

Consultation Questions

Section 1

The Scots Language Society (SLS) is grateful for the opportunity to be involved at these early stages of the preparation of the paper on the Executive's proposed strategy for Scotland's languages. This response focuses on issues facing the Scots language, each numbered paragraph making its specific point. We noted and endorse the view that we must

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1. Do you agree with the reasons given for promoting and learning languages on pages 4 and 5, and that these are the main reasons for supporting current language initiatives in Scotland? If not, why not?

â€œrecognise, respect and celebrate the Scots language as an integral part of our cultural heritage' and similarly we support and endorse the view that Scots is a 'distinct' language. We also agree with the comments that 'Scotland has a particular responsibility as a custodian ofâ€¦ Scots' and that 'no one outside Scotland bears the same responsibility for protecting [this] language'. It is good to see commitment to the European Charter principles stated by the Executive, and of course Part II of that Charter, the part under which Scots is recognised by Treaty, calls for â€œ... resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard themâ€™ (Article 7, 1c). We note that the paper encourages â€œbodies to consider the development of language plans based on the principles listed in this strategy, having regard to the initiatives which are in place.â€™ (p2) We particularly welcome the Executiveâ€™s commitment that â€œWe must also ensure a familiarity with the language so that we continue to understand not only our literature and our historical record but also our contemporary arts...â€™ (p9, 1st para.)

2. Do you agree that the language initiatives described on pages 6 â€œ 12 and elsewhere

1. The Executive summary (p3), in finding different words for the treatment of Gaelic and Scots, no doubt intends to reflect real difference in need and policy commitment. We have no complaint about the treatment Gaelic receives, and support it. However, through funding of the Scots language bodies listed in the document, the Executive already â€œencouragesâ€™ Scots, so that a better formulation might be â€œThat the Scots language will be respected and encouraged.â€™ (The relevant language of the European Charter, Part II, Article 7 1d is â€œfacilitation and/or encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life;â€™). The existing phraseology, â€œtreating Scots with respect and prideâ€™, is vacuous. Who is to treat it in such a way, and how would we know when they had done so? 2. We agree broadly with the first paragraph on p9 although we suggest that to say that 'Scots is not an endangered languageâ€™ begs too many questions, and will be seen as an excuse to avoid resourcing. (â€œLess threatenedâ€™ would be more accurate phrasing.) We understand that resourcing is not the subject of

<p><i>are the key areas for language promotion in Scotland? If not, why not?</i></p>	<p>this consultation document. However, Executive figures provided by the GRO indicate 1.5 million speakers, not the 5 million to be expected if the whole population spoke it, so that Scots is self-evidently a language at some uncertain point of decline. Research is lacking, and any commitment that could be given to a Census question in 2011, or to consideration of other appropriate forms of research, would be welcome here. 3. The terms "Scots, Doric and Lallans" do not list alternative dialects, as was no doubt intended. (p9, 1st para.) We suggest "the Lowland, North-East, and Shetland dialects" as a more correctly neutral emendation here. 4. We welcome the clarification of education policy given in the second paragraph on page 10, and note the commitment to provision of appropriate teaching materials. However, the education objectives then stated are unclear. We ask that the Executive places a clear duty on education authorities to incentivise their teachers of English, Drama and Music to make full use of the Scots language heritage available to them, with the objective of ensuring the survival of the language by passing it on to new generations of children throughout Scotland.</p>
<p>3. Do you agree that the key principles listed on pages 14 and 15 should shape language activity in Scotland? If not, why not?</p>	<p>5. On a related point, we note from page 14 that public authorities have already been tasked by Ministers to develop language plans for their communities, and from page 15 that the place of the Scots language in such plans is the subject of a principle to be taken into account. We welcome that, and would ask that the principle is stated as we argued in paragraph 1 above, ie: "That the Scots language will be respected and encouraged."</p>
<p><i>4. Are there any other comments you would like to offer on this strategy in relation to the promotion of languages in Scotland?</i></p>	<p>6. A matter not mentioned in the Strategy paper is policy respecting the place of the Scots language in the media. We recognise that for the present any initiatives in that area are likely to be arts-driven, and the subject of particular applications to arts funding bodies by people with creative proposals. We think therefore that this paper should be strengthened by specific mention of arts funding bodies as being amongst those that are tasked by government to maintain adequate language plans in line with the general strategy outlined by the paper, plans in which Scots would be taken into account amongst the other language priorities.</p>

5. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, how do you think you may be able to contribute to the success of the strategy?

We welcome your kind comments on the Scots Language Society and the positive comments on Scots which the paper contains. We hope that the publication of the paper will lead to an opportunity for a dialogue between those working in the field and the Executive. We would suggest that this could best be done by setting up a small working party which could draw up the remit for a 'McPherson'-style report for Scots, with a view to developing a clear national plan for the survival and health of the language. If you wish further explanations or a discussion on the issues raised above please contact; T M Band, Preses, Scots Language Society tel 01738 583403, e-mail tom@pitcairnalpines.co.uk or John Law, Administrator, Scots Language Society tel 01764 682315, e-mail info@airt.co.uk