

## **A Strategy for Scotland's Languages – Public Consultation**

*Question 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?*

Agree with question 1. We also feel that many young Scots, already disadvantaged, are additionally socially excluded from mobility within the EU and elsewhere because they do not have FL skills. What kind of image of Scotland are we projecting to the outside world if we do not embrace multilingualism? The rise in migrant workers has shown how foreign nationals can benefit from spending a period abroad, and this is not an option for most young Scots.

*Question 2: Do you agree that the language initiatives described on pages 6-12 and elsewhere are the key areas for language promotion in Scotland? If not, why not?*

Agree broadly with question 2. But we must acknowledge that language learning requires a long-term commitment and there will be no “quick fixes”. There are issues of language teaching methodology which need to be addressed, and we need to see the return of Foreign Language Assistants throughout schools and colleges. We need to learn from our European partners about how to make language learning effective and motivating.

We also feel that there should be more “joined up thinking” in relation to the teaching of English as a second language and the teaching of foreign languages to young Scots.

A common methodology should be considered. The teaching of English and Communication should reflect the need for students to understand grammatical structure and terminology if they are to learn how languages work and acquire a real working knowledge of a second language.

*Question 3: Do you agree that the key principles listed on pages 15 and 16 should shape language activity in Scotland? If not, why not?*

We agree with the key principles, but in Fife schools there has been a severe downward trend in the number of secondary school pupils learning foreign languages. Nationally the picture is patchy, in both primary and secondary schools, in spite of the efforts of the Scottish Executive. Fewer students are gaining qualifications in foreign languages and very few HN courses now even offer languages as options. This has led to language departments in recent years being closed in some colleges and universities – and in the long run to a lack of language teachers being available.

*Question 4: Are there any comments you would like to offer on this strategy in relation to the promotion of languages in Scotland?*

If the strategy is really to improve the situation, local councils (who fund the initiatives) must carry through the work they are expected to do by the

Scottish Executive. It should also be emphasised that “continuous and progressive” education in the same language means that the same language studied at primary school should be taught to children in their secondary school. Although all children have a “language entitlement”, in practice some children are allowed to drop out of foreign language classes at an early stage. Languages are not thought to be a core skill in the UK – this is not the case in other European countries, where citizens are encouraged to learn “at least two languages in addition to their first language”.

*Question 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 have already started this – there is buoyancy in the market for ESOL and for foreign languages in lifelong learning in adult education classes. However the latter is regarded generally as being just a leisure activity. At our college, if possible we encourage our evening students to gain a qualification. We believe that this helps lifelong learners to progress and become active language users rather than remain at beginners' level. The demand for some languages e.g. Polish, has increased in line with the number of migrant workers who are entering the Fife economy. As a college, we are committed to internationalising our curriculum as appropriate and we anticipate this will have an impact, albeit over a period of time, on the demand for foreign language classes.

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