

15 MAR 2005

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Cultural Commission,  
Broughton High School,  
Carrington Road,  
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11 March 2005.

James a chaidh.

It was a very great pleasure to meet with you again, at our offices some time ago.

Following our discussion the Bòrd promised to make a submission to the Commission on the issues surrounding Gaelic, and I apologise for the delay in getting the document to you.

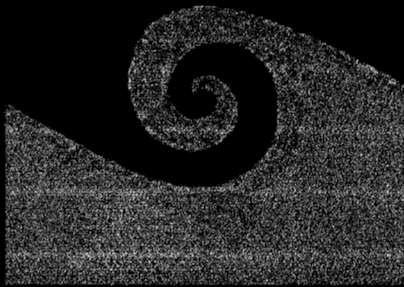
However, I now have pleasure in attaching a submission to the Commission from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and I hope this is helpful to you in formulating your report for the Minister, and I would wish to stress that if the Bòrd can be of any further assistance to you please let me know.

Joseph Shaward

Allan Campbell

**Allan Campbell  
Chief Executive**

BÒRD NA  
GÀIDHLIG



# Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Submission to the Cultural  
Commission

March 2005

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## **Bòrd na Gàidhlig**

### Submission to the Cultural Commission

**Thoir a-nuas dhuinn na coinnleirean òir  
'S annta càraibh na coinnlean geal, cèir  
Lasaibh suas iad an seòmar a' bhròin  
Taigh aire seann chànan a' Ghàidheil  
Se siud o chionn fhad' thuir an nàmh  
Ach fhathast tha beò cànan nan Gàidheal**

*Bring out the golden candlestick  
And set up the white-wax candles  
Light them in the room of mourning  
Hold a wake for the ancient tongue of the Gael  
That is what the enemy once said  
But the language of the Gael lives on*

*Cànan nan Gàidheal le Murchadh MacPhàrlain*

#### **Introduction**

Murdo MacFarlane's poetry, above, makes reference to the 'enemy' wanting to 'hold a wake' for Gaelic. Although the language is in a precarious state, it is far from dead, and indeed there is much about which to be optimistic.

In 2005 we are on the verge of a real turning point in the fortunes of the language. Gaelic is being supported, for the first time, through legislation, with an executive-sponsored Gaelic Language Bill currently working its way through the Scottish Parliament, which should lead to a Gaelic Language Act by the summer.

The Scottish Executive has set up a new body. Bòrd na Gàidhlig is a non-departmental public body (NDPB) established in 2003 as one of the Scottish Executive's responses to the recommendations of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic. Bòrd na Gàidhlig is appointed by, and accountable to, Scottish Ministers, in common with other NDPBs, and works closely with the Scottish Executive. The Bòrd advises Scottish Ministers on all areas of Gaelic development and seeks to operate within the policy context established by Scottish Ministers.

The task of Bòrd na Gàidhlig is to create a sustainable and growing future for Gaelic, and it has defined its task in terms of five key aims. These are to:

- **Increase the numbers of speakers and users of Gaelic**
- **Strengthen Gaelic as a family and community language**
- **Facilitate access to Gaelic language and culture throughout Scotland**
- **Promote and celebrate Gaelic's contribution to Scottish cultural life**

- **Extend and enhance the use of Gaelic in all aspects of life in Scotland**

These aims will be achieved by focussing on specific activities in priority areas of action which include education and learning; Gaelic culture and heritage; economic and social development; and strategic cross-sectoral development.

In the Scottish Executive's 'Cultural Policy Statement' it is stated that *'The Commission's findings will be informed by the diverse cultural and linguistic communities within Scotland, with particular regard to Gaelic language and culture.'* In the Cultural Commission's Interim Report, it is stated that *'there is a tremendous appetite for traditional arts and culture throughout Scotland ... and we also recognise the need to explore opportunities which will develop Scotland's rich linguistic heritage through the arts and culture, and we will be pursuing these themes over the coming months through consultation with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the Gaelic and Scots cultural groups and stakeholders from Scotland's other linguistic communities.'*

Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcomes the opportunity of a dialogue with the Commission, and would be happy, at any time, to advise the Commission on matters relating to the Gaelic language and its significant role within Scottish cultural life.

The response to setting up of the Commission, in some quarters, has been less than enthusiastic, but Bòrd na Gàidhlig agrees with the Commission that this is a 'once in a lifetime' chance to examine the scope of Scottish cultural life for generations to come, and the opportunity should therefore be welcomed. In Scotland, we are not starting from scratch, and indeed have achieved a great deal, and have much to be proud of.

Gaelic should, we feel, have a central role to play in the cultural life of a future Scotland, and in this submission we have attempted to give the Cultural Commission an overview of the work of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as well as addressing the questions raised in your consultation paper.

### **Bòrd na Gàidhlig's priorities**

Bòrd na Gàidhlig recently published its first Plana-Gnìomh or Operational Plan **2005-07**, which will be overtaken by the National Plan for Gaelic once the Gaelic Language Bill is enacted. The following are the Bòrd's priorities in relation to arts and cultural development, which will be refined through time, in the National Plan for Gaelic, and perhaps in light of the Commission's findings.

## **Arts**

Within the priority area of the Arts, we will seek to focus support, resources and activity in the following areas in order to achieve our aims:

- **Increase the promotion and availability of Gaelic arts, traditional and modern, throughout Scotland**
- **Raise awareness of Gaelic in the arts and culture sectors and encourage arts festivals and events to adopt Gaelic policies and include Gaelic where possible**
- **Increase the availability of Gaelic arts in schools**
- The Gaelic arts are a significant aspect of Scottish cultural expression, they enrich the lives of Gaelic speakers, learners and supporters and they ensure greater access to the Gaelic language at all levels.
- The Bòrd will seek to increase training opportunities in the Gaelic cultural professions by working with the Gaelic Arts Strategic Development (GASD) Group, in order to ensure high quality delivery and the enhanced use of Gaelic within those professions.
- The Bòrd, in partnership with the Gaelic Arts Agency, will continue to work with the Scottish Arts Council to implement their policy and to attract further funding to Gaelic cultural activities.
- The Bòrd, in partnership with the Scottish Arts Council and other agencies, will encourage and support local groups, festivals and events to adopt Gaelic language policies.

## **Gaelic Publishing**

Within the priority area of Gaelic Publishing, we will seek to focus support and resources in the following areas in order to achieve our aims:

- **Increase the range and quality of materials for Gaelic and Gaelic Medium Education**
- **Extend the range and availability of Gaelic publications including books, magazines and journals**
- **Assist with the development of Gaelic adult learning resources**
- The need for a strong publishing sector in Gaelic is important for the survival of the language. There is a need for high quality educational reading materials as well as the regular appearance of Gaelic publications.
- The Bòrd will seek to work with key partners including the Scottish Arts Council, Comhairle nan Leabhraichean, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig and others in creating new resources for all levels of education, enjoyment and lifelong learning.
- The Bòrd will seek to encourage the creation of new publications in Gaelic.

## **Information and Promotion**

Within the priority area of Information and Promotion, we will seek to focus support and resources in the following areas in order to achieve our aims:

- **Promote information schemes which raise the profile of Gaelic and promote the language at a national level**
- **Support key partner groups that seek to promote Gaelic cultural events and initiatives**
- **Increase the use of ICT to promote Gaelic and access to Gaelic cultural activities**
- There is a continuing need to highlight the importance of Gaelic as an intrinsic part of Scotland's national identity, both in a national and international context. This is essential to ensure that Gaelic has a secure future in Scotland.
- We will seek, at all times, to raise the profile and status of Gaelic and seek to form new partnerships to market and promote Gaelic at a national level.
- We will encourage information schemes to disseminate information about Gaelic and the benefits of bilingualism
- The Bòrd will assist in the development of a Gaelic cultural strategy.
- The Bòrd will inform the Cultural Commission of the importance and value of Gaelic to Scottish culture. The Bòrd will participate in the European Network of Language Boards and will share information with the Gaelic development sector.
- The Bòrd will seek to identify cultural practitioners to act as language ambassadors.

## **Culture and Heritage**

Within the priority area of Culture and Heritage, we will seek to focus support and resources in the following areas in order to achieve our aims:

- **Raise awareness of Gaelic heritage and assist schemes which seek to secure the Gaelic linguistic and cultural heritage for the future**
- **Promote the use of Gaelic in tourism in Scotland**
- Encourage the main cultural development organisations to implement Gaelic strategies to increase Gaelic usage in Scotland.
- The Bòrd will assist initiatives aimed at supporting Gaelic's linguistic and cultural heritage for future generations.
- The Bòrd will work with the Gaelic Arts Strategic Development Group, the Scottish Arts Council, local authorities and others to increase opportunities for wider community participation in Gaelic cultural activities and to facilitate the delivery of new Gaelic cultural activities in schools.

## **Media**

Within the priority area of the Media, we will seek to focus support and resources in the following areas in order to achieve our aims:

- **Encourage all efforts to extend the range, quality and availability of Gaelic television programmes**
- **Improve provision of Gaelic news through a service which will disseminate information to Gaelic speakers and learners**
- **Increase availability of Gaelic educational materials by means of new technology**
- We will seek to support, where possible, the efforts of those operating in this sector and work towards the availability of Gaelic media which meets the legitimate expectations of Gaelic speakers in Scotland and elsewhere.
- It is vital that Gaelic speakers and learners have access to a wide range of Gaelic media and that a Gaelic media sector can expand and provide employment, skills training and confidence for Gaelic speakers.
- Our aims in this area include the establishment of a Gaelic digital television service, the expansion of Gaelic radio, a Gaelic news service in print and in text and the increasing use of Gaelic in other newspapers.

## **Cultural Rights**

It is the view of Bòrd na Gàidhlig that the rights that emerge as part of the cultural review should, as far as possible, be enshrined in a legal framework.

In recent initiatives to secure the status of Gaelic, we have seen reluctance among some public bodies and local authorities to do anything unless required to do so. A Culture Bill, if carefully framed, could assist in enabling the aspirations of the Scottish Executive - as articulated by the First Minister in his 2003 St Andrew's Day speech - to be realised.

The right of Gaels to use their own language in any context is something we would aspire to, and we would also like to see a Scotland where all people are enabled and encouraged to learn Gaelic, as well as learning about Gaelic culture and heritage, and the central part it has played, and still plays, in shaping Scotland.

Our main aim is to increase the numbers of Gaelic speakers, but alongside that, we need to raise awareness of Gaelic's place in everyday life in Scotland, so that even if people choose not to learn the language, they can appreciate the place of Gaelic, and can recognise that it was indeed a language spoken throughout Scotland. Our language, songs, tunes and stories articulate aspects of

Scottish life, including social history, politics, place names and people, about which every citizen should know.

The whole issue of cultural rights and accompanying entitlements is challenging, but with the Executive taking the lead, and public bodies and local authorities following that lead, significant players in Scottish life can be brought together and effective cultural policy can be developed. Gaelic is at the core of the cultural heritage of Scotland, and it is inconceivable that the First Minister's aspirations for cultural rights and entitlement could be achieved without Gaelic at the heart of any proposals. 'Cultural entitlement' and 'cultural rights' are terms somewhat difficult to define, even for those involved in the cultural sector, but the point of them must be that we give more people access to the best cultural activity available, for enjoyment, education and development

### **Education**

The development of Gaelic education is key to the language's future. As a longer-term aspiration - and since the Commission is looking at generational change - it would not be unreasonable to expect that every child in Scotland, through time, should have the option of receiving their formal education through the medium of Gaelic.

This should not be confined to primary school level, but extended to secondary and tertiary level, enabling all school leavers and other adults to receive their further education through the medium of Gaelic if they so choose.

The learning of Gaelic should be promoted and encouraged throughout Scotland, and its relevance to all residents of Scotland must be clearly articulated. Cultural activities should be an integral part of school life and should not be the 'afterthought' to other 'mainstream' school subjects.

Within the 5-14 curriculum in Scotland, every young person should leave school with a specified minimum knowledge of indigenous Scottish culture, including the Gaelic language. The formal and informal education sectors in Scotland should be treated as equal partners in the delivery of cultural education.

With the imminent Gaelic Act, we are not starting from scratch in Scotland. We have sound proposals for a 'cultural pledge' as an important legacy of Highland 2007 - the Scottish Year of Highland Culture. These initiatives are important, have grown out of community consultation, and could offer a valuable model which the Cultural Commission could pursue in its own consultations and planning.

## **Cultural Leadership**

A Ministry of Culture could be a positive thing. A dedicated Minister of Culture could give the leadership many feel is missing in Scottish cultural life, and could act as an essential champion both at home and overseas, for Scottish culture and the cultural sector. The Minister would also provide strategic support and guidance in the vital interface between NDPBs and the Executive sponsoring department.

It could be argued however that with sound policy, and effective management, culture could pervade every area of government in Scotland, and the aspirations articulated by the First Minister in his St Andrew's Day speech could be achieved without such a new Ministry.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig believes that the arms-length principle is still appropriate, and while the Scottish Executive should be the ultimate policy-makers and 'guardians' of cultural rights, entitlements and responsibilities, they should take advice from the cultural bodies appointed by Ministers in reaching such policy. There are several cultural NDPBs in Scotland, and rather than simply disband them, there is an argument for ensuring that they work more effectively together, abandon the traditional sectoral boundaries, and meet, think and plan across the whole of the cultural sector.

The cultural industries are often excluded from the decision-making processes in Scotland, yet they make an extremely important contribution to the economy of the country.

The commercial sector has been an important sponsor of the arts, for instance. Artists, too, often feel excluded from the processes. There should be a way for the public and private sectors to interface, so that all parties can have a role in the policy and decision-making.

Gaelic experience can offer a solution here. The language has survived over many years, largely but not exclusively, because of a dedicated voluntary sector, backed up by a range of professional organisations. The Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic, for instance, was very careful to ensure that grassroots organisations were consulted on Gaelic's future, and this will also be a feature of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's working practice.

Only through close working between local authorities, NDPBs, and the private and voluntary sectors can we get a proper overview of the opportunities that exist to improve access to language and cultural activity.

## **Funding arrangements**

In the specific case of the Gaelic language, we believe that funding to enable Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and partners, to revitalise the

language, must be available from the Scottish Executive. If we believe in the arms-length principle, then it follows that while the final decision about how much public money is allocated to the cultural sector is in the hands of the Scottish Executive, appropriately resourced NDPBs should be left to determine the most effective use of these public funds. They are, after all, answerable to Ministers, and their members are appointed for their expertise.

National agencies, such as the NDPBs, cannot rightly have any great influence over local authority spending decisions, but with a more creative, inclusive approach to planning, it is possible for local authorities to work in harmony with other agencies.

Most NDPBs have a range of bodies that they fund, to enable them to achieve their strategic targets and meet objectives. However, current funding cycles (usually 3 years) can result in uncertainty for those organisations, and the inability to forward plan. This often restricts creative thinking, as well as causing feelings of insecurity, and Bòrd na Gàidhlig would advocate a move towards 5 to 10 year agreements with the Scottish Executive, and partners, with regular reviews at appropriate times within the cycle, perhaps at 3 year intervals, as is now the case.

### **New Technology and Media**

The use of technology is being considered at present in relation to the teaching of Gaelic, to enable the most effective use of Gaelic-medium teachers. There is currently a group advising the Scottish Executive on the use of new technology to deliver education, including the possibility of a 'virtual' secondary school providing Gaelic-medium education. The teaching of traditional music to young people in remote places, via video-conferencing, has also been considered, and may become a reality with the advent of Broadband.

However, welcome though the possibility of new technology is, it cannot be viewed as the complete panacea for Gaelic, or for cultural transmission. An over-dependence on video-conferencing in delivering education or cultural activity, without regular and substantial face-to-face engagement, may result in pupils sitting in front of a television like robots! There is nothing to replace the interaction with a real person in learning an instrument, or a language.

The importance of broadcasting to Scottish cultural life should also be a matter of concern to the Commission. Bòrd na Gàidhlig believes that education and broadcasting are key elements in underpinning the Gaelic language, although many other elements are involved. Therefore, although broadcasting is currently a reserved matter, the National Plan for Gaelic, must include broadcasting. We believe the recommendations of the Cultural Commission should do the same, and in the specific case of Gaelic, must recommend a dedicated channel broadcasting in the Gaelic language.

Gaelic Media Services (GMS) believes that the UK broadcasting system is not helping the Gaelic language, because the current Gaelic broadcasting provision is too patchy to have critical mass. This critical mass is essential in promoting Gaelic's use, and the same could be argued of promoting Scottish culture. It should be remembered that the predecessor of GMS, Comataidh Craolaidh Gàidhlig, was the biggest single funder of Gaelic arts activity, and it also underpinned a small, but important, Gaelic broadcasting industry.

### **Cross-sectoral**

It is obvious to Bòrd na Gàidhlig that the cultural sector as a whole should seek to arrange mutually beneficial partnership with other areas of government. In the case of Gaelic, these would include the arts, education, sport and tourism.

There is a major, though currently unexploited, opportunity to promote Scotland as a tourism destination through using the Gaelic language as a unique part of the country's culture. Much could be made of our traditional songs and music, genealogy, and place names, a great many of which are Gaelic in origin. There are numerous opportunities to point tourists towards historic sites, and tell their story in an imaginative way. This would not only be informative for tourists, but would give the people of Scotland the opportunity to learn much more of the unique Gaelic heritage, much of which is currently hidden, resulting in a great deal of ignorance of the centrality of Gaelic to Scottish cultural life - now and in the past.

### **Conclusion**

Bòrd na Gàidhlig welcome the opportunity to make this submission to the Cultural Commission, and as stated previously, looks forward to a dialogue with the Commission.

In summary, Bòrd na Gàidhlig believes that:

- The Gaelic language should have secure status in Scotland, and should be recognised as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect with English
- The Gaelic language should be at the forefront of cultural development in Scotland
- Gaelic should become more visible, and used, in Scottish public life
- Cultural Rights can only be enforced if enshrined in law, although fostering goodwill in enabling the delivery of rights would be desirable in the absence of legislation
- Cultural entitlements and rights must result in more people gaining access to the best cultural activity available

- While a Ministry of Culture could be a positive thing, the arms-length principle is still appropriate, and closer working between local authorities, NDPBs, and the private and voluntary sectors could produce an overview of the opportunities that exist to improve access to cultural activity
- The use of technology is extremely important, and can make a significant difference in offering access, and although many other issues are involved, education and broadcasting are key to Gaelic's future
- There should be a dedicated Gaelic television channel
- Scotland should be promoted as a tourism destination through the use of the Gaelic language as a unique part of the country's culture.

**Bòrd na Gàidhlig**

March 2005