

SPEAKING NOTE

I am very glad to be with you today to give an update on progress with the recommendations of the Scots Language Working Group.

Scots Language Working Group

I would again like to thank Professor McClure for chairing the Group and producing such a wide ranging and detailed report.

As a part of the Group I would also like to thank my fellow Group members for their various contributions both within the group and also for their wider activity within the wider Scots community.

The Working Group took place as part of a range of other initiatives to support the Scots language. Most of you here are familiar with these initiatives but they offer useful background.

In January 2009, the Audit of Current Scots Language Provision was published.

In February 2009, the Scottish Government held a conference on the Scots Language at the University of Stirling.

The conference brought together a number of Scots language interests and provided the Scottish Government with views and suggestions on how the Scots language could be better promoted and developed in future.

At this time, the Scottish Government also took on responsibility for the funding of the Scots Language Centre and Scottish Language Dictionaries.

In addition, the Scottish Government also started to make progress with the inclusion of a question on the Scots language in the 2011 Census for the first time.

So, we can see that Scots Language Working Group was established as part of a range of other initiatives by Government to support the Scots language.

As we all know the aim of the Group was to produce a report and to offer recommendations to Ministers which would help with the promotion and status of the Scots language.

Increased Status for Scots Language

The other point that is worth making is that the establishment of the Scots Language Working Group by Scottish Ministers, in itself, gives significant status to the Scots language.

These two things are worth remembering. The context was one of increasing support for Scots and, in itself, the establishment of the Working Group demonstrated official support for the language.

Recommendations

The Working Group made a number of very important recommendations which were welcomed by Ministers at the time. The recommendations were in key areas such as education, broadcasting and media, literature, publishing, the arts, tourism and more.

In her response at the time, Ms Hyslop said that she was confident that the activity and recommendations of the Working Group would strengthen this valuable part of Scottish life.

Scottish Studies

At the moment, we are also taking forward Scottish Studies which is another manifesto commitment.

Scottish Studies will create a distinct strand of learning focused on Scotland and incorporating Scottish History, Scottish Literature, the Scots and Gaelic Languages, wider Scottish culture and Scottish current affairs.

Our clear aim is that all pupils will have access to this strand of the curriculum at both Primary and Secondary levels.

Scottish Studies will ensure that pupils have the opportunity to learn about Scotland's languages and how they are an integral part of Scotland's heritage, national identity and current cultural life.

The Scots language will certainly be an important part of Scottish Studies as it develops. The Scottish Studies Working Group will provide advice and recommendations to Ministers early next year.

I fully expect that when the Scottish Studies Working Group reports we will be able to look closely at what other important steps can be taken to support Scots within education.

In the discussions of the Scots Language Working Group there was a strong focus on education and it was clear how important this is for making progress with the use and status of Scots.

Given the place that was given to education in the Working Group, I believe it is right that the new Scottish Studies initiative should include the Scots language.

Again, this is an initiative that comes with the full support of the Scottish Government and I am confident Scottish Studies has a role to play in the future place of the Scots Language.

Update on Progress

Let me outline the progress to date in line with the recommendations as laid out in the report.

General

We are taking the opportunity to consider a Scots Language policy as part of the reporting cycle for the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. The report is to be submitted to the Committee of Experts in May next year.

In a tight spending review, we have been able to maintain funding for the Scottish Language Dictionaries and the Scots Language Centre at current levels (SLD - £200,000; SLC - £70,000) over the next three years.

The Education Outreach Officer of Scottish Language Dictionaries has been working with Education Scotland to develop CPD resources and events for teachers.

Even this week there will be a strong programme of Scots CPD support for teachers. This will cover topics such as Developing Scots Language at S2; Celebrating Scots: A

Personal Journey; Using Scots Across the Curriculum and many others.

Education

I have already spoken about the Scottish Studies initiative in which Scots language will be an integral part.

With regard to online resources, Education Scotland are presently working on the Studying Scotland initiative which will provide online resources for practitioners. We held a stakeholder event on 5 October. This provided a forum for discussion about how the online resource can best be utilised by practitioners and young people.

Both Scottish Studies and Studying Scotland will reflect dialect diversity.

One of the recommendations was the establishment of a Network of Co-ordinators who would be able to delivery training and advice on resouces to practitioners and we are keen to make progress with this recommendation. We feel that it would be sensible to await the advice from the Scottish Studies Working Group as this will influence the

role of the Co-ordinators. We plan to establish a steering group which will give advice to Ministers on the role and remit of the Network.

However, it is good to know that both Education Scotland and Scottish Language Dictionaries are active in supporting teachers in schools.

Literature and the Arts

A number of the recommendations under this heading related to Creative Scotland and together with Ms Hsylop, I recently met with representatives of Creative Scotland to hear about the work they are doing to support the Scots language. Creative Scotland are developing a number of dynamic and exciting projects.

One which I would like to highlight is the Future Place Partnership which celebrates uniqueness of place. This may have a role in supporting Scots community initiatives such as Shetland Forwards, the Doric Festival and the Lapraik Festival. I would ask you to highlight this opportunity to those whom you think would be interested.

A number of the recommendations are not within the gift of the Scottish Government. Where this is the case, I have written to the bodies in question to draw their attention to the recommendations and to seek their support. This applies particularly to the recommendations relating to Broadcasting, International Contacts, Public Awareness and to the Scottish Funding Council.

Census

As you will know, a question on Scots was included in the Census for the first time. We set up a short life working group on 9 September 2010 to consider how to support respondents when answering the question. An important outcome was the work carried out by the Scots Language Centre to develop a micro site to provide examples of different dialects of spoken Scots to support people as they considered this question in the Census.

The good news is that the Census took place, there was a question in it on Scots language ability and a measure of support was available. We will now look forward to the results coming out next year.

I know many of you here very well and now as Minister I have welcomed the opportunity to meet with you in this capacity and look forward to working with you in years to come.

We will continue to take forward the recommendations of the Working Group and I hope to have the opportunity to provide this Group with further updates in the future.

Word count: 1361