

PRESS RELEASE: 4th July 2006

Rannsachadh Mòr (The Big Survey) – Take a break and fill it in!

Millions of people are making their opinions known each week when they vote for their favourite Big Brother contestants. Channel 4 has realised your opinion counts, and so have we. Why not take 20 minutes to switch off Big Brother, and make your views known about something that affects you! Tell us your thoughts about the Gaelic Arts.

The Big Survey – or Rannsachadh Mòr in Gaelic – gives you a chance to say what you think. At the beginning of June, the survey arrived on the doorsteps of 25% of households in the Western Isles and Skye and Lochalsh, making it the largest ever piece of research on the arts and culture in this area. The survey aims to find out what people think about the Gaelic arts and their impact on the community, the economy and the language. Every single opinion is valid – both positive and negative, from Gaelic and non - Gaelic speakers.

Understanding the views of the local people is essential in order to improve the quality and range of arts that they receive, and to make these more accessible to everyone. The survey offers an opportunity for people to make their views known and in doing so, to shape the artistic and cultural services that affect the quality of life in the Western Isles and Skye and Lochalsh.

So far the response has been overwhelming with over 1,000 replies arriving back within the first 3 weeks. In order to obtain as representative a picture as possible, we are hoping that still more people will fill in the survey and send it back. The more replies we get, the more accurate the results will be. So if the questionnaire has arrived at your door, and you haven't as yet responded, now is the time to fill it in and send it back if you want your views to be heard!

The research is being carried out independently by Professor Alan Sproull at Caledonian Business School. The work was commissioned by Pròiseact nan Ealan, on behalf of the Gaelic Arts Strategic Development (GASD) Forum.

Director of research, Professor Sproull commented, “Aside from results on specific forms of Gaelic-related artistic and cultural activities such as radio, story-telling, or local bands, the survey touches on some fundamental issues concerning the distinctiveness of the culture of these islands and how it may be preserved and developed. Gaining such insights is unusual as it is difficult, expensive and time consuming to gather data from a cross-section of the population – for this reason I hope the people of the area who receive a questionnaire can find the 20 or 30 minutes necessary to make their views known.”

Issues covered are relevant to everyone who lives within the Western Isles and Skye and Lochalsh. Questions cover topics such as whether the Gaelic language can boost tourism or encourages economic development and if the language and arts are essential to the health of our culture. If you are one of the thousands of residents who received the survey, and you have a view on any of these topics, make your opinion count and make sure your thoughts don't go unheard.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- The GASD Forum acts collectively on behalf of 6 key Gaelic arts organisations: Pròiseact nan Ealan, An Comunn Gàidhealach, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, Comhairle nan Leabhraichean, Tosg, and Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig. The GASD Programme is managed by Pròiseact nan Ealan.
- **Proiseact nan Ealan (PNE)** is the national development agency for the Scottish Gaelic arts. PNE is based in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, but works nationally and internationally. It is a registered charity, employs a staff of twelve and generates an annual income of approx £750,000. Its key stakeholders are the Scottish Arts Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. PNE is not a funding agency but researches, develops and pilots new initiatives in the Gaelic arts. When pilot projects prove sustainable they are set-up as independent companies. Past PNE initiatives include Fèisean nan Gaidheal, the Ceolas summer school and the Tosg theatre company. PNE productions such as An Leabhar Mòr: The Great Book of Gaelic, have won an extensive range of awards. www.gaelic-arts.com
- The research is funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Arts Council
- The research will be conducted completely independently by Prof Alan Sproull and colleagues at the Caledonian Business School, Glasgow Caledonian University. The funding bodies have not sought to influence research design nor will they play any part in the analysis of data or in the production of the final report.
- The postal survey will gather information via questionnaires sent to 7,600 adults in the targets areas (25% of the adult population, selected randomly). As such it is the largest survey of its type ever held in the area.

- The analysis of the postal survey results can be compared to those generated by a broadly similar exercise undertaken (at Glasgow Caledonian) in 1996. This gives the researchers a unique opportunity to describe and analyse change over the last decade.
- Coverage of the survey. The study addresses the following issues:
 - 1) Is the Gaelic language essential to the future health of our culture?
 - 2) Are Gaelic artistic activities – such as TV, music, plays, internet sites – the key to motivating young people to develop the language?
 - 3) If the Gaelic language continues to decline can a distinct Gaelic ‘view of the world’ be maintained?
 - 4) Do we need Gaelic arts and culture for the future economic development of our area?
 - 5) Does Gaelic language, arts and culture boost tourism in the Western isles and Skye?
 - 6) Does the health of the Gaelic language, arts and culture help encourage young people to live and work in their home area?
- These issues will be addressed by analysing responses to 4 sets of questions:
 - 1) What Gaelic-related arts and cultural services and products (such as TV, radio, CDs, exhibitions, music, plays, storytelling and other live events) do people actually consume?
 - 2) What factors lie behind the decision to consume or not?
 - 3) What is the impact of consumption on behaviour and attitudes?
 - 4) How important is Gaelic arts and cultural activity to the distinctiveness and future health of the Western isles and Skye and Lochalsh?

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