

Summary of meeting at Taobh na Pàirce (TnP) – Friday 9th February 9:15am

The meeting was called to:

- update parents about the recent publication of statements from Councillor Laidlaw, Drummond High School (DHS) and Broughton Primary School (BPS) and Leith Walk Primary School (LWPS) and to discuss various associated social media posts
- update parents on the meeting with Leith Walk Councillors
- update parents on the latest Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG or GISG) meeting. GIG is the group tasked with assessing the progress and implementation of Edinburgh Council's Gaelic Language Plan. It involves parent representatives along with Councillors, Council officials and other Gaelic stakeholders.

Brian Thunder, Convenor of [Comann nam Pàrant Dùn Èideann](#) (CnP) and Marianne O'Loughlin, TnP Parent Council GIG Representative gave an overview of recent events. (More detailed information can be found via the links.)

Firstly, Councillor Laidlaw wrote an [article for the Broughton Spurtle](#) where he expressed his opinion that Edinburgh should not have a stand alone GME school.

CnP produced a [response](#) that highlighted the inaccuracies in Councillor Laidlaw's article and confirmed that a dedicated GME school would, from an educational perspective as outlined by Education Scotland's Statutory Guidance on GME be the best option. Furthermore, Cllr Laidlaw's Conservative colleagues also recognised the educational value of dedicated schools when they unanimously, along with every other councillor in the city, of all parties, voted to "*note that the educational arguments for a standalone Gaelic school had been established*" in June 2011.

CnP and Taboh na Pàirce Parent Council (TnPPC) have continually stated that GME is open to all families who wish it for their children. We are a diverse community with over 40 nationalities at our school with 27 languages spoken.

Secondly, There are members of the Drummond Community who would like us to show our support for their campaign by rejecting the Edinburgh Council proposal to move GME to Drummond with the consequence that EME pupils may be moved elsewhere. However, it remains the intention of CnP and TnPPC to engage with the Council and to discuss the issues around this proposal.

It was outlined that we have a long term commitment to work constructively with Edinburgh Council and feel that this commitment should be honoured. Representatives from GME parent groups attend very regular meetings with Councillors and Council officials to work towards long term solutions for the expansion and delivery of Gaelic playgroups, nursery places, primary school places, additional secondary subjects, out of school activities and cultural activities. Our working relationship with the Council will need to continue long after this issue is resolved, and we feel maintaining good lines of communication is the best option.

It was also emphasised that this engagement process is not a formal consultation, but a way for Edinburgh Council to collate the views of all stakeholders in advance of any formal consultation. Engaging with the Council is the best way to open the discussion on other development options, and to keep the educational needs of all the children at the centre of the discussion.

Read the statements by Broughton Primary School and Leith Walk Primary School.

Questions were then taken

1. Will the informal consultation go ahead if the other PCs don't want to take part in the engagement events?

Yes, it will. The Council is gathering information from all stakeholders to see if there is a proposal to take to a statutory consultation. This informal phase is not a consultation, but a process of gathering views.

2. If the other PCs don't take part won't that invalidate the results?

We don't think so. It's an informal consultation and the statements made by Leith Walk Primary PC make their position clear and withdrawing from the process is a statement in itself.

Having taken part in many consultation processes in the years preceding the opening of TnP, it is the position of CnP and TnPPC that it is good to engage at the informal stage as your comments help to inform and shape the debate at the earliest stage.

3. When are the Council thinking of going to a statutory consultation?

The earliest that they could take the request for a statutory consultation would be the May Committee.

4. Are we putting together a response to the Broughton Spurtle?

We hope to pull something together but it is time dependent. Offers of assistance are always welcomed. Currently, the information on the CnP website is useful for journalists to use to inform themselves of our position. When approached by journalists we issue a short statement and then direct them to the CnP site for the detail.

When inaccuracies arise in a publication or statement we do ask for them to be corrected. For example, a recent statement made various inferences as to why parents choose GME that were factually incorrect. When this was pointed out, the other party agreed and removed the comment.

5. Are the Council planning to put other options forward?

We have asked for a range of proposals.

6. When does time become critical? ie: when does something have to happen.

The Council are saying that the current P6 would be the earliest intake. However, we feel that there is a lot of work to do to make the GME unit at JGHS strong enough to withstand a move and 2019 does not feel practical.

The good news is that a new teacher has been appointed at JGHS to work specifically within the Gaelic unit delivering history across all years as well as social science, Gaelic and geography to the lower years. We are very focused on encouraging the Council to recruit more teachers, at primary and secondary – especially as we move to capacity at TnP.

7. The Council hasn't said much about the educational benefit for the English Medium Pupils at Drummond in relation to this proposal. Drummond does a lot of work for children with special needs and how does the Council propose to address this?

We don't know at this stage. We do know that the Council have to show how the proposals they are making improve the educational benefits for all the children involved.

The feeder primaries and the Drummond Community are best placed and best informed to make suggestions to the Council as to the best educational future for their children.

Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG) Meeting Update

Representatives from Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce Parent Council, Comann nam Pàrant, Cròileagan and James Gillespie's High School (JGHS) Parent Council attended the City of Edinburgh Council's Gaelic Implementation Group meeting with elected members and officials on Tues 30th January.

The main agenda item covered in the meeting was the report on feedback from the public consultation on the draft Gaelic Language Plan. This was shared with members, and officials from the Strategy and Insight team talked through the feedback and the process for incorporating the feedback and finalising the plan.

Questions were asked about how the feedback informs the plan and how the final plan will balance the aspirations expressed in the feedback against realistic delivery. The Strategy and Insight team will be responsible for updating the plan and presenting it to the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee (CPSC). It was thought that the work needed would result it in being presented to the CPSC meeting in May. At our request, the report on feedback from the public consultation will be published when the Committee papers are released ahead of the CPSC February meeting.

One of the key discussions was around the recruitment and retention of teaching staff. CnP has been proactive in making suggestions for actions on this in [their paper on sustainable GME development](#). GME parent representatives emphasised that this issue was something the Council needed to be proactive on with a requirement to build up secondary GME at James Gillespie's as a necessity before any intended move.

The next GIG meeting will be in March.

Meeting with Leith Walk Councillors

Brian Thunder, Convenor of CnP and Marianne O'Loughlin, TnP GIG Representative met with:

- Marion Donaldson - Labour Group.
- Amy Mcneese-Mechan - SNP Group.
- Susan Rae - Scottish Green Group

The aim of the meeting was to share with them the benefits and value of GME education. The [Education Scotland Statutory Guidance on GME](#) provides a lot of information about this. It was recommended that everyone who hasn't already reads it, as it lays out the best approach for GME and provides a lot of good responses for the criticism that GME often receives.

Question: Is it useful for us to engage with our local councillors?

Yes, please do. The statutory guidance on GME provides a fantastic resource to help inform Councillors about the benefits of GME and on the best pathways going forward for the development of GME. We also hope to publish further guidance on our blog as soon as possible.