

# Gaelic Common Room Consultation Report

## Introduction

In the University of Edinburgh's Gaelic Language Plan 2013-18, the University made the following commitment:

*The University, in co-operation with Gaelic groups in Edinburgh, will investigate the possibility of establishing a Gaelic common room in the George Square area to encourage Gaelic use and support Gaelic activities among staff and students. The outcome of this investigation will be documented and actioned as appropriate.*

The University is pleased to be leading on this initiative, which should provide a resource for students, staff and members of the community. As such, the University held a seven-week public consultation on this space in October and November 2014. The guiding principle of the common room is that it be a Gaelic-only space that will be of benefit to the University and wider community by providing a space where Gaelic is used and encouraged.

Five questions were asked in the survey, regarding location, use, amenities and hours of the space as well as general suggestions. Email responses were also invited. This paper includes summaries of responses to each of the questions, along with comments and emails submitted.

## Summary of responses

Online: 109

Gaelic: 39 (34%)

Email: 4

English: 77 (66%)

Paper: 3

**Total responses: 116**

## Current Context and Recommendations

Prior to the consultation, the University's Gaelic Officer met with Frank Gribben, former chair of the Gaelic Language Plan Working Group, and colleagues from Estates & Buildings to discuss potential sites for the Gaelic common room. Some potential sites for a Gaelic common room were identified, which informed the options given under 'location' on the consultation. It was agreed that the Gaelic Officer would run the consultation while colleagues in Estates & Buildings explored potential sites for the common room.

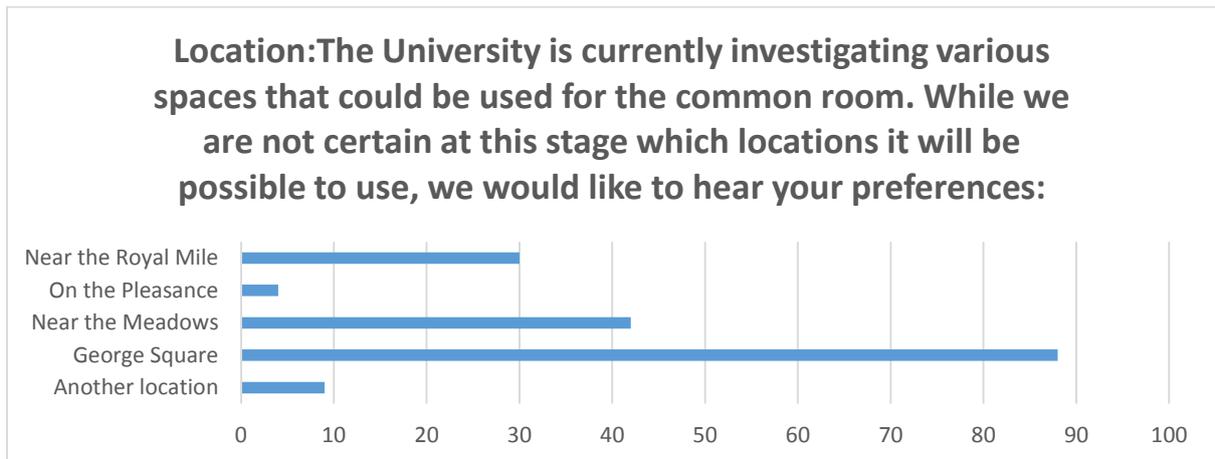
Discussions have taken place recently with Gaelic groups in Edinburgh, in particular Comunn na Gàidhlig, about rooms provided by the council for the Gaelic community at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce. It was agreed that these rooms would not be suitable for use as a drop-in space due to issues of access and location, but that they could serve as an events space for the Edinburgh Gaelic community. As such, it is recommended that the University's Gaelic common room functions primarily as a drop-in space for the University and community in a centrally located and accessible space.

In terms of next steps, it is recommended that the Gaelic Officer again meets with colleagues in Estates & Buildings to identify opportunities for a location and to map out a way forward for the project.

Bria Mason

May 2015

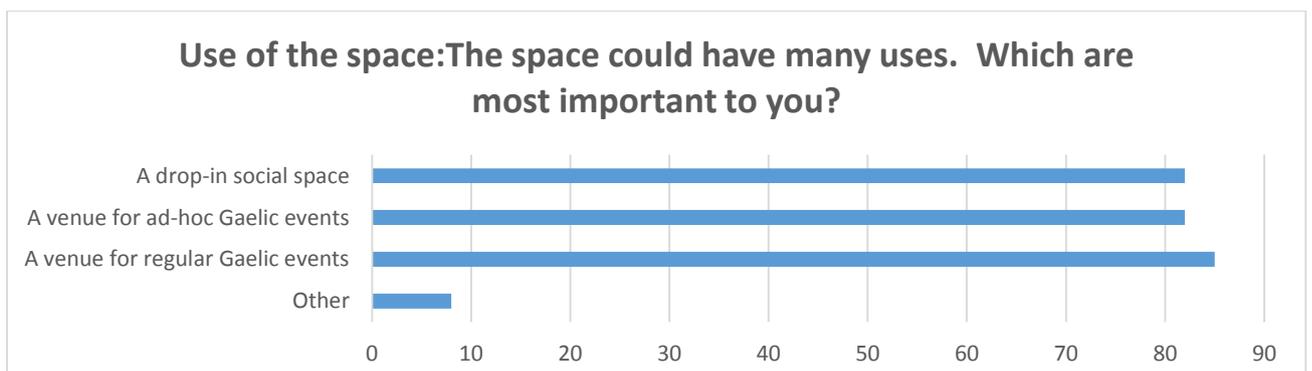
## Question 1



### Another location:

- Bu choir dhant-seomar a bhith ann an aite far am bi oileanaich agus luchd-obrach ag obair sa chiad dol-a-mach
- *The room should first of all be in a location where students and staff work*
- Bhiodh Baile Dhunleibhe gu math freagarrach ;-)
- *Livingston would be appropriate ;-)*
- Peebles
- Moray House School of Education
- Nearby to the University English speaking common room. Oh wait. We don't have one anymore.
- Easily accessible from trains and Princes Street would be good for general public
- The Saltire Society may be interested to share in this and to offer a room at its offices in Fountain Close on the Royal Mile
- Somewhere near Princes Street/George Street, or nearer bun sgoil taobh na pairce.
- Anywhere! We have spent years looking for a room like this. It didn't work out at the Story Telling Centre nor at the Gaelic School in Bonnington. A pity because either would have served a useful purpose.

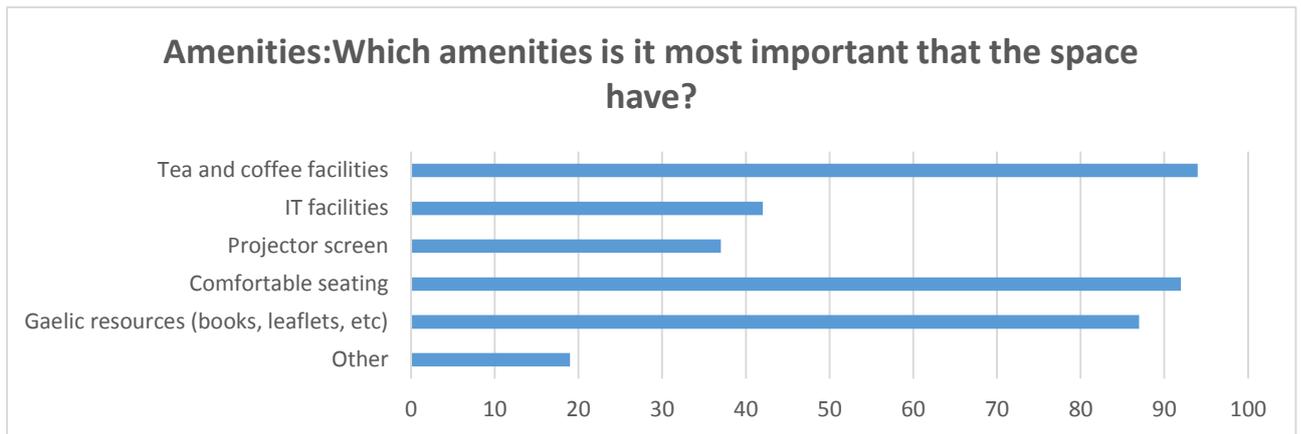
## Question 2



Other:

- Tachartasan Gaidhlig mi-fhoirmeil coicheangailte ris an oilthigh.
- *Informal Gaelic events connected with the University.*
  
- a h-uile rud sa Ghaidlig
- *everything in Gaelic*
  
- Oidhcheannan fiolm
- *film nights*
  
- Iad uile seo.
- *all of these.*
  
- Iàrach airson cridhe na Gàidhlig a thogail - saoilidh mi gum biodh e math, mar is eimplier, neach (mar an oifigear, no duine aig a bheil a' Ghàidhlig co-dhiùbh) a bhith faisg gu leòr air an t-seòmair. Caran mar a bha Chrisma 'n uair a bha i na rùnaire... còmhraidh neo-fhoirmeil uair sam bith! Am b'urrainn dhuinn a bhith ann air an oidhche?
- *A site to create a Gaelic heart – I think it would be good, for example, to have someone (like the officer, or at least someone who speaks Gaelic) near to the room. A bit like Chrisma when she was secretary... informal conversation any time! Could we be there at night?*
  
- Aite far as urrainnear falbh eadar clasaichean airson cupa tì, comhradh agus rum airson obair a dheanamh cuideachd.
- *A place where one could go between classes for a cup of tea, conversation and room for working, too.*
  
- Seomar rannsachaidh, leabharlann
- *a research room, library*
  
- àite airson bùithean-obrach tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig
- *a place for workshops through the medium of Gaelic*
  
- Activities for children and parents (children's books, etc.)
- The same uses the English speaking common room has. Oh wait. We don't have one anymore.
- Gaelic toddler groups, adult and children's language courses
- welcoming space for learners as well as fluent speakers
- also to have a part of the space available for booking for private gatherings e.g. a lunchtime birthday party.
- especially just a simple drop-in social place sounds good
- A Gaelic information hub
- Just a Gaelic space.

### Question 3

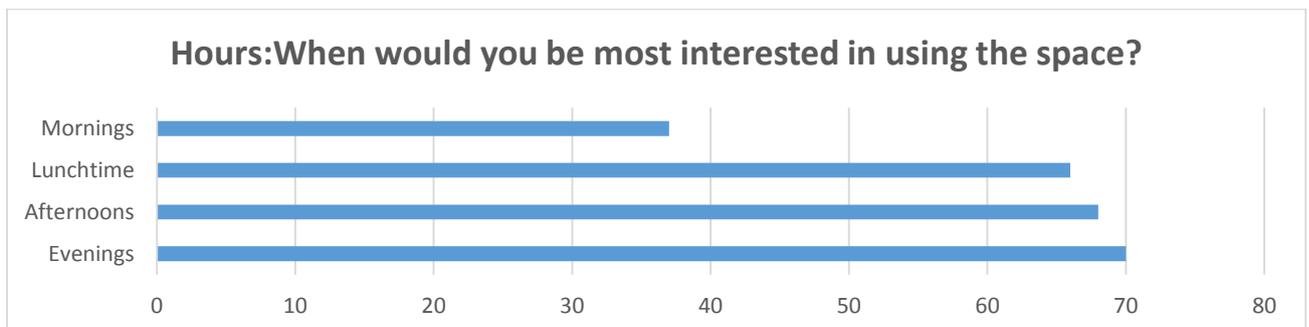


Other:

- proiseactar 'son powerpoints ma bhitheas oraidean ann, no 'son fiolm, msaa
- *a projector for powerpoints if there will be talks there, or for film, etc*
- Tha seithrichean agus coire na rudan as cudromaiche, ach bhiodh e math nam b' urrainnear goireasan IT, sgrion m.s.a.a. a bhith ann cuideachd.
- *Chairs and a kettle are the most important things, but it would be good if there would be IT facilities, a screen etc. there as well.*
- Goireasan clàraidh airson radio agus fiolm.
- *Recording equipment for radio and film.*
- leabhraichean Gàidhlig bhiodh math, bu dòcha postairean 's an leithid. Ceòl Gàidhlig ga cluich, fhios a'd, beagan de atmosphere
- *Gaelic books would be good, perhaps posters and things like that. Gaelic music playing, you know, a bit of atmosphere*
- Tha wifi glè chudromach an-diugh agus gu h-àraidh gum biodh e comaach airson duine bho taobh a-muigh an Oilthighe a chleachdadh. Bhiodh proiseactar (os-cinn) math cuideachd - agus a-rithist, biodh feum ann air ainm-cleachdaidh is facal-faire airson daoine/aoghean bho thaobh a-muigh an Oilthighe.
- *Wifi is very important today and especially that it would be possible for those from outside the University to use it. A projector (overhead) would be good, too – and again, there would need to be a username and password for people/guests from outside the University.*
- Cluicheadar CD agus CDs Gaidhlig, microwave ma tha daoine ag iarraidh lunch a theasachadh agus ag ithe an sin, ealain Ghaidhlig air na ballaichean.
- *A CD player and Gaelic CDs, a microwave if people want to heat lunch and eat there, Gaelic art on the walls.*
- Wifi
- *Wifi*

- Goireasan IT agus sgrion ma tha sibh ag iarraidh oraidean a chumail an sin.
- *IT facilities and a screen if you want to hold talks there.*
- Faireachdain math blath a thalaidheas sgaoilteach dhaoine a-staigh aig diofar amannan dhen latha. Mor gu leor son cuirm bheag dhaimheil a chumail ach beag gu leor son gun cuir daoine eolas air a' cheile. S docha da sheomar ceangailte - far an gabh tachartasan cur air doigh san darna fear is am fear eile fosgailte son ti is comhraidh etc
- *A good, warm feeling that draws a variety of people in at different times of day. Large enough to hold a small friendly party but small enough that people will get to know each other. Perhaps two connected rooms – where events can be put on in one and the other can be open for tea and conversation etc*
- Chanainn gum biodh e math nan robh deoch-làidir 's biadh ri fhaighinn cuideachd.
- *It would be good if food and alcoholic beverages could be available as well.*
- Staff on hand at certain times of day to speak, listen and support
- snacks, alcoholic drinks, welcome person
- notice board
- Whisky?
- Disabled Access and within reach of toilet facilities
- Good, electronically visible administration of any facilities
- facilities/license for buffet food either all day or for specific events
- Native Gaelic speaker to help with conversations etc.

#### Question 4



#### Question 5 – additional ideas or comments:

- Àite: Airson cothroman a thoirt don choimhearsnachd tighinn airson tachartasan, bhiodh àiteanan do chàraichean feumach. Cleachdaidhean: Dh'faodadh tachartasan àraidh mar òraid no cuirm-ciùil tachart ann an aite sam bith. Bhiodh e cudromach gun tachradh rudan cunbhalach anns an seomar seo. Ach airson daoine fhaighinn a staigh agus cleachte air an t-seomar, 's ann is fhasa a bhiodh e le tachartasan àraidh.`
- *Place: In order to give the community the opportunity to come to events, places for cars would be necessary. Use: Special events like a lecture or a concert could happen anywhere. It*

*would be important that regular events happen in this room. But to get people in and used to the room, it would be easier with special events.*

- Tha an leithid seo cumanta gu leor ann an oilthighean eile, agus bhiodh e gle mhath nan robh Dun Eideann a' leantainn eisimpleir chaich. Bhiodh gu leor ann a bhiodh deonach a chur gu feum.
- *This sort of thing is common enough in other universities, and it would be very good for Edinburgh to follow the others' example. There are enough who would be willing to put it to good use.*
- Tha e cudromach gum bi an t-seomar fosgailte tron latha - agus cuideachd gum faodar a chleachdadh o am gu am as deidh uairean obrach, nuair a bhios tachartasan sonraichte ann.
- *It's important that the room be open through the day – and also that it could be used from time to time after work hours, when there are special events.*
- Dè mu deidhinn dà sheòmar - fear beag airson m.e. agallamhan, teagasg aon-air-aon agus m.s.a.a., agus fear nas motha airson tachartasan.
- *What about two rooms – a small one for ex. interviews, teaching one-on-one etc, and a larger one for events.*
- Bu chòir dha a bhith mòr, so-fhaicsinneach agus furasta ri lorg, suidhichte ann am meadhan an oilthigh agus fosgailte dhan choimhearsnachd.
- *It should be large, visible and easy to find, situated in the centre of the university and open to the community.*
- Tha e cudromach gum bi cothrom aig luchd na Gàidhlig sa bhaile cothrom fhaighinn air an t-seòmar airson coinneamhan no tachartasan (ann an suidheachaidhean iomchaidh).
- *It is important that Gaelic speakers in the city have the opportunity to use the room for meetings or events (in appropriate situations).*
- Chan eil ach deagh idea!
- *It's just a good idea!*
- 'S fheudar nach e dìreach seòmar falamh a th' ann; 's fheudar gu bheil beatha is beòs ann.
- *It needs to not just be an empty room; there needs to be life and vitality there.*
- cothrom air cleachdadh an aite do chairdean an Oilthigh
- *the opportunity for friends of the University to use the space*
- 'S toil leam gum biodh an t-seòmar seo fosgailte dhan a' choimhearsnachd. Agus a thaobh cleachdadh an t-seòmar mar 'drop-in', bhiodh e math a thighinn gu Dùn Èideann air latha sam bith gus Gàidhlig a chleachdadh an àite dìreach a' tighinn dhan a' phrìomh baile airson tachartasan sònraichte na Gàidhlig.
- *I like that the room would be open to the community. And with regard to using the room as a 'drop-in', it would be good to come to Edinburgh any day to use Gaelic instead of just coming to the capital city for special Gaelic events.*

- Feumaidh e a bhith faisg air far a bheil oileanaich agus luchd obrach dol a bhith anns an latha, cha bhiodh fear air an Royal Mile gu feum idir na mo bheachd 'sa, bu choir dha a bhith aite far a bheil cuideigin a' dol ma tha fiu 's leth uair a thide saor.
- *It needs to be close to where students and staff are going to be in the day, one on the Royal Mile would be no use at all in my opinion, it should be somewhere where someone goes if they have even half an hour free.*
- Feumaidh e bhith faisg air far am bheil na daoine. Cha bhiodh ùine no ùidh aig daoine coiseachd son 10 mionaidean ann agus air n-ais. Mholainn fhèin Ceàrnag Sheòrais is i goirid dhan Roinn, Sgoil Eòlais agus an Leabharlann. Bu chòir dha bhith na àrainneachd thlachdmhor chofhurtail son luchd-cleachdaidh.
- *It needs to be close to where people are. People wouldn't have time or interest in walking ten minutes there and back again. I myself would recommend George Square, which is close to the Department [of Celtic], School of [Scottish] Studies and the Library. It should be an attractive, enjoyable, comfortable environment for users.*
- Am bheil cothrom ann an aite a chleachdadh aig deireadh na seachdaine airson tachartasan cuideachd?
- *Is there an opportunity to use the space for events on the weekend, as well?*
- A dheanamh Beachdan nan oileanach is na coimhearsnachd a shireadh. Beachdan muinntir nan sgoiltean Gaidhlig a shireadh Gabh ealla ri feumalachdan 2014 ach cuideachd son nam bliadhnachdan ri tighinn
- *To seek opinions from the students and the community. To seek the opinions of those at the Gaelic schools. Think of the needs of 2014 but also the years to come.*
- Bu mhath leam moladh a thoirt dhan oilthigh son a bhith a' beachdachadh air a' mholadh seo. Chanainn gum biodh e na ghoireas air leth tarraingeach agus cothrom math ann gum bi e gu math soirbheachail, agus na mhodal fiùs do dh' oilthighean agus bailtean eile an Alba.
- *I would like to suggest that the university consider this recommendation. I would say that it would be a very attractive resource and a good chance that it will be very successful, and even an example to other universities and towns in Scotland.*
- Pre-prepared visual aids would ease learning - pictures, scenarios and the like
- As I live in the Borders I would like to access local Gaelic conversation classes or failing that by skype. I would like a buddy to help me with grammar etc. or a mentor. The drop in would only be useful to me if I could use it productively with people at my level of the language as I do not live nearby.
- Although most groups offering Gaelic tuitions/conversation/company in Edinburgh have websites many in the wider Gaelic speaking community do not use the internet. Another possible use for such a space could be the dissemination of information in a form accessible to more people.
- I am in favour of this idea. But the replacement of a University staff common room has still not been made, and I feel angered by the fact the 99.9% of staff members are uncatered for, while we target the 0.1% who would benefit from this to the exclusion of others.
- It would be good to have emphasis on current Gaelic speakers, but also provide a place to future Gaelic speakers as well, such as children - a place for parents to go and expose

children to the language and the culture - for this being easily accessible with busses and trains (and cars if possible) would be a huge advantage

- This is such a positive move forward! This would help us grow Gaelic at the Uni in a big way. We could make the most out of this room.
- Could be used as After school club for all ages of GME Meetings for parents Could host music events
- It could also be a place where exhibitions of pictures or photos of Gaelic/highland interest could be held.
- So many Gaelic related activities at the University are organised seemingly on a wing and a prayer or with poor publicity only reaching the usual suspects usually at short notice. The provision of a Gaelic space deserves good administration and publicity as well as modern looking marketing. The space should also be obviously available to those out with Gaelic/Celtic departments to whom Gaelic is important or of interest.
- The space could benefit from having coin operated lockers for declared members in addition to temporary ones for visiting persons who may for example have a musical instrument to store safely before usage in an evening event in the space. Membership of the Gaelic Space, as opposed to drop in users for whom the space is designed to be a useful facility, could perhaps have as part of the membership arrangement a time-limited access to archive material in the School of Scottish Studies library or Highland archives stored elsewhere in the University.
- Having it open at the weekends would be of most help to the wider community. Another idea is, if there's a Gaelic-student society, perhaps work with them to develop and run the space?
- To be accessible for parents with younger children as well in Gaelic community.
- great idea - that the common room is centrally placed in the university is important symbolically and practically
- Important to make it available to Gaelic learners or those interested also. A strict requirement for only Gaelic to be spoken may hinder the inclusion of learners
- As a UoE staff member and the mother of toddler attending Croileagan /Taobh na Paircs the most important thing for me is that this space is available for non UoE people to use easily and for it to be a comfortable and flexible space to use. Perhaps somewhere for a class to be held there as a treat for kids; or a school play to be held there; or a visit to the 'library' there; or somewhere to watch a Gaelic kids programme somewhere different.....it needs to be a flexible space for all ages. Good luck!
- This is a much needed resource and fits right into the University's Language Policy aims and objectives as well a resource for the University's Gaelic learner and speaker communities.
- I think it would be a great space for parents of children in Gaelic medium education to come to and for those learning the language to have the confidence to try out their conversational skills.
- An excellent idea and any additional space for event etc. can only be good.
- excellent idea, would be good if the Gaelic community were to use it
- This will be a pointless exercise unless it is ensured that the location of the common room is central and easily accessible.
- I am very pleased that the University is taking the lead in this initiative. For the past 50 years we have sought a Gaelic home in Edinburgh without success. The result is a Gaelic community that has no coherence, cohesion or a sense of togetherness. I hope this works out.

- This is a great idea, as someone who is going to commence learning Gaidhlig this semester it would be really very helpful to have somewhere to go outside of classes.

## Email Responses

### Email 1:

I attempted to access the on-line consultation but the links to the questionnaires would not work for me. So I submit my views on the various matters referred to in the consultation document by email.

First of all I want to commend the University for this initiative. I think, in one form or another, it must go ahead.

I also welcome, and commend, the intention to use the space not only as a resource for the university Gaelic community but for the wider Gaelic community. (By 'Gaelic community' I mean all those with an interest in speaking Gaelic and having the opportunity to use Gaelic within this space.)

I see this resource as having two kinds of use. During the day it would be a drop-in centre, primarily used by, but not confined to, students and staff. Evening use might be expected to involve more structured activities (lectures, discussions, classes, ceilidhs etc) from time to time and might be expected to attract users from the wider Gaelic community. So, broadly but not rigidly, university use by day and university + community use in the evenings.

As to location, given these possible uses, I would have thought somewhere in the George Square area would be appropriate. That is the heart of the university and is also pretty central within the city. Presumably there is still a bus service of some description to take students backwards and forwards from George Square to King's Buildings.

In terms of amenities, the space would be predominantly social but capable of being re-configured for more formal use. It should certainly have comfortable chairs, tea and coffee facilities, IT facilities and literature making it a distinctively Gaelic room. A projector screen would be useful for talks, presentations etc.

As someone in employment and not situated particularly close to George Square, my use of the facility would be in the evenings or at weekends (would it be open at weekends?) and probably in the context of more formal activities (e.g. talks, presentations, classes) than as a drop-in centre.

For decades Gaels in Edinburgh have discussed and, intermittently, fund-raised for a Gaelic Centre in the city without ever quite getting there. This initiative may go some way towards meeting that need, as would greater community access to and use of Sgoil Taobh na Pairce. That would give the Gaelic community (and all those interested in becoming part of it) two facilities within the city.

I wish the initiative every success.

### Email 2:

Hi,

I would love to see a genuine Gaelic/Gaeilge village in Edinburgh. In my view, the plan for a Gaelic common room is a wonderful step forward because it will provide an opportunity for people to

recognize, celebrate, and promote the often over-looked, down to earth attributes of the Gaelic culture, languages and peoples.

I think it also provides an opportunity for many of us to explore and overcome inhibiting preconceptions. Many people from the Gaeltacht, especially in modern historical context, have lived out their lives in and contributed immensely to the city, and yet many of the gaels have persevered through torrents of institutional indifference, discrimination and mock solemnity. According to the writer Andy Wightman, in a chapter from his book called 'The Poor Had No Lawyers', Edinburgh has in modern historical context facilitated hatred towards Gaeldom. I find myself compelled to think on this assertion while I sing bass for Còisir Dhùn Èideann. If I am to continue to live in Edinburgh, and sing with Còisir Dhùn Èideann, it would be good for my mental health to see Edinburgh making a statement of intent: that albeit there may be people in our modern history that hate the highlander etc., there are many more people in Edinburgh who love the Gaelic culture and language.

**Email 3:**

'S e bhiodh, agus chan ann ron am.

*It would be [useful], and it's not before time.*

**Email 4:**

Hi Christine,

That sounds really fun, I'd love to have a common room to meet everyone in.