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By email

31 October 2022

Joan a charaid

Re: meeting on 6 October with Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

We hope you are well. We write to update you on our recent meeting on 6 October with Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, to discuss Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Edinburgh and the Lothians. At this meeting, key issues were covered:

- Confirmation from the Scottish Government that no sites in their portfolio that could be used for the new GME high school (Scottish Government are happy to share further information around their scoping).
- There remains available the offer from the Scottish Government to support a City of Edinburgh Council feasibility study of sites. (We believe such a comprehensive overview of sites, demonstrating which are available and which are not, would allow GME families to see a transparent process which would, in turn build trust and move the discussions forward.)
- There are two strands of potential financial support available from the Scottish Government: £4m Gaelic capital fund which could support renovation projects and the larger capital investment programme which would be appropriate for a new build.
- In relation to the above point, it was noted that in order for there to be financial commitment from the Scottish Government, there first needs to be a proposal to discuss. We have reiterated to the Cabinet Secretary in our follow up letter that there needs to be a strategic approach, robust planning and parental engagement in the creation of a proposal that best meets the needs of GME pupils now and in the future. The educational benefit of establishing a new school must be central to the proposal, underpinned by well-developed plans for issues such as curriculum, immersion, location and staffing.

Overall, we have called on the Cabinet Secretary to lend her support and intervention where possible and appropriate in order to make more substantial progress. While we appreciate the work of all council officers over the years, we believe we have reached an impasse which has been particularly hard to overcome. We have highlighted this in the briefing paper we sent to all members of the Education, Children and Families Committee, and again in several of our written and verbal deputations.

We are keen, now, to secure a collaborative approach regarding the development of GME in Edinburgh, particularly around proposals for the creation of a GME high school and the expansion of primary provision. We are very open to working with the new administration and would be delighted to meet with you to discuss this further.

Le dùrachdan

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn)