

 the SCOTS language society
leid associe

Scots Cheritie no 10286

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Elaine Morton, Secretar, SLS, 6 Dryden Place,
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Karen Watson
The Cultural Commission
Broughton High School
Carrington Road
EDINBURGH

Dear Ms Watson

The aims of the Scots Language Society are to promote Scots in literature, drama, the media, education and in everyday use. Scots is a valid part of our cultural heritage, and we want it to take its place as a language of Scotland, alongside Gaelic and English.

As an organisation, we noted with dismay, that the SE in publishing its Cultural Strategy at the end of last year made a commitment to consult on culture but language did not feature. Likewise we were disappointed that there was no mention of Scots in the original statement from the Cultural Commission.

Your consultation paper seeks explicitly to identify what specific entitlements might be and what would be the best methods and structures for developing and delivering them?

In respect of the Scots language, I think this issue has already been very fully considered, and the required actions are contained in a number of recent publications.

The Education, Culture and Sport Committee of the Scots Parliament (2003) produced its report into the role of education and cultural policy in supporting and developing Gaelic, Scots and minority languages in Scotland and concluded that Scotland needs an inclusive, cohesive, languages policy. "*...a country haein nae specific policy for its hamelt leid/s in actual fact haes a sleekit policy. Its policy is tae let the leids dwine and dee.*"

The Cross Party Group in the Scots Parliament on the Scots language, also published in 2003, "A Statement of Principles". This is based on the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights and contains in a single document an inclusive body of principles for upholding, promoting and respecting language diversity. The document starts by asserting that Scots is language and demands an end to prejudice. It then goes on to define the courses of action which need to be enshrined in Scottish political, educational, social and cultural fabric to enable the Scots language to develop and thrive.

In addition, Scots has been recognised by the Council of Europe and the UK Government as one of Europe's minority languages, yet the report of the European Committee of Experts levelled unreserved criticism at both the UK and Scottish governments over their (lack of) implementation of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages. They were particularly recommended to "*create conditions for the use of Scots in public life, through the adoption of a language policy and concrete measures, in co-operation with the speakers of the language.*"

I would therefore submit on behalf of SLS, that if the recommendations outlined above by these eminent bodies was actioned, then Scots would have parity of esteem with Gaelic and English, and a significant part of our cultural heritage will have been supported as it deserves. It also goes without saying that any policy which aims to be founded on cultural "rights" is grossly compromised if language rights are neglected.

IRENE MCGUGAN
(on behalf of Scots Language Society)