment and retention would work.

- *'How is the quality and expertise of teaching being assessed?'*
- *'How will we ensure that the school attracts the highest calibre of teaching?'*

Parents were interested in staffing levels for the different options provided and what this meant in terms of **breadth and depth of curriculum** and subject specialism. Some parents were keen to ensure that subject specialists were used to teach curriculum areas and that expertise in a subject should come before ability to speak in Gaelic.

GME immersion was the next theme of concern and what that might mean for the new high school. This area of concern tied into the lack of confidence parents had in there being sufficient fluent Gaelic speakers to deliver a GME high school.

- *'Will all staff be fluent in Gaelic?'*
- *'How will this be supported?'*

Other areas that were highlighted include how staffing will work in the new school and whether there will be a higher staff/pupil ratio to allow for a wider breadth of curriculum in the early stages. Parents asked when the new Headteacher and Depute Headteacher would be appointed, and shared thoughts on the current GME staff at JGHS, for example whether staff would move to the new school. Parents queried how teaching would work across two different sites. This concern also extended to options of co-location and impact on staffing.

2.5 Information Required about Transition of GME between JGHS, Darroch and proposed options for GME secondary school provision

Theme	Frequency
Year Groups and Transition Phases	16
Role of Darroch	14
General Uncertainty	13
Sibling Guarantee	7
Anxiety for Small Initial Cohort	7
Capacity of Darroch	5
Transition for each option	4
GME Staffing through transition	4
Conflation with Rising Rolls	4
Concern/Opposition to P6/P7 Enhanced Transitions	4
Impact on S3 and above at JGHS post transition	3
Travel	2
Equity at Darroch	2
Educational Benefit	2
Additional Support Needs	2

The **impact** of **uncertainty** around proposals and the **disruption**, educationally and emotionally, on children (and their parents) featured heavily in responses to this section of the survey.

- *‘Appalling to expect children to transition mid-school career, especially given uncertainty of timings. How can this be justified?’*
- *‘How will disruption be managed?’*
- *‘What about the needs of pupils with ASN who do not deal well with transitions?’*

The most frequently occurring theme under the topic of Transition was that parents have significant concerns about the potential impact of the proposals on the children who would be most affected. For example, a child that is currently in Clas 5 could be expected to spend S1 as a JGHS pupil (but with their education split between two campuses) and then, in S2, transfer to a new site as part of a **small, young S1/S2 cohort** of GME pupils to ‘seed’ the first dedicated GME high school in Edinburgh without the benefit of **older GME peers/role models**.

- *‘How will the lack of senior mentors in the GME school be mitigated when it is just a small roll of S1-S2s in a big campus (especially in the case of a joint campus where the majority at the EME school have grown up together)?’*

Parents queried whether the suggestion that the 2025 Clas 7 pupils would transfer to a new site in order to bolster a small, young S1/S2 cohort would be in the best interests of the **Clas 7** pupils or indeed have any benefit to the S1/S2s, and whether any impact assessment of this proposal had been undertaken. It was cited as an example of the Council proposing

inadequate and inappropriate 'mitigations' in order to **retrofit** a flawed initial concept.

- *'Previously, we have heard suggestions that primary 7 pupils from Taobh na Pairce would be moved to the Liberton site to populate the building. Can the Council provide any clarification on this? Would this move be optional?'*
- *'Absolutely no primary school children should be making the transition until they naturally move to S1.'*

Confusion and consternation about the **role of the Darroch Annexe** was a feature of survey responses on this topic. Many parents highlighted that the Darroch refurbishment was originally intended to be a stepping stone towards a dedicated GME high school and then as a second GME primary school for Edinburgh. Parents indicated that there had been little transparency as to why the plan for Darroch has changed. Parents queried why there appears to be a rush to remove GME from JGHS, since Darroch has been refurbished with Gaelic-specific funding from the Scottish Government, and has sufficient capacity to accommodate the projected number of GME learners for many years. Parents wanted clearer information about the projected rolls at JGHS (including GME) and the capacity of Darroch, in order to evaluate the rationale for the removal of GME from JGHS within the timescales indicated in the proposals. It was clear from responses on this topic that many parents would see value in building on the success of GME at JGHS by using Darroch over a longer period of time to develop a broad GME curriculum supported by a dedicated GME leadership team. Once established, GME would be in a position to move to a dedicated GME high school.

- *'How does the council justify using Gaelic-specific funding on Darroch, and then seemingly abandon Darroch as an option during this transition phase due to JGHS numbers?'*
- *'My understanding is that the Darroch annexe was refurbished, using Scottish Government Gaelic Specific funding on the basis that it would be used as GME secondary provision and then used as a 2nd GME primary. It now appears that Darroch will be used as a general overspill for JGHS for the next 10-15 years. How was this decision arrived at?'*
- *'Why can't the GME kids stay at Darroch whilst staffing is increased and a standalone site is developed?'*

A frequently-raised issue on this topic was the subject of **siblings**. Parents indicated that they are concerned that the proposals would have the effect of splitting families, and that this is a concern for a wide range of reasons. Other issues cited included the disproportionate impact on family logistics and the potential diluting of parental engagement across schools. A number of parents indicated that they would expect a 'sibling guarantee' as part of the proposals. The issue of siblings came up in relation to primary schools too, i.e. where an older sibling attends Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce but lives in a catchment for a newly-designated GME unit.

- *'Why are the Council not offering a sibling guarantee, where this is offered in almost every other scenario?'*
- *'If, at the opening of a new GME secondary, a family has children in the upper years at JGHS (who will not move) and younger children due to start secondary school, does the Council have a policy to accommodate families who want their children to attend the same school?'*

A further concern frequently aired in responses on this topic is how the Council will ensure that S1 and S2 GME pupils who are to be largely based at Darroch from August 2022 will receive a **high-quality educational experience, equitable** both to the GME pupils in older

years who went before them, and to their S1 and S2 English Medium Education (EME) counterparts. For example, parents were concerned that being based at the annexe will disproportionately reduce access to library facilities, sports facilities, additional support for learning resources, lunch clubs etc for GME pupils compared to EME pupils. Parents also indicated that GME pupils at Darroch could miss out on socialisation opportunities usually associated with transition to high school, where pupils transitioning from a number of primary schools to a single high school would normally have the opportunity to meet new friends, broaden their horizons and move away from any long-standing negative relationship dynamics.

- *‘How are the council planning to monitor the Darroch transition and ensure that children in GME have the same opportunity as children at the Warrender Park campus?’*
- *‘I want to understand my child's educational experience at the different stages of the transition - Please can the Council identify any negative effects from the transition phase and identify what they will be implementing to mitigate any negative effects of being educated in this interim period?’*

Parents asked how the Council's obligation to apply [GIRFEC](#) principles and the importance of **additional support for learning provisions**, irrespective of GME or EME, would be addressed in the proposals.

- *‘How will the individual's needs be met and ensure that GIRFEC is in place for each young person involved?’*
- *‘What about those with additional needs? How will transition and change be handled for them? How will their needs be considered?’*

2.6 Information Required about the impact of proposals on early years and 0-3 years (Cròileagan) GME provision

Theme	Frequency
Increased Sgoil-Àraich provision	8
Increased Cròileagan provision	6
Importance of early language acquisition	3
Detailed plans	2
Staffing plans	2
Location of Sgoil-Àraich provision	2
Location of Cròileagan provision	2

Parents are keen to see detailed plans for how the Council expects to expand the **number of early years GME places**. Although the newly-implemented 1,140 hours early years education is broadly welcome, it has reduced the overall number of Sgoil-Àraich places available and has had a negative impact in terms of the number of families who are able to access early years GME education for their children. Parents queried how further early years GME provision would be **staffed**.

- *'Will there be early years provision at each of the 3 proposed primary school sites? And a cròileagan?'*
- *'How will nursery provision be increased across the city?'*
- *'Will more early years places be made available to meet demand, in what timescale?'*
- *'What staffing plans are there to run these sessions for each location option?'*
- *'How will any new pre-school and primary sites across the city will be staffed?'*

Parents would like to see **the Council (and neighbouring local authorities) expand the locations at which early years GME provision is available**. All early years GME education currently takes place at the Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce site (between Sgoil-Àraich and Òganan), requiring significant journey times for GME families with very young children.

- *'Policy needs to change to allow people all across the Lothians to access preschool GME - this was acknowledged as a problem years ago but still is unresolved. What is the first action the council needs to take and when will it be taken?'*
- *'Croileagan should be available for all children, why are the Lothians not included?'*

Parents would like the Council to demonstrate its understanding of the **importance of early years language acquisition**, especially in relation to GME.

- *'Language acquisition from 0-3 is crucial.'*
- *'GME is important at early stages.'*

2.7 Information Required about the impact of proposals on GME primary school - what questions do you have?

Theme	Frequency
Location assessment	9
Staffing plans	8
Increased GME primary provision	7
Concern about not opening primary schools well in advance of GME high school	6
Concern about GME units rather than GME schools	5
Transitions	4
0/3-18 GME provision	3
Early transition of P7s	3
Connections between primary school and high school	3

When asked what else they wanted to know, parents asked for much more detailed information about how **locations** of proposed GME units, and issues raised within this topic covered the assessment of **catchments, population served and transport issues**.

- *'How has the Council determined the catchments for the three proposed units/schools?'*
- *'How many children will each catchment address?'*
- *'What travel assessment has been carried out for the new proposed units?'*
- *'In the Liberton option, how have the Council assessed the plan for a colocated primary school on the same site as two secondary schools for educational benefit and feasibility?'*

Parents asked for more detailed information about how **projected growth at GME primary level** has been forecasted. Parents also asked how the Council is planning for new primary schools/units to be staffed considering **current staffing challenges**. They also asked whether there will be a through-school for **0/3-18 year GME provision**.

- *'How will these schools be staffed?'*
- *'Staffing it would be an issue as it is challenging to recruit and retain staff for one GME school.'*
- *'How will each location impact the staffing at the current primary school?'*
- *'A second gme primary has been proposed. Will this be colocated with any proposed site?'*
- *'Is the idea to have a through school still in discussions? I really liked that idea.'*

Parents were keen to have more detailed information about **transition**, such as a unit in EME primary, a through-school, and socialisation opportunities for GME children moving to high school. Parents are keen to understand the rationale for **GME units in EME schools vs new GME schools**.

- *'Given the clear preference from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government for dedicated Gaelic schools rather than units, why is the Council proposing to open new primary units rather than dedicated primary schools?'*
- *'Why would people choose hubs over Taobh na Pàirce?'*

There were also queries around the **rationale** for the timescales around the openings, asking why the plan was not to **open new primaries first**.

- *'TnP is at capacity now, should a second primary school not be a priority?'*
- *'Would there be any movement on building new GME primaries before a new secondary was completed?'*

2.8 Information Required about the impact of proposals on GME pupils remaining at JGHS after delivery of proposed GME secondary school provision

Theme	Frequency
Staffing	12
GME curriculum	11
Detailed plans	7
Uncertainty	5
Stretched resources	4
Maintaining Quality of GME at JGHS	4
Disruption	2
Fragmentation of GME community	2

Parents want to know what will be the impact of GME moving to a new location on already stretched **GME staff levels and resources at JGHS** in terms of travel time between two distant sites, resources, etc.

- *'How will the few GME teachers there be able to teach the older GME kids?'*
- *'This is the thing I am most frightened about. We already don't have enough teachers in GME.'*
- *'Where will the teachers come from to support 2 Gaelic high schools?'*
- *'How will this get better once staff move to a new site?'*

Parents want to know how the Council will ensure that S3-S6 GME pupils remaining in JGHS are supported with their **Gaelic fluency, and GME curriculum options** (for example, would they be expected to travel to a distant campus to take GME qualifications) and would like the Council to make sure pupils are **not isolated** from the GME community. Parents also asked how educational **disruption** to the GME pupils remaining at JGHS can be minimised.

- *'How would younger GME pupils at the new location have older GME **role models**?'*
- *'What will be the impact of **fragmenting** the GME community?'*
- *'How will the **Darroch** annexe be used when GME leaves JGHS?'*
-

Parents also asked how the Council will ensure that younger and older GME pupils are able to access an **equitable** secondary school provision, and parents sought greater clarity on which year groups will move and whether **older GME** students can move along with the S1/S2 cohort.

2.9 Information Required about Active travel to/from proposed options for GME secondary school provision

Themes	Frequency
Active Travel Options	50
Environmental Policies	6
New Cycle Paths	6
Safety	6
Public Transport	6
Mental Health Benefits	3
Distance of Travel	3

Parents want to understand what **active travel options** will be put in place for each site and a list of pros and cons for each option. Parents were concerned that initially there would be a large cohort coming from the north of the city, from which there is no direct travel route (based on the new school being in Liberton). Parents are very concerned about what routes will be in place to facilitate any potential sites. Parents are also keen to know about the active travel plans for each site from anywhere within the city, especially in the new catchment areas for the new primary school units as they open up and for those students outwith the Council boundaries. Many parents wanted to know if there would be new routes, if there would be a direct bus or if there would be provision of specific school buses.

Potential **new safer cycle paths** are also a key area of interest, with parents seeking information on the old railway lines at Powderhall, Abbeyhill and the line near Butterfly Way/Urban Eden.

- *'Will safer routes also incorporate the major transport hubs for those children coming outwith of the city?'*
- *'Will it be safe to walk/cycle/scoot to the new school?'*

Parents are also concerned that these proposed locations do not comply with the Council's **environmental policies**, vision statement or their active schools commitments. Parents are worried that schools which do not have active travel infrastructure will not be supported by the local communities the school could be in, by the parents themselves or by the Government locally or nationally. Schools and pupils have been looking at their environmental impact in the lead up to COP26 and beyond. Having a school further away from the majority of the cohort seems like a backwards step.

Parents want to know what the **public transport** options will be too. They are concerned with having no direct bus links, too many changes and long journey times.

Travelling by walking or cycling improves **mental health** as well as their physical health and parents feel if this option is not available to them it would be detrimental to their children's education. They also feel that journeys using public transport as it currently stands would

take too long and would have a damaging effect on their children's mental and physical health. Parents are further left questioning how **distance of travel** will affect their child's education and mental health.

2.10 Information Required about Timescales for proposed GME secondary provision options

Theme	Frequency
Develop a Strategic Plan	21
Prioritise Educational Benefit	13
Detailed Timescales	10
Darroch Medium-Term Plan	5
Contingency Planning	4
Detailed Timescales for Central Sites	3
Realistic Timescales	3
Develop the Primary Pipeline	2
Transition Cohorts	2

Respondents asked that time be taken to **Develop a Strategic Plan**, rather than rush to a conclusion at this stage. Parents would like to see the time taken to develop a strategic, ambitious plan for GME aligned to the SNP Manifesto/Scottish Government commitments to Gaelic.

- *'I believe it would be better for the City of Edinburgh Council to get this huge venture right rather than try to push it through in haste. The GME high school could be a huge success for the Council if viewed, and undertaken, by them with sufficient ambition for and commitment to Gaelic language and culture. Therefore, I think sufficient time should be allowed to ensure this is a success for its future pupils, for the community and for the city itself.'*

Parents would like to understand how the Council will **Prioritise Educational Benefit**, and would like to understand why constraints such as the upcoming local authority council elections and rising rolls are driving timescales when the focus should be on the Educational Benefit.

- *'Why should the upcoming council elections be a deciding factor in timescales for consultation?'*
- *'Priority should be what is best for GME, does Darroch not provide GME with sufficient capacity?'*

Detailed Timescales are sought for each option, including those for a more central location. Parents are looking for greater clarity and for timescales to be more detailed than simply an opening date for each. Parents are keen to understand how realistic any plans are, and what the impact of slippage would be. Certainty is sought to support children's well-being. Parents also asked for **Contingency Planning** to be included and reflected in the plan, appreciating the impact of delays on transition cohorts, and noting that delays have

previously been experienced at Darroch and Boroughmuir projects.

- *'Needs detailed timelines, with contingency - expecting young teenagers not to know where they will be attending school and for how long is nothing short of cruel.'*

In terms of **Darroch Medium-Term Plan**, respondents on this theme would like to understand why, given the capacity provided and the funding commitments specific to GME to develop Darroch, it could not be used for longer than currently planned in order to allow time for the strategy to develop and to build a more robust GME provision as a first step to a standalone school.

- *'Given the capacity uplift provided by Darroch, why is the council pursuing the establishment of a new GME high school [in] these timeframes?'*
- *'Why is there such a hurry to move Gaelic learners on from JGHS when Darroch has been funded as an ongoing centre of Gaelic learning?'*

Parents would like to understand how the Council can **Develop the Primary Pipeline** to support a fuller secondary school, and also how any different options can support this better with more time to ramp up.

Finally, parents want to understand what the impact of the different options and timescales on the Transition Cohorts will be and which secondary year groups will transition to the new school.

2.11 Leadership, deliverability and financial planning for holistic development of GME in Edinburgh

Theme	Frequency
Leadership	13
Budget	12
Uncertainty	11
Long term/strategic planning	10
Priorities	10
Parental engagement	6
Community facilities	5
Staffing	3
Risk of falling numbers	2
Engagement with Scottish Government	2

Parents queried the lack of **leadership** on this important project e.g. head teacher in place for GME high school and a corporate level GDO with educational remit. They question why the Council's **financial planning** for GME (e.g. pupil generation rate) has been absent despite the agreement to establish Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce over a decade ago.

- *'How will CEC ensure there is an experienced leadership team in place to support the transition to a new school, the development of a new school community, and the further growth of excellent GME educational provision?'*
- *Gaelic development positions at CEC staff level so that the needs are understood from within the Council?*
- *Who is leading this nationally significant project?*

Parents point out that there is much **uncertainty** in the deliverability of the proposals and that there appears to be a significant **lack of long term or strategic planning** for the holistic development of GME in Edinburgh. These issues leave parents questioning whether the Council's **priorities** truly lie with the development and improvement of GME in Edinburgh, rather than the stipulated requirement to address the rising rolls issue at JGHS.

- *'Need full options appraisal of all sites.'*
- *'We are entitled to expect a well thought-out plan for the best standard of education for our children.'*
- *'Can the council provide a 10 year plan?'*
- *'Where is the strategic thinking?'*
- *'Council proposals obsessed with location, bricks & mortar & not GME development & educational benefit to pupils.'*
- *'It seems that you are basing your preference of Liberton on the building cost of a new school as well as reducing the school roll at JGHS only.'*

- *'Why do CEC not recognise that every communication they release about GME demonstrates that their priority is reducing numbers at JGHS, and quickly, rather than indicating any desire for strategic, holistic growth in GME in Edinburgh?'*

Parents note that **engagement with the GME families** is seen as having been poor to date and that this lack of engagement increases the **risk of falling numbers of GME pupils** at any dedicated GME high school.

- *'What are contingencies for poor enrollment (given the ill-thought and inadequate planning by Edinburgh City Council)?'*
- *'Given the manifest inconvenience of the Liberton and Castlebrae options in relation to north and west Edinburgh, what strategies would the Council adopt to (1) attract families to GME in the first instance and (2) retain pupils at the primary-secondary transition?'*

Once again, parents point to the challenges of **staffing** a dedicated GME high school, on the basis of the current numbers of secondary GME teachers in Edinburgh and the ongoing recruitment and retention of GME staff.

Parents feel that any statutory consultation on proposals, in advance of concluding discussions with the **Scottish Government** as to the level of support it may be able to provide towards the establishment of a standalone, centrally located GME high school in Edinburgh, would be unacceptable.

- *'I am unclear why the consultation is being pushed ahead when the Scottish Government's position - picking up on their manifesto commitment - remains unclear. A consultation without knowledge of this stance seems very problematic.'*
- *'When CEC raised the predicted costs of the Royal Victoria site with the Cabinet Secretary, why weren't the financial plans more exhaustively developed? The Cabinet Secretary responded with a request for more detailed costings. Has CEC now provided these? If the Council doesn't make an effort to provide this, does that mean the request for support with the Royal Victoria site cannot be seriously considered by the Cabinet Secretary?'*

2.12 What other information would you like to see included in any consultation (informal or statutory) on GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh?

Theme	Frequency
Evidence and transparency from Council supporting their proposal, such as impact assessments (including equality impact assessment) and published analysis	16
Engagement / listening to GME parents, including building trust	10
Teacher recruitment and retention	6
Timescale considerations and planning	5
Rising rolls at JGHS being separated out from GME discussions / plans	5
Parity between Gaelic and English	4
Impact of location	4
Engagement and communication from Comann nam Pàrant	4
Support for Gaelic outwith school, eg community	3
Financial planning and investment in GME	2
Expert advice and experience	2
Scottish Government commitments explored	2
Plans for promotion of GME and Gaelic	2
Plans for development of GME	2
Demonstrable leadership from the Council	2
Sibling guarantee and transfers	2

In terms of other information that families would like to see included in any consultation (informal or statutory) on GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh, the most commonly occurring theme from respondents was **evidence and transparency** from the Council. They seek the Council to provide evidence in support of any proposal that is made, including information such as impact assessments (including equality impact assessments) as well as the educational benefits of a co-located campus to be clearly articulated. They also seek transparency in the process, including published analysis, as well as detail on how each option is assessed (including in terms of the wider community purpose for the school). Respondents also noted they require clear and detailed information from the Council, and a proposal which demonstrates that the Council understands issues that are specific to GME provision.

- *'What evidence does the council have it knows better than parents?'*
- *'I would like detailed information on how the Council really understands the issues that are specific to GME provision as well as for them to have an understanding of the national, historical, social and cultural context surrounding this.'*
- *'I would like the Council to set out its plans for analysing consultation response in a fair and transparent way'*

The second most common theme was **engagement** with and **listening** to parents, including the building up of **trust** from the parent body. Included in this was the call for engagement with parents, staff, pupils and the GME community. There was also a wish for the statutory consultation itself to allow for full participation, for example through an inclusive approach with questions designed to enable people to answer them and to feel listened to. GME voices were felt to be key to the consultation and assurance was sought that the Council would not push through an option which does not have support from the GME community.

- *'I would like to see any consultation really asking questions that are designed to enable people to answer them and feel listened to?'*
- *'How do they plan to gain the trust and improve their communication with parents?'*
- *'Consultation questions should be agreed with GME community.'*

Another recurring theme was **teacher recruitment and retention**, in which respondents sought clear plans for 'grow your own' and teacher development, a staffing strategy and how the staff body would be grown over time. Timescales for the new GME high school were also a consideration with the general feeling that the process seemed rushed, that the proposal needed more time, and that it would be preferable to consider the long term benefits to delaying the process (such as sustainable growth and the development of early years provision).

Rising rolls at James Gillespie's High School was also a topic of interest. Respondents felt that the issue of rising rolls should be separate from the discussions about the new GME high school, and the general impression is that the timelines are to accommodate rising rolls rather than in the best interests of GME high school pupils.

- *I would like this consultation to be made in isolation from the question of the rising school role at JGHS.*

Parity between Gaelic and English was also a recurring theme. Respondents sought evidence that the Council welcomed GME, that they respect parents' choice to prioritise GME for their children, that the Council recognised Gaelic as equal to English, and the feeling that the proposals to date did not appear to show the valuing of GME or of Gaelic.

- *Will the council recognise Gàidhlig as equal to English?*
- *I would just like to see some behaviours from the council which demonstrated that GME was welcomed.*

The **impact of location** was also raised several times. Respondents asked the Council to consider what the likely impact location would have on the development of language in the City, and how each of the proposed locations might encourage or discourage families to join GME. There was also concern that the strong community at Taobh na Pàirce would be dispersed. There was also questioning as to what arrangements would be put in place to ensure access to the different options from East, West and Midlothian.

- *‘What is the likely impact of the location of the GME high school on the development of the language in the City? In what way might each of the proposed locations encourage or discourage families to join the Gaelic education stream and therefore the future of the language in the City?’*

Four respondents raised communication and engagement from **Comann nam Pàrant**, with the potential for an increase in surveys for parents, additional ways of voicing opinions and preferences, and processes which consider families who have less knowledge of the statutory consultation process and limited time to engage.

There were also calls for **support for Gaelic outwith the school setting**, for example in the **community**. Respondents asked what the Council plans to do to support the GME community, whether there are plans for a community hub so that Gaelic can be grown outwith 0-18 education, and whether the scope for using the new school as a base for Gaelic community activity will be assessed in each of the options included in the proposal.

- *‘What is the scope for using the school as a base for Gaelic community activity - which sites offer the best location for this possibility?’*

Additional topics raised (though to a lesser degree) were financial planning and investment in GME (including the note that the Council has not budgeted for GME), expert advice and experience (the call for advisers to be recruited into the process), Scottish Government commitments (the call for the statutory consultation to be delayed until options have been explored), the promotion of GME and Gaelic (that the Council be aware of the benefits that Gaelic language and culture bring to the city), the development of GME (such as a strategy for improving GME), demonstrable leadership from the Council, and sibling guarantee and transfers.

Conclusion

The results of this survey reinforce the assertion that significant unanswered concerns remain, preventing families in GME from engaging meaningfully with the Statutory Consultation.

There are frequent cross-cutting themes, including, but not limited to:

- **Curriculum** - Parents repeatedly raise concerns regarding insufficient information on curriculum, through Gaelic and English, and how this will be delivered under each option and during transition states.
- **Staffing** - More clarity on plans and actions to achieve and retain adequate staffing at all levels, both now and in the future in order to support the growth implied, are mentioned in several contexts.
- **Locations** - Parents want to know how locations have been objectively assessed. There is also a need for greater clarity regarding the impact that locations and settings would have on curriculum, community, inclusion and well-being.
- **Transitions** - Parents have concerns that GME students at various educational stages may be negatively impacted in ways that have not been adequately identified and mitigated in the Council's proposals.
- **Timelines** - Parents feel that the Council's proposals are too hasty in their attempts to relocate GME secondary provision before fully developing the strength of provision at Darroch/JGHS and establishing increased early years and primary provision.

In addition, parents cite the issues of local elections and of rising rolls at JGHS having an unnecessary and unjustifiable impact on the timescales for a GME high school. Frequently in their responses, parents stress their expectation that the Council, through its actions, demonstrate that it is led by seeking to deliver an educational benefit, and to diligently and fully explore the support from the Scottish Government to deliver what is best for GME in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

The overarching message from parents is the need for the Council to take time to adequately develop their plans for GME, to properly consider the significant issues that are being raised and to address these comprehensively. In addition, parents look for much greater engagement from the Council. They seek a proposal which is informed by the needs of the GME community it seeks to serve.

The conclusion Comann nam Pàrant reaches from parental feedback and the responses to the survey is that a clear and demonstrable educational benefit for children in GME has yet to be presented.

APPENDIX

Survey questions

What stage(s) of GME is/are your child(ren) currently attending? Please select all that apply to your family.

1.a. Location(s) of proposed options for GME secondary provision. (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

1.b. Location(s) of proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

2.a. Curriculum at proposed options for GME secondary provision. (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

2.b Curriculum at proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

3.a. Educational benefits associated with proposed options for GME secondary provision. (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

3.b. Educational benefits associated with proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

4.a. Staffing at proposed options for GME secondary provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

4.b. Staffing at proposed options for GME secondary provision - what questions do you have?

5.a. Arrangements for transition of GME between JGHS, Darroch and proposed options for GME secondary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

5.b. Arrangements for transition of GME between JGHS, Darroch and proposed options for GME secondary school provision - what questions do you have?

6.a. Impact of proposals on early years and 0-3 years (Cròileagan) GME provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

6.b. Impact of proposals on early years and 0-3 years (Cròileagan) GME provision - what questions do you have?

7.a. Impact of proposals on GME primary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

7.b. Impact of proposals on GME primary school - what questions do you have?

8.a. Impact of proposals on GME pupils remaining at JGHS after delivery of proposed GME secondary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

8.b. Impact of proposals on GME pupils remaining at JGHS after delivery of proposed GME secondary school provision - what questions do you have?

9.a. Active travel to/from proposed options for GME secondary school provision (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

9.b. Active travel to/from proposed options for GME secondary school provision - what questions do you have?

10.a. Timescales for proposed GME secondary provision options (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

10.b. Timescales for proposed GME secondary provision options - what questions do you have?

11.a. Leadership, deliverability and financial planning for holistic development of GME in Edinburgh (tick box) (Please tick this box if you need more information about this topic.)

11.b. Leadership, deliverability and financial planning for holistic development of GME in Edinburgh - what questions do you have?

12. What other information would you like to see included in any consultation (informal or statutory) on GME secondary school provision in Edinburgh?



Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)
Statement
19 January 2022

Comann nam Pàrant welcomes the publication of the proposals by City of Edinburgh Council and there is much to consider. We are, however, concerned that discussions with the Scottish Government on their potential financial support for a GME high school have not been fully explored by the Council and, as such, do not form part of the proposal. Comann nam Pàrant has highlighted repeatedly that the Council must take the time for these discussions to reach a conclusion before proceeding to any statutory consultation. Many GME families will be disappointed that this has not taken place.

We also urged the Council to undertake an informal consultation with families on any new information. GME families are disappointed that the informal consultation promised by the Council in December 2021 has not taken place. As it stands, the Council are seeking to proceed to statutory consultation with a proposal that contains considerable changes, such as the inclusion of a GME secondary facility on the existing Castlebrae High School site in Craigmillar, proposals for changes to primary level provision and a new pupil placement policy which would impact families in Edinburgh and the Lothians. These are significant modifications to previous proposals and require careful consideration.

The Council are holding their Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on Monday 24 January. At this meeting, the Committee will be voting on the crucial issue of whether to proceed to statutory consultation on 31 January. Despite the significance of this, the Council only released their papers at 4.30pm yesterday (18 January 2022).

We believe the current timeframe does not allow sufficient time for committee members to properly digest the most up to date iteration of the proposals for GME secondary provision and confer with ward councillor colleagues on these. Nor does it give reasonable time for parents to review the new information and participate in the process by contacting their ward councillors, education spokespeople or Comann nam Pàrant to express any concerns they may have about the proposals.

As elected representatives and officials involved in this process have themselves repeatedly stated, parental engagement is of paramount importance. Comann nam Pàrant is currently appraising these papers, as are GME families across Edinburgh and the Lothians. We are disappointed that the Council has offered their colleagues and their constituents such little time to consider the proposals.

Comann nam Pàrant will publish a full statement in due course.

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)



cnpduneideann@gmail.com
By email

18 02 2022

Alison is Iain còire

Re: forthcoming Additional Meeting: Education Children and Families Committee

With less than one week until the forthcoming Additional Meeting: Education Children and Families Committee, we write to you to express our concern that the papers are not yet available. The meeting is scheduled for the morning of 24 January 2022. Given the significance of the meeting, i.e. the Committee voting on whether to proceed to statutory consultation on 31 January, we would expect that there be sufficient time for GME families and Comann nam Pàrant to be able to read and consider the proposals.

In response to previous proposals, we raised concerns that, as it stood, proceeding to statutory consultation did not offer the following:

- Adequate time for the Council to fully explore potential financial support from Scottish Government in meeting their manifesto commitment of a 'central, stand-alone school'
- The opportunity for an informal consultation with families on any new information, such as the additional proposed site at Craigmillar, or to answer parents' concerns and queries on educational benefit and curriculum
- Sufficient planning for the recruitment of staff for the new school

As elected representatives and officials involved in this process have themselves repeatedly stated, parental engagement is of paramount importance. We have consistently highlighted that parents feel they have not been given sufficient information from the Council. In addition, the Council's intention 'to carry out further informal engagement with school communities on the education implications of these options during the remainder of December 2021' did not take place. Without sharing the papers in advance, the Council is again preventing those most affected by the proposals from participating fully in the process.

At the last meeting of the Gaelic Implementation Group (on 11 January), the Council noted that they would aim for papers to be released on 19 January. Given that the Committee is being asked to vote on proceeding to statutory consultation on 24 January and that

Committee members will need to confer with their colleagues in advance of this, we believe this publication date is unreasonable as it does not allow sufficient time for:

(i) committee members to properly digest the most up to date iteration of the proposals for GME secondary provision and confer with ward councillor colleagues on these

(ii) parents to review the information and participate in the process by contacting their ward councillors and/or Education spokespeople, and/or Comann nam Pàrant to express any concerns they may have about the proposals.

We therefore suggest the meeting is postponed.

Comann nam Pàrant values the relationship we have built with the Council over recent years, one based on respect and acting in good faith. We urge the Council to undertake proceedings in a way which is fair to those who are most affected by the proposals.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd
Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)



cnpduneideann@gmail.com
By email

23 December 2021

Iain is Alison còire

Re: correspondence between the City of Edinburgh Council and the Scottish Government

We write to you in relation to your letter to Shirley Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, dated 21 December 2021, which was in response to the Scottish Government's letter regarding a site for a new Gaelic Medium Education (GME) secondary school for Edinburgh, dated 14 December 2021, both of which you kindly shared with Comann nam Pàrant (CnP) on 23 December 2021.

The Cabinet Secretary's letter notes that *'it would be premature for the Scottish Government to indicate any financial commitment to one particular option in advance of a [feasibility] study being carried out.'* and *'that significant questions remain both about the cost, viability and availability of the Royal Victoria site in the timescales needed. These are important questions and again the proposal of a feasibility study would provide the necessary clarity on this and other options and would assist with decision making.'*

CnP agrees with the Cabinet Secretary's suggestion and welcomes her support to undertake a feasibility study. CnP sees this as a commitment to take the steps necessary to achieve the successful and strategic development of GME which families seek.

Your response, however, states that *'[the Scottish Government] are not in a position - even in principle - to provide extra funding to build a new Gaelic secondary school.'* and goes on to say that *'consequently, it is not possible to include the Victoria site in our Statutory Consultation. We are therefore left with the two options to put to the Gaelic parents. The co-located option at Liberton and stand-alone option at Craigmillar.'*

CnP disagrees with this interpretation. The Cabinet Secretary has, in fact, stated that without a feasibility study, the Scottish Government is not in a position to comment on financial commitment. She has **not** stated that the Scottish Government would be unable to provide financial support, only that this cannot be confirmed until a feasibility study is carried out first.

CnP also finds the Council's conclusion concerning, in particular the action to discount an option without undertaking the feasibility study as suggested. We remind the Council, once again, that without the detailed, high quality information required, it is impossible for families to engage meaningfully in any consultation.

In our meeting of 14 December 2021, you asserted your belief that discussions with the Scottish Government will be concluded prior to the start of any statutory consultation. As it stands, there is no conclusion, and to proceed to statutory consultation now will be viewed by many as unreasonable. CnP, and the families we represent, expect the Council to work in partnership with the Scottish Government to undertake the level of due diligence required before any consultation begins. Failure to do so will lead families to question whether it is truly educational benefits to our children which are at the heart of any consultation.

Le dùrachdan

Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)

Sent 21/12/21

Dear Shirley -Anne

Thank for your email which makes it clear that you are not in a position - even in principle - to provide extra funding to build a new Gaelic secondary school. Consequently, it is not possible to include the Victoria site in our Statutory Consultation. We are therefore left with the two options to put to the Gaelic parents. The co-located option at Liberton and stand-alone option at Craigmillar.

I have been asked if you could clarify the Scottish Government's position in relation to the SNPs manifesto commitment to build a 'new stand-alone Gaelic School in the centre on Edinburgh.' As I have said in previous correspondence it is only fair Gaelic parents are aware of all the options before they decide what is the best way to develop the Gaelic language in Edinburgh.

Kind regards and best wishes for the festive season

Cllr Ian Perry and Cllr Alison Dickie

Convener and Vice Convener Education, Children and Families

T: 0300 244 4000
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Cllr Ian Perry, Convenor

ian.perry@edinburgh.gov.uk

14 December 2021

Dear Councillor Perry

Thank you for your e-mail of 10 December in connection with a site for a Gaelic medium school in Edinburgh. I welcome this ongoing exchange and look forward to a resolution of these discussions. I note and welcome your reference to a feasibility study and, as you are aware, the Scottish Government would be happy to support this approach.

I believe a feasibility study would provide a clear picture and assessment of the options. The feasibility study would also assist with the decision making process and, as such, it would be premature for the Scottish Government to indicate any financial commitment to one particular option in advance of a study being carried out.

I note your request for financial support for the Royal Victoria site. I am aware, however, that significant questions remain both about the cost, viability and availability of the Royal Victoria site in the timescales needed. These are important questions and again the proposal of a feasibility study would provide the necessary clarity on this and other options and would assist with decision making.

As mentioned in my previous letter more detail would assist with our internal financial processes and at present, as a result of the lack of detail and the high level of uncertainty attached to the Royal Victoria site, we are not able to comment either way on this particular site.

I would be grateful if you could continue to keep me and my officials informed of the next steps that the Council decides to pursue in terms of possible sites, including plans for any consultation.

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

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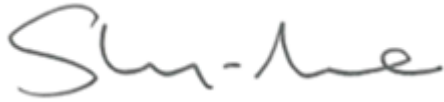
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As I stated in my previous letter, I would be happy to meet with you and relevant officials to discuss this further.

I hope this is helpful.



Shirley-Anne Somerville

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cnpduneideann@gmail.com
By email

17 December 2021

Alison is Iain còire

Re: meeting on 14 December 2021

Thank you for meeting with Comann nam Pàrant (CnP), along with the Parent Council chairs of Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce and James Gillespie's High School, on 14 December 2021. We appreciate the time taken by you and officers to update us on the ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government, and on the Council's plans for the Gaelic Medium Education (GME) Statutory Consultation.

In the meeting, CnP expressed the serious and growing uncertainty among parents regarding the proposals due to an absence of key information and their unanswered questions, and how this in turn is leading to a loss of faith in the Council. This presents a real risk to achieving a successful outcome for the statutory consultation process, which we urge the Council to acknowledge.

CnP reiterated that despite multiple letters and deputations over the past year, calling for the information parents require to inform them as they engage with the issues, no significant progress has been made, and that sufficient information has not been provided. CnP highlighted that the recent developments to include a standalone option make it even more necessary to address the existing gaps, such as clarity on curriculum offer and delivery, and any new gaps arising due to this late addition.

The proposed changes to GME provision in Edinburgh are unique and complex. They include many factors specific to the GME experience, in addition to the many interconnected variables and requirements mandated by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. They must be grounded in Education Scotland's guidance on GME, which has as its basis the principle of language immersion, and the delivery of a sufficient proportion of the curriculum through Gaelic.

It is with these complexities in mind that we remind the Council that it is the depth and breadth of the information provided to parents which is critical. This information must demonstrate quality through the required attention to detail, and substance in describing

the improvements specific to our children's education, in order to convince parents of the Educational Benefits of any proposal.

The stark reality is that, due to the ongoing information deficit and the recent decision by Councillors to set in motion a path to a premature consultation, there is an increase in the number of parents who view the proposal for a new GME high school as a risk they are unwilling to take. CnP asks the Council to consider the consequences of this.

The following pages include CnP's key questions and summarises the concerns of parents which were captured in our most recent survey in December 2021. We ask the Council to reflect on parents' concerns, and to provide answers to our questions urgently.

Questions from Comann nam Pàrant, pages 3-4

Summary of questions/issues raised by survey respondents, pages 5-6

Additional information, pages 7-11

We look forward to your responses.

Le dùrachdan

Comann nam Pàrant

(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) asks the Council to answer the following questions:

Scottish Government and financing

- Has the Scottish Government agreed to reach a conclusion regarding financing by 24 January 2022?
- Would a “full audit” of any proposed asset transfer be undertaken prior to 24 January 2022?
- How will each of the currently proposed sites be funded?
- Will the Council undertake a feasibility study on central, stand-alone sites?

Detailed information

- Can the Council provide assurances that each area of concern that has been highlighted by Comann nam Pàrant will be addressed in the statutory consultation?

Evidence

- Can the Council confirm that they will demonstrate an evidence-based approach to their proposals? CnP ask for evidence which:
 - Demonstrates the pros and cons with respect to the principle of immersion at any option.
 - Provides a detailed Location Assessment for each proposal is sought, covering the impact on travel times, the characteristics of each site, their suitability for a city-wide catchment to include equity and sustainability criteria, and ability to serve the Lothians.
 - Explains the criteria used to make recommendations, and how the location will link with the Gaelic Community, including primary provision, and serve a Gaelic Community Purpose.

Educational benefit and curriculum

- What will be the curriculum offer at each site?
- How will the curriculum be delivered in each option, if not by the staff of the GME secondary school?
- Can the Council confirm that the Educational Benefits statement will include a comparison to the current offering at JGHS/Darroch as well as a comparison of what will be on offer at each of the proposed options?

Action to be taken now

- Can the Council address any of the concerns prior to the start of the statutory consultation process, for example by providing parents with additional information or offering clarity on key issues that Comann nam Pàrant has raised throughout the past 12 months?

Experience

- What is the learning that the Council has gained from its engagement with Sgoil Ghàidhlig Glaschu and how has this informed their proposal?

(continued overleaf)

Engagement

- What are the Council's plans for parental engagement prior to the start of the statutory consultation?

James Gillespie's High School

- What is the GME staffing plan from August 2022 onwards?

Long-term view

- How does the Council plan to grow GME provision at the high school, against what timescale?

Summary of questions/issues raised by survey respondents

The questions submitted by respondents to the survey have been summarised by theme and will be more comprehensively considered in a further report on the survey findings in due course. For the purposes of City of Edinburgh Council, the most frequently submitted themes for each topic have been collated in the table below. This is intended to draw attention to the areas where GME families have indicated the most significant information gaps exist.

Location
A detailed Location Assessment for each proposal is sought, detailing impact on travel times, characteristics of each site, suitability for a city-wide catchment, and ability to serve the Lothians. In terms of co-located and standalone , justification is sought in terms of educational benefit, along with details of relationships with local EME schools including curriculum delivery. Greater explanation of Criteria used to make recommendations, and how the location will link with the Gaelic Community , including primary provision, and serve a Gaelic Community Purpose .
Curriculum
Detailed assessment of how a broad curriculum would be delivered at a dedicated GME high school from its inception, and what model of delivery would be used at each site.
Educational Benefits
Detailed assessment of the education benefits of each proposed site, concern around immersion and Detailed and transparent information from the Council minority language education best practice, information on how the offer is better than current provision at JGHS/Darroch.
Staffing
Detailed plans for how CEC plan to staff a dedicated GME high school with sufficiently fluent, suitably qualified Gaelic-speaking staff from its inception, taking into account the ongoing challenges in this area
Transitions
How would the negative impacts on a small initial GME cohort (e.g. not having older GME role models and being co-located with a large, EME high school with a full complement of learners) be minimised and mitigated?
Early Years and Cròileagan
How will CEC expand the numbers of early years GME places and the locations at which they can be accessed, taking into account the importance of early language acquisition ?
Primary Level

More detailed information about how locations, catchments, population served, forecasted GME growth and transport issues have been assessed?

Remaining GME at JGHS

How will CEC ensure that S3-S6 GME pupils remaining in JGHS are supported with their Gaelic fluency, and GME curriculum options (would they be expected to travel to a distant campus to take GME qualifications) and make sure they are not isolated from the GME community?

Active Travel

How will active travel options be supported at each site?

Timescales

Will the Council **Develop a Strategic Plan**, and provide **Detailed Timescales** grounded in **Educational Benefit**. Take the time to deliver a plan aligned to the Scottish Government commitments to Gaelic and allow GME at JGHS/Darroch to become stronger. Clarification on why factors such as rising rolls and council elections should influence planning.

Leadership

Why has CEC's financial planning for GME (e.g. pupil generation rate) been absent despite the agreement to establish TnP over a decade ago?

Other

Parents seek detailed and transparent information, greater engagement with and understanding of the GME community, and more information on the curriculum

Additional Information

Discussions with Scottish Government

We understand that the Council is involved in ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government about the potential for financial support towards the use of the former Royal Victoria Hospital site for a dedicated GME high school. The Scottish Government has asked for more information about the proposal for that site, including further detail on the finances involved, so that the proposal can be properly audited, and the Council has asked the Scottish Government to first confirm if they could financially commit to this option before a full audit is undertaken. Councillor Perry, you noted, in the meeting of 14 December 2021, that the former Royal Victoria Hospital site cannot be included in a statutory consultation unless there is guarantee from the Scottish Government that funding would be available to the Council to secure the site. Councillor Perry, you also asserted your belief that these discussions will be concluded prior to the start of any statutory consultation.

In Councillor Perry's recent letter to Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, dated 24 November 2021, he noted 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.' Additionally, in the Council's report to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2021, it states 'the uncertainty of whether or when the GME school will be delivered has been incorporated into the design process and resulted in limited opportunities for design and cost efficiency.'

We are keen for further clarity as, in discussions at our meeting of 14 December 2021, the implication from Councillor Perry was that the Liberton option is fully funded but the other two (Royal Victoria Hospital site and Castlebrae High School site in Craigmillar) are not. It is essential that the Council is able to confirm how each site would be funded, and to what extent each of these are reliant on financial support from the Scottish Government. We would expect options proposed within a statutory consultation to have guaranteed financial support.

Information

Lack of information was a fundamental issue raised during the meeting. Our recent deputations have highlighted the complexities, uncertainties and variables that are at play in the proposal for a new GME high school. We reiterated that parents cannot be asked to make a decision based on the level of information that has been provided to date. We asked the Council to fill the gaps, covering immersion, staffing, curriculum, finance and the development of Gaelic at both secondary and primary level.

We understand from our discussion that the statutory consultation paper to be presented will be significantly more detailed than the short, draft paper submitted to the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting on 28 May 2021. As per the statutory guidance for consultation on schools, it is the Council's responsibility to provide parents with high

quality consultation documents, underpinned by a high standard of information. With this guidance in mind, we look forward to receiving the robust documentation required.

An evidence-based approach

We noted that parents require an evidence-based approach from the Council when proposals are being put forward, specifically with reference to immersion and minority language best-practice, and that the Council recognises the needs which are specific to GME. We highlighted that many parents struggle to see how a co-located campus could best meet the needs of GME.

More broadly, parents are seeking an approach which is fair, independent and objective in its assessment, and not one which seems oriented towards the Council-preferred option of Liberton. We urged the Council to consider how parents' questions are treated and that these are answered as fully and as fairly as possible.

Educational benefit and curriculum

We highlighted that we cannot agree with the assertion that the educational benefit and curriculum offer will be identical regardless of where the school is located. A stand-alone school has educational benefits which are specific to GME. In addition, the overall curriculum offered at either a stand-alone school or shared campus is linked to their nearby EME school as that will potentially determine the curriculum offer where subjects are not initially available in GME.

We welcome the Council's commitment to providing a detailed educational benefits statement in any proposal, as is the statutory requirement. The educational benefits statement would need to be a statement of benefits as compared to the current offering at JGHS/Darroch as well as a comparison of what will be offered at each of the proposed sites.

Shared campus / Location

We noted that 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 significant number of parents would actively oppose it. Based on our most recent engagement with parents, this appears still to be the case.

We discussed how the consultation has often been focused on estates and a physical building; however, the quality of education and the level of immersion should continue to be the guiding principle when determining the educational benefits of any option.

As part of this discussion, we emphasised that setting is an important part of the equation, and that the different location options will have critical impacts on the level of immersion, the curriculum offered, well-being implications due to travel time, ability to participate in after-school activities, and links to the established Gaelic community. As such, it is not possible, or desirable, to focus on any single aspect of the proposal in isolation. Feedback

from parents reflects this, for example in references to the relationships between location and educational benefits.

Engagement

We had queried the extent to which formal engagement of parents will take place prior to 24 January 2022. Councillor Perry, you noted that you will update CnP and parents as soon as further information is available. We stress again that such informal engagement is vital and that the statutory consultation process itself is not the sole means by which to alleviate parents' significant concerns. We note that the time to undertake informal engagement is very short.

Comann nam Pàrant noted that the Council should look again at the written deputations submitted in May and December, and at our correspondence with the Council to date, all of which highlight the areas of concerns that we have raised repeatedly throughout the year and which need to be fully addressed. If there are concerns that the Council can address now, for example by providing parents with additional information or offering clarity on key issues, we advise that this is done as soon as possible rather than waiting until the start of the statutory consultation process.

Extent of parental concern

We noted that there are high levels of concern amongst parents, driven by a lack of confidence in the proposal itself and in the Council's plans to deliver their ambitions for a GME high school. In addition, there is a trust deficit: many parents do not believe the Council is actively listening to their concerns and responding appropriately (for example, through engagement, clarity or detail), nor do they feel the Council's proposal is driven by the desire to create a high school which best serves the needs of GME pupils and the wider GME community. As such, there is a widespread impression among GME parents that the Council is not acting with their best interests at heart, as reflected in parents' frustration at the Council's continual push for a shared campus at Liberton despite there being no evidence that this option would be supported by a majority of GME families.

Experience

Comann nam Pàrant is aware of the breadth of experience held by colleagues at the Council working in education. However, we did stress that, although staff can draw on their experience in consulting on changes to primary schools, there is no precedent for a GME high school in Edinburgh. This is a new venture and, as such, we remind the Council to keep at the forefront of their minds the distinct considerations that a GME high school requires and the cultural, social and historical context in which it exists. In addition, this is the creation of an entirely new high school rather than a refurbishment or a rebuild. As such, this brings additional challenges and considerations, as highlighted by parents, such as transition, staffing and recruitment, and GME development in the long term (including primary provision).

The Council noted that they work in partnership with others and seek external experience to inform their view, including Sgoil Ghàidhlig Glaschu. We would be keen to find out more about the ways in which the Council's engagement with Sgoil Ghàidhlig Glaschu has informed the Council's proposal.

James Gillespie's High School

Funding for staffing was raised at the Gaelic Implementation Group. Though we value the support for Grow Your Grown, there is still an issue around funding for GME staffing. It is also unclear whether the staffing schedule noted in the informal consultation outcome report is being undertaken or on track. This has an impact on the issue of educational benefit.

The Council was asked to bear in mind that the proposal affects parents of both GME and EME pupils at James Gillespie's High School. There are two different options with different timescales and the Council was urged to avoid a situation whereby the statutory consultation becomes an unpleasant process due to the Council citing rising rolls as a factor in determining the timescales.

Darroch

The move of GME pupils to Darroch in 2022 was also discussed. It was noted that this is a significant stepping-stone for GME on the journey towards a dedicated high school, and that it potentially provides a positive opportunity for GME to be strengthened prior to any move to a new location. For example, if implemented well, it could support the cohort of GME pupils to develop a Gaelic ethos and identity, improve opportunities for immersion, and consolidate a strong GME faculty. However, it was also noted that JGHS has lost a significant portion of its fluent, qualified Gaelic-speaking staff in recent years and, as a result, the proportion of the curriculum delivered through Gaelic has reduced at JGHS rather than increased.

We heard from the Council that there is a budget agreement (to be approved by the Finance and Resources Committee at a meeting on 3 February 2022), which is most welcome news, particularly if this funding is to be targeted at Darroch-based GME staffing. However, we also heard that the Council's experience with recruiting GME staff has identified specific challenges and can be a protracted process. Comann nam Pàrant suggested that GME parents are likely to have far greater confidence in the Council's ability to deliver a successful, well-staffed GME high school if they can see evidence of incremental improvements in GME provision at JGHS, prior to any consultation taking place, compared to being asked to rely on aspirations to that effect contained in a consultation report.

In short, GME parents will look to Darroch as a small-scale example of how well the Council can deliver against its ambitions for GME and, if done well, it has the potential to bolster confidence that GME will thrive at a new location.

Long term view

We noted the Council's view that parents must be aware of the limitations and to 'manage expectations' in terms of the proportion of the curriculum delivered in Gaelic. We strongly urge the Council to communicate this with parents as some will be unaware of these limitations, instead expecting a fully immersive S1-S6 provision and a timescale which reflects this. Comann nam Pàrant understand that examinations in Gaelic are not within the Council's control but we would urge the Council to work with SQA in order to provide parents with clear information on which subjects would be examined in Gaelic at the inception of the school and how any development of this within the larger national programme to increase the delivery of exams in Gaelic.

In addition, the Council must explicitly state the degree to which a GME high school would rely on a nearby EME school or whether the Council would propose to follow the Sgoil Ghàidhlig Glaschu model whereby the school employed its own non-Gaelic speaking teachers which allowed for the opportunity to steadily grow the Gaelic-speaking faculty as and when Gaelic-speaking staff were available to be taken on.

We seek assurances from the Council that they are fully committed to developing GME provision at the high school. We expect the Council to fully inform parents as to the percentage of the curriculum that would be delivered in GME when the school opens and, if this has limitations, we seek assurance that the Council is committed to growing this over time and request information from the Council as to how they plan to achieve this.



cnpduneideann@gmail.com

By email

9 December 2021

Alison is Iain còire

Re: Education, Children and Families Committee, Tuesday 7 December

On behalf of GME families across Edinburgh and the Lothians, we write to you to express our disappointment at the decision taken on Tuesday 7 December by the Education, Children and Families Committee to disregard the concerns of GME families, instead voting to accept the Council's report on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation.

Over the past year, Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) has repeatedly highlighted the longstanding concerns of GME families regarding the proposals for a new high school. We have undertaken a survey and held meetings for parents, collaborated with families in writing our deputation in May 2021, and communicated with the Council through letters and meetings. Most recently, we submitted a written deputation to the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting held 7 December 2021, outlining again the range of issues which have not been addressed, and highlighting information gaps, a lack of strategic planning and areas which require clarity.

We are greatly concerned by the decision to agree to a proposal which includes starting a statutory consultation process on 31 January 2022. There is insufficient time for the Council to fully establish engagement with parents, or to provide the requisite detailed information for GME families to make an informed decision, or for families themselves to fully consider each option. In addition, of significant concern is the absence of a clear strategic approach to support the growth needed in GME at secondary level and the way in which this aligns with the Scottish Government's national ambition for, and commitment to, Gaelic.

Without such a strategy in place, coupled with robust information, clear communication, substantial engagement, and the time for GME families to fully consider options, there is a very real risk that GME families will not have confidence in the proposal. This, in turn, puts the statutory consultation process in jeopardy. Comann nam Pàrant is fully aware that the

success of a new GME high school relies on the support of the families and community it serves; we strongly encourage the Council to acknowledge this too.

In her letter to the Council dated 26 November 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills stated that further information about CEC's proposals for GME secondary school provision is required in order to determine what support is available from the Scottish Government, in line with the SNP's recent manifesto commitment to GME in Edinburgh. We are sure that you would agree that it would be completely inappropriate for either an informal consultation or a statutory consultation to commence without this avenue being explored as fully as possible.

The ambition for a new GME high school for Edinburgh is hugely significant for the growth of GME, and we recognise the considerable steps taken over the years in working together to achieve this goal. But the Council must ensure that any proposal and outcome is guided by the views of GME families, and that the GME community is fully included at every step of the journey towards a new high school. Comann nam Pàrant is committed to the GME families we represent and we will continue to advocate on their behalf, listen to their concerns and amplify their voices.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd

Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)



Statement regarding the outcome of the Education, Children and Families Committee meeting

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) is deeply disappointed by the decision taken today (7 December 2021) by the Education, Children and Families Committee to disregard the concerns of GME families, instead voting to accept the Council's report on Gaelic Medium Education Statutory Consultation.

In the report, the Council recommended that a proposed Statutory Consultation Paper be presented for consideration to a special meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2022.

The Council has asserted that parents have full knowledge of what is being offered in the proposal and that consultation has been ongoing for sufficient time. Comann nam Pàrant cannot agree with either of these statements, and has repeatedly outlined serious concerns over the past year, through letters, reports, meetings and deputations.

The Council has not made it clear what the potential options will be for a new GME high school, or how it aligns with Scottish Government ambitions for Gaelic, nor have they given adequate information on crucial issues such as curriculum, immersion, transition or staffing. All of these are central concerns for GME families who have the right to participate in this process from a fully informed position. They are unable to do so without meaningful communication and engagement from the Council.

The Council has not undertaken this in a substantial enough way during 2021, and we firmly believe that there is insufficient time for the Council to complete the necessary strategic planning, communication and engagement prior to 31 January 2022, the proposed start date of the public consultation period.

Comann nam Pàrant submitted a [written deputation to the Education, Children and Families committee](#) ahead of today's meeting. In our deputation, we asked the committee **not** to agree to the Council's report due to the significant concerns we have with the proposal, including but not limited to:

- Absence of clear educational benefits for the different options
- Lack of a strategic approach 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

- Failure to fully address the concerns and questions that Comann nam Pàrant raised during the informal consultation period
- Absence of strategic planning for the recruitment and retention of Gaelic speaking teaching staff and for how the Council aims to increase the proportion of curriculum delivered through Gaelic.
- Absence of financial planning for the holistic development of GME from 0-18 years in Edinburgh, and, crucially,
- **Insufficient time for the Council to meaningfully engage with GME families on their proposals, putting the success of any statutory consultation in jeopardy.**

We requested that the Council instead take the time to prepare and present detailed pre-consultation information, to communicate and engage with families in a more comprehensive way, and to fully address the concerns raised by Comann nam Pàrant in the past year. The Council cannot reasonably expect to establish, maintain and develop this engagement with parents on such a significant matter in the short timeframe.

Comann nam Pàrant will continue to advocate for GME families across Edinburgh and the Lothians and we strongly encourage all GME families to share their feedback and concerns:
cnpduneideann@gmail.com



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

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

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>



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)

Sent 24/11/21

Dear Shirley-Anne

Thank you for engaging with us in the important discussion regarding the future development of Gaelic Medium Education in Edinburgh. I think that we both appreciate how important this work is in the educational and cultural life of the city, and in Scotland. Equally, we are both sensitive to the complexities inherent in the various options that are being developed and proposed.

As you are aware we were carrying out a more detailed assessment of the Fettes Police Headquarters and the former Royal Victoria Hospital sites. After discussions with Police Scotland we have ruled out the Fettes site because it will not be available in the timescale to which we are working. Following discussions with Lothian Health we established that the former Royal Victoria Hospital site is available for development but there are two constraining factors which are highlighted below.

The first is the timescale.

Scottish Water are currently on the site carrying out significant infrastructure works which will continue for approximately another 12 months. This will obviously extend the timescale for the building of a new school, see below for an initial estimate of the timescales involved to construction.

- Scottish Water complete works – 2022
- Agreement for land transfer and associated funding – 2022
- Concept Design – 2023
- Detailed Design – 2024
- Construction – 2025 & 2026
- New School Opening – 2027

The estimated completion time for building the new school on the Liberton site is 2025. Extending the timescale for delivery of a new school will increase accommodation pressures at James Gillespies High School. Our present estimate is that the school will be beyond capacity by 2025 meaning if we extended the timescale it would lead to overcrowding which could adversely affect the quality of education.

The second factor is Finance.

NHS have confirmed the capital receipt from the Royal Victoria Hospital site disposal is expected to be part of the funding package for the Western General Masterplan. Therefore, if this site is to be used for a GME secondary school the Scottish Government would have to be involved in agreeing the site can be transferred to the Council and that agreement would need to include meeting the funding gap which would then exist in the Western General Masterplan funding package. The process to secure this agreement would need to be concluded expeditiously otherwise it will be an added pressure on the timescales identified above.

The likelihood is that this option, mainly due to the cost of acquiring the site and additional building costs, would amount to between £20-£25m more than the Liberton option for a new school.

Assuming the level of GME capital grant provided by the government for building the new school is similar irrespective of where it is constructed then this estimate of £20-£25m is the additional funding the Government would need to provide in order to make this option work (bearing in mind this should be index linked to recognise rising costs). 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.

However, at this point I must bring to your attention that we are still of the opinion the best educational option for the development of Gaelic is the co-located campus we are proposing for the Liberton site for all the reasons we have outlined in our previous correspondence and discussions.

We are planning to bring a report to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2021. This report will identify the council sites that are available. It will offer outline costs, with an appraisal of each option, and I will ask committee to consider starting the statutory consultative process with the Gaelic and school communities. Consequently, in order to allow the officials time to prepare a report including recommendations for the content of the statutory consultation, we please need an answer as soon as possible as to whether the Scottish Government is willing to make the former Royal Victoria Hospital site and the extra funding required to deliver a GME secondary school at that location available to the Council. .

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible

Kind regards

Cllr Ian Perry

Convener of Education, Children and Families



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

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

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

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

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.

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Sharon May

Convenor
Comann nam Pàrant
(Dùn Èideann & Lodainn)

Copy to
Douglas Ansell, Scottish Government
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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.

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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

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.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](#)