



Comann nam Pàrant
Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland



COMANN NAM PÀRANT NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN/WINTER
2011



COMANN NAM PÀRANT

Foreword

Welcome to the Comann nam Pàrant newsletter. This is the first of what we hope will be a quarterly publication containing information and items of interest for parents with children in Gaelic Medium.

I have recently met with parents in Glasgow and Tiree who are keen to re-establish Comann nam Pàrant in their respective areas and both now have committees with an action plan for their group. One of the priorities for the Glasgow group is to support the establishment of a second Gaelic primary in the city which is needed to cope with the high demand for GME. In Tiree, parents are keen to support the school recruit a Gaelic speaking teacher who will be able to cover a period of maternity leave from January to May next year. If you know any teachers who would enjoy the island experience for a few months could you ask them to get in touch?

As Glasgow parents start to think about a second school, Edinburgh parents are welcoming the decision of their local authority to go ahead and establish a stand alone Gaelic school in Edinburgh. This is great news for our capital city and testament to the hard work of many Gaelic medium parents over the years who have worked so hard campaigning for a school.

We are hoping that local groups will contribute items for future editions and that the newsletter will encourage stronger links between groups who can share useful information and experiences.

Magaidh Wentworth
Parental Officer



Facebook!

You can now get up-to-the-minute news and updates from Comann nam Pàrant via our Facebook and Twitter feeds!

The pages will be updated with information of interest to parents and others involved in GME on a regular basis.

They will also prove useful (in particular Facebook) in allowing parents to share issues/news with each other and to generally help in co-ordinating efforts across the country.

So get following us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ComannNamParant or on Twitter @ComannNamParant!



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New CnamP Officer - Coinneach Maccoinneach

My name is Kenneth Mackenzie, a recent graduate of Gaelic Studies at the University of Aberdeen. I first started speaking Gaelic whilst at Croileagan back in 1992. I then went on to study through Gaelic medium education at Dingwall Primary School, where I was a regular at the Sradagan groups and also at Fèis Ròis. I continued with Gaelic education into Secondary, where I took part in extra-curricular events such as the BT National School Debate and Ri Chèile.

And so now I find myself here, on one of CnaG's Graduate placements, with Comann nam Pàrant. Although not a parent myself, I hope that the experience gained from each tier of Gaelic medium education will be experience enough to stand me in good stead for the year to come!

Coinneach Maccoinneach
Parental Officer



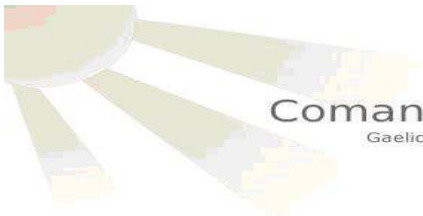
Highland baby fair and the Eastgate

Our team of parents in Inverness has been very busy over the last couple of months. Comann nam Pàrant had a stall at this year's Highland Baby Fair in Inverness. The fair was held over two days (1st/2nd October) at Eden Court Theatre and could only be deemed as being a success. CnP were there to encourage and promote Gaelic medium education and to answer and settle the concerns that the parents (and those who were expecting!) had about bilingual education. Numerous parents showed a

genuine interest in the possibility of Gaelic medium whilst some even enquired about how to go about learning themselves.

Comann nam Pàrant and CnaG were also present at the Eastgate shopping centre for a day at the end of October to spread information about GME. Even Nip made an appearance!

Comann nam Pàrant would like to thank our parental advisors throughout Scotland for all the work they have been doing in promoting Gaelic education.



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The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17

Bòrd na Gàidhlig are currently consulting on this draft national Gaelic plan. The consultation runs until 5th January and given the emphasis on the importance of language transmission in the home and on growth in Gaelic medium education we hope that parents will participate in the consultation and submit responses. The plan aims to '*attain stability in the number of people speaking Gaelic by raising the rate at which new Gaelic speakers are created to 'replacement level' - i.e. the level at which the loss of mostly older Gaelic speakers is balanced by the creation of new speakers.*' As well as strengthening the transmission of Gaelic in the home the aim is to double the number of children entering GME each year within the lifetime of the plan, an ambitious target which will require much support from parents throughout Scotland so this is your opportunity, as parents, to tell Bòrd na Gàidhlig what you think is important in the development of GME. What support would you like to see to encourage parents to use Gaelic at home with children? What can we do to attract more children to GME?

The plan is available on the Bòrd na Gàidhlig website at www.gaidhlig.org.uk where there is also information on how to respond.



HMIe Report 'Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers.'

This HMIe report, published in June, is the first national report from the inspectorate on progress and issues in Gaelic education since the publication in 2005 'Improving Achievement in Gaelic' and is based on evidence from inspections over the period 2006 to 2011.

The report describes best practice in Gaelic medium education especially in regard to language immersion and the importance of ensuring that the curriculum is delivered totally through the medium of Gaelic.

The lack of written national guidance for Gaelic medium education which defines best practice is highlighted in the report as is the lack of progression at secondary level and the need for more effective transition from primary to secondary.

Read the report at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/gebse.html>



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Bilingualism Matters - Westerns Isles Branch Launch



Antonella Sorace at 'Bilingualism Matters'

The many and varied benefits of bilingualism in the Western Isles were at the heart of the launch of a new initiative and resource, as part of the Mod Fringe in Stornoway in October - the Western Isles branch of 'Bilingualism Matters.'

While the cultural benefits of speaking Gaelic are well known, the wider cognitive advantages that bilingualism brings - regardless of which languages - are only beginning to be understood. What opportunity lies on our very doorstep, right under our noses, in the shape of Gaelic Medium Education? An opportunity that gives benefits way beyond fluency in Gaelic - and English - important as that is?

The work of esteemed linguist Professor Antonella Sorace, on the advantages of bilingualism is at the core of this new, innovative project. As professor of Developmental Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh, her groundbreaking research has truly dispelled the myth that exposure to 2 languages can confuse a child and hinder their mental development. On the contrary, her work shows how bilingual children gain so much more than monolingual children.

A well attended, informal gathering at An Lanntair were welcomed by Comhairle nan Eilean's Director of Education and Children's Services, Seonag MacKinnon, and heard from Professor Sorace as she emphasized the fantastic 'bilingualism' opportunity that GME offered in the Western Isles. Deputy Rector from the Nicolson Institute, Angus MacLennan, spoke of the unique 'bilingual' situation the Western Isles offered with Gaelic, in a typically humorous, yet serious address. In particular he talked about the duty we had as parents, organisations, and as communities, to set a bilingual example for the next generations to follow in the islands, and use Gaelic in as many situations as possible.

Representing the newly formed Western Isles branch, local coordinator, Iona Mactaggart, went on to thank all who spoke, especially Professor Sorace and the Council and Comann nam Pàrant for their support in the establishment of the branch. With a small local team now trained, she said they were looking forward to showing how the many benefits of bilingualism were there for all to see, and were an integral part of the opportunity that GME in the islands was. As well as organizing different, informal events throughout the islands, she said the team would also love to hear from any groups, or parents out there who want to find out more.

For further information on 'Bilingualism Matters', www.bilingualism-matters.org.uk