



25 bliadhna de na Fèisean

25 years of the Fèisean

**The Participants' Story:
Attitudinal research on the Fèis
movement in Scotland**
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RSAMD National Centre for Research in the
Performing Arts

*'If you lose the language you
lose the songs... and if you lose
the songs you lose the feeling of
the music and if you lose that
you lose the culture'*

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The project team and acknowledgments

The research was conducted by the RSAMD's National Centre for Research in the Performing Arts. The team comprised:

Stephen Broad, Consultant Researcher

Responsible for the day-to-day business of the project, he also undertook the survey design and quantitative analysis. Co-author of the report with particular responsibility for the analysis.

Jacqueline France, Consultant Researcher

Responsible for telephone and face-to-face interviews. Co-author of the report with particular responsibility for the case studies.

Madeleine Stafford, Administrator

Celia Duffy, Project Manager

The team was assisted by two expert advisors:

Kenna Campbell

In addition to offering her matchless expert advice, writing the prologue and giving us access to her archives, Kenna Campbell translated the questionnaires and responses: we are extremely grateful to Kenna – mòran taing.

David Price

David Price placed the results of the survey in the wider context of developments in community arts – his comments are included in the conclusion to the report.

Acknowledgements

Arthur Cormack managed the project for Fèisean nan Gàidheal and provided valuable input to many aspects of the research.

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Finally, we would like to thank those hundreds of Fèis people – past and present – who gave so generously of their time to respond to questionnaires or take part in interviews.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal is grateful to the **Scottish Arts Council** and **Highlands & Islands Enterprise** for funding towards the costs of this study.

Geàrr-chunntas Gnìomha

'S e amas an rannsachaidh a tha seo, sgeul nan com-pàirtichean a tha air pàirt a ghabhail anns na Fèisean innse, agus a bhith a' dearbhadh buaidh nam Fèisean air am beatha, an cuid obrach, agus am beachd air a' Ghàidhlig.

Chan eil e comasach aon seòrsa modh-rannsachaidh a chleachdadh airson an t-amas seo a choileanadh, agus mar sin, tha an aithisg seo a' toirt còmhla dà mhodh-obrach eadar-dhealaichte. Chaidh sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air com-pàirtichean nam Fèisean le sreath cheistean, agus a bharrachd air sin, tha sgeulachdan pearsanta ann bho dhaoine a bha an sàs ann an còmhraidhean na b' fhaide.

Ma tha na daoine a ghabh pàirt anns an rannsachadh ga rìreabh a' riochdachadh nam Fèisean, chan eil teagamh nach eil na Fèisean air còrdadh gu mòr riutha agus air a bhith gu math buannachdail dhan a' mhòr-shluagh a ghabh pàirt annta. Tha na fhuair sinn a-mach bhon rannsachadh deimhinne a thaobh seo:

- Thuirt 76% gun robh buaidh làidir aig na Fèisean orra a thaobh a bhith ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig
- Thuirt 79% gun robh buaidh làidir aig na Fèisean orra air am beachd a thaobh na Gàidhlig
- Thuirt 87% gun robh buaidh làidir aig na Fèisean orra a thaobh a bhith a' cluich neo ag ionnsachadh ionnsramaid ciùil neo a thaobh a bhith a' gabhail pàirt ann an seinn Gàidhlig, dràma, neo dannsa traidiseanta
- Thuirt 50% gun robh buaidh aig na Fèisean orra a thaobh a' chùrsa no na dreuchd a thagh iad
- Thuirt 61% gun robh buaidh aig na Fèisean orra a thaobh a bhith a' fuireach neo a' tilleadh a dh'fhuireach air a' Ghàidhealtachd agus anns na h-Eileanan
- Thuirt 86% gun robh buaidh aig na Fèisean orra air am beachd a thaobh nan Ealan anns an fharsaingeachd

Tha an rannsachadh cuideachd a' sealltainn na dòigh anns a bheil an iomairt ga cumail fhèin beò agus ga h-ath-nuadhachadh fhèin: a-rèir an sgrùdaidh, tha 1 a-mach a 5 a' dol air adhart gus pàirt a ghabhail anns na Fèisean ann an dòigh eile, rud a tha na adhbhar dòchais airson leudachadh agus seasamh nam Fèisean anns na bliadhnaichean rin teachd.

Bha mòran de na toraidhean aig Francois Matarasso air an dearbhadh, faisg air 10 bliadhna an dèidh dha rannsachadh a dhèanamh airson na h-aithisg *Northern Lights: The Social Impact of the Fèisean (Gaelic Festivals)*. Tha an t-àrdachadh ann am misneachd dhaoine, sgilean eadar-phearsanta, neartachadh choimhearsnachdan agus buannachdan dhan eaconamaidh a' nochdadh uair is uair.

Tha na sgeulachdan pearsanta bho dhaoine a bha an sàs anns na còmhraidhean air dearbhadh cho cudromach is a tha iomairt nam Fèisean ann a bhith a' toirt tòiseach tòiseachaidh do dh'òigridh ann an ceòl – ann an

cuid de shuidhichidhean gam brosnachadh a thaobh ionnsramaid air a bheil iad a-nise a' dèanamh am beò-shlàint. Tha iad cuideachd a' dearbhadh an àite a tha aig na Fèisean ann a bhith a' brosnachadh càirdeis agus is dòcha, gu sònraichte, na dòigh anns a bheil na Fèisean air togail a thoirt dhaibh a thaobh na Gàidhlig, gu h-àraidh ann an teaghlach far an robh a' Ghàidhlig an ìre mhath cailte, neo far nach robh eòlas sam bith air Gàidhlig gus an deach ball den teaghlach gu Fèis.

Executive summary

The aim of this study is to map out the story of people who have taken part in Fèisean, and to ascertain how their participation has influenced their life, their career, and crucially, their attitude to the Gaelic language.

No single research methodology could achieve this aim, and so this report deliberately brings together two very different approaches. Data gathered from a **survey of Fèis participants** is presented here alongside very **personal case studies** drawn from extended interviews with Fèis people.

If respondents to our survey are representative of Fèis participants generally, then there seems little doubt that the Fèisean have provided a positive enriching experience for the majority of participants. The evidence from the surveys is overwhelming in this regard:

- **76%** of respondents reported a **positive influence on their motivation to learn Gaelic**
- **79%** of respondents reported a **positive influence on their attitude to Gaelic**
- **87%** of respondents reported a **positive influence on their motivation to play or learn a musical instrument or take part in Gaelic singing, drama or traditional dance**
- **50%** of respondents reported a **positive influence on their choice of study or career**
- **61%** of respondents reported a **positive influence on their intention to stay in, return or relocate to the Highlands and Islands**
- **86%** of respondents reported a **positive influence on their attitude towards the arts in general.**

The survey also indicates how the movement **feeds and renews itself**: according to the results of the survey, **1 in 5 learners go on to take part in the Fèisean in another role**, a very positive indication for the continuing sustainability and growth of the movement.

Many of the **findings of François Matarasso are confirmed**, nearly 10 years after his study *Northern Lights: The Social Impact of the Fèisean (Gaelic Festivals)*. **Increased confidence, interpersonal skills, community cohesion and economic benefits are all recurring themes.**

Case study interviewees emphasise the importance of the movement in **introducing young people to music** – in some cases, introducing them to an instrument around which they would build a career. They also underline the role of the Fèisean in **initiating and fostering friendships** and, perhaps most strikingly, highlight the part that the Fèisean have played for them in **encouraging and enabling an interest and pride in Gaelic**, especially in families where the language was one generation from being lost, or where Fèisean were the first contact with the Gaelic language.

Prologue: Barra 1981

'There are times when certain circumstances and people come together to create something altogether amazing. Such was the genesis of Fèis Bharraigh.

In the nineteen seventies a leading exponent of the bagpipes was a young doctor from Moidart. Greatly in demand, he travelled world wide, when work permitted, promoting and teaching piping. At home, however, he found the picture less encouraging. Many factors had a bearing on this: crucially, and most recently, two world wars had wiped out families, fathers and sons, breaking that rich and powerful chain of tradition in music and oral literature which had existed in the Highlands and Islands. There was little tuition, formal or informal, of the young in the traditional Highland instruments, the pipes, the fiddle and the clarsach, and while An Comunn Gàidhealach promoted Gaelic song through its local and national Mods, traditional Gaelic music was in an arid and perilous state. In some schools pupils could study music but were required to follow a classical curriculum exclusively.

Dr Angus MacDonald was deeply concerned about the Scottish situation and sought a solution. He had seen in Ireland successful initiatives in the teaching of traditional music that greatly attracted him and which he felt convinced could be made to work at home given funding and support. It was essential, however, that such a venture should succeed and should be seen to succeed. To that end it required to be launched in an area or community where success was assured. But where...?

He discussed his idea, a summer school in traditional Gaelic music, with his pibroch mentor and kinsman in Glasgow, Roderick MacDonald (Ruairidh Roidein) of South Uist, seeking advice as to a suitable location in which to plant the school. Mrs MacDonald, also from South Uist, overhearing the conversation advised him to speak to her nephew, a dynamic young priest, newly appointed to Northbay in Barra, who had a particular flair for community empowerment. This was, the now legendary, Father Colin MacInnes.

Father MacInnes knew that for an initiative of this nature to succeed the people had to take ownership of it. Teaching music from oral tradition was not common in the educational system at the time. Dissatisfied and frustrated by the lack of interest shown by the school music department in Gaelic music, the people of Barra, an island particularly rich in music and song and in tradition bearers, were ready and willing to take up this challenge. In order to qualify for Scottish Arts Council funding the concept of a summer school in traditional Gaelic music was expanded to become a multi-faceted community festival combining tuition and performance and involving the whole island, young and old. The local Head Teacher, John Campbell, had a word for it: 'Fèis', and so 'Fèis Bharraigh' was born in 1981.

An interested outsider – I had never set foot on Barra – I was paid the supreme compliment of being invited to be one of the tutors at this first Fèis. I recall our excitement and anticipation as, along with my colleague and co-

tutor, Ishbel T. MacDonald, daughter of Ruairidh Roidein and an avid collector of songs, we devised a curriculum and identified suitable songs for the children. We dug deep into our own memory banks but realised that our initial approach should be through local material, an approach that, interestingly, remains a cornerstone of Fèis practice. Much had been recorded in Barra by various collectors, not least by the School of Scottish Studies who were generous to us with help. Our main source of songs for that first Fèis was the highly respected collector and academic, Reverend William Matheson, then recently retired from the Celtic Department of Edinburgh University, who was intrigued and delighted to be involved in this novel venture.

It had been claimed by some that children were no longer interested in the old Gaelic songs, games and riddles. We were curious to find out whether this was true of the children who would - we hoped - be attending Fèis Bharraigh. The enthusiasm, enjoyment, beauty and incredible energy with which they took to the songs told us otherwise. The sight and sound of the children singing lives with me to this day, and whenever I hear Crodh an Tàileir or Fosgail an dorus dha'n tàileir fhìdhleir or Duncan Johnston's Farewell to Nigg, I can feel the warmth of the sun that shone on us then and hear the children's voices, intermingled with the strains of the pipes, the fiddle and the clàrsach, ringing in my ears.

To quote from the executive analysis in the first Annual Report of Fèis Bharraigh: 'It is true to say that Fèis Bharraigh was an ... experience...which had repercussions throughout the whole of Gaeldom.' It is also true to say that the legacy continues and there are many songs in mainstream singers' repertoire today that stem (whether or not they know it) from that first Fèis.'

Kenna Campbell
12 August 2005

Section 1

What we set out to do

The aim of this study is to map out the story of people who have taken part in a Fèis or Fèisean, and to ascertain how their participation has influenced their life, their career, and crucially, their attitude to the Gaelic language.

No single research methodology could achieve this aim, and so this report deliberately brings together two very different approaches and methodologies with the aim of creating a rounded picture of the movement's people, 25 years on from its small beginnings on the Isle of Barra in 1981.

Detailed statistical analysis of data gathered from over 200 questionnaires is presented here alongside individual, and very personal, case studies drawn from extended interviews with Fèis people – participants, tutors, organisers and volunteers. Into this mix is added a great number of comments from those we contacted, which range in scope from personal reflections on the movement as a whole to comments on aspects of their own particular experiences at Fèisean.

This mixture of hard data and personal narratives covers a range of issues associated with the Fèisean but focuses primarily on the effect participation in Fèisean has had on individuals and their communities. In particular, the remit required that the research determined what effect, if any, participation in a Fèis has had on participants':

- Motivation, or otherwise, to learn and/or use Gaelic, and/or attitude towards Gaelic;
- Motivation to continue with the playing or study of a musical instrument or Gaelic singing, or to continue having an involvement in Gaelic drama or traditional dance;
- Choice of study or career;
- Choice of location/place of residence;
- Identification with Gaelic language and culture, and the arts in general.

In addition, the study suggests a profile of the Fèis population as it is today – based on the survey results – examining such questions as gender balance, levels of participation, age and ethnicity.

Section 2

The context for this study

Fèis (plural Fèisean) is the Gaelic word for a festival or feast. However over the past few years the word has become synonymous with the Fèis movement; a group of Gaelic arts tuition festivals, mainly for young people, which now take place throughout Scotland.

A Fèis is an opportunity for individuals to come together to develop skills in the Gaelic arts - song, dance, drama, and traditional music on a wide range of instruments. Tuition is accessible and fun, but professional and effective. The focus of activity for most Fèisean is an annual, week-long festival, but increasingly Fèisean offer a full programme of year-round follow-on classes to ensure sustained provision.

*The Fèis movement came about when a group of parents and other individuals on the Isle of Barra became concerned that local traditions were dying out and that island children were not being taught traditional music in the context of formal education. To address this issue the first **Fèis Bharraigh** was held on the island in 1981. Inspired by the success of this first Fèis, many other communities throughout Scotland established similar events.*

(from the Fèisean nan Gàidheal website¹)

2.1 Context

Fèisean nan Gàidheal estimates that more than 4,500 young people currently participate in the 37 Fèisean that take place each year in Scotland. These individual Fèisean are corporate members of Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the national development and support agency for Fèisean, whose board is elected from among the member Fèisean.

Fèisean nan Gàidheal reports that the 37 Fèisean create more than 450 tutor posts for 132 individuals which, when added to the staffs of Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Fèis Rois, is equivalent to 24.8 full-time posts.

The Fèisean movement is considered by many to be a successful example of community arts activism, and its activities have been highlighted by Scotland's First Minister, Jack McConnell, amongst others.

The national audit of youth music in Scotland – *What's Going On?* – gave quantitative evidence of the importance of traditional music to Scotland's young people, estimating that around 8,800 young people take part in traditional music each week (as compared with 5,800 participating in Western Classical music and 5,200 in Rock, Pop or Dance music).²

This is not the first study on the Fèisean. In 1996, François Matarasso completed pioneering qualitative research on the social impact of the Fèisean that embraced such questions as individual and personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment, and local identity.³

Matarasso's work still stands as an important contextualisation of the Fèisean movement and, as will be seen, many of his conclusions are supported nearly ten years on in this study. However, the focus of the present research is

¹ www.feisean.org, accessed 1 Jul 2005.

² Stephen Broad, Celia Duffy and David Price, *What's Going On? A National Audit of Youth Music in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Arts Council, 2003), 27.

³ François Matarasso, 'Northern Lights: the Social Impact of the Fèisean (Gaelic Festivals)', *The Social Impact of Arts Programmes* (Stroud: Comedia, 1996).

rather different. Rather than deal directly with social issues *per se*, this study examines in greater detail (and with quantified results) the impact that participation in a Fèis or Fèisean has had on people's attitudes, motivations and life choices, together with a profile of Fèis people today. Naturally, there is a degree of overlap in the areas of study, but, particularly in the light of the continuing confirmation of Matarasso's conclusions that this study provides as a by-product, the two reports should be seen as complementary.

2.2 Outline of methods

Two methodologies were employed in this study – sampled survey with associated analysis and discussion, and in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants. These approaches were undertaken independently by the two authors of this report, and give very different results: one provides a rigorous, quantitative account of perceptions across a large sample of those associated with the Fèis, the other offers richly detailed personal accounts from Fèis success stories. Despite the contrasting approaches adopted, frequent liaison ensured that emerging themes could be drawn out across the whole study.

2.2 Timetable

October 2004	RSAMD awarded contract
November 2004	Discussions between FnG and RSAMD
December 2004	Contact data proforma designed and sent to all Fèisean
January 2005	Contact data gathered from individual Fèisean Questionnaires designed and piloted
February 2005	Contact data gathered from individual Fèisean Contact data cleaned and collated Postal sample designed
March 2005	Postal questionnaires sent Web survey goes online Case study interviewee data provided by FnG
April 2005	Face-to-face and telephone interviews
May 2005	Face-to-face and telephone interviews Web survey closes Postal data collated
June 2005	Analysis Report written Draft report sent to FnG
July 2005	Revisions of draft
September 2005	Report finalised

Section 3

Research methodology: Survey

3.1 Purpose of the questionnaire

A single questionnaire (available in Gaelic and English) was designed to elicit quantitative and qualitative data on respondents' perceptions of the Fèisean movement. A key aspect of the study was the impact of participation in a Fèis on various aspects of respondents' attitudes to Gaelic, the Highlands and Islands and the arts in general. With the known but unquantified diversity of Fèis participants, it was not considered feasible to find a comparable 'control group' of similar people who had not experienced a Fèis, so the questionnaire aimed to achieve data on the influence of the Fèis by asking respondents to reflect on their own experiences.

3.2 Designing the sample

The questionnaire sample was designed in two distinct parts. Firstly, using data held by the individual Fèisean, a more controlled sample to be contacted by postal survey was planned. From 1,818 records supplied by 16 of the Fèisean, a planned sample of 600 was built, with respondents chosen to achieve a reasonably even distribution of ages, randomly selected with respect to Fèisean and geography. Data from the individual Fèisean was of varying quality, with some Fèisean providing full contact and participation details and others providing more patchy information. To achieve representation from as many Fèisean as possible, data was 'cleaned' where necessary and possible (using, for example, web reference tools to complete addresses). The planned sample size of 600 was chosen in anticipation of a return rate of around 20% (typical in postal surveys). The postal survey was bilingual, with all questions and information given in Gaelic and English.

In addition to this more controlled sample, a version of the questionnaire was made available in an online format, again in English and Gaelic, using the Zoomerang survey-hosting application. Details of the online survey were sent out to all Fèisean by FnG, and links were also given from the FnG and RSAMD websites. This version was identical in content with the postal survey.

For both these parts of the survey, the actual sample is, of course, a self-selecting opportunity sample comprising those that chose to complete the survey: the extent to which this has influenced the results is discussed below.

3.3 Confidentiality, child and data protection

We wanted to make sure that respondents were able to respond freely and fully, so we made all questionnaires anonymous. Contact data for the postal survey was held for the duration of the study by RSAMD as contractors to FnG, under its registration with the Information Commissioner and in compliance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

3.4 Response rates

The following table gives the planned sample size, removed surveys (all undelivered), response rate and actual responses for the postal survey, with similar data on the online survey.

	Planned	Removed	Response rate	Actual responses
Postal survey	600	36	23.7%	134
Online survey (English)	n/a	0	n/a	64
Online survey (Gaelic)	n/a	0	n/a	10
				208

3.5 Dealing with different levels of participation: Samplers, Returners and Devotees

Initial analysis suggested that respondents' answers to the reflective questions that form the main part of the survey were not consistently affected by the type of participation (e.g. as a learner, as a tutor) or by their age. On the other hand, however, it was clear that some respondents had attended a large number of Fèisean, whilst others had attended only a few – perhaps only one – and that themes emerged according to respondents' degree of participation.

In order to take account of any effect that repeat participation might have on responses to the reflective questions, a simple methodology was adopted to distinguish respondents. The question that asked respondents to recall (by guessing if necessary) the various Fèisean they had taken part in – in whatever capacity – was used to calculate a figure for the number of events that each respondent had attended. 183 out of the 208 responses offered enough information to estimate the number of events they had attended.

Each respondent was then flagged as either a **sampler** (if they had attended 1 or 2 Fèis events – corresponding to participating in a number of events that lies between the minimum and lower quartile of all respondents' events attendance) a **returner** (if they attended between 2 and 7 Fèis events – the interquartile range of events attendance) or a **devotee** (if they had attended more than 7 events – corresponding to participation in a number of events that lies between the upper quartile and the maximum). The numbers of participants in these categories is, by definition, fixed by the total number of responses received (in other words, there is no information carried by the respective numbers of samplers, returners or devotees), but this labelling process allowed the responses to the reflective questions to be disaggregated according to how many Fèisean had been attended.

In the sections that follow, participation – whether a respondent is a 'sampler', a 'returner' or a 'devotee' – stands as the main distinguishing factor between respondents. There are twice as many returners as there are samplers or devotees, so this group should be seen as representing the central tendency in the results.

Further discussion of bias and balance may be found in Section 7: Negative impacts of the Fèisean.

Section 4 Who responded to the survey?

4.1 Type of participation

Respondents were asked to describe their participation – current and past - in the Fèisean movement by selecting all applicable responses from a predetermined list comprising 'Learner', 'Tutor', 'Volunteer' and 'Organiser'.

The following table gives the percentage of all respondents (postal and online) describing themselves under each category – note that these percentages sum to more than 100% since respondents were asked to tick all that applied, and many indicated more than one category.

Description	% respondents
Learner	87.5
Tutor	25.5
Volunteer	12.5
Organiser	11.5

If we consider those who have taken only one role, the percentages are:

Description (one role)	% respondents
Learner	63.9
Tutor	5.3
Volunteer	2.4
Organiser	1.9
<i>(More than one role)</i>	<i>26.5)</i>

These results show that over a quarter of our sample have taken part in Fèisean in more than one of the above roles. Disaggregating these 'multi-role' respondents, and taking only the four most frequently recurring combinations, gives the following results:

Description (more than one role – 4 most common combinations)	% respondents
Learner and Tutor	10.1
Learner and Volunteer	2.9
Learner, Tutor, Volunteer and Organiser	2.9
Learner, Tutor and Volunteer	2.4
<i>(Learner + any other role or roles)</i>	<i>20.4)</i>

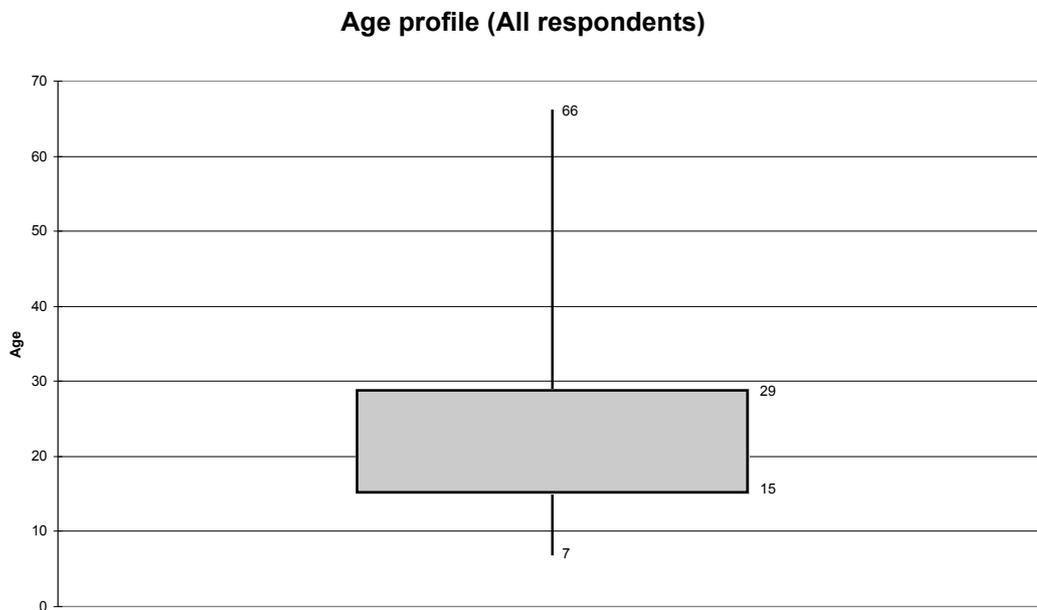
All the 4 most common combinations of role involve Learners, and the total percentage of respondents who said they had participated as a learner *and in another role* was 20.4%. If the respondents to this survey are at all representative of participants in the Fèisean movement generally then this result makes a startling point about the way the movement feeds and renews itself: if 1 in 5 learners go on to take part in the Fèisean in another role, this is a very positive indication for the continuing sustainability and growth of the movement – and for Gaelic arts in general.

4.2 Age Profile

Respondents were invited to give their year of birth (though a few declined) and from this, the range of ages represented in the survey can be examined. The following box-and-whisker diagram shows the range, interquartile range and median age across all respondents:

How to read this diagram (and others like it)

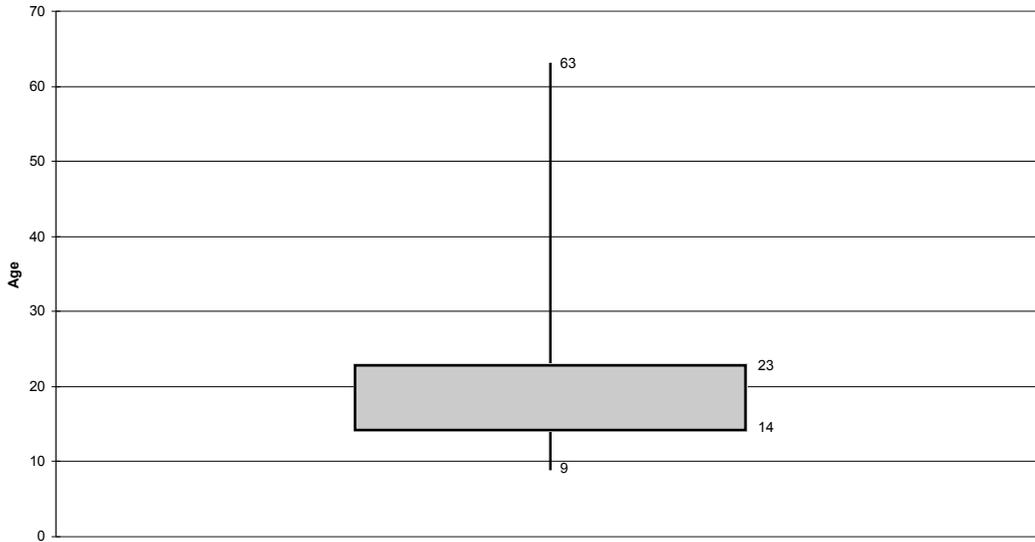
This diagram is a so-called box-and-whisker diagram, designed to show the spread of the data. The age of half of all respondents lies within the box at the centre of the diagram. The lines above and below the box extend to the maximum and minimum ages given. As a result, the box shows the central tendency in the age of respondents, whilst the lines above and below show the eldest and youngest respondents.



Median age of all respondents = 20

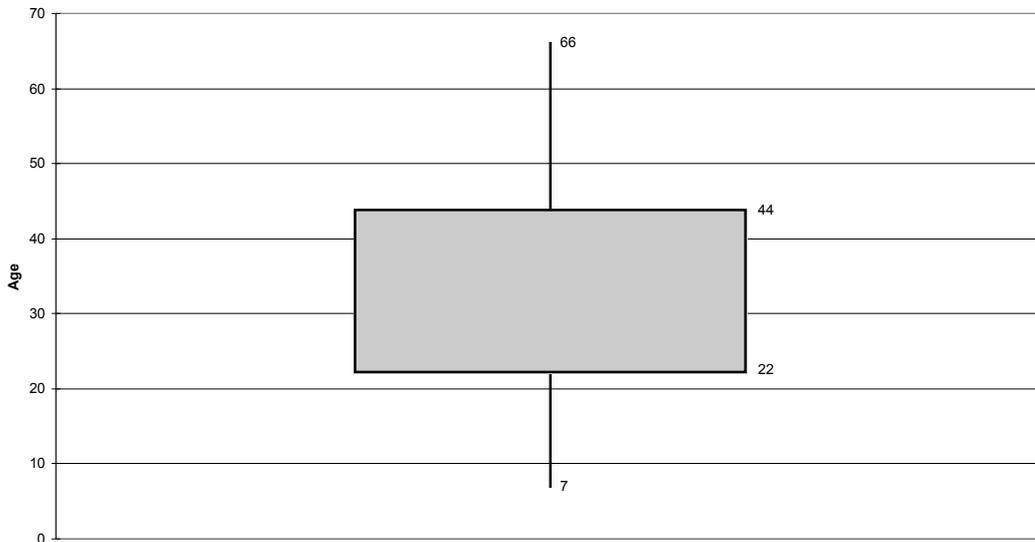
Analysis showed, however, that the two forms of the survey – postal and online – were returned by different groups of participants. The postal survey, with its degree of design and contact data sourced from individual Fèisean, was returned by a younger group of respondents, whilst the online survey attracted older (but also the very youngest) respondents. The following charts give the age profiles of the postal survey and the online survey respectively:

Age profile (Postal respondents)



Median age of postal respondents: 17

Age profile (Online respondents)



Median age of online respondents: 31

Clearly, the two surveys reached rather different audiences – this, however, suggests that the online survey played an important part in reaching a wider range of Fèis participants, past and present, than would have been possible from the records kept by individual Fèisean alone.

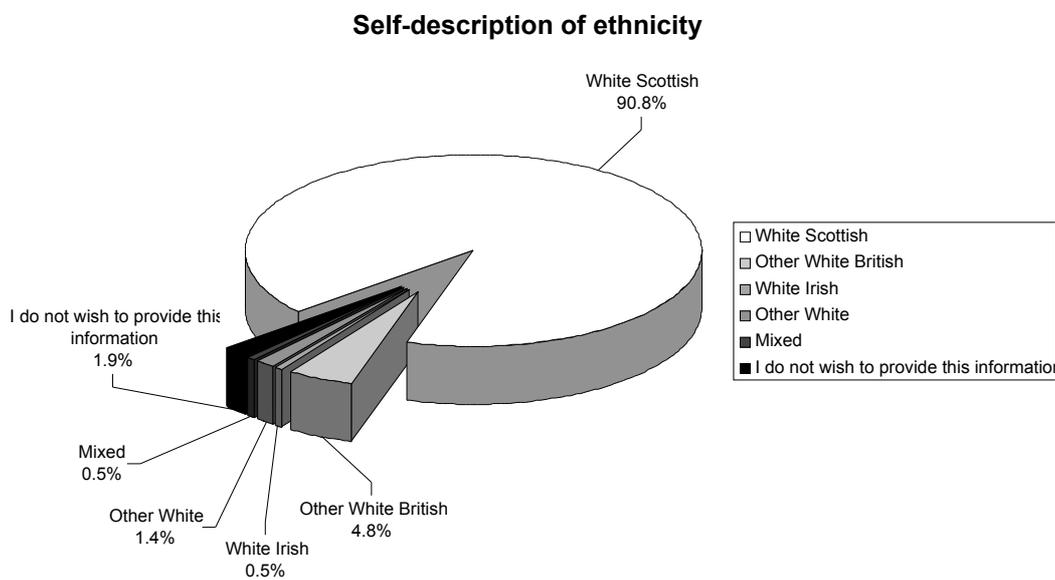
For the respondents who completed online questionnaires, it is possible to calculate the median ages of those responding in English and Gaelic. The small number of responses in Gaelic (10) requires that the comparison be treated with some caution, but it is notable nonetheless that

4.4 Gender balance

The gender balance among respondents was approximately 2/3 female to 1/3 male (66%/34%). If the survey sample is at all representative of Fèis people as a whole, then this result provides statistical confirmation of Matarasso's qualitative comment on the crucial role that women play in the Fèisean.⁵

4.5 Self-description of ethnicity

Respondents were asked to describe their ethnicity by selecting from categories recommended by the Commission for Racial Equality for ethnic monitoring in Scotland.⁶ The following chart gives the result (non-zero values only):



⁵ Francois Matarasso, *op. cit.*, 15-16.

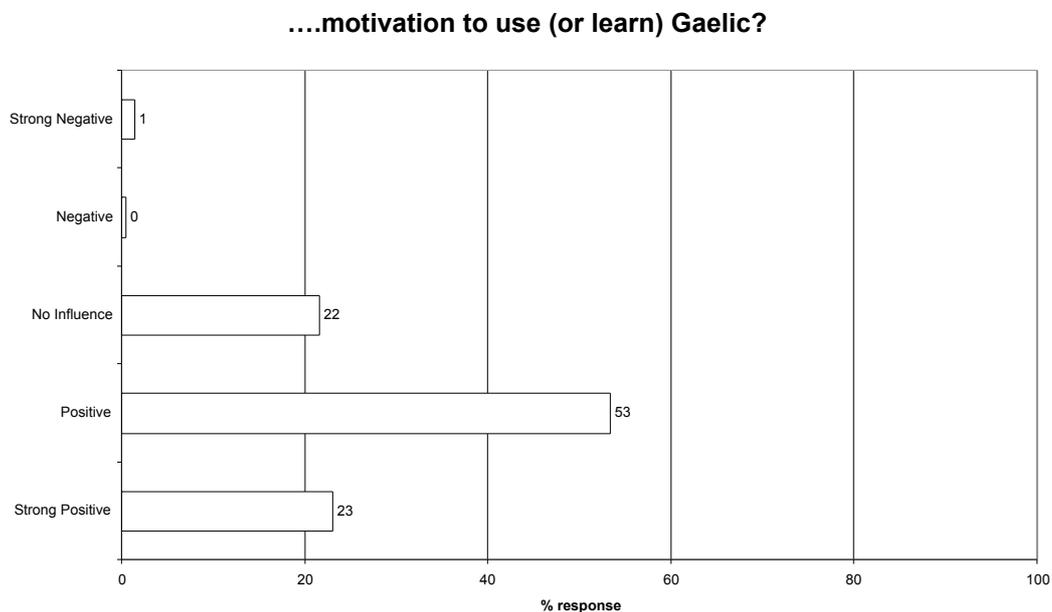
⁶ www.cre.gov.uk/gdpract/em_cat_scot.html, accessed 1 Jul 2005.

Section 5: The influence of the Fèisean on participants' attitudes

The central aim of this study was to examine the influence of the Fèisean on attitudes relating to Gaelic, the Gaelic arts, the Highlands and Islands, careers and the arts in general. This section explores the results of a series of questions in which respondents were asked to reflect on and rate the influence of the Fèisean on a 5-point Likert scale and to elucidate further if they wished.

5.1 Effect on motivation to use or learn Gaelic

The following chart gives respondents' perception of the influence of participation in a Fèis on their motivation to use or learn Gaelic (percentages of the total are also given):



76% of all respondents reported a positive effect on their motivation to use or learn Gaelic.

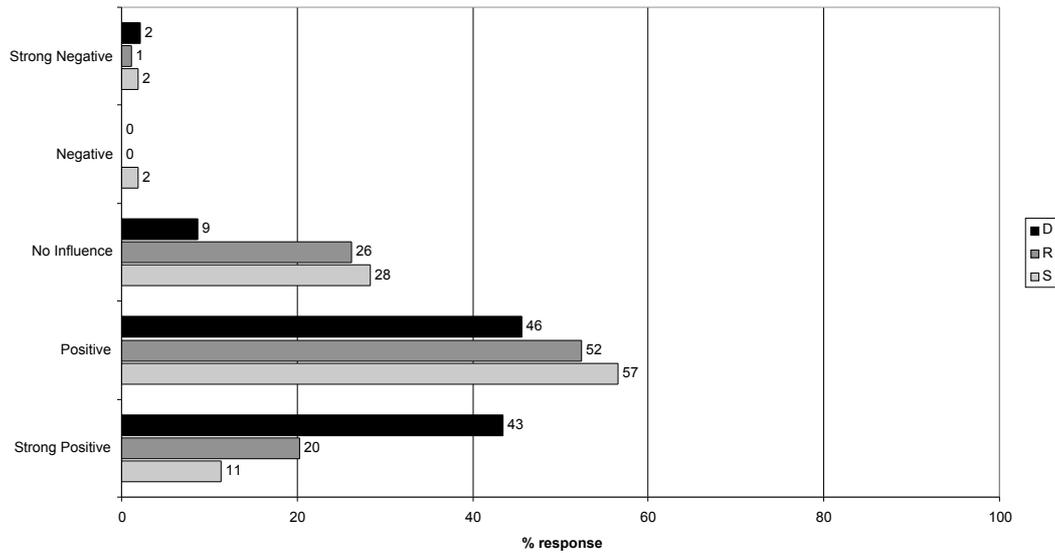
Male, 23, 'Devotee'

Cha tug mi moran aire aig an am mu Gaidhlig ach a nis tha mi den bheachd mar nach robh mi air pairt a gabhail anns an Fheis agus Sradagan nuair a bha mi nas oige nach bhithinn air ard ire Gaidhlig a dheanamh sa Sgoil neo air a dhol gu Colaisde an t-Sabhal Mhor.

I did not pay much attention at the time regarding Gaelic, but now I am of the opinion that if I had not taken part in the Fèis and Sradagan when I was younger, I would not have done a Higher Gaelic in school nor gone to the Gaelic college at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Using the methodology outlined above, this result can be disaggregated by respondents' level of participation in Fèis events. The following chart shows the same data parsed according to whether the respondent is a 'sampler' (S), a 'returner' (R), or a 'devotee' (D):

...motivation to use (or learn) Gaelic? (by Feis participation)



These results are perhaps more telling than the blander totals in the previous chart. As might be expected, those who have attended the greatest number of Fèis events tend to report more of a positive influence on their motivation to use or learn Gaelic – 89% of ‘devotees’ report a positive influence – fairly evenly split between a ‘positive’ and a ‘strong positive’ influence. ‘Devotees’ are considerably less likely to report no influence.

Female, 35 ‘sampler’
 My father has been learning Gaelic for some years and I have always thought it was a bit of a waste of time, but now I feel totally differently and we really encourage each other to learn.

Female, 27, ‘Sampler’
 The Fèis for me was more about the music and history of Scottish Highland culture and not the language. Unfortunately I do not yet speak Gaelic.

‘Samplers’ and ‘Returners’ are much more likely to report ‘no influence’ (just over a quarter of each say this), but there is still a significant positive impact, with 68% of ‘Samplers’ (who, remember, have attended just 1 or 2 Fèis events) nonetheless reporting a positive effect on their motivation to use or learn Gaelic.

It is worth noting at this point, since it holds for all cases of the same form of analysis below, that this association of level of Fèis participation with particular attitudes is not necessarily causal; that is to say that such results should not be read to mean that ‘if you go to a lot of Fèis events, then you experience a positive influence on your motivation to use or learn Gaelic’. We cannot conclude this from the line of enquiry undertaken here. However, what we can say is that those who attended more Fèis events also reported a greater positive influence on their motivation to use or learn Gaelic.

Female, 17, ‘Returner’
 I think that the lunchtime activities etc. geared towards the promotion of Gaelic didn’t influence me, but the Gaelic atmosphere and the fact that all the tutors were interested in the language promoted a positive attitude towards the language.

Distinguishing between ‘Samplers’, ‘Returners’ and ‘Devotees’ is a useful way of taking account of such issues and allowing some underlying trends (though not causalities) to emerge.

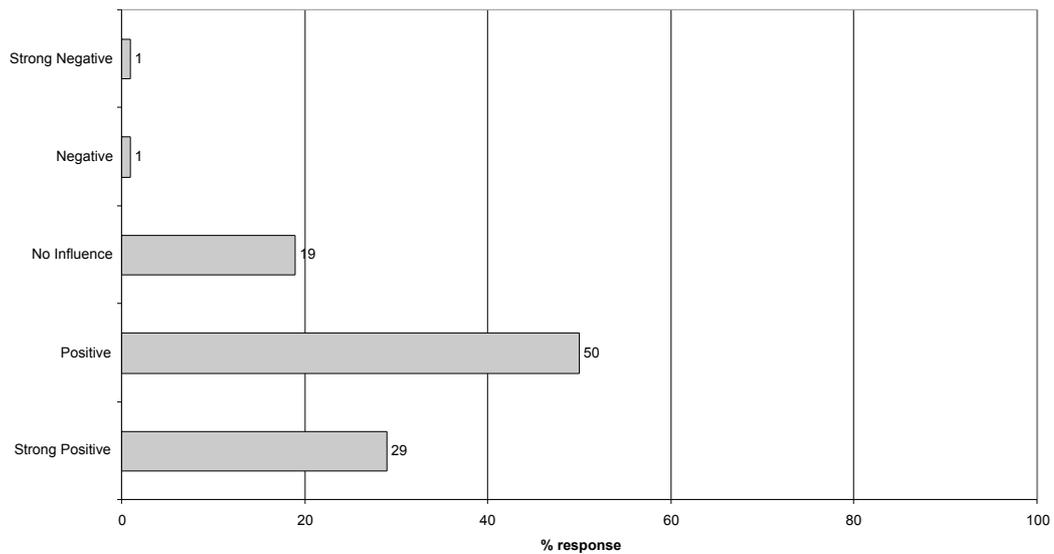
5.2 Effect on attitude towards Gaelic

Male, 27, 'Devotee'

My experiences at Fèis Chaitaibh and the people I met at the Fèis inspired me to take a positive interest in Gaelic. I feel strongly about the promotion and funding of the language.

The following chart gives respondents' perception of the influence of participation in a Fèis on their attitude towards Gaelic (percentages of the total are once again given):

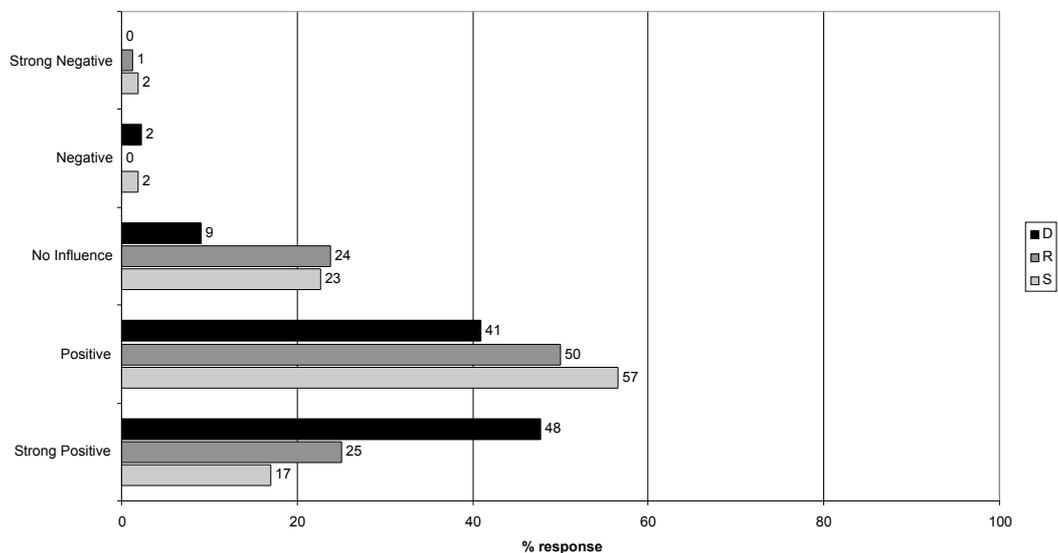
...attitude towards Gaelic?



'[The Fèisean] made Gaelic seem like a rich, viable, vibrant thing that was alive'
Eoghan Stiubhart

Again a large number of respondents – 79% - report a positive influence on their attitude towards Gaelic. This result is in line with the previous result, as is the analysis with respect to level of Fèis participation, given in the following chart:

...attitude towards Gaelic? (by Feis participation)

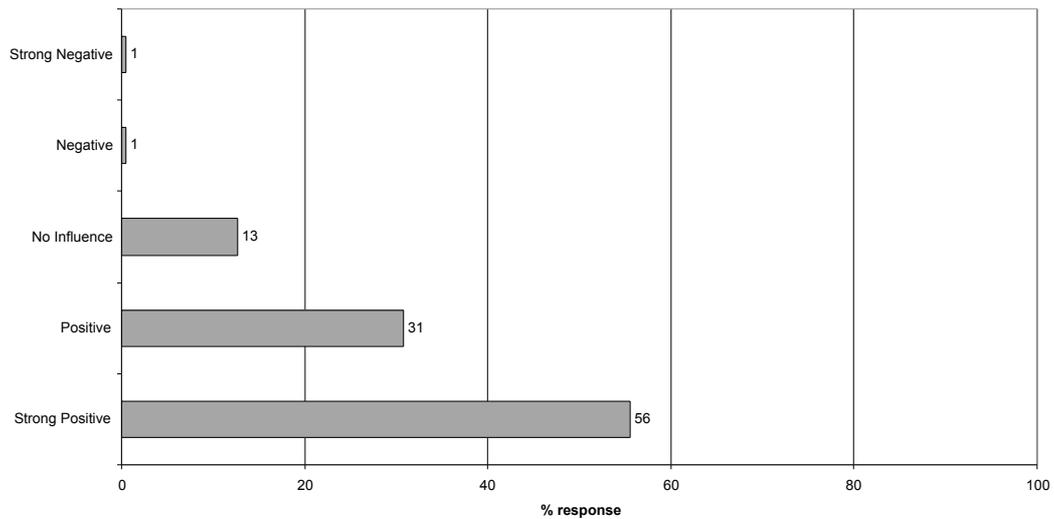


5.3 Effect on motivation to play or learn a musical instrument, or take part in Gaelic singing, drama or traditional dance

Female, 11, 'Returner'
I love playing the fiddle more than anything

The following chart gives respondents' perception of the influence that participation in Fèisean has had on their motivation to play or learn a musical instrument, or take part in Gaelic singing, drama or traditional dance:

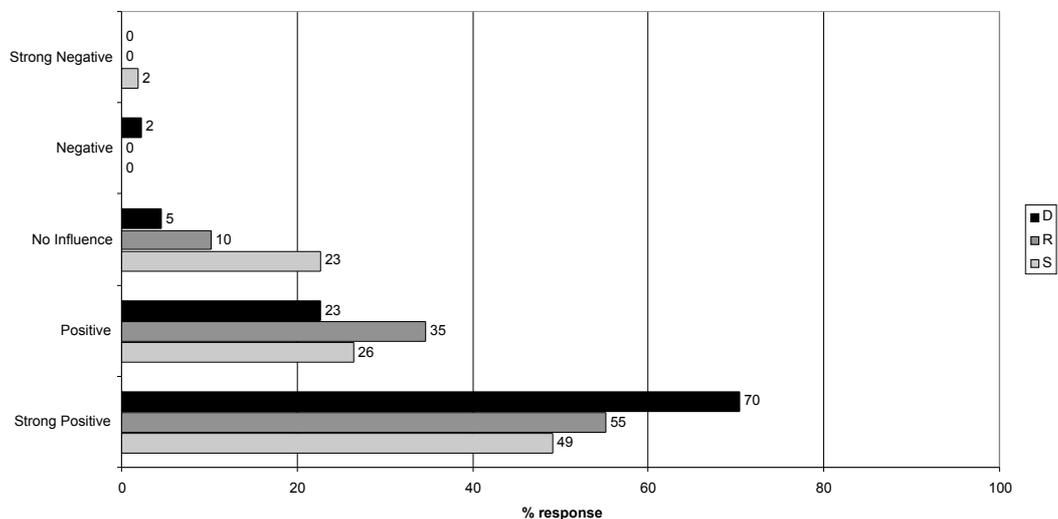
...motivation to play or learn a musical instrument or take part in Gaelic singing, drama, or traditional dance?



Once again, the perceived positive influence is substantial – with 87% of respondents reporting a positive or strong positive influence.

When analysed by participation in Fèis events, the results look like this:

...motivation to play or learn a musical instrument or take part in Gaelic singing, drama, or traditional dance? (by Feis participation)

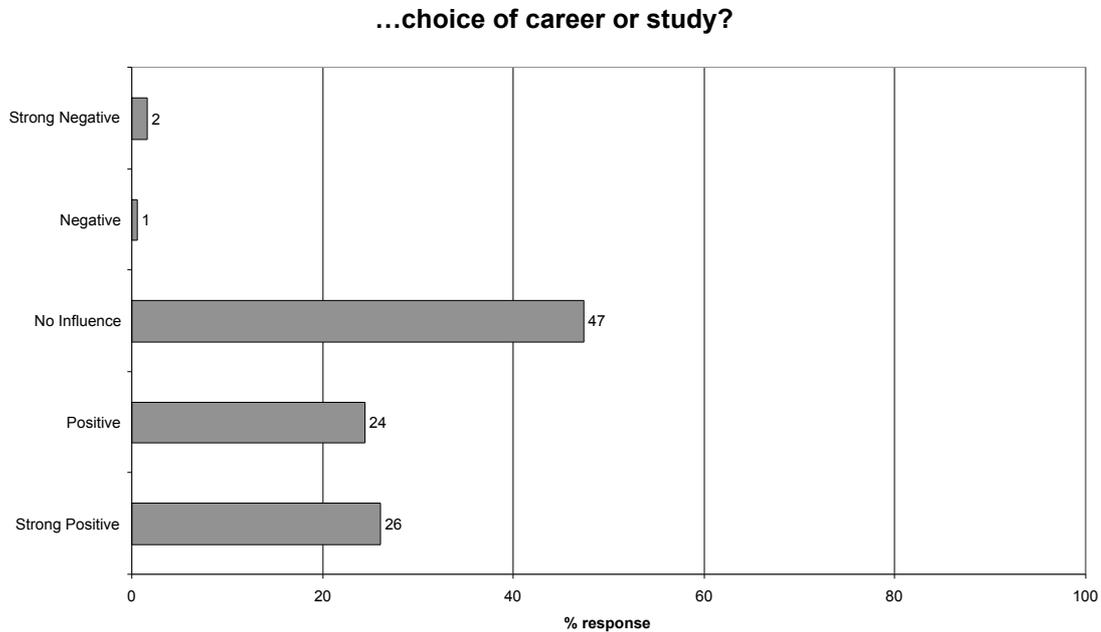


This result – both in its ‘raw’ form or parsed by Fèis participation – is rather different from previous results, showing a much greater proportion of respondents reporting a strong positive influence on motivation to play or learn a musical instrument or take part in Gaelic song, drama or traditional dance (56%) compared with the number of respondents reporting a strong positive influence on either their motivation to use or learn Gaelic (23%) or their attitude towards Gaelic (29%).

If we consider the analysis by Fèis participation, then a difference in the types of respondent reporting ‘no influence’ is worth noting: whilst only small percentages of ‘devotees’ and ‘returners’ report ‘no influence’ (5% and 10%), nearly a quarter (23%) of all ‘samplers’ say that the Fèisean exerted no influence on them with respect to participating in Gaelic arts. It is perhaps worth considering whether, on the one hand, such ‘sampler’ respondents attended only 1 or 2 events because they did not receive a positive influence from these events, or whether, on the other, no positive influence was perceived as a result of them attending only 1 or 2 events.

5.4 Influence on choice of career or study

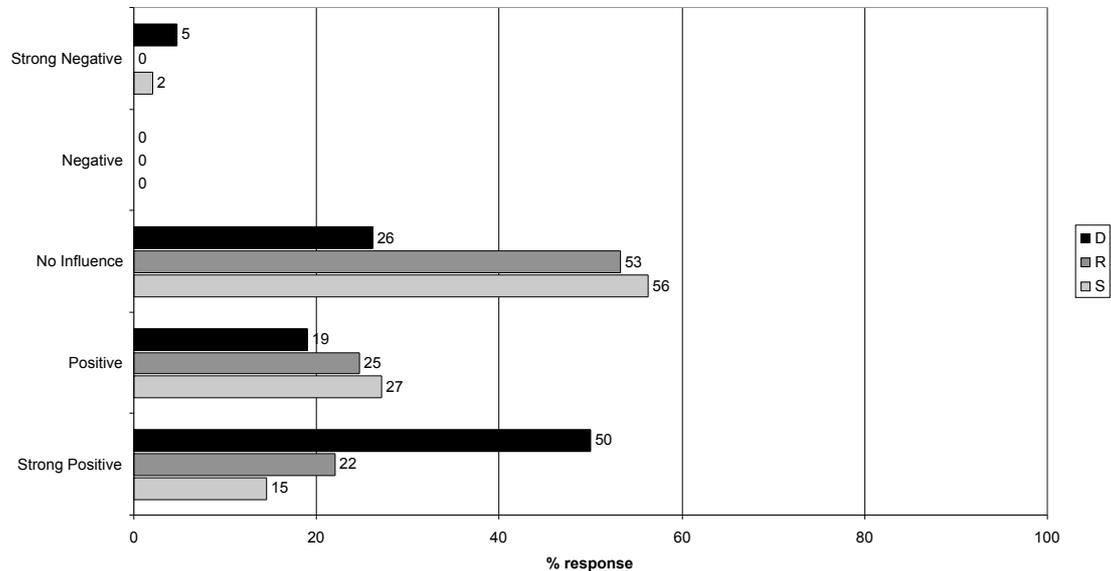
The following chart gives respondents' perceptions on what, if any, influence participation in a Fèis has had on their choice of career or study:



Whilst the figures for a positive influence seem much lower here than in the responses analysed so far, they are perhaps more remarkable. Precisely half of all respondents report that the Fèis has had no influence, or a negative influence on their choice of career or study – however, this leaves the other 50% reporting a positive influence, with more than a quarter of all respondents claiming that the Fèis was a strong positive influence on their choice of career or study.

Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, analysis by Fèis participation offers greatly increased insight (and more easily digestible results):

...choice of career or study? (by Fèis participation)

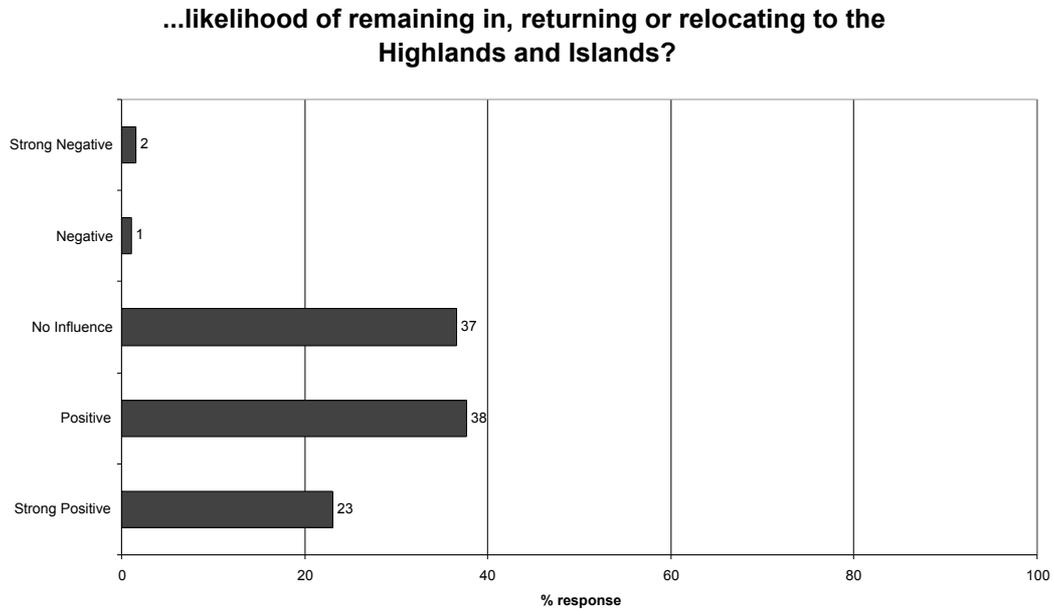


This analysis shows how the responses from the ‘devotees’ influence the headline result in the first chart. Recall that the ‘devotees’ are those respondents whose participation in Fèis events lies between the upper quartile and the maximum – they are the ‘top 25%’ in terms of Fèis participation. The analysis above shows how the 50% of all respondents who report a positive influence on their choice of career or study is propped up by ‘devotees’ – half of whom report a strong positive influence on their choice of career or study.

Despite this, however, the results for the other groups of respondents, whilst less obviously dramatic, are no less striking. Although more than half of ‘samplers’ and ‘returners’ report no influence on choice of career or study, 42% of ‘samplers’ – who, remember, have attended only 1 or 2 Fèis events – say that this relatively small amount of participation has nonetheless influenced their choice of career or study positively – an astonishing result that clearly invites further investigation.

5.5 Influence on the likelihood of remaining in, returning or relocating to the Highlands and Islands

The following chart gives the overall results for respondents' perception of how participation in a Fèis has influenced the likelihood of them remaining in, returning or relocating to the Highlands and Islands:

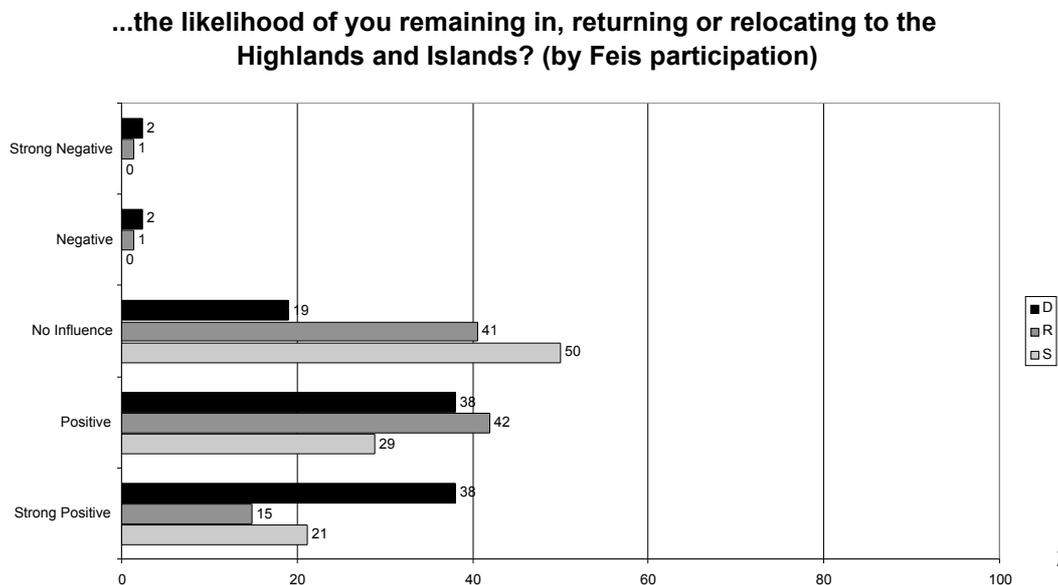


Male, 18, 'Returner'

Ideally, I will relocate back to the Highlands by the time I am 30. The Fèis has made me appreciate how lucky I am to live in the Highlands and how special Highlands culture is.

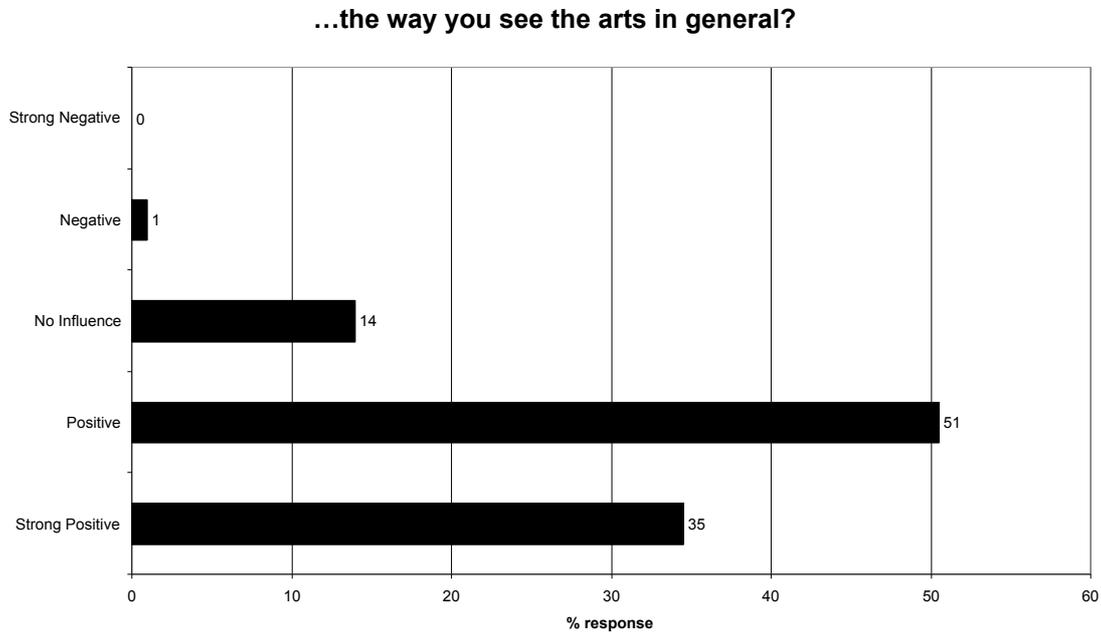
This result is best viewed alongside the previous one – where the result for influence on choice of career or study was split half and half (with around half perceiving no influence and half perceiving a positive

influence), here, on the same principle, the split is about 40-60, with over 60% reporting a positive influence on their motivation to stay in, return or relocate to the Highlands and Islands. When split by 'samplers', 'returners' and 'devotees', the result is:

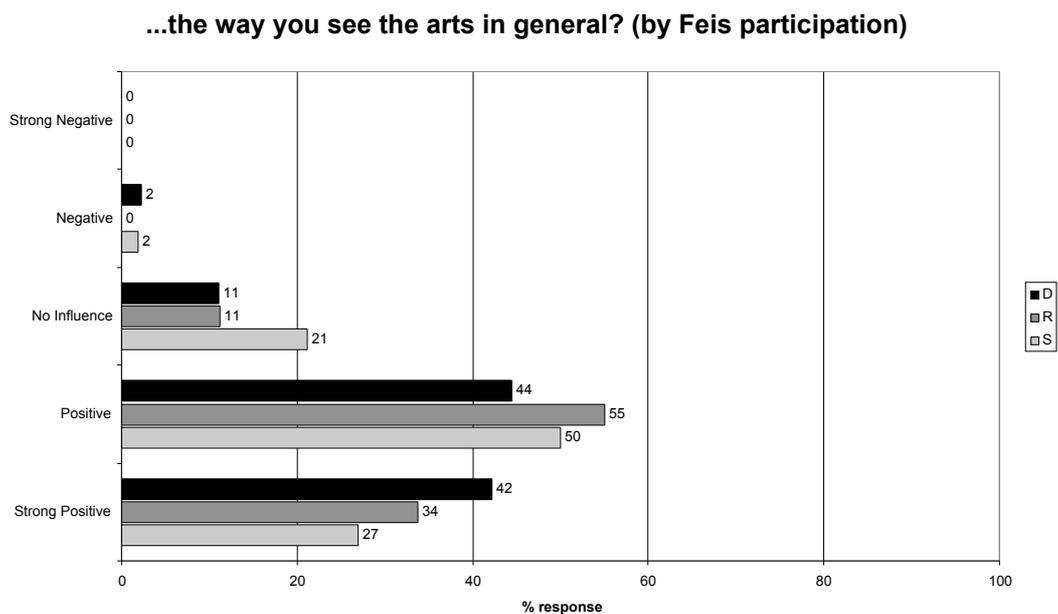


5.6 Influence on the way the arts in general are seen

The following chart gives respondents' perceptions of how their participation in Fèis events has influenced the way they see the arts in general:



Once again, a very large percentage of respondents report a positive or strong positive influence – some 86%. Here, the response is parsed by Fèis participation, showing that although the proportions of 'positive' and 'strong positive' influence vary across types of respondent, the total number of each type reporting a positive influence (i.e. either positive or strong positive) is remarkably similar (86% of 'devotees'; 89% of 'returners'; 77% of 'samplers').



Section 6: The effect of the Fèisean on individuals and communities

By means of an open-ended question, the surveys asked respondents to reflect on what effects – positive or negative – the Fèisean had brought to them and their communities. The free text responses brought up a range of issues, but certain themes recurred time and again. In this section, those themes are unpicked by reference to the extensive comments of respondents. For clarity, we have grouped this qualitative discussion under four main headings, but in reality, many comments covered more than one of these areas.

6.1 Personal benefits to participants from participation in a Fèis

In the report accompanying his 1996 study on the Fèisean, Matarasso comments:

One of the most consistent and striking findings of the study is the extent to which people have gained self-confidence as a result of their involvement in the Fèisean.⁷

Whilst the focus and methodology of the present study is more wide-ranging than that of Matarasso, the free text responses provide continuing support for his findings – especially with respect to female respondents. One respondent, a 20 year-old female who had attended just one or two Fèis events, commented *'I feel more outgoing. [Fèisean are] a chance to see what we are really made of!'*. Another female respondent of a similar age and Fèis 'returner', wrote: *'I think it really made me a lot more confident and outgoing. These qualities have really helped me!'*. An 11-year old girl who had attended several Fèisean said quite simply: *'I take part in more things now'*.

In other replies, respondents highlighted increased confidence in speaking Gaelic, and explained how their participation in Fèisean had directly opened up new experiences, like wider travel.

Female, 28, 'Returner' I married a Fèis tutor last year – thank you!
--

6.2 Interpersonal benefits

Female, 61, 'Sampler'

We all had a really great time, and have fantastic memories. Though I must also say it nearly killed me with exhaustion!
--

The collective pronoun 'we' underlines a second recurring theme in the free responses on the effects of the Fèisean: the important social role they had played for participants. Many respondents mentioned the friends they had made at the Fèisean and others stated that their ability to deal with others had improved. One 16-year old respondent who attended only a couple of Fèis events said *'It let me meet people I didn't know'*. Another similar respondent who had attended a few more events wrote: *'I have learnt a lot and met a lot of really nice people. I made loads of friends.'*

⁷ Francois Matarasso, *op. cit.*, 18.

Several respondents emphasised the longevity of such friendships, perhaps in contrast to the (relatively) short duration of the individual Fèisean.

'[I now live in Glasgow but] I still have close friends that I met at Fèis' commented one Fèis 'returner', whilst another respondent – a 'sampler' – wrote *'I made great friends for life'*.

In a theme that is echoed in the case studies, several respondents specifically mentioned inter-personal skills.

One 25-year-old 'devotee', who had worked as a tutor and organiser, commented: *'Aside from keeping our tradition alive it can also empower young people. I have personally seen some young people's inter-personal skills change drastically for the better after attending a Fèis.'*

'I would possibly go so far as to say that one of the most important things I got out of attending Fèisean... as a teenager... was the contacts and the friendships made.'

Douglas Beck

6.3 Social benefits to communities

Many respondents highlighted the advantages they saw the Fèisean bringing to their communities. One respondent wrote: *'A significant impact of the local Fèisean I think is that it brings together all those in an area concerned about Gaelic and local traditions, culture and values. By sharing concerns, a sense of community is nurtured, and without this many Highland and Island communities might be in danger of losing heritage and identity. And once it's gone, it's gone.'*

One 18-year-old who had attended only 1 or 2 Fèis events commented: *'The Fèis has been a great help to the community as different events go on during the week and it brings everyone together'*. Another 'sampler' – a 42-year old woman – commented on the way the Fèis united different generations: *'I think the Fèis has had a very great influence in my community: young and old both participation and enjoying the wonderful Highland culture. A great asset!'*. Others mentioned the same idea: *'The Fèis creates a strong sense of community... [and] helps build relationships with new, similar-minded people of all ages!'*

Others mentioned the sense of community pride that they said Fèisean events had engendered: *'Spors is ploidh le ma charaidean is gu mor mar phairt de choimhearsnachd fad seachdainn is proiseil as a sin. Bhiodh sinn a'coiseachd troimhna a bhaile aig toiseach a h-uile Feis le brataich is eile, is tha cuimhne agam a bhi uamhach moiteil is muinnitr na sgìre aig na dorsan aca. (Fun and games with my friends and to be greatly a part of the community for a whole week and proud of that. We would march through the town at the beginning of every Fèis with banners and all that, and I remember being very proud because the people of the district were at their doors.)'*

Still others drew attention to direct and indirect social benefits that the Fèis had brought to their communities. One respondent commented *'Fèisean provide an opportunity for local communities to develop their musical talents, a benefit which continues well beyond the end of the Fèis event through individuals' participation in other events e.g. ceilidhs for the local community'*.

Another, younger, respondent said: *'We now have a shinty club all year round because of the Fèis.'*

6.4 Economic benefits to communities

Many respondents referred, either implicitly or explicitly, to economic benefits that they perceived as resulting from the Fèisean. Some related these in unambiguous terms: *'[Fèisean generate] economic benefits to the host*

Female, 15, 'Returner'

My mum comes with me and instead of participating she goes around the island, and she really enjoys that.

*community (e.g. through both direct and indirect expenditure during the event)'.
Others referred to the Fèisean as a boost to*

tourism, especially in remoter areas. 'I feel it promoted the village, and gave it a

welcoming, friendly outlook, encouraging tourism' wrote one younger

respondent who had attended several Fèisean, whilst another commented *'the Fèis brought people to an area they otherwise wouldn't have visited, which is good for both the visitors and locals.'*

One male 28-year-old respondent, who had attended several Fèisean as a learner in the nineties and now manages a chain of pubs and restaurants, commented on the pool of talent he can draw upon to provide entertainment for locals and visitors: *'I now employ many of the tutors and learners I met through the Fèis as entertainers in our pubs and restaurants.'*

Section 7: Negative impacts of the Fèisean

The results presented above suggest that the Fèisean have had a relentlessly positive influence on all aspects of the areas examined in this study – and this is indeed the case with respect to the statistics and the vast majority of comments received from respondents. This section examines the issues surrounding research with an opportunity sample, and considers some of the individual negative comments that have been made.

7.1 ‘Fair and balanced’?

In a study of this kind, researchers have to plot a difficult course between discussing the recurring themes that crop up time and time again in responses and the specific comments made by individuals. Where the statistical results and general thrust of the comments are overwhelmingly one-sided, as they are in this case, researchers have a further difficulty: do they suppress the voices of the small minority because they *are* a small minority, or do they risk lending such minority reports more significance than they deserve by trying to construct an artificially ‘fair and balanced’ report?

Such considerations are compounded further when the opportunity sample available for the study is a self-selecting group (i.e. those who choose to return a questionnaire) of individuals involved in a movement that inspires dedication and passion. There may be a temptation on the part of respondents to act as advocates of the movement, rather than honestly reflect on and report their own experiences.

The results in the sections above reflect the totality of responses received, either exactly (through the statistical analysis) or indicatively (the comments that pepper the discussion) and the analysis by Fèis participation (the separation into ‘samplers’, ‘returners’ and ‘devotees’) was conceived to allow the responses of those with a greater stake in the movement to be distinguished from those whose association had been less sustained. Since we might expect that participants who return time and again might feel more inclined to act as advocates of the movement, this might allow us to take some account of advocacy effects.

There were also, however, a limited number of negative comments among the responses, and it is worth noting them, with an awareness of their status.

7.2 Negative aspects of respondents’ Fèis experiences and respondents’ suggestions

Because of their small number, it is difficult to group the negative comments received into coherent themes (though areas such as use of Gaelic and cost do recur). They are presented here as a cluster of personal experiences – not representative of the sample as a whole, but perhaps providing points of reference for issues that the movement should be aware of. They reflect a variety of viewpoints, some made with a wide knowledge of the movement, some relating purely personal experiences, still others reflecting well-known cultural attitudes and tensions.

Male, 24, 'Sampler'
[Attendance at Fèis]
demonstrated the futility of
Gaelic as a living language

Male, 18, 'Returner'
No obvious advantage in my eyes. Yes, it does teach kids about the skill and fun that is in music, but the scope is firmly set in purely Scottish music when really these events should consider the wider world that is music!

I hate living in Highlands and Islands and can't wait to get to university to escape.

I believe Gaelic to be waste of time and money as it is truly a dead language!

I once did play fiddle but moved to clarinet which cannot take part in any Fèis. I've been playing clarinet for 6 years and working towards Grade 8.

Female, 54, 'Returner'
My children learn some (Gaelic) through songs but they aren't taught to understand it which is a pity. I would like them to learn more.

Male, 34, 'Returner'
The Gaelic language should be used much more by the tutors and participants. For the most part I find the use of Gaelic at Fèisean tokenistic and piece-meal.

Female, 45
I have been trying to learn Gaelic for a long time and sent my daughter to the Gaelic medium school - and tried to take her and her cousins to the Fèis organised there on Saturday mornings. The nursery teacher who ran the Fèis there at that time refused to allow the cousins to attend because they were not at the Gaelic medium school. We have finally (4 years later) had the courage to return to the Fèis to find it a far more inclusive and therefore enjoyable set up. The Fèisean need to be careful about who they employ to run their groups in different areas because it could make a big difference to encouraging people or frightening them off from learning Gaelic.

At present my daughter is in the youngsters group and there seems to be very little attempt to use Gaelic words. I think £5 for a 1 hour session for my daughter to make cards and play Duck Duck Goose is quite expensive and that this is off-putting for many families in my community.

Female, 37, 'Returner'

One of the main disadvantages is the lack of opportunity to continue playing these instruments etc. throughout the year, therefore sometimes it's only the mainland children that get a real benefit. The price is also based on mainland classes and it really can be very expensive to send all your children to the Fèis with little deduction for any multiples. I loved the Fèis and I wish it were more accessible to families that may be discouraged due to costs.

Female, 32, 'Devotee'

It's very good and beneficial to people - music is great for the community. One negative thing might be the fact that alcohol and drugs play a big part in the music scene, and in Fèisean, too. Many young musicians (many of who regularly go to Fèisean) believe that you have to drink heavily, smoke, and take drugs to be "real" musicians. Tutors don't seem bothered about being drunk in front of their students, and I think in this sense, the tutors do not serve as good examples to young people.

Male, 21, 'Sampler'

I believe it must be better marketed to the general public rather than the more "already-Gaelic" market.

Male, 29

(The Fèis) undermines the need for the provision of adequate long-term music and Gaelic teaching in schools as the Council think this can now be the role of the Fèis.

It has to be emphasised again that the quotes above constitute almost all the negative comments received in over 200 responses – they are very much in the minority. Further 'unpicking' of the questions suggested by these comments would require additional research. However, in their raw form, they nonetheless raise issues and reflect concerns that should form part of the overall picture.

Section 8: Case studies

8.1 Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to explore in detail the experiences of a number of Fèis participants. These are not research interviews in the technical sense – they are not analysed thematically in the way such interviews would be – but rather case studies that explore the rich personal experiences of the interviewees.

This second part of the report contrasts strongly with the first: where the survey and analysis dealt mainly with anonymous responses and trends across the sample, this section presents the personal stories of a number of ‘special cases’. These ‘special cases’ range from Lauren MacColl, winner of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award 2004 and other professional musicians, to those whose work feeds into Gaelic culture in other ways, like Eòghan Stiùbhart, who now works in Gaelic policy support.

8.2 Methodology

The interviewees were chosen from a larger pool of people provided by Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the final selection being left to the researcher, who aimed to achieve a spread of geography and age. Question areas for the semi-structured interviews were determined in advance (see Appendix 2) to achieve some comparability across the case studies.

Each case study interviewee was contacted in advance by telephone. The areas to be covered in the interviews were explained, and it was ascertained that contributors would be willing to talk about their experiences.

Those interviewed for the study confirmed that they were happy to talk ‘on-the-record’, and for the interviews to be recorded. The researcher underwent disclosure by Disclosure Scotland to allow interviews with those under 16 to take place if necessary (though in fact all the selected interviewees were 16 years of age or older).

As with the survey, contact data for case study interviewees was held for the duration of the study by RSAMD as contractors to Fèisean nan Gàidheal, under its registration with the Information Commissioner and in compliance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.

It was considered important to see interviewees in familiar surroundings, in their own home or workplace, and this was achieved wherever possible. All interviews were written up from unedited recordings.

Writing the Case Studies: reflections of researcher Jacqueline France

'Their stories in their words'

'These case studies are personal stories so it makes sense to introduce them in person. When presented with a pool of three dozen potential case study subjects, most of whom I had never heard of, I had to formulate a set of criteria that I felt would give a broad picture of what Fèis involvement had meant to different people.

I knew it was probably likely - if not inevitable - that the names supplied by Fèisean nan Gàidheal would be people with largely positive experiences. I also realised that unless I actively sought out 'anti-Fèis' participants, I was unlikely to be able to alter this bias. I relied on my own judgement in making what I hoped would be the right choice of interviewees to illuminate a diversity of experiences, and relied in turn on their willingness to be honest and forthcoming – and not simply paint a distortedly glowing picture of their experiences, whether through loyalty or any feeling of obligation towards the Fèis movement.

I wanted to achieve a geographical distribution in the 13 case studies and decided to make all the interviews face to face and on the record, recording them with the permission of the subjects.

I then selected individuals to reflect as wide an age and experience range as possible, from those still at school or in higher education, to people who've embarked upon their careers.

The interviews lasted on average an hour and I then wrote up the discussions as personal stories. For this, I used key experiences and events to bring each individual's story alive, quoting them wherever possible. These key events included those moments like first trying an instrument that would later form the basis of a musical career, determining to continue as a musician when interest was flagging, deciding to learn Gaelic or use the language in a career or recognising the value and importance of a culture that might perhaps have never featured before in their lives.

I wanted to tell their stories in their words, with their own emphases, to enable the reader to get a feel for their experiences as if they were hearing them speak for themselves.

As I've said, the stories are positive and the interviewees represent 'special' cases. Having said this, it's remarkable how much the comments they make about the Fèisean are in keeping with the results of the survey. These prominent 'success stories' may be reflections of the myriad smaller successes reported by those who returned a survey.'

Case study: LAUREN MacCOLL

'Without the Fèis I wouldn't have carried on the violin... I wouldn't have any Gaelic... I wouldn't have known traditional music as I do. I would always say the Fèis is my main thing... the thing that I always think of when I think of my childhood or my exposure to music'.

When Lauren MacColl was about 12, she was on the verge of giving up the classical violin. Now, she is the current titleholder of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award. What happened in between was the Fèis.

Lauren is 19 and from Fortrose. She started learning classical violin when she was nine and went to Fèis Rois in Ullapool a few months later. *'Really everyone went that I knew, Rita Hunter just put leaflets around everyone in the school, I don't think it was marketed as a traditional music week as such. I don't think I knew what to expect, I just knew I'd be playing the violin, I knew there's be a different kind of music and I knew I'd have to pick something else to play as well, which was a bit nerve wracking'.*

'Everyone was at different standards, all of a sudden people around you had played since they were four, or ... were total beginners. I had an instrument but I still hadn't learned how to use the bow, I maybe didn't even know the names of the strings by then'.

Learning by ear was the first thing they tried and Lauren remembers the tutor, Kenny Fraser, making them learn Happy Birthday before tackling anything else. She says it was an eye opening experience, *'I think because up until then I'd just thought of the violin as being a bit of a chore ... but then I saw everyone having so much fun and I was pleased you could play lots of tunes on the whistle (her second choice) by the end of the week. I couldn't quite believe that everyone had ... remembered tunes for the concert at the end of the week and that it all came together suddenly and it was obviously a lot of work and tutors kind of held the concert together, but at the time I just thought it was this big huge thing'.*

Although she felt inspired after that first experience, she didn't feel she connected much with the music because she had also done Highland dancing since the age of three and felt that was more of a connection to the Fèis. The conscious connection to music was to come later.

Lauren says socially, the Fèis was brilliant. *'We always stayed in the clubhouse and I think that was the main thing, the girls staying six to a room and midnight feasts - the poor supervisors! - getting dressed up for the ceilidh'.* As well as being at the Fèis with existing friends, she made new ones and is still in touch with some of them.

With no Gaelic in her family or at school, Lauren's first and only exposure to Gaelic came through the Fèis. She remembers fun and games, the Fèis song, learning the names for vegetables and colours. *'I didn't realise it at the time but the next year I did remember it'.* When she returned the following year, Lauren's playing had progressed, she had a better idea of how to read music and was learning more traditional tunes, although she does remember it as not so important at the time. The turning point musically came when Lauren started secondary school. She remembers one to one tuition for the first time with Louise Mackenzie *'It was totally different... somebody who could focus to just my level ... looking back (it was) very valuable because I was thinking of maybe giving up. I wasn't enjoying school lessons, it was monotonous, I wasn't getting on... I was on the point of giving up and then luckily had Iain MacFarlane and Allan Henderson and that was it - there was no giving up.'*

She remembers what made a difference. *'They were quite young people... they were obviously making careers out of it... I could relate to them much better, there was so much fun going on in the class'.* Again, Lauren was having to learn by ear and because the approach involved getting no notation at all, she had no choice. *'I think that stuck after that and I was amazed... we learned about 10 tunes by the end of the week!'*

Lauren was totally surprised at the difference that experience made and how much she got out of it. *'I think that was the first time as well that I recognised the different types of tunes and maybe styles... they talked a lot about Highland styles, and about pipe music and ornaments as well.'*

She realised then that fiddle was her instrument. *'It was kind of a flash in the car (going home after the Feis concert)... before then it didn't come easy to me but (with) this learning by ear skill I realised that it was not as hard and it wasn't a chore, it was a pleasure. It was still hard work in that I wasn't making a very good sound...(but) I knew I had the ideas in my head and I was placing them all together.'*

Gaelic too, *'was making much more sense'* and Lauren was doing Gaelic singing as her second study. The names of tunes were in Gaelic and she found this important. She was also learning how to converse and while she is *'not anywhere near fluent'* she is using the language. *'I don't think I would have been interested if it hadn't been for that early exposure. It's in an environment that doesn't feel like a classroom environment ... it's not like we would learn French at school, that was a chore'*.

After that, Lauren was playing more throughout the year at Fèis events and classes and was taught by Alpha Munro. She attended her last Fèis at 16 as a participant and has taught at several since then. Her overriding memories of the Fèis are the traditional music tuition and exposure to Gaelic. *'Without the Fèis I wouldn't have carried on the violin... I wouldn't have any Gaelic'*. Lauren is now studying fiddle and Gaelic song on the BA Scottish Music course at the RSAMD, as well as teaching fiddle to adults and children and teaching at Fèisean. While she feels what is happening now *'is probably all down to the Fèis'*, Lauren pays tribute to her first violin teacher who gave her a good grounding. *'But I wouldn't have kept it on, I wouldn't have known traditional music as I do. I would always say the Fèis is my main thing... the thing that I always think of when I think of my childhood or my exposure to music'*.

Lauren says music *'is probably the most important thing just now'*. She says winning the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Award in December has given her focus. She is aiming for a career combining performance with teaching. She feels the Fèis movement can only expand. *'It's great to see things going full circle, like myself and others teaching'*. She says young people are learning without realising it. *'They are very dismissive... they've just learned three new tunes... but they know them, they're there and they can play them really well... and they will look back on it I think and see it as a good experience'*.

She says young players are benefiting from the opportunities the movement offers, including Fèis concerts. She remembers playing at Eden Court when she was 13 and being put forward for Phil Cunningham's 'Young at Heart' involving different Fèisean. *'I think opportunities like that... (are) a valuable thing, exposing people to performing as well as getting people to get up and introduce tunes. There's always people like Phil ... you know they're really successful but they come back and have a tune with you when you're young and that means quite a lot.'*

On the importance of the movement to Gaelic, she says: *'I think it's an important thing to deliver Gaelic to maybe people who would not generally be from a Gaelic speaking background... also, because Gaelic's in this situation where it must be saved... instead of just pushing it on people and getting them to learn it, it's a very natural way to absorb it, through a Fèis'*.

Lauren is in no doubt at all that the direction her life has taken – and will hopefully continue to take – is directly attributable to the Fèis.

Case study: LYNNE HOUSTON

'It's such a great thing, it's so inspirational really, the fact that this organisation started 25 years ago with one Fèis... now there are Fèisean all over Scotland.'

When Lynne Houston was 10, she was in Edinburgh with her father and saw a piano accordion in a music shop. She decided there and then this was the instrument for her and persuaded her father to buy her one and get her lessons. Now, accordion is her first instrument and Dunfermline born Lynne is currently living in South Uist, learning Gaelic and studying HNC Music Performance at Lews Castle College in Benbecula.

Six months after getting her first instrument, Lynne attended Fèis Chataibh with her cousins and learned accordion, guitar and bodhran. *'It was brilliant, I'd never really heard Gaelic spoken... I was just intrigued... and the Gaelic songs, I really liked them... I learned so much music, so many tunes that week, I think my parents were really impressed as well... I couldn't wait to come back.'*

When she went to that first Fèis, Lynne did not have a word of Gaelic, since the language was not part of her life in Edinburgh. *'When I left... I could do what's your name, where are you from, count to ten, all the basics, colours, things like that. It was brilliant... it was a great experience. It's great at that age to go along and get introduced to Gaelic and Gaelic music and all these instruments and stepdancing as well.'*

Quite apart from the music, Lynne had discovered a thirst for Gaelic. She wanted to know what tune names meant, where they were from, what songs meant and from there, to learn the language. She feels the songs and language go together and one forms a bridge to the other. *'The whole-Fèis song, where everyone sings together, they all get into the tune and really belt out the words as well so they're getting used to the sounds of Gaelic song without worrying that they're singing the words right... because if they get a couple of words wrong it doesn't matter because they're saying the sound and it's such a good start and introduction to the language.'*

There was no Gaelic teacher at her school in Golspie, so Lynne persuaded the high school to let her do Gaelic higher on her own - and got an A. Her Gaelic is now much better and improving all the time. *'The confidence and language have come mostly from going to the Fèis... you have brilliant tutors who are so encouraging... it's so wonderful being able to speak this language... as you get older they start teaching you funny things like chat up lines and stuff like that, to keep you interested! Useful stuff, you know, when you're at the ceilidh!'*

She intends to become fluent and as well as doing six hours a week at college, works in the local Co-op and speaks Gaelic to customers - some of whom won't let her speak English! Next year she will do Gaelic and physics at Aberdeen University - actually doing the degree course in Gaelic. Although she went to her first Fèis to learn accordion, she couldn't wait to learn the language and her parents thought it was *'brilliant'* that she was speaking Gaelic. Her father is treasurer of Fèis Chataibh and on the board of Fèisean nan Gàidheal. Her parents are learning Gaelic and she converses with them both. Her younger sister is studying music in Plockton through the Fèis, playing piano and whistles.

Lynne is actively involved in the Fèisean movement, on the committee of Fèis Tir a'Mhurain and teaching accordion, whistle and keyboards in Gaelic and would like to go into Gaelic medium teaching, perhaps teaching physics in high school. Musically, she feels she owes much to the movement. *'If I hadn't been going to the Fèis I might not even be playing the accordion, it's quite likely I would have stopped... because being a teenager I suppose other things take up your time and if you haven't got something... that's inspirational and really makes you want to learn and want to continue, it's so easy just to give up'*. In terms of Gaelic language, *'I... went to an evening class for eight weeks and would not have done that without the Fèis'*.

It has also been important socially. *'I've made so many friends through the Fèis from all over Scotland and from Ireland and... met all these great people from college here...'* Lynne reflects on how differently her life might have turned out. In Edinburgh she was a keen skier, visiting the local slope several times a week. *'If I hadn't gone to that Fèis I would have been a skier... I would have travelled but wouldn't have any Gaelic.'* She is in no doubt it was the right choice. She has made most of her close friends through the Fèis and traditional music. When she visits one particular good friend in Lewis she spends all night talking to her grandfather in Gaelic and playing pipe tunes.

She stresses the movement's importance to the language. *'Because it's for young people it makes it, like, cool for young people to learn Gaelic... they think it's a great thing to be speaking Gaelic and speak Gaelic with each other'*. Indeed, if she didn't teach chanter in Gaelic they wouldn't play!

She wants to stay involved. *'It's such a great thing, it's so inspirational really, the fact that this organisation started 25 years ago with one Fèis ... now there are Fèisean all over Scotland and all these children are doing traditional music and learning Gaelic (who) probably wouldn't have been before... because Gaelic has been dying out. If it wasn't for all these children suddenly inspired to learn Gaelic and traditional music and learn the traditions of... their grandparents and great-grandparents then it wouldn't be happening'*. She feels the experience is quite unlike that of school. *'Children come home from school and go 'I don't want to go back', they come home from the Fèis going when's my next one and can I go to the workshops, can I learn the guitar, can I learn the clarsach, can I have a clarsach?'*

Lynne loves the Western Isles for their language and culture but would also like to work towards promoting Gaelic in non-speaking parts of Scotland and wants to see the Fèisean movement grow and receive the financial support it needs. *'I know there are some people who think 'why are you bothering (for example putting road signs in Gaelic) it's a dying language, who cares'... but all these people that are going to the Fèis care... and it's such an important thing because if you lose the language you lose the songs... and if you lose the songs you lose the feeling of the music and if you lose that you lose the culture'*.

Case study: LINDSAY DUNBAR and LAURA GREEN

'It's all about making it relevant and that's why the Fèis is so good'

Laura Green, who is 24, and 26 year old Lindsay Dunbar, both work full time for Fèis Rois in Dingwall - Laura as Education Development Officer and Lindsay as Project Co-ordinator. Working for the same organisation is one of several parallels in their lives involving music and the Fèisean movement.

Lindsay was born in Achiltibuie, is not aware of Gaelic as a language in her family and hasn't explored its history in this respect, but doesn't think it is relevant. *'I feel there is still a lot of hostility towards people who... maybe don't have the right claim over the language and culture... I think we should be a lot more supportive of people who are willing to experiment and explore and learn and pick up on the language'*. Lindsay says her mother was a Scots speaker until it was 'educated out of her' at school.

This experience is mirrored in Laura's family - in Gaelic. Her mother's parents were from Achnahaird and fluent speakers but while Laura's mother had Gaelic along with her brothers and sisters, when they went to school they weren't encouraged to speak it. Laura remembers hearing her grandfather tell stories and use Gaelic in everyday life on the croft - including talking to the sheepdogs. The language was still very much part of the community and culture where she grew up - she recalls hearing women singing in Gaelic at a ceilidh in Achiltibuie Village hall and since she enjoyed singing, she picked up on the language and by the time she started school her ear was attuned to it.

Both Laura and Lindsay were nine when they first went to Feis Rois Oigridh in Ullapool. There, they had games and classes covering basic conversational Gaelic. Laura went for musical reasons; she had started playing chanter, both her parents played different instruments and she wanted to try other instruments too.

When Lindsay followed a year later, it was for the social element. *'I think I honestly went just for the craic because everybody else from the village was getting to go, so I wanted to go too. It was quite nice in Achiltibuie because we were such a small community... a couple of people who were in the year above me... had gone the year before and come back saying it was great, so of course everybody in my year all wanted to go'*. She was also playing chanter, but

preferred Gaelic song and drama. *'The Gaelic language classes I always found particularly interesting... I think for a long time while we were at the Fèis it didn't seem clear in my mind why we were having a half hour class every day, but as you get older you suddenly realise what it's all about and if you're doing Gaelic song or doing a tune which has got a Gaelic name, then it all starts to relate'*. Lindsay is sure her reason for learning Gaelic came from learning Gaelic song, which she feels is *'a brilliant way of introducing children to the language'*.

Laura went to this Fèis for three years and then to Fèis Rois nan Deugairean in Gairloch until she was 18 and Fèis Alba for 2 years, learning harp under Ingrid Henderson and later Alison Kinnaird. She was still playing pipes and was in the Ullapool and District Junior Pipe Band. She found the Fèis motivated her musically. *'I would meet new friends and have a good time and ... by the time (I) got to secondary school I was really motivated and started practising for half an hour, an hour a night... and then by the time we got to secondary school and Fèis Rois, if you went to the masterclasses, you'd get to go and play at summer ceilidhs, you'd get to play at exciting venues... so then it would motivate you to practise and get better'*.

Lindsay was in the same pipe band, but didn't enjoy it to the same extent and Gaelic singing and drama were her favourite activities at the Fèis, where she recalls being taught by Cathy-Ann McPhee and Eilidh Mackenzie. *'When you're nine years old you don't know who these people are, but you know they're good and... they made it really enjoyable and interesting and that's why you wanted to go'*. She also attended Fèis Rois until, at 16, she went to high school in Edinburgh where she could do higher drama. This meant losing touch with the Fèis, pipe band and Gaelic language. *'But I also think that if I hadn't gone to Edinburgh at that stage in my life I may never have actually realised what I'd come from and I might not feel so interested in helping to promote it now'*. She recalls going to high school in Edinburgh and being told that playing pipes and singing Gaelic songs was not good enough. *'It felt like a tremendous setback but I knew they were wrong'*. She even ended up teaching Scottish music to the rest of the class! On another occasion, while students did work placements with lawyers' and doctors' offices, she wanted to help at Fèis Rois, but was told that wasn't acceptable. Nevertheless, she called Rita Hunter anyway and did her placement. While she feels that staying in Ullapool would have strengthened her interest in music, Edinburgh strengthened her interest in the Gaelic language and made her more determined to understand it. She went on to graduate in modern Celtic studies and drama.

Socially, both Laura and Lindsay place a high value on the Fèis and have formed strong friendships going back to their childhood. Both stress the importance of being able to meet young people from other areas, especially as there were very few of their age in their own community. Says Lindsay: *'I think it can't be (overestimated) what the Fèisean movement's done for children socially, especially in a place like the Highlands, it must be the same in small island communities as well. It's an incredible feeling when you meet somebody and I found this at university as well, you meet somebody who's from up here and you say 'oh did you go to the Fèis?' and they go, oh yeah, I was at the Fèis too and automatically you have this bond, even though you might have nothing else in common. You realise you were both in Ullapool this one week in your entire life at the same time and you might even have been in the same class... it's brilliant. We are all teetering towards our thirties now and yet we still all look back on it with very fond memories and we still have very fresh memories of our social lives when we were 9 to 12 years old'*.

Laura is sure the Fèis encouraged her to improve her musical skills and was a springboard for other activities, including doing higher advanced music at school, playing in bands and entering competitions. *'I think I probably would have given up the pipes and maybe even music if I hadn't been involved in the Fèis'*.

Lindsay stresses the movement's importance culturally too. *'I think (the Fèis) is really important because it helps people understand their identity and their history... the Fèis is helping promote language and culture and music'*. She also feels the Fèis could provide a valuable blueprint for other communities in Scotland. *'The Fèis movement is about Gaelic in Scotland but other cultures should look at the... movement as a model for their own cultural awareness and teaching'*.

She feels the movement is *'probably central'* to the future of Gaelic culture and music in Scotland. *'You want to start young with good education, so teaching young children about the*

language and the music and the culture is how to get it planted in their minds as something they might want to explore as they get older... I think definitely the Fèis movement is central to that. She feels that while interest in learning music is very strong and growing, more thought should perhaps be given to the Gaelic language aspect of the movement. *'I think we need to keep looking at how the Gaelic language is presented, how it's used, how it's taught and showing children that there's a future in it as well... I think that's very important'*. Both agree that it is now considered 'cool' to speak Gaelic, but Lindsay adds, *'The words should be relevant. Although it is more cool to speak Gaelic, at the same time, children are still quite happy to talk in English once they walk out of that classroom, so it's all about making it relevant and that's why the Fèis is so good, because it's not inside a classroom, it's during their holidays and they're having tutors and young people who are talking with them in Gaelic and I think that's what could make it a very successful project in the future.'*

Laura, who spent two years on the BA Scottish Music course at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, feels strongly that the Fèisean movement and higher education institutions, like the RSAMD and Strathclyde University, could exert more influence over the politicians and decision makers, who talk about the importance of music in education. She cites an example from her own experience, of having to compose a piece of music for full orchestra, which she says would have been marked lower had it been a Scottish music composition. Lindsay sees her own future involving the Fèis, music, teaching and increasing the use of Gaelic, possibly creating her own business and promoting Scottish music as part of marketing Scotland. Laura also feels more could and should be done to promote Scottish music. *'I think that the Fèisean and other organisations need to work more closely to promote Scottish music to the business world (as is done in Ireland) ... we need to sell it'*.

Case study: DOUGLAS BECK

'Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the Fèis movement, can provide that cultural context.'

Douglas Beck, who is 27 and from Ullapool, is from a non-Gaelic speaking family and first studied the language formally in 6th year of high school. But he'd had an interest in it for a long time before that. He used to go loch angling and *'used to spend hours poring over maps looking for places to fish with a Gaelic dictionary in one hand'*. Also, he recalls, *'I think it was a combination of some kind of association I formed in my head between piping and Gaelic... traditional music and Gaelic'*.

When he first attended Fèis Rois in 1989 when he was 12 the impetus was definitely musical. *'I went because I'd started to progress with piping... I was just about to go to the pipes from the chanter (he had played for about a year) and it was my piping teacher (Pipe Major Norman Gillies) who said I should go along'*.

'One of my main memories of my first Fèis was being very tired for the whole week... because it was very intensive... you got three choices and I think I wanted to do piping, piping, piping and I wasn't allowed to do that so I think I did accordion and drums as well as piping. I had a good time... it gave me an impetus to practise a lot... it's something I talk about when I'm teaching now... a period of intense tuition will give a child an injection and an impetus to go and play double the amount for a few weeks ... that happened to me. It also did push me on quite a lot musically and possibly to a higher level that I needed.'

It was also possibly Douglas's first formal experience of any structured Gaelic learning. But he does not feel the Fèis gave him any *'massive impetus to be interested in Gaelic... I was aware of the fact that there were tutors there who spoke Gaelic and supervisors who spoke Gaelic and you would hear Gaelic, but it didn't slap me in the face and say: this is a Gaelic event'*. But later, when he was helping at the Fèis, he had more contact with tutors and more chance to get to know people on a one to one basis. *'I think that is when I did get much more of a feeling of Gaelic... I've got mental pictures of the conversations I had about Gaelic with tutors'*. He remembers hearing a supervisor singing a song which he recognised as a pipe tune and

'something went click in my head' and he realised there was a bigger connection than he had previously thought.

'I also remember the people who were there who spoke Gaelic who were young and cool and hip and trendy... and feeling quite cool because I was hanging about with them... that is probably when I thought of the Fèis as a Gaelic thing'. Socially, he found it a very positive experience. 'It was possibly the first time I met people who I subsequently went on to know a bit better'.

He found the whole experience invaluable. *'Musically... the encouragement to practise, practise, practise... in retrospect I think that was what the great thing was... it was solid practice for 4 or 5 days... to the extent that I kind of got a reputation as a bit of an anorak who would never put his chanter down... it was piping piping piping piping piping piping piping piping piping and more piping!'* Then, Douglas underwent a musical sea change. The guitarist Jim Hunter asked to borrow a piper to play in a rock band. Douglas was sent along. *'That is possibly what gave me a much broader musical... kind of sense... because piping is a very, very inward looking discipline... and probably I could have quite happily gone down the competition and pipe band route, with the personal enjoyment aspect possibly second to some extent'.*

'Possibly the first thing it did was it gave me an awareness of other instruments... I think my viewpoint in my early to mid teens was there are bagpipes and there are other instruments that play Scottish music, they exist out there somewhere... and I didn't really think about them a huge amount. Possibly that incident with the rock band... was not the absolute defining moment for thinking about things differently... but it is lodged in my brain as a very important one.'

The new musical awareness born of the rock band incident led to playing a new instrument. *'I'd always been told the tin whistle was the devil's spawn ... and you'd get warts if you played it!'* He says he appreciated this was said in jest, but the instrument changed his view of traditional music. *'I'd had the nine notes... and suddenly there was this magical low D'.*

For his higher music Douglas composed a new version of The Foxhunter's Suite for whistle and piano - no pipes - and by the time he left school he had started to play whistle in informal session bands and was an *'embryonic traditional musician rather than pipe pipe pipe pipe pipe'.* He attended Fèis Rois four times as a participant and twice as a helper and supervisor. Socially, he made friends and stays in touch with them. *'I would possibly go so far as to say that one of the most important things I got out of attending Fèisean... as a teenager... was the contacts and the friendships made.'*

'When I ended up doing Celtic studies I do remember people involved in the Fèisean movement being supportive of that and pleased I had done that.' Also, he says the Fèis made him become more involved in traditional music and the Gaelic world. Douglas works full time for Fèisean nan Gàidheal, as Project Officer with Meanbh-Chuileag (Midge Theatre Company - a wee theatre company with bite!) which works in schools across Scotland as well as delivering drama and Gaelic workshops at Fèisean and other events. Douglas himself helps co-ordinate Gaelic provision and language development at Fèisean, recruiting Gaelic-speaking tutors. He thinks Gaelic has a much higher profile at the Fèisean now than when he first went and is presented in a better and more visual way. He hopes he is instrumental in helping this. He aims to make it fun. *'Don't ram it down their throats... if a child can go away from a Fèis aware that they have been involved in a Gaelic event, they'll have a positive inclination towards Gaelic, hopefully not just an ambivalent one... certainly not a negative one. How it is presented is the most important thing. For me it's obvious, I want kids to have a wee smattering... these kids in 20 years time, 15 years time, will be in a position to send their kids to primary school... and will they send their kids to the Gaelic or will they send their kids to the English stream? Hopefully if they have a positive attitude towards Gaelic, or if they remember... way in the back of their heads... I did Gaelic once, or did Gaelic at the Fèis... and that was quite cool... (then that will influence them). I stick to that really strongly'.*

While Gaelic speaker numbers are falling, he sees it as his role to help reverse that. *'There are huge numbers of kids who speak Gaelic who do go to a Fèis... and they have got to be given an indication that it is important ... kids who are learning Gaelic in school from non Gaelic backgrounds, thinking 'my parents put me here and I do this thing in school, it's got no relevance to me...'* Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the Fèis movement, can provide that cultural context.

He sees the Fèisean movement as instrumental for these young people and part of his job to be involved in the process, working and living in Scotland.

Case study: EOGHAN STIUBHART

'I made all these decisions about what I was going to do... but these would never have happened without the Fèis.'

Eoghan Stiubhart started learning Gaelic at school and through the Fèis when he was 11. Now, at 23, he's working for Bord na Gaidhlig - the Gaelic Development Agency - on secondment at the Scottish Executive after graduating in Celtic Studies and politics at Glasgow University. Eoghan was born in Glasgow, with Gaelic on his mother's side of the family. Although she herself was not encouraged to speak it, Eoghan did hear it spoken by his grandparents and what his mother knew, she passed to him. He got his first taste of the Fèisean movement after his mother Anna had been instrumental in setting up the non Gaelic-medium Fèis in Inverness. In that first year, Eoghan took accordion, clarsach and whistle. *'I ended up going because my mother was involved with it, but it didn't stop me enjoying it... it was good... I really enjoyed it'.*

He started learning Gaelic at school and two months later was at the Fèis, where he learned phrases and played games in Gaelic, remembering that *'it gave me a fun aspect to it a lot sooner than maybe if I'd just spent four years at school learning it and hadn't had any experience of it outwith the classroom... it was the thing outside school that made Gaelic a good thing to speak... I had always enjoyed Gaelic and it made me really want to learn it and really want to speak it. From then on I knew I always wanted to speak Gaelic'.* He did not then perceive Gaelic as a language under threat. *'I didn't have any sense of it as an endangered language or a language which was.... fading away, but I knew it was something to be proud of and always wished I'd had the chance to speak... when I was wee I was very... proud to be Scottish... and Gaelic was a Scottish thing... and a good thing to know'.*

Musically, Eoghan benefited from the Fèis too. He had played piano since the age of seven but couldn't play by ear - something he still cannot do. He learned accordion at the first Fèis under Jim Mackay. *'It was good craic... I really enjoyed it'.* The following years, he also learned whistle and clarsach. The accordion emerged as his favoured instrument and he took weekly classes. After missing the Fèis for a year when his mother's involvement stopped, Eoghan returned and met up again with friends he'd made through the movement. He tried the bodhran for the first time and meanwhile was still doing drama and was starting to try out his Gaelic. *'I cannot even think how bad my Gaelic was then... I shudder to think but at least I was trying it... I was starting to try and use it more even though I probably didn't make any sense... I've been told I didn't make any sense actually!'*

While the Fèis was valuable musically, it is the social element that Eoghan particularly remembers. The number of friends he has made through the movement is in double figures, with many more acquaintances. He describes it as a catalyst for meeting people which has made his life richer. *'I think the Fèis as an instrument for young people meeting outside school, is probably the most invaluable tool in Scotland today, especially in the Highlands... I can't think of anything else similar to it... it's an unbelievable tool for social capital... you bump into someone or you're at an event... it doesn't have to be deep or profound but you've got a connection with this person... you can walk in and just get the craic with someone... as if you've never been away... that for me is the key to it, that's the important thing'.*

Eoghan remembers a party he went to with friends made through the Fèisean movement, just before Christmas in 1997, attended by *'every teenager worth their salt... everyone who was really cool in their 5th and 6th year went to this party'.* Although he knew of traditional musicians such as the McCalmans, Iain MacKintosh and Dick Gaughan, he started to discover folk music in a wider sense, including bands like Shooglenifty, the Peatbog Faeries, Wolfstone, the Tartan Amoebas and Martyn Bennett. The following year saw the first Fèis Alba and while there he remembers a teacher, Davie MacLennan, saying to him: *'You've got to keep up with your Gaelic'.* *'I think that was probably one of the things that got me... more into my'*

Gaelic... to be encouraged like that. While at university, Eoghan realised his Gaelic was foundering, so he took a year at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and then returned to finish his degree, knowing he wanted to work in Gaelic.

'It's been important for me because of my development as a Gaelic speaker ... it gave me something that made Gaelic seem like a rich, viable, vibrant thing that was alive and it was a great thing for me to learn and would be of great value to me... personally and spiritually... it was very relevant to me... it's highly important for people to understand where they've come from... anywhere in the world.... if a tree (doesn't) have roots it dies and it's the same with people really.'

He can identify key factors in his life and trace them to the Fèisean movement. *'If there was no Fèis my life would be entirely different... in a way I can't think back over my personal life history over the last 12 years without thinking that the Fèis has had a very big role to play in that'*. He says the confidence and cultural awareness he's gained are unquantifiable. *'The Fèis itself never got me to write my 6th year study Gaelic thesis on my family history... it never itself made me go to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to become fluent in Gaelic... it never itself makes me speak Gaelic to my Granny... but the vibrancy it imparted about the Gaelic culture and the Highland culture, it just provided that environment... the friends and the companionship... allowed... me to grow as a human being and develop as an adult... and make my own rational decisions... I made all these decisions about what I was going to do... but these would never have happened without the Fèis'*. Eoghan also says the movement grounded him within his own family, where Gaelic was one generation away from being lost. *'Just to be able to speak to my Granny in Gaelic is great... I think I speak a lot more to my Granny now than I ever have done because I speak Gaelic'*.

Eoghan says he got the job at the Gaelic Development Agency through the connection with the Fèis and has been working on the Gaelic Bill. After the secondment he will attend Jordanhill College to fulfil his ambition to become a teacher and wants to teach Gaelic and modern studies. He wants to encourage young people to learn and speak Gaelic and will do so with his own children too, if he has them. *'They won't have a choice!'*

Case study: JULIE FOWLIS

'The Fèis has done a power of good, not only for the culture and the music but for the language as well, making it accessible to young people.'

When Julie Fowlis and her parents were at a parents' evening in high school, one of her teachers said there was no point in her continuing to study Gaelic since, as a non native speaker, she would never be able do anything with it, or get a job in any Gaelic related industry. Thinking it wouldn't help her, Julie dropped it. Today, Julie is an acclaimed Gaelic singer, already established in her professional musical career. *'I don't think of it as bad advice'*, says Julie, acknowledging that her teacher believed he was trying to help her and could not have foreseen how Gaelic would develop, especially in the media, *'but I'm glad I proved him wrong!'*

Julie is from North Uist and grew up with Gaelic *'from the word go'*, with a native Gaelic speaking mother. She did Gaelic song in school - as well as speaking, praying and playing games in the language. But like a lot of her generation, when spoken to in Gaelic, she would respond in English. *'The change in my generation from my mother's was that English had become the mainstay in terms of television and radio and it was everywhere'*. Also, Julie's father was not a Gaelic speaker, so English was the language used at home. Julie was also aware of a feeling among her contemporaries that it was perhaps not 'cool' to speak Gaelic. The family moved to Strathpeffer when she was a teenager and she continued with Gaelic in high school - until that piece of advice.

Julie's instrumental education began at Primary Four, when she was taught chanter by the late Calum Campbell. She competed in local Mods and did singing and Highland dancing. Later, classical piano tuition helped develop her reading skills. She had relied on playing from memory and was caught out as a teenager when her piping tutor tested whether she had learned a tune by asking her to play from the notation he gave her. She played the tune perfectly

- but not the one in front of her! Later, when she decided to do standard grade music, she learned oboe - the last instrument available in school - and cor anglais.

Julie attended Fèis Tir an Eòrna when she was nine, *'I just remember it being great fun... all of your friends were going'*. It was also a great chance to learn instruments - chanter, keyboard and pipe band drumming - as well as Gaelic and shinty. She made new friends and says socially the Fèis was *'great'*. After attending for several years, Julie left North Uist and didn't return to another Fèis until doing a university business studies placement at Fèis Alba in Skye. Julie says going back *'kind of opened my eyes again'*. There were students from the degree course at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, *'who got to work with their idols... I remember meeting so many folk and it was a great thing, a really great thing... That summer, I remember it so well. I was working... but you were still involved in the sessions and the sing songs and the craic.'* She played whistle then - *'fairly rubbish I think!'* and felt herself going through a self-conscious phase of how little she knew of traditional music. She was in awe of the RSAMD students - never mind the tutors. *'It's funny now looking back, how highly I held them and now I'm just in amongst them doing the same thing and it's amazing really.'*

Julie did a music degree at the University of Strathclyde and was singing more in Gaelic, with increasing frustration at not being able to converse in the language. This was followed by the Gaelic immersion course at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig which *'was literally like unlocking a door'* and gave her the confidence to use the language inside her head.

Musically, Julie found the Fèisean hugely important. She helped co-ordinate concerts for the first Ceilidh Trail at Fèis Rois, as well as playing pipes and singing. She describes it as *'part of a great learning curve, a great thing for me'*. She benefitted directly herself, as it helped her overcome a very bad problem with nerves.

Socially, the Fèis has created lasting friendships with fellow musicians that remain strong, even if they might not see each other for months at a time. *'I think there's something about playing music with other people that you do create a bond.'*

The Fèis has also created job opportunities. Julie was Education Development Officer for Fèis Rois and, facing a the choice of taking a full time job or completing her Gaelic course, was encouraged towards the latter, while the post was held open for her. After two years in the post, she continued part time to combine it with playing. Finally, she made the move into performing full time - *'the best decision I ever made'*. She plays with the band Dochas, has released her first solo album and is currently working on solo, duo and band projects.

Julie is in no doubt about the importance of the movement for young people, including herself. *'From being a child and just being in it because it was great fun and not really realising what an impact it was having on you... what you were being subjected to at the time... and then going back to it and seeing kids... people... studying music now that I saw just when I started work with the Fèisean 8 years ago and they'd just be starting off and you can see them coming right through university now and performing now for themselves... it is so important and it is such a huge thing'*.

She has taught at many Fèisean, including the one she first attended as a child and sees the movement growing. Julie feels that in some areas the element of culture being passed down through generations is no longer so common and that sense of musical community is being provided by the Fèis. She feels without the movement, the Gaelic culture *'would be in a much, much worse state. The Fèis has done a power of good not only for the culture and the music but for the language as well, making it accessible to young people. When I was in school, which isn't that long ago, it was so not cool to play the pipes, it was so very uncool to sing Gaelic, I mean you just didn't admit it to anybody and we would get a slagging for taking your pipes out or wearing the kilt or anything like that and you got a hard time for it. But now it's kind of different... it's kind of cool and trendy to be doing that sort of thing now. That mindset to change from black to white in such a short time is a big thing, it's a really big thing'*. Julie feels the Fèis has contributed to that change *'almost completely I'd say... it makes music relevant to them and the language and the whole package'*.

As for herself, *'I don't know if I'd be playing music at all (without the Fèis)... maybe not so much in my younger years, but if I hadn't had those years of experience... when I was 20 years old, helping behind the scenes... and getting back into the scene... I would still be playing pipes and singing a bit but I wouldn't be making a career out of it, certainly.'*

Case study: RACHEL NEWTON

'If I hadn't gone to the Fèis... I don't really know where I would be now.'

Rachel Newton from Edinburgh, spoke and sang in Gaelic as she grew up. She spent holidays in Achiltibuie - where her mother Jessie is from - and went to the Gaelic Medium School in Edinburgh. Rachel's mother understood, but didn't speak Gaelic; although it was her own parents' first language, she was not encouraged to use it. Rachel's father is from West Lothian.

When she was 9 - she is now 19 - Rachel went to Fèis Rois in Ullapool. She was already playing violin, had just started playing clarsach at school, was speaking Gaelic and starting to be involved and interested in the culture. Her cousin went too and the prospect of spending a week away from home was an exciting one.

She recalls the main thing then was probably the social aspect, rather than musical development. She played tin whistle, since she was learning clarsach and violin at school and wanted to try something new for fun. She particularly remembers performing the Fèis song on Loch Broom FM. *'I just totally loved it, loved it so much, it was always awful at the end when you had to go home'*.

Rachel went almost every year until she was 16 and enjoyed it so much her mother started Fèis Dhun Eideann, which Rachel has attended, together with Fèis Rois, Lochabair and Eilean an Fhraoich. In sixth year Rachel attended the City of Edinburgh Music School, studying clarsach as her first instrument and Gaelic singing. These took up much of her time, so again the Fèis provided an opportunity to play purely for enjoyment - Rachel chose fiddle. By now, the main benefit was learning from other musicians, both tutors and fellow participants, *'soaking up what they were doing and playing with them'*. She cites this valuable contact as being *'one of the things that's influenced me most as a musician'* and also in helping her become confident and grounded in traditional music. *'They just think, am I the only person interested in this sort of music, you know, how uncool am I ... but you go to a Fèis and you realise there's lot of... teenagers really into it as well and I think it really is a great thing'*.

She also credits the Fèis with maintaining her interest in playing. When she was about 15 and between clarsach teachers, she found she was losing interest, but kept it up through Saturday classes. Some lasting friendships through the Fèis movement have resulted in musical collaborations. After being involved in the Fèis Rois Ceilidh Trail for four years, Rachel and fellow players Fraya Thomsen and Lynsey Payne formed the band Cloud Nine. Other musical opportunities include performances at Celtic Connections and the Edinburgh Fiddle Festival. Rachel is currently doing the BMus Traditional Music Course at Newcastle University and was a finalist in this year's BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician of the Year.

'If I hadn't gone to the Fèis... I don't really know where I would be now. I cannot really imagine what I would be doing. I don't know if I'd be doing music at all. I would maybe be doing music as a hobby but I don't know if I would be studying it at degree level... because the Fèis was... what kept me interested in music. You went to the Fèis and you remembered the reason why you did music, just because it was so fun and sociable as well.'

In terms of language, Rachel doesn't feel the Fèis has made much difference to her personally, since she was using Gaelic at school and felt culturally grounded in her own family. But she acknowledges its importance in introducing and teaching Gaelic to young people. *'Some kids really take it on and just love it... I've seen kids really getting into Gaelic'*.

Rachel is certain of the relevance and future of the movement. *'I just see it getting more and more popular... with loads and loads of kids going to it. From my own experience of teaching at the Fèis, the kids just coming up and saying how much they love it and they're definitely coming back next year and they bring a lot of their own friends and every year there's more and more people.'*

'I think it is relevant to more and more young people as time goes by, that thing of people realising they are not alone in their love of traditional music and also being introduced to it... just going along and learning about a new culture, their own culture... so I would definitely say it was relevant in that way'.

Without the Fèis movement, Rachel sees the Gaelic culture being far less accessible to young people, especially without the association with school and the competitive element of the Mod. *'The Fèis turns it into fun and recreation and something that you go to and really enjoy... and although you're actually learning a lot it's like a holiday and you're meeting other people'.*

Rachel sees her future in performing, composing and teaching and would like to teach at the Fèis. She is certain she would not be aiming for a professional musical career without the Fèis and feels there are many who feel the same. *'There's nothing better really than playing with other people and getting enjoyment from the sound you're making and everyone's making as a whole... and that is the main enjoyment I've had from the Fèis, that was where I first had that experience properly, I would say.'*

Case study: JENNIFER PORT

'I would say that certainly a large percentage of what I've done is as a direct result of the Fèis because I can remember it being really good fun as well as educational...'

Jennifer Port from Golspie is 23 and working full time as a musician. She first went to Fèis Chataibh aged 10, at the suggestion of a teacher encouraging young musicians to form a band. She was told the Fèis was a good thing to go to during the summer and would offer a chance to try instruments that might not be available at school. She was already learning piano, oboe and recorder, but he helped her obtain a repaired clarsach through the local authority. That teacher was Graham McCarthy, to whom Jennifer says she owes a great deal.

She learned Gaelic singing, accordion and clarsach and although she recalls being poor at the accordion, nevertheless valued the chance to discover it was not the instrument for her. *'It was a great thing to be involved in... I remember having lots of fun trying instruments... some you can play, some you can't'*. The clarsach was in the former category and that first Fèis led to others throughout the summer and tuition which would otherwise have been impossible. *'That was the great thing about the Fèis... it was in a block ... you came away with sore fingers but you certainly learned a lot. I got the chance to learn by ear and... took the music away at the end of the week... I got the chance to be playing alongside other people, because quite often when you are playing an instrument... there are not too many (other) people in your area'*. One of the most valuable experiences the Fèis gave Jennifer was her first taste of public performance. *'Certainly it was always very positive musically'*. Fèis tuition was combined with private lessons under Vicki Horton.

Jennifer's parents are from Glasgow - the family moved to Sutherland in 1972 - and the Fèis was her introduction to Gaelic language and song - *'the teachers made it such fun!'* She took both further in her degree course and although not fluent, says without the Fèis she might never have become involved. She was proud to tick the census box counting her as a Gaelic speaker. Jennifer feels strongly about the importance of the Fèis in the future of Gaelic, especially as the language faces difficulty with falling numbers of speakers. *'I think it's so important that it's kept alive and given the opportunity... the Fèis is hugely important in doing that... getting the Gaelic across to the children... not always just the language ... the culture within the music and the dance and arts and crafts... there are so many things at the Fèis now, but I think that as a culture as well as a language, it's maybe the first opportunity some children are getting to do it at all'*.

Jennifer later attended Fèis Rois and Fèis Alba and valued meeting others of different ages, from different areas. She stays in touch with friends made at the Fèis, including Kathleen Graham from Skye, with whom she did the BA Scottish Music Degree at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. After graduating with Honours in 2003, Jennifer travelled the world for a year - 14,000 miles with her clarsach! - then set up in business. Her playing credentials include many successes at the Mod since the age of 12, including a crop of gold medals in 2004 and one engagement which Jennifer acknowledges will probably be linked to her name forever... playing at the wedding of Madonna and Guy Ritchie and the christening of their son. *'I cannot possibly look at it in a bad way, because definitely it has generated publicity... but it does amuse me that we're now five years on and some people are so enthusiastic about it'*. Jennifer was approached by Skibo Castle and asked to reserve the dates, only told why nearer the time and sworn to secrecy - difficult living in a student flat! - and she still cannot reveal certain details. She wrote a tune, The Secret, *'after the biggest secret I ever had to keep!'*. Jennifer is proud of having played at the event and feels lucky to have been chosen, *'but I'm more proud of the fact that I got a degree from the (Royal Scottish) Academy of Music and Drama than I played for Madonna, to be quite honest... I think that's probably true because that came from sheer hard work!'*

While Jennifer's sure the high profile engagement has generated work, she's also certain the Fèis has been a springboard. *'I would say that certainly a large percentage of what I've done is as a direct result of the Fèis because I can remember it being really good fun as well*

as educational... it wasn't a case of something my Mum and Dad thought I should go to... it was something I really enjoyed going to and I got a lot out of it.

Jennifer teaches at Fèisean, including Fèis an Earraich and Fèis Chataibh and welcomes the movement's presence in places like Cumbernauld and Bishopbriggs. Working for the Youth Music Initiative, she's introduced hundreds of children to instruments like the bodhran, keyboard and clarsach and given them a whistle to keep. *'I just think that's fantastic... just the fact that the kids come away... being able to play tunes on the whistle and the fact that nobody's going to say, oh we need to take that back now... so in that respect I think the interest must be much greater now among children, of the Fèis and the types of music and culture of the Fèis, therefore I think it can only go from strength to strength.'*

Case study: DEIRDRE GRAHAM

'I think the Fèis is the single most important movement that has promoted Gaelic music.'

Deirdre Graham is 20, from Breakish in Skye and grew up bi-lingual in Gaelic and English and surrounded by traditional music. She has sung all her life, started playing clarsach at school, then classical piano at 12. When Deirdre was nine, she entered a school competition, run by the Gaelic Society of London, in which she interviewed her grandfather in Gaelic - and won. At school in Skye, she recalls Gaelic medium pupils were called 'Gaelic aliens' by their English medium contemporaries.

At three, Deirdre attended Fèis Barraigh with her sister Kathleen and brother Magnus and although she cannot remember much about it, knows she loved it. She went several times but went mainly to Fèis an Earraich, where she learned Gaelic singing, clarsach and drama. At first, when she was too young to stay at the Fèis in Plockton, she *'hated having to go home ... It was great fun... you met loads of new people because it was Skye and Lochalsh... you had all the different kids from different schools taking part... pretty much everyone went to the Fèis really'*. Deirdre made new friends whom she would see again next year and became closer to friends from her own school, as well as building her musical repertoire. She was learning clarsach and fiddle, but remembers, *'if you didn't play an instrument you did drama or you did singing or took up something... it was definitely a highlight of the year, you'd got the Fèis coming up... the dance on the Thursday night... it really was a big thing and it stayed with me'*.

Deirdre attended different Fèisean until she was 17 and recalls the benefit musically of getting different clarsach tutors: *'you were getting material that you wouldn't have had otherwise... you weren't working towards the Mod curriculum or working towards whatever, you were getting new stuff and it was fresh and a different style and then later on I started developing my own ideas'*. Developing ideas and repertoire were the most valuable elements to her as a player. While she would work on technique with her regular tutor, *'the Fèis was there for a burst of new tunes... technique came into it but not as the main objective.'*

She learned Gaelic songs early on, but didn't continue, with clarsach, drama and newly discovered stepdancing becoming her main interests. Socially, it was *'fantastic'* and Deirdre had recognised the value of the Fèis as a musician. *'I think if you get past a certain age... if you're still going to the Fèisean, you're obviously going to have a keen interest in music, by the time you get to 5th... or 6th year you've got an idea that music is important to you and so the people that were still doing it at that age, you had this common interest and so that is really important I think'*. Deirdre complemented her experiences by going to concerts, festivals and events where she often met fellow Fèis goers.

'I think the Fèis is the single most important movement that has promoted Gaelic music. I think it's the biggest surge of... Gaelic music revival that there has been... I've grown up through it, a load of my friends... some of them that aren't into music always regret not having carried on the Fèis for the music... I think everyone, whether they're going into music or not, will look back on the Fèis and definitely find importance in it, whether it's socially or musically or whatever.'

In terms of Gaelic language, Deirdre is certain of the movement's value. *'Initially the Fèis was set up to revive local traditions and language and music and dance and song... and I think they have done a great job on that. I think in the last few years there's been a stronger emphasis put on Gaelic language... musically it's getting bigger and bigger and bigger and the language is now going with it'*. While always certain of the aims of the movement herself, Deirdre is aware that some parents might send their children to the Fèis without knowing a lot about the aims, but she feels this is being addressed. She also feels it is *'incredible'* that the movement now exists in places like Dumbarton and Stirling.

Deirdre teaches at several Fèisean, starting nine years ago as a shadow tutor and teaches clarsach, Gaelic singing, keyboards and stepdancing. It is her main source of teaching. *'I suppose because my own experiences were great at the Fèis... socially it's fantastic as a participant and a tutor ... just because I got so much out of it musically and I really appreciate the... fantastic... work that they're doing... and they're reaching more and more people and so I want to be part of it... I very much welcome the chance to do it'*.

Deirdre is studying Gaelic song and piano on the BA Scottish Music Degree course at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and is about to do Honours. Afterwards, she would like to do the television course at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and would ultimately like to combine music, teaching, media and Gaelic in a freelance career. She certainly sees herself living and working in the Highlands and remaining involved in the Fèisean movement. Looking further ahead, if she has a family, *'they are going to Gaelic medium, they are going to the Fèis... just because I've had such fun and great experience with it myself! I do feel that over the years I'm gaining more awareness and appreciation of the culture but also that fun is definitely one of the most important factors as well.'*

Case study: EWEN and MEGAN HENDERSON

'Not everyone will like Gaelic, not everyone will like traditional music, but unless they try it or check it out... they're never going to know, so it's great to get them into it in some way.'

'It's keeping the culture and traditional music in Scotland and keeping it alive and not letting it go to waste...'

Megan Henderson and her brother Ewen, from Fort William, belong to one of Scotland's most distinguished musical families. Megan, who is 16 and about to enter 6th year at Lochaber High School, plays fiddle, accordion, piano and flute. Ewen is 18, has just finished at the same school and is about to go to university and plays pipes, fiddle and piano.

Both attended their first Fèis at eight - Fèis Lochabair, which their father is involved in running. Some of their siblings had already been and they were eager for their turn. Both were already playing and wanted to go for the music. Their older siblings spoke Gaelic, as did their grandparents, but their parents represented a missed generation. Megan recalls, *'growing up you always had a lot of Gaelic songs and music going on in the house, you just kind of grew up with it and when you went to the Fèis everyone got a Fèis song and about half an hour of Gaelic each day'*. On entering high school she took Gaelic at standard and now higher grade, as did Ewen. As well as the Fèis Gaelic classes, both also took Saturday classes and were encouraged by their family to learn and use Gaelic. Ewen recalls it wasn't *'cool'* to speak Gaelic at school, but says *'I always thought it was quite cool because a lot of the slightly older people, like musicians I admired and looked up to ... used it or liked the music so I thought it was quite cool'*. The Fèis gave them both a taste of - and for - Gaelic, especially through games. Says Megan, *'when you're younger, if you enjoy something you find it easier to learn, so in a game you'll pick it up and probably remember it'*. Ewen adds, *'You want to make it as least like school*

as you can make it'. Both feel they benefited from their exposure to Gaelic at the Fèis, so that at school they were not starting from scratch. Neither is fluent but continually improving and Ewen is considering the Gaelic immersion course at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. He says the Fèis is important in encouraging the use of Gaelic, *'among many Fèis goers it's trendy, it's quite cool to be speaking it and they might not have it if it wasn't for the Fèis ... it just makes it seem more alive.'*

Both were motivated to go their first Fèis to learn and improve on their instruments, learn new tunes and meet tutors from all over Scotland and the world, as well as work with other young musicians. Both had started by playing classical violin but wanted to learn traditional music. They were surrounded by traditional music at home and had fiddle lessons under Angus Grant.

Megan describes the Fèis as *'magic ... it was just really good fun ... you got to meet new friends ... got more tunes ... each year you could see yourself gradually getting better and the tutors were really helpful as well'*. Ewen recalls, *'When I was just wanting to learn traditional music it was just tunes, tunes, tunes, tunes that I wanted to get. Even if you weren't particularly good at music or all that interested, there were things for you to do ... activities and ... games, so it was quite fun.'*

Both have formed friendships that have carried into high school, made stronger by the common interest of music. *'It was great going and meeting loads of other people, young people your same age who were learning traditional music as well and having the same interests.'* Ewen says, *'One of my best friends was probably at the very first Fèis I went to ... you had this common interest, your strongest interest, you both shared, playing with them ... you could talk to other ones (friends) about football and stuff but then they wouldn't understand when you were talking about traditional music'*. Megan and Ewen play in Broslum, a band they started from the Fèis and after attending Fèis Rois, Ewen is in a four strong band, The Tassle Bandits. While he'd like to pursue a musical career, he'll first study aeronautical engineering at Glasgow University but intends to get involved in the city's music scene and perhaps form another band. He insists, *'I would always need traditional music around me ... I don't know what I would do if I didn't have that'*. Megan is studying music in high school and hopes for a musical career, possibly a combination of performing and teaching. Both value the musical, social and cultural experiences the Fèis has given them. Says Megan, *'I don't think I would have probably carried on Gaelic in school ... I might have dropped it after second year ... because otherwise it would have just been a school subject like any other ... we wouldn't have got to know a lot of people from different places in Scotland and stayed in touch with them and got to play with different people...'* and Ewen adds, *'I think musically we'd be pretty well trapped in this area'*.

They relish the chance to encounter musically diverse cultures from other countries and broaden their musical horizons, as Megan says, *'To get exposed to that is great ... that's an opportunity you would just miss out on altogether if it wasn't for the Fèis.'* The quality of the tutors is one valuable aspect of the Fèis which they feel encourages young musicians, *'if it's someone you really look up to it you'll work that extra bit harder as well'*.

Ewen feels the Fèis offers non Gaelic speakers in particular, a great opportunity, *'Not everyone will like Gaelic, not everyone will like traditional music, but unless they try it or check it out... they're never going to know, so it's great to get them into it in some way'*. Megan says of the movement's importance, *'it's keeping the culture and traditional music in Scotland and keeping it alive and not letting it go to waste ... all the talent ... and hopefully it will progress'*.

Through the Fèis, they played in Harvest at Celtic Connections, of which Ewen says, *'that was just a great experience of working with big name professional musicians and pulling together a big show and getting a wee bit of a taste of what it is like to work and that being your life'*. They're both looking forward to expanding that experience this year with the Ceilidh Trail.

Case study: LAUREN TAIT

'When I went to the Fèis I didn't even know what a clarsach was ... the Fèis ... has brought me where I am now...'

Lauren Tait, from Fort William, has just completed the Gaelic immersion course at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and is about to study clarsach and piano on the BA Scottish Music Degree Course at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, the realisation of a long held ambition.

She was brought up with traditional music, not by her parents, but her aunt and uncle who played in a Scottish ceilidh band. She attended her first Fèis Lochabair at eight, all her friends went and it was something to do in the Easter holidays. Lauren had just started playing the chanter and pipes were her first instrument for some years. She attended that Fèis for 10 years and went to others, including Fèis Mhuile, Alba and the Lochaber Ceilidh Trail.

'I always loved the Fèis, I used to start looking forward to the Fèis at Christmas time', she recalls, adding that tutors were a big part of the experience. 'It was never just about playing music ... you were playing games to do with music and I just really enjoyed it and all my friends enjoyed it as well.'

Before her teens, Lauren was *'totally into traditional music'*, playing six or seven instruments. *'I used to go and set them out in my living room and go round and play each one, one after the other, just spend a whole day doing that and that was the Fèis that did that.'*

At one time Lauren was taking Fèis classes for piping, accordion and group work with clarsach and *'used to look like a traveller because I'd have all these instruments all over me ... I played those three instruments intensively for a long while'*.

On starting high school, Lauren was afraid it wouldn't be thought *'cool'* to attend the Fèis. *'There were two camps, people who played music and who didn't. Fèis always had a good reputation for being a laugh and getting to play music and have a good time.'* With music lessons every Saturday Lauren was teased about always playing and being in the Gaelic choir. But she remembers turning the tables on her peers with their poorly paid Saturday jobs, since she could always earn more busking! At about 15, she realised the clarsach would be her first instrument. She had played in the band Broslum (with Ewen and Megan Henderson) and people kept telling her she should play more clarsach. *'When I went to the Fèis I didn't even know what a clarsach was. When I was about 12 I just wrote down on a bit of paper to the Fèis that I wanted to learn to play the clarsach. The clarsach's my first instrument now ... I would never have known what it was if it wasn't for the Fèis.'* Many of her opportunities are directly due to her involvement in the movement, such as Harvest at Celtic Connections and Beolach, as well as support gigs for Capercaillie and Blazing Fiddles. She also values the lasting friendships she's made. *'I've got so many friends from the Fèis I cannot actually count how many ... half these people ... I'd never met before, but because you have the same interests ... you'd just say, have you heard this CD? You might disagree about other things but music is always the common link, the common bond.'*

'I'd probably say that was one of the most valuable points of the Fèis, that it does bring friendships together and because of that you do get a lot more out of the music. There's the edge to it as well, that if you're playing and you hear somebody playing a tune better than you, you think, I'd better go and play that tune a bit better, but I don't think that's a bad thing at all, I think that's a really good thing.'

While Lauren would play music all year round, the Fèis provided a burst of renewed energy *'of everybody playing and getting the craic and then after that you were totally excited about the music again ... and you wanted to do it and do more and do more and do more'*. She feels the Fèis acts like a springboard to young musicians, getting their names known and showcasing them.

Lauren is not from what she would consider a Gaelic-speaking family. Her father's side is from the Borders and mother's side from Argyll, with Gaelic, but not in her mother's or grandparents' generations. While music was Lauren's first reason for attending the Fèis, the movement also provided her first real experience of the language. In high school she chose Gaelic over French and German and says she wouldn't have gone to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig without the Fèis. *'I've always believed even when I was young, that the language and the music go like that (links fingers) ... it's the introduction that's the most important thing about it ... even if it's just learning a couple of Gaelic songs when you're younger.'* The Fèis made her *'completely aware'* of the Gaelic culture. *'You were getting the best of tutors in the traditional music world, you were completely made aware of what was going on, if you wanted to be aware.'* She can now read, write and converse but is not yet a fluent speaker. *'I'm an example of how the Fèis introduced me to Gaelic and how I've brought it on.'*

Lauren believes the Fèis movement has a strong and relevant future. She'd like to see more done for teenagers and praises the Ceilidh Trail initiative. She has taught at several Fèisean and wants to involve the Fèis in her future as a teacher and performer.

Section 9: Conclusion

9.1 The Surveys

If respondents to our survey are representative of Fèis participants generally, then there seems little doubt that the Fèisean have provided a positive enriching experience for the majority of participants – indeed the evidence from the surveys is overwhelming in this regard:

- 76% of respondents reported a positive or strong positive influence on their motivation to learn Gaelic
- 79% of respondents reported a positive or strong positive influence on their attitude to Gaelic
- 87% of respondents reported a positive or strong positive influence on their motivation to play or learn a musical instrument or take part in Gaelic singing, drama or traditional dance
- 50% of respondents reported a positive or strong positive influence on their choice of study or career
- 61% of respondents reported a positive or strong positive influence on their intention to stay in, return or relocate to the Highlands and Islands
- 86% of respondents reported a positive or strong positive influence on their attitude towards the arts in general.

Results like these undoubtedly raise questions over the integrity of the sample. Analysis by level of Fèis participation was developed to try to take some account of ‘advocacy effects’. When unpicked according to respondents’ levels of participation in Fèisean, the results were less one-sided, but no less remarkable.

Among the notable findings of this analysis were the results for ‘sampler’ respondents – those who had attended only 1 or 2 Fèisean – where 42% said that their relatively limited engagement with the Fèis had positively influenced their choice of career or study.

The analysis showed that Fèisean were more likely to have been a greater influence on participants’ attitude to Gaelic music, arts and drama than to the language itself – and the positive influence on respondents’ attitude to Gaelic, whilst present in ‘sampler’, ‘returner’ and ‘devotee’ responses, was more pronounced among the ‘devotees’. ‘Samplers’ and ‘returners’ were much more likely not to have perceived an influence on their motivation to use or learn Gaelic, or their attitude to Gaelic.

‘Sampler’ respondents were also much more likely to say that participation in a Fèis had not changed their attitude to Gaelic music, arts and drama. Nearly a quarter (23%) of all ‘samplers’ say that the Fèisean exerted no influence on them with respect to participating in Gaelic arts.

If the respondents to this survey are at all representative of participants in the Fèisean movement generally then the survey also makes a startling point about the way the movement feeds and renews itself: if 1 in 5 learners go on to take part in the Fèisean in another role, this is a very positive indication for the continuing sustainability and growth of the movement – and for Gaelic arts in general.

Many of the findings of François Matarasso were confirmed, nearly 10 years after his study. Increased confidence, interpersonal skills, community cohesion and economic benefits were all recurring themes.

There were negative or critical comments, but these were very few in number. We do not wish to introduce a skewed picture by giving them undue prominence, for they are not representative of the majority of responses, but nevertheless most were reported, so that individual concerns and experiences, and cultural tensions, are acknowledged as part of the picture.

9.1 The Case Studies

Taken as a whole, the case studies represent a wholly positive account of the Fèis experience, although clearly the contribution made to each individual's life varies. These interviewees may be special cases – they represent success stories and many are now professionals – but the 'Fèis effects' they report are entirely consistent with those found in the wider survey.

Interviewees' original reasons for attending Fèisean varied. Some wanted musical tuition, others went for the craic. Once there, however, most experiences crystallised into three distinct areas: music, Gaelic and friendships. Reflecting one of the themes of the survey responses, most case study participants have made life-long friendships – despite the relatively short duration of individual events. The intensity of the experience and the common bond it established is a recurring theme. Many case study interviewees, like the respondents to the survey, were exposed to Gaelic for the first time at a Fèis and some have gone on to become fluent speakers and make Gaelic a central plank in their careers. Others have told us that learning Gaelic through the Fèis revived the language in their own families, where the language was in danger of disappearing. Several case study participants who have gone on to make music their career have told us that

'When you're nine years old you don't know who these people are, but you know they're good and... they made it really enjoyable and interesting and that's why you wanted to go'
Lindsay Dunbar

the Fèis was responsible for introducing them to what became their first instrument. In other cases, participants told us that going to the Fèis had motivated them to continue playing music when they were considering giving up. This was often due to individual Fèis tutors and the approach they adopted.

The case studies point up a theme that was also present in the survey responses, but which did not figure strongly in the analysis: how much fun the Fèisean are. Case study interviewees came back again and again to this aspect, underlining how much they looked forward to Fèis, how 'cool' they were, and how the informal approach taken and the quality of the tutors made learning fun – even subconscious.

9.3 The wider context: non-formal music making⁸

The 25 years of the existence of the Fèisean have seen enormous cultural, social and technological change. In many ways, the Fèisean have blazed a trail of innovation that others now follow. Nonetheless, it is worth looking for insights to be gained from examining a wider context, so that the movement may continue to adapt and grow. In this section, community arts expert David Price offers observations on that wider national picture, and looks ahead to next practice.

Non-formal sector growth

Perhaps in response to what has been described as ‘student alienation’ to music in schools, there has been an exponential growth in the UK in the ‘non-formal’ sector. Essentially, this sector comprises extra-curricular music projects in schools, instrumental tuition outside local authority provision, and a myriad of projects taking place in youth and community centres, arts venues and other places. The popularity of these projects is now leading to a call for the mainstreaming of such successes into more formal settings – a trend that is clearly evidenced by the Fèisean nan Gàidheal’s partnership with Highland Council to deliver activities under the Youth Music Initiative. Clearly, the Fèisean can play a key role in the future, so long as they are able to reflect and articulate what ‘works’ in their teaching and learning environments.

Informal learning processes

A key aspect of the success of the non-formal sector is the use of informal learning processes. Often seen in project and workshop settings, their characteristics include some of the following:

- The use of large-group ensemble playing;
- An emphasis upon aural/oral forms of learning, rather than a reliance on music literacy, in developing general musicianship skills;
- The incorporation of peer-coaching and apprenticeship models of learning;
- The use of improvisation, composition and student-derived materials rather than tutor-prescribed materials;
- The predominance of musical practice (i.e. doing) rather than ‘learning about’;
- The deployment of students as teacher, where young people lead in their area of expertise (e.g. specific genres, music technology, etc)

Such approaches are being advocated in initiatives in England (through the Wider Opportunities and Musical Futures programmes) and there is a substantive body of experience held by Fèisean that could contribute to a better understanding of effective teaching and learning in non-formal contexts.

⁸ The following definitions are widely accepted: ‘Formal’ - organised through statutory provision - schools, colleges, music services; ‘Non-formal’ - activities that take place outside of the formal settings, for example youth and community contexts. These are usually supervised by adult professionals or volunteers; ‘Informal’ - activities that young people organise and lead themselves without supervision.

There are two elements of what is currently being described as ‘next practice’ (in an attempt to avoid the dubious process of determining what makes ‘best’ practice) where Fèisean may wish to examine external models. The first is the development of creativity skills, particularly in composition and improvisation. It is now widely recognised that gaining confidence in these expressive musical skills can significantly improve self-esteem and sense of identity – two characteristics that sit well with the aims of the Fèisean.

The second is the way in which genre-specific work (Jazz, Pop, Traditional) is becoming increasingly at odds with the way young people listen to and experience music outside of the lesson or workshop. As Howard Goodall remarked recently “They [young people] have abandoned the musical frontiers that once seemed a fact of life for many musicians.”⁹ The vitality of traditional music in Scotland is due in part to the mix of genres that infuse many new artists’ work – certainly; creative experimentation is a key part of the contemporary scene in traditional music in Scotland. This new eclecticism is no passing fad and it is likely that in the not too distant future funders will eventually re-structure their schemes to reflect this. The Fèisean may be able to develop such skills of synthesis in its participants without compromising its core values.

Cultural diversity

Whilst opportunities for participation in the UK have flourished over the last 10 years, the beneficiaries overwhelmingly have come from one ethnic grouping: white British. Access to minority ethnic musics still remains patchy (particularly in rural communities) and ensuring that provision does not become ‘ghettoised’ is a challenge facing all music educators. In this respect, Fèisean nan Gàidheal faces a difficult balancing act between celebrating the indigenous and diverse culture, and making it easily accessible to a wide diversity of participants.

Growing your own

By general consent, the most pressing need arising from the growth of non-formal music making is ensuring a steady supply of appropriately skilled music leaders to meet needs. Conservatoires, Universities and Further Education colleges are attempting to meet this shortfall but with limited success. Young people are unlikely to see non-formal teaching/music leading as a first-choice career option, unless they have previously experienced it. The case studies here point to the effectiveness of the ‘informal apprenticeship’; elsewhere, projects like the Guildhall’s CONNECT programme, Birmingham’s Sound It Out or the Sage Gateshead have systematically trained music leaders for their own expanded needs by growing their own. As the results of this survey show, this is also a great strength of the Fèisean, and it could be usefully documented and shared among the wider music community.

⁹ <http://www.howardgoodall.co.uk/biog/Articles%20Page.htm>, accessed 15 September 2005.

9.4 The wider context – the policy crossroads

The 25th anniversary of the first Fèis is also a time of great change in Scotland: The Cultural Commission, conceived to offer a new ‘cultural vision’ for the nation, has reported; there are developments in curriculum, through the 3-18 ‘Curriculum for Excellence’; whilst in the Gaidhealtachd, Highlands and Islands Enterprise has launched its strategy for ‘A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands’. Bòrd na Gàidhlig has also been established and The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act has been passed by the Scottish Parliament for commencement early in 2006.

It is against this backdrop that the current study has been undertaken. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act requires Bòrd na Gàidhlig to produce a National Plan for Gaelic. Within that plan, arts activity should feature as an important medium through which many people have their first engagement with the language, as evidenced by the work being carried out by the Fèisean.

At the time of writing, the Executive’s response to the Cultural Commission report is awaited but it is worth remarking here that the report singles out the Fèisean for praise, commenting that ‘the commission was deeply impressed with the scope of the achievement.’¹⁰

The 3-18 curriculum review is also at an interim stage at the time of writing, but it is striking how many of its aspirations (expressed in its 2004 document *A Curriculum for Excellence*) are, if the results of the survey are at all representative, already made a reality within the Fèisean. *A Curriculum for Excellence* aims for all young people to be ‘successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors’. Under these broad headings, some of the specific aims which seem particularly relevant to the work of the Fèisean in the light of the findings of this research include having ‘enthusiasm and motivation for learning’; ‘self-respect’; and a ‘commitment to participate responsibly in [...] social and cultural life’.¹¹

The Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) strategy for *A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands* provides yet further points of contact between the effects of the Fèisean, as suggested by this study, and wider policy aims. The overall aim of the strategy is to ‘enable people living in the Highlands and Islands to realise their full potential on a long-term sustainable basis’. The results of the survey point clearly to the Fèisean helping to fulfil this aim – with sustainability (perhaps its most challenging aspect) underlined by the survey result that suggests that 1 in 5 Fèis learners go on to support the movement in another way. ‘Strengthening the Gaelic language’, which, if the results of this survey are at all representative, is a key outcome of participation in a Fèis, is noted as a priority for action.¹²

One of the most striking results of the research was that well over half of respondents reported a positive or strong positive influence from Fèis participation on their intention to stay in, return or relocate to the Highlands and Islands. The potential importance of this apparent effect of participation in a Fèis is pointed up by the HIE strategy, which reports strong agreement

¹⁰ [...], ‘Our Next Major Enterprise’: *Final Report of the Cultural Commission* (Edinburgh, 2005), 84.

¹¹ [...], *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Edinburgh, 2004), 12.

¹² [...], *A Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands* (Inverness, 2005), 17.

among stakeholders in the Highlands and Islands that ‘encouraging more people to live, work and study in the Highlands and Islands will improve prosperity and quality of life for everyone.’

If the stakeholders that HIE consulted in developing their strategy are correct, it may be that the astonishing effects of Fèis participation reported by those who contributed to this study could have a wider impact in the Highlands and Islands, since Fèisean take place all over Scotland and beyond. If Fèis participation – wherever it takes place – encourages identification with the Highlands and Islands, then the result could be far-reaching.

9.5 Coda

In their annual report on the first Fèis in 1981, the organisers wrote:

The Gaelic language has ceased to be the language of many homes and of the playground (except in Vatersay). A few years ago, this situation was being accepted as a natural sign of progress, but this is no longer the case. It is, however, abundantly clear that the Gaelic language can not survive in linguistic isolation but must be the fruit and flowering of a wider cultural and human expression of a distinctive Celtic expression. Music, song and bardic expression is an integral part of, and a necessary support to the language.¹³

The last quarter-century has seen massive expansion in Gaelic-medium education (making Gaelic, in some schools at least, the language of the playground once more). The rate of decline in the use of Gaelic has been stemmed, and is no longer seen as ‘natural’. What was ‘abundantly clear’ to the organisers of Fèis Barraigh in 1981 is vindicated by the results of this study: 25 years on from this first Fèis, the fruitfulness of the approach pioneered on Barra and propagated by the growing Fèis movement and Fèisean nan Gàidheal is clearly evident. It is a success story to be told and celebrated.

¹³ [...], *Fèis Bharraidh: First Annual Report* ([unpublished], 1981), 2.

Appendix 1: The questionnaire



A' comharrachadh
25 bliadhna de na Fèisean

Celebrating 25 years of the Fèisean

RSAMD
The ROYAL SCOTTISH ACADEMY
of MUSIC & DRAMA

Mar phàirt de chomharrachadh 25bl de na Fèisean, tha an t-Ionad Rannsachaidh Nàiseanta airson nan Ealain Bheò aig an RSAMD a' deanamh rannsachaidh air a' bhuidhe a thug na Fèisean air an fheadhainn a ghabh pàirt annta thairis air na bliadhnan sin.

Innsidh an rannsachadh sgeul cuid de na ghabh pàirt ann a' Fèisean agus feuchaidh e ris a' bhuidhe a bh'aige air am beatha a shealltainn; air an dreuchd neo an t-ionnsachadh a' roghnaich iad a leantainn; ach gu bunaiteach, air am beachdan fhèin air a' Ghàidhlig.

Chuireadh an ceisteachan seo gu sampall de na ghabh pàirt ann a' Fèisean, 's a bha clàraichte aig luchd eagrachaidh nam Fèisean. Tha na ceistean a' feuchainn ri shoillearachadh dè bhuidhe, ma bha dad idir, a bha aig gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis orra.

Mas urrainn dhuit beagan ùine a ghabhail gus an ceisteachan seo a lionadh sa thilleadh, bhiodh sin na chuidicheadh mòr dhuinn gu barrachd fhaighinn a-mach mu na Fèisean. Mòran taing dhuit.

Ma tha ceistean sam bith agad mun cheisteachan, neo mun rannsachadh, 's e do bheatha fios a chur gu Stephen Broad air s.broad@rsamd.ac.uk (0141 270 8329).

As part of the celebrations of 25 years of the Fèisean movement, the National Centre for Research in the Performing Arts at the RSAMD is undertaking a study of the impact of the Fèisean on participants over the last quarter-century.

The research will map out the story of people who have taken part in Fèisean and will try to find out how participation has affected their life, their career or study choices, and crucially, their attitude to Gaelic.

This questionnaire has been sent to a sample of Fèis participants from records provided by Fèis organisers, and asks a range of questions that aim to understand if, and how, taking part in a Fèis has influenced you.

If you can take a few moments to complete and return this questionnaire, it will help us learn a good deal more about the Fèis movement. Thanks for your help.

If you have any queries about the questionnaire or the study, please feel free to contact Stephen Broad on s.broad@rsamd.ac.uk (0141 270 8329).

1. Dè'n dòigh anns an do ghabh thu pàirt ann a' Fèis? (Comharraich gach dòigh)
In what way have you participated in a Fèis? (Tick all that apply)

- Mar neach-ionnsachaidh *As a learner*
Mar neach-teagaisg *As a tutor*
Mar neach-cuideachaidh *As a volunteer*
Mar neach-eagrachaidh *As an organiser*

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

2. Dè bhliadhna anns an d'rugadh tu?
In which year were you born?
3. Dè chiad phàirt den chòd puist a th'agad an dràsda (m.e. PA75, IV43)?
What is the first part of your current postcode (e.g. PA75, IV43)?
4. Bheil thu fireann neo boireann?
Are you male or female?
5. Bheil thu an dràsda *Are you currently:*

- 'S an sgoil *At school*
Nad oileanach làn-thìde *A full time student*
Ann an cosnadh *In employment*
Eile *Other*

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

6. *Ciamar a tha thu ga do mheas fhèin?* How do you describe yourself?

- Albannach Geal *White Scottish*
Breatannach Geal eile *Other White British*
Eireannach Geal *White Irish*
Geal eile *Other White*
Innseanach *Indian*

- Pagiosànach *Pakistani*
- Bangladeiseach *Bangladeshi*
- Aiseanach eile (Deasach) *Other (South) Asian*
- Sìneach *Chinese*
- Carobaidheanach *Caribbean*
- Afracanach *African*
- Albannach Dubh agus Dubh eile *Black Scottish and other Black*
- loma-threubh *Mixed*
- Eile *Other*
- Chan eil mi deònach *I do not wish to provide this*
- a'fiosrachadh seo a thoirt *information*
- seachad

7. Dè na Fèisean aig an robh thu agus cò na bliadhnachan? (Thoir tuairmse mur eil cuimhne agad gu cinnteach!)

Which Fèisean have you attended, and in which years? (Take a guess if you can't remember exactly!)

Fèis	Na Bliadhnachan <i>Years attended</i>
<i>e.g. Fèis Mhuile</i>	<i>96 97 98 ?99</i>

8. Dè bhuidh, ma bha dad idir, a thug gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis air do **thogradh** gu Gàidhlig a'chleachdadh neo ionnsachadh?

*What influence, if any, has participation in a Fèis had on your **motivation to use** (or learn) Gaelic?*

- Buidh làidir a thaobh *Strong positive influence*
- Buidh mheadhonach a thaobh *Positive influence*
- Cha robh buaidh idir *No influence*
- Buidh an aghaidh *Negative influence*
- Buidh làidir an aghaidh *Strong negative influence*

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

9. Dè bhuidh, ma bha dad idir, a thug gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis air do **bheachd** air Gàidhlig?

*What influence, if any, has participation in a Fèis had on your **attitude** towards Gaelic?*

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Buidh làidir a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong positive influence</i> |
| Buidh mheadhonach a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Positive influence</i> |
| Cha robh buaidh idir | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>No influence</i> |
| Buidh an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Negative influence</i> |
| Buidh làidir an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong negative influence</i> |

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

10. Dè bhuidh, ma bha dad idir, a thug gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis air do thogradh gu **inneal ciùil** a chluich neo ionnsachadh, neo pàirt a ghabhail ann an **seinn is dràma Ghàidhlig**, neo **dannsa tradaiseanta**?

*What influence, if any, has participation in a Fèis had on your motivation to play or learn a **musical instrument** or take part in **Gaelic singing, drama or traditional dance**?*

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Buidh làidir a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong positive influence</i> |
| Buidh mheadhonach a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Positive influence</i> |
| Cha robh buaidh idir | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>No influence</i> |
| Buidh an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Negative influence</i> |
| Buidh làidir an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong negative influence</i> |

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

11. Dè bhuidh, ma bha dad idir, a thug gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis air an **dreuchd** neo **an t-ionnsachadh** a roghnaich thu leantainn? Ma tha thu anns an sgoil, dè bhuidh a tha thu a' smaoinneachadh a dh'fhaodadh a bhi aige ort san àm ri teachd?

*What influence, if any, has participation in a Fèis had on your **choice of career or study**? If you're at school, what influence do you think it might have **in the future**?*

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Buidh làidir a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong positive influence</i> |
| Buidh mheadhonach a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Positive influence</i> |
| Cha robh buaidh idir | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>No influence</i> |
| Buidh an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Negative influence</i> |
| Buidh làidir an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong negative influence</i> |

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

12. Dè bhuidh, ma tha dad idir, a thug gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis air cho buailteach sa tha thu **fuireach, neo tilleadh neo gluasad don Ghàidhealtachd 's na h-Eileanan**? Ma tha thu a' fuireach còmhla ri pàrant neo ri neach-cùraim, dè bhuidh a tha thu a' smaoinneachadh a bhios aige ort san àm ri teachd?

What influence, if any, has participation in a Fèis had on the likelihood of you **remaining in, returning or relocating to the Highlands and Islands**? If you live with a parent or guardian, what influence do you think it might have **in the future**?

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Buidh làidir a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong positive influence</i> |
| Buidh mheadhonach a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Positive influence</i> |
| Cha robh buaidh idir | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>No influence</i> |
| Buidh an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Negative influence</i> |
| Buidh làidir an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong negative influence</i> |

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

13. Dè bhuaidh, ma tha dad idir, a thug gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis air mar a tha thu a' faicinn nan ealan san fharsaingeachd?

What influence, if any, has participation in a Fèis had on the way you see the arts in general?

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Buaidh làidir a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong positive influence</i> |
| Buaidh mheadhonach a thaobh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Positive influence</i> |
| Cha robh buaidh idir | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>No influence</i> |
| Buaidh an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Negative influence</i> |
| Buaidh làidir an aghaidh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <i>Strong negative influence</i> |

Inns tuilleadh dhuinn (mas math leat) *Tell us more (optional):*

14. Dè na buannachdan neo na h-easbhuanachdan a thàinig ort fhèin agus air do choimhearsnachd ri linn a bhi a' gabhail pàirt ann a' Fèis?

What advantages or disadvantages has participation in a Fèis brought to both you and your community?

Inns dhuinn dad sam bith a tha thu fhèin a' faicinn iomchaidh, mas e do thoil e
Please tell us about anything you think might be relevant

Mòran taing dhuit airson an t-saothair a ghabhail an ceisteachan seo a lionadh.

Faodaidh tu an ceisteachan crìochnaichte a thilleadh anns a' chèis-litreach a tha an luib seo, oir neo a thilleadh le post-dealain gu: Madeleine Stafford, Research Administrator, RSAMD, 100 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G2 3DB m.stafford@rsamd.ac.uk (0141 270 8310).

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. You can send the completed questionnaire by post using the enclosed envelope or by email to: Madeleine Stafford, Research Administrator, RSAMD, 100 Renfrew Street, Glasgow G2 3DB m.stafford@rsamd.ac.uk (0141 270 8310).

Appendix 2: Question areas for semi-structured interviews (case studies)

The following question areas formed the basis of the case study interviews.

1. Relevant personal and family background, including music and Gaelic language?
2. When and why did you attend your first Fèis?
3. What did you do?
4. What did you expect?
5. What sort of experience was it? (positive/negative)
6. Key events/conversations/memories?
7. How did it influence or benefit you regarding...
 - a. ...Music
 - b. ...Gaelic language and culture
 - c. ...Friendships
 - d. ...Choice/direction of career
8. Attitude towards Fèis in terms of its importance and relevance regarding...
 - a. ...Music
 - b. ...Gaelic language and culture
 - c. ...What it has brought to your own life
9. Any negative experiences?
10. What are you doing now?
11. How do you envisage your future?
12. How do you see the future of the Fèis movement?
13. Any other comments that I haven't given you a chance to make?

Appendix 3: List of interviewees

Douglas Beck

Lindsay Dunbar

Julie Fowles

Laura Green

Mhairi Hall

Ewen Henderson

Megan Henderson

Lynne Houston

Lauren MacColl

Rachel Newton

Jennifer Port

Eoghan Stiubhart

Lauren Tait

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