

THE LITERATURE FORUM FOR SCOTLAND

Response to a Strategy for Scotland's Languages

1. The Literature Forum welcomes the rationale and objectives for the language strategy.

We would also comment that Scotland's linguistic diversity is the basis of the energy and distinctiveness of both Scottish literature and oral tradition which are recognised worldwide as of international cultural importance.

Under 'Enriching Education' we would comment that Scotland's inherent linguistic diversity, if celebrated and recognised, can be the first building block in a love of languages and an appetite for learning other modern languages.

2. Under 'Gaelic' we welcome all the measures outlined. However, we believe that in relation to 'Enriching Education' all learners, not just those in Gaelic medium, should be able to have a taster experience or some familiarity with the importance of Gaelic to Scottish place names, environmental education, history, culture and literature.

Under 'Scots' we endorse pride and respect but express disappointment at the lack of any evidential base for the strategy. How many Scots speakers are there, who, where, what kind, what is the role of Scots-English and dialects? We believe that at least half of the Scottish population is, to a significant degree, bilingual on a range of Scots to Scots-English. Treating Scots on a basis of equality is therefore a critical issue of social justice and inclusion, numerically outweighing by far any other minority language community.

Under 'Scots' the curricular references are out of date, as the 3–18 Curriculum for Excellence is now driving development. We are disappointed and puzzled by the lack of specific reference to Scots in the Curriculum for Excellence guidelines. We believe that this is inconsistent with "respect and pride" and with this Draft Strategy. We urge a specific reference to Scots because

- a) of its social importance (as indicated above) culturally and numerically
- b) it is central to Scottish literature
- c) it is the focus of positive language interest and significant creativity amongst children and young people in Scotland today.

The last point has emerged strongly through our Literature in Learning pilot projects (www.literatureinlearning.org.uk) as well as in the responses to Itchy Coo resources and the Scots Language Centre website.

Under 'British Sign Language' we would draw attention to a shortage in Scotland of language learning resources for children and parents. 'Stories in the Air' has recently produced, with Scottish Executive support, some excellent starter visual dictionaries but much more is needed if BSL is to be treated as a language anyone can learn.

Under 'Language Learning' we would press the link in education between understanding and positively affirming existing linguistic diversity and the learning of other languages.

4.&5. The Literature Forum of Scotland brings together all of Scotland's literary organisations. Particularly in the Scottish context, literature and language support each other from nursery rhymes in Scots to epic novels in Gaelic. Literature has a huge potential to foster and encourage linguistic diversity and language learning and our participant organisations are committed to these aims.

However, a coherent action plan with appropriate resources, particularly in respect of Scots and BSL, is now urgently required to advance this agenda in appropriate ways after the long delay in the production of this initial strategy.

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