

The cost of Gaelic School escalating

Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the statutory body responsible for the promotion and development of Gaelic and advising Scottish Government Ministers, has expressed serious concerns about the escalating costs of refurbishing Bonnington School in Edinburgh.

It had been hoped by parents that The City of Edinburgh Council would vote to establish a Gaelic school in Edinburgh when it meets on 30th June. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has supported this initiative from the outset and has previously welcomed The Scottish Government decision to provide capital funding of £1.4m to cover the cost of the project as identified by the City of Edinburgh Council. Recently however new estimates of £3.6m have emerged, putting a question mark over the development of the school and the City of Edinburgh Council has confirmed today that they will not now be holding a vote until September after they have carried out another in-depth survey of the building proposed as a Gaelic school.

Bonnington School is a listed building, and parents and other interested groups have expressed astonishment that the Council have not maintained it.

Commenting on this current state of affairs, Cathraiche of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Arthur Cormack, said:- "It is imperative that all stakeholders who have already shown strong commitment to this proposal get together as soon as possible to resolve the situation. It is now clear that the extent to which officials of the City of Edinburgh Council were unable to accurately predict the costs of renovation has, at best, delayed progress and, at worst, threatened the whole proposal."

In the meantime Mr Cormack has written to Council Leader Jenny Dawe, expressing serious concerns at this turn of events in the following terms: "It now appears that the extent of the work required at Bonnington will take much longer than expected to complete resulting in the school not opening, as expected, in 2012. As you will be aware, if Bonnington School does not open in August 2012, there is going to be an accommodation problem at Tollcross and it is obviously very important to us that a situation does not arise whereby Gaelic-medium pupil numbers are capped and children are denied the Gaelic-medium education their parents wish for them."

"It is vital that the City of Edinburgh Council is transparent about this, and that we see the detail of the costs along with an explanation as to how this extremely unfortunate turn of events occurred, how Council officials got their sums so wrong, to what extent the Council is insured for theft and water ingress and whether a claim will offset some of the extra costs. Most importantly, we need to know the effect all this will have on the establishment of the Gaelic school."