

**Cross Party Group on the Scots Language  
Education Sub-committee  
Aberdeen meeting**

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2009**

**5.30pm**

**James Scotland Suite, MacRobert Building, Aberdeen University**

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**Sederunt:**

Grace Banks (Aberdeen Reading Bus Initiative), Sheena Blackhall (Elphinstone Institute Research Associate), Cecilia Craig, Matthew Fitt (Itchy Co), Jacky Hardacre (Arts Education Team, Aberdeen City Council), Sheila Love (HT Ardler PS, Dundee), Moira MacIver (Kittybrewster PS, Aberdeen), Joanna Nicholson (Sonsie Music), June Ranscombe (Principal Teacher, Auldearn PS, Highland), Vicky Roberts (Portlethen Academy), Tracey Thomson (Dyce PS, Aberdeen), Jenny Watson (Aberdeen Reading Bus Initiative), Maureen Watt MSP, Les Wheeler (Elphinstone Institute Research Associate)

**Apologies:**

Tracey Adams (Monifieth HS, Angus), Jo Allen (Portobello HS, Edinburgh), Stewart Anderson (HT Wigtown PS, Dumfries & Galloway), Muriel Angus (Letham PS, West Lothian), Jill Bennet (Scots Poetry for Cool Kids, Fife), Glenn Bard (Shetland), David Borthwick, Laura Brandon (Carrick Knowe PS, Edinburgh), Joy Cameron (Lochnell PS, Argyll & Bute), Margaret Cruickshank (Mither Tongue), Phillipa Cochrane (Scottish Book Trust), Mary Connolly (HT, Nethermains PS, Falkirk), Elizabeth Cordiner (Scots Poetry for Cool Kids, Fife), Paula Cowan (University of the West of Scotland), Rhona Craig (HT Culross PS, Fife), Beth Dickson (Glasgow University), Liz Dyer (Inverclyde), Lynne Ferguson (Literacy, Falkirk), Lindsay Fleming (West Dunbartonshire), Margaret Foley (Quality Improvement Officer, Dundee), Susan Forde, Fiona Gold (East Dunbartonshire), Maureen Jobson (Acting Director of Education, East Lothian), Laureen Johnson (Shetland ForWirds), Hilary Jones (Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama), Morag Kell (Banchory Academy, Aberdeenshire), Karen Llewelyn (Glasgow), Rod Lovie (Strathisla Scots Spickers), Marion Low (Inveralmond HS, West Lothian), Katrina Lucas (Comely Park PS, Falkirk), Peter MacKenzie (Education Convener, East Lothian Council), Ruth McClements (Bannockburn PS, Stirling), Peter McGhee (Quality Improvement Officer, North Lanarkshire), Jennifer McGlone (Scottish Arts Council), Professor Jim McGonigal, Irene McGugan, Ailsa McInnes (East Ayrshire Libraries), Susan McKay (Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service), Lucy McKinlay (East Renfrewshire), Joanne McPake (Scottish Centre for Language Teaching), Angela Mackie (Letham PS, West Lothian), Fiona Maher (Midlothian), Janey Mauchline (Adviser in Languages, South Lanarkshire), Pauline Millar ((Inveralmond HS, West Lothian), Rosa Murray (General Teaching Council), Joan Parr (Scottish Arts Council), Morag Pieroni (Greenwood Academy, Irvine), James Robertson (Itchy Co), Gemma Rooney (South Ayrshire), Mirka Ryjackova (Itchy Co), Jane Sandell (Stirling Libraries), Jean Sangster (Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama),

Pauline Sangster (Moray House), Caroline Stein (Probationer Support, Falkirk), Eunice Stephen (HT, Inverallochy PS, Aberdeenshire), Sandy Stronach (Doric Festival), Jack Stuart, Glenn Telfer (Edinburgh), Christian Tait (Shetland ForWirds), Emma Turnbull (Scottish Arts Council), Rosalind Webster (South Ayrshire), Melanie West (North Ayrshire Education Resource Service), Graham Williamson (Scottish Qualifications Authority), Christine Wilson (HT Greenmill PS, East Ayrshire)

Rob Gibson MSP, Cathy Peattie MSP, Karen Gillon MSP, Frank McAveety MSP, Margaret Smith MSP, Mike Rumbles MSP, Brian Adam MSP, Marilyn Glen MSP

Catherine Stihler MEP, Ian Hudghton MEP

## 1. Welcome and introductions

Maureen Watt (MW) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Participants introduced themselves. Matthew Fitt (MF) read out the apologies including apologies from MSPs and MEPs.

MW noted the sad passing of Stanley Robertson in August, marking his great contribution to the Scots Language. (An obituary for Stanley is available at [http://www.economist.com/obituary/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=14350185](http://www.economist.com/obituary/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14350185))

## 2. Sharing good practice

2.1 Jenny Watson and Sheena Blackhall, Aberdeen Reading Bus Initiative. JW opened the presentation on the Aberdeen Reading Bus Initiative by announcing that 11,000 copies of their Doric poetry anthology for children aged 8 - 14 had been sold since September 2008. Their second Doric poetry anthology, *Nae Bad Ava*, aimed at 3 - 8 year old children was launched in May 2009 and is a bestseller in the Aberdeen branch of Waterstone's. More information is available at [www.readingbus.co.uk/FitLike/](http://www.readingbus.co.uk/FitLike/). JW then talked about a new project *Abertoun*, which is currently being run as a Glow group. For more information about Glow, visit [www.ltscotland.org.uk/glowscotland](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/glowscotland) *Abertoun* is a resource for teaching Doric which uses parts of a town as places children and teachers can visit to access Doric poems, songs, examples of children's artwork and creativity. There have been positive responses to the resource from reluctant readers and writers. Pupils loved showing their Glow group on-line to their friends. SB read out one of the poems. JW then showed the group a short animated feature in Doric, *A Bird's Eye o Tillydrone*, created by pupils at Riverbank PS, Aberdeen. Other schools cannot currently access this on Glow.

2.1.1 Questions - MF asked if it was known how many teachers used the *Abertoun* resource.

2.1.2 JW answered that it was hard to tell exactly but she knew that a large number of people had told her they had visited the website.

2.1.3 Cecilia Craig (CC) commented that there were many good learning opportunities in *Abertoun*. JW added that the children felt real pride from

the work generated by this resource. Vicky Roberts (VR) mentioned that Shetland had a project similar to this.

2.2 Cecilia Craig, Research on Doric in Aberdeenshire schools. (An abstract of CC's research is available on the Scots CPG Education sub-committee website [www.scotsinschools.com/reports](http://www.scotsinschools.com/reports)) CC explained that it was arranged for her to work as a supply teacher for a month at Mearns Academy, Laurencekirk, Aberdeenshire and that this enable her to carry out research with pupils. She worked with S1 and S2 classes and a bottom stream S4 class. CC's research also covered two P7 classes, a P3 class and a P4 class. She used a range of methodology to ask pupils about their attitudes towards Doric and questioned teachers about their use of literature in Scots and by Scottish authors. She said she found an incredible enthusiasm and passion from the children for Doric. Some pupils were also discouraged from speaking Doric at home and in reply to the question do you speak Scots, CC quoted from this answer:

**Never - because no-one else speaks it and I've grown up with the English language. Everyone talks to me in English, even my grandparents. Even though they speak Scots to other people they still talk to me in English. So I talk to them in English but never speak it except when asked to speak it.**

CC noted that some vocabulary items were immediately recognised by the majority of respondents but that some vocabulary was not known or little used. A noteworthy finding was that pupils had very few Scots verbs at their disposal and that this would inhibit fluency and creativity in Doric. CC stated that the concepts of slang, accent, dialect and language are insecure terms in many schools and that clearer understanding of these terms can be delivered through greater study of Scots. CC concluded that more CPD (Continuing Professional Development) opportunities were required for staff.

2.2.3 MW suggested that the Registrar General for Scotland, Duncan Macniven, should be given the opportunity to review CC's research. MF agreed to make Mr Macniven aware of this research.

### **3. Provision for Doric in *A Curriculum for Excellence (ACE)***

3.1.1 Les Wheeler (LW) began the discussion by reminding the group that when he was a Development Officer for Doric, it was on a part-time basis while his Gaidhlig counterpart was full-time. LW pointed out that high schools have not generally engaged with Doric in the way primary schools have. CC said that ACE has made an impression on secondary schools as they are exploring how to work with Scots Across the Curriculum. CC mentioned Fraserburgh and Inverurie Academies in Aberdeenshire as examples of good practice in this. VR said that the existence of the Scottish Parliament has resulted in a larger number of pupils feeling more Scottish. She noted that trips to see Scotland play at rugby were increasingly popular as were trips to sites in Aberdeenshire connected to the life and writings of Lewis Grassie Gibbon. SB pointed out that the Itchy Cool website - [www.itchy-cool.com](http://www.itchy-cool.com) - contained useful lists of Scots words for teachers to use. VR highlighted that

as a practising teacher from Shetland but who works in an Aberdeenshire school she had to adapt her Scots language to suit the needs of her Doric speaking pupils.

3.1.2 MF asked if the group thought that the current ACE guidelines and statements on Scots in *Building the Curriculum* and *Literacy and English Experiences and Outcomes* made clear enough reference to Doric.

3.1.3 SB and LW said that Scots was the correct and appropriate name for the language across Scotland. Scots, it was noted, is the umbrella term for all the dialects including Doric. This was generally agreed by the group. SB stated that the using the term Scots promotes unity and citizenship across the country. LW mentioned that he had produced a map of the different dialects that exist with the North East.

#### 4. Ways Forward for Doric in Education

4.1.1 MF asked if staff across Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray knew of the valuable Doric resource, the Elphinstone Kist, available at [www.abdn.ac.uk/kist/](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/kist/). LW stated that a great deal of effort had been invested in making the Kist known to schools but Moira MacIver indicated that not every school knew about it or used it.

4.1.2 SB said that teaching Doric under the banner 'Scottish Dimension' was more readily accepted by schools.

4.1.3 Sheila Love (SL) highlighted the potential for linking Scots across the curriculum through ACE. She raised the possibility of reviewing current topics of study in order to allow more opportunities to allow Scots in to learning. Explaining to parents that Scots has a place in the context of learning English can give the language kudos. MW commented that bilingualism is a great point in favour of promoting Scots in schools.

4.1.4 June Ranscombe (JR) talked about the experience of Scots across the curriculum in Highland at Inverness High School and in particular at Alness Academy. She mentioned that rendering Burns' 'Tam o Shanter' into a local setting and collaborating with the history department made the poem easier to deliver.

4.1.5 CC asked about the Scottish Qualifications Authority and it was agreed that the Sub-committee seek clarification from the SQA on the use and assessment of Scots.

4.1.6 SB highlighted the Poetry Archive and the children's poetry section within it. Available at ([www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/home.do](http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/home.do)) It is a large collection of poems read by the poets themselves with accompanying text of the poem, comments and biographical notes. SB said this is an excellent resource which could be emulated in Scotland for Doric. Moira MacIver added that there is a real need for more resources based around the learning of poetry.

4.1.7 CC and LW asked about CPD opportunities and the difficulties of staff being available to attend them. MW said that under the terms of A *Curriculum for Excellence* an extra day has been made available to staff for CPD training.

## **5. Any other committee business**

5.1.1 MF announced that he had been in contact with sub-committee participants on Shetland and Orkney to see if they might consider holding local Scots CPG Education meetings for interested teachers and individuals. MF will continue to liaise with Laureen Johnson on Shetland and Simon Hall on Orkney.

5.1.2 MF intimated to the sub-committee that the Committee of Experts from the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages would be in Edinburgh on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2009. MF undertook to make the Committee of Experts aware of the existence and work of the Scots CPG Education sub-committee.

5.1.3 MF recognised Cecilia Craig's draft form for sub-committee research on attitudes towards Scots across the country and suggested that the sub-committee might approach Andrew Harvey (AH) from South Lanarkshire and Katrina Lucas (KL) from Falkirk to work with her on producing more draft questionnaires for the sub-committee to consider as a whole. MF would contact AH and KL.

5.1.4 MF reminded the sub-committee of the need to contact MSPs and other officials in order to make them aware of good practice of Scots in Education.

Minutes of the meeting on 9.6.09 were approved.

Maureen Watt MSP thanked everyone for attending, MF for taking the minutes and organising the meeting, and thanked all generally within the Scots community for their hard work in promoting the language.

## **6. Next meeting**

MF announced that the third meeting of the Scots CPG Education sub-committee will be held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November in the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow in early evening, time to be confirmed.

**Minutes: Matthew Fitt (Itchy Coo)**