AR STÒRAS GÀIDHILG

Sgrùdadh-cùise: Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnG) agus Blas

Tha an rannsachadh o chionn ghoirid air luach na Gàidhlig mar so-mhaoin eacnachmach is shòisealta, a’ sealltainn dhuinn eisimpleirean air ciamar a bhios gniomhachasan, ionairtean sóisealta, agus coimhearsnachdan a’ cleachadh Gàidhlig, agus de cho cudromach sa tha i ann an conaltradh, amasan sóisealta agus coimearsalta. Tha an sgrùdadh-cùise seo a’ taisbeanadh ciamar a tha Fèisean nan Gàidheal a’ cleachadh Gaelic mar so-mhaoin.

An-dràsta, tha 44 Fèisean (féisean ciùil neo-fharpaiseach) gniomhach ann, le còrr is 15 luchd-obrach lân-ùine ag obair eadar a’ phriomh bhuidheann agus Fèis Rois. Tha FnG agus Blas le chéile a’ taighinn maoineachadh bunait bho Alba Cruthachail. A réir rannsachadh a chaidh a dhéanamh bho chionn ghoirid do HIE, tro ghnìomhan nam féisean, chaidh iomlan de 107 obraichean ionann is lân-ùine (FTE) a chruthachadh (‘a gabhail a-steach FnG, Fèis Rois agus na h-oldean a th’air am fastadh). A thaobh àiteachan far a bheil féisean air an cumail, ‘s iad na h-aon sgirean air tir-mòr no anns na h-Eileanan an làr far nach eil féisean Siorrachd Lannraig a Deas, Lodainn taobh a-muigh Dhùn Èideann, Siorrachd Chlach Mhanainn, Dùn Dè agus Fìobha.
Tha Fng a’ creidinn gu bheil an gniomhan riath a bhith nan imeall airson inbhe a’ chàinann àrdadhadh an àite a’ chìul, ged is e ‘an cèol a tha a’ tàladh dhaoinne gu ruige nam fèisean.” Ged nach eil iad a’ faicinn an cuid oibrach mar theagasg Gàidhlig, tha iad a’ creidinn gum b’ur chòir gach pàistè a thig gu féis blasad fhàighinn den chànan.

Tha Fng a’ faicinn na Gàidhlig mar fheart a tha gan déanann eadar-dhealaichte bhò prògràmata eile de dh’iodeachadh ciùil ‘raidséanta’, a tha thastho beò ann an Obair Dheadhain is Dùn Èideann, le Gàidhlig a fhàeart a tha a’ deàdhan nam fèisean cinnteach, agus a’ tabhann eileamaid a tha gan déanamh sònraichte. Leis a ra, tha Fng a’ creidinn gu bheil Gàidhlig a’ cur luach ris an eòlas a tha cór ris 6,000 oileanach a tha a’ ghabhail com-pàirt gach bhfiaidhna a’ faighinn, agus dh’han luchd-èisteachadh – a-nis a’ streap ri a’ gabhail com-pàirt a’ chàil geall ris an luchd-cìùil is a’ chàil geall ris an luchd-tadhail eadar-nàiseanta.

Chomhoir An Ghaeilge

Tha Fng a’ chàilgean a dh’oibrigh le luchd-eileamaid agus dh’han luchd-èisteachadh – a-nis a’ streap ri a’ gabhail com-pàirt ris an luchd-cìùil – a’ chàilgean a’ chàil geall ris an luchd-cìùil is a’ chàil geall ris an luchd-tadhail eadar-nàiseanta.

Coltas Ris Fèisean, Tha Fng a’ chàilgean a dh’oibrigh le luchd-eileamaid agus dh’han luchd-èisteachadh – a-nis a’ streap ri a’ gabhail com-pàirt ris an luchd-cìùil – a’ chàilgean a’ chàil geall ris an luchd-cìùil is a’ chàil geall ris an luchd-tadhail eadar-nàiseanta.

Air Fhoilscheadadh le
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd ‘s nan Eilean.

Airson an aithsigh uile agus foilseachaidhean eile, thigear gu www.hie.co.uk/gaelic

Airson tuilleadh fiosrachaidh air Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnG) agus Blas, thigear gu www.feisean.org agus www.blas-festival.com

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FnG believes its activities have always been a vehicle for promoting the language rather than the music, although 'it is the music that attracts the people to the féisean'. Although it does not see its job as teaching Gaelic, it believes that every child who comes to a féis should experience the language.

FnG see Gaelic as the component that distinguishes the féisean from other 'traditional' music tuition programmes, which still exist in places like Aberdeen and Edinburgh, with Gaelic being the added component that both makes the festivals authentic, and provides the element that makes them special. This being the case, FnG believes it adds Gaelic value to the experience of the 6,000 plus students who take part every year, and the audience - now in the range of almost 8,000 people annually. As well as being active within the féisean themselves, young musicians and those linked to the féisean are encouraged to become involved in the allied annual Blas festival. This is a separate initiative, run by FnG but also funded by The Highland Council. This has a much more outward looking focus, and does attract some international visitors.

Like the féisean the annual Blas festival has a profoundly Gaelic focus, with artists taking part also obliged to use Gaelic from the stage, in introducing their acts and in other aspects of their involvement. In 2012 almost 8,000 people came to the Blas events, which on principle, are held within communities, rather than consisting of big money making single events. “To put on a music event in the highlands to make money you would just put it in a big tent and charge, but the ethos of this is different – it is to take events out to communities”.

The performers are a mixture – some young performers directly linked to FnG, and others are quality Gaelic artists already performing for a living. In the organisation and performance of the Blas festival, strong links are always made to the young people within the féis movement, and also to organisations such as the Plockton-based National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music, and the Promoters Arts network. One aim is to give young people already involved in the work of the féisean an opportunity to perform alongside their preferred musicians and acts, thus further developing their experience in the music and arts field.

Audience feedback suggests that perhaps 80% of the Blas festival’s audience regularly acknowledge the enhancement added by Gaelic to the festivals.

Although the Blas events have a turnover approaching a quarter of a million pounds (£230,000), the organisers suggest that it is hard to specifically attribute a percentage of this to Gaelic since “if we were asked to run a festival then we wouldn’t ever do it without Gaelic – so it is 100% from that point of view. You could put on a non-Gaelic event but we wouldn’t be interested in running it”.

The incentive for FnG to become involved in the Blas activities was both that there would be a clear Gaelic element, but also that young people would have the chance to further develop the work and experience they had gained within the féisean themselves.

The issue of skills development continues to be an important one for FnG, with both Gaelic training for tutors being encouraged and expected, but also training provided for young people to take part in Cèilidh trails – of which there are currently seven. A fortnights training provision is provided for this in Plockton with one-to-one help also given so that those taking part can then go touring in their local areas, using Gaelic in their sets. Féis Rois similarly undertake a ‘national cèilidh trail’ even taking Gaelic to the Cambridge Folk Festival.

Further arts training is given by the FnG’s Gaelic drama theatre education group which helps develop drama in Gaelic schools every year and includes a Gaelic Summer School. FnG has also set up what it calls Fèisgoil, a Gaelic to the Cambridge Folk Festival. Although the Blas events have a turnover approaching a quarter of a million pounds (£230,000), the organisers suggest that it is hard to specifically attribute a percentage of this to Gaelic since “if we were asked to run a festival then we wouldn’t ever do it without Gaelic – so it is 100% from that point of view. You could put on a non-Gaelic event but we wouldn’t be interested in running it”.

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In terms of using Gaelic as an asset, FnG believes it is a profoundly Gaelic organisation that both brings young people to the language, through the culture, but also then takes back a constantly enriched version of a living tradition, into the communities themselves, thus helping the attractiveness and cohesion of the Gaelic tradition within Scotland’s arts and cultural fields.
The recent research into the economic and social value of Gaelic as an asset, highlights some key examples of how businesses, social enterprises and communities are using Gaelic, and its significance in fulfilling their communication, commercial and social objectives. This case study demonstrates how Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnG) and Blas use Gaelic as an asset.

Currently there are 44 active fèisean (non-competitive Gaelic music festivals), with over 15 full-time staff working between the central organisation and Fèis Rois. FnG and Blas receive foundation funding from Creative Scotland. According to recent research for HIE, through the activities of the fèisean, a total of 107 full time equivalent posts have been created (encompassing FnG, Fèis Rois and the tutors employed). In terms of geographical coverage the only areas of the mainland and the Western Isles not covered are South Lanarkshire, the Lothians outwith Edinburgh, Clackmannanshire, Dundee and Fife.