Celtic Neighbours Partnership

Co-ordinator’s interim report to Committee Sept/ Oct 2016

Since our involvement in co-ordinating the TOSTA project became so full-time, I have not been making the time to update you on activities and developments. I apologise for that, and will make sure to send you all a short report every two months from now on. I’ll also do my best to make sure that a new edition of ‘Nods and Whispers’ the e-newsletter for our wider circle of participants, is produced, translated and distributed before Christmas.

**1. Project-based activities:**

The **TOSTA** project reached its culmination in September this year, and the remaining elements are simply the production of an evaluation and a ‘reflection’ report, reporting also to our national funding agencies, concluding all financial arrangements, and discussing with our partners what shape the legacy might take, and how – if at all – elements of the TOSTA partnership might be carried on into the future. TOSTA has been a significant challenge, a steep learning curve at times, but dramatically successful and immensely enjoyable. Fuller information will be available in ‘Nods and Whispers’, in the reports to be distributed before Christmas, and online at [www.tosta2016.eu](http://www.tosta2016.eu)

**Craobh Abhainn,** the four-way collaboration we helped to stimulate with the support of ColmCille, has also reached at least a temporary conclusion with a performance in Errenteri in the Basque Country. This bilingual, multi-media, cabaret-style drama highlighted the experiences of young Irish-speakers picking potatoes in Scotland at the beginning of the last century, and featured performers from both countries. Music and visual arts helped to make this entirely Gaidhlig/ Gaeilge accessible to non-speakers. Created and sustained by Fíbín and Áras Inis Guaire in Ireland and Sabhal Mor Ostaig and An Lòchran in Scotland,it was an exciting production, and we hope to be able to offer the participants in second tour in Wales next year.

Funding from the Arts Council of Wales for the **Prifio** project has just been confirmed. This initiative will combine the mounting of two parallel exhibitions from the Basque Country (one fine art, the other cultural and ethnographic) in Machynlleth, combined with a ‘roadshow’ featuring Basque music, poetry and film-making, and a ‘Basque language week’ involving school pupils, shopkeepers and more in raising the profile of both Euskara and Cymraeg in the host region. If successful, it might provide a pattern for similar events in other cultures. More information is already available on our website, and will be circulated in the next in ‘Nods and Whispers’.

Preliminary negotiations are taking place between Ealain na Gaeltachta and Aras Eanna in Ireland, and Y Tabernacl in Wales, to create the first stage of a regular **two-way exchange** of native-language visual artists. The first exchange is scheduled to take place in September 2017.

**2. Structural and technical activities:**

Minutes of the **committee meeting** held in Errenteria this September have already been circulated. The most important outcome was a decision to undertake an independent review of our work, and a subsequent consideration of how to adjust our aims and working patterns. E5,000 has been offered from Ireland to help forward this process, on the understanding that similar amounts are raised in Wales and Scotland. Kath in Scotland and Meic in Wales will be exploring the possibilities of achieving this between now and Christmas, and will report back.

Meic and Kath are planning to convene a meeting this Autumn in Scotland to continue the process of integrating Celtic Neighbours’ activities more fully into Gaidhlig life, and to offer our expertise and support to groups contemplating international work. This will be combined with a visit already planned, to share ideas with the committee of An Lòchran in Glasgow.

The Celtic Neighbours **website** was redesigned and overhauled during the summer, and is now more accessible on both PC and mobile devices, as well as being easier and quicker to update. Geedbacj from users so far has been entirely positive.

**3. Finances**

Dwynwen and I will be finalising the accounts for TOSTA next week, but it’s possible to say that our spending on the project has run slightly under budget throughout, and we’re confident of concluding the project with balanced books. We can’t praise enough the support we’ve had from DSS2016 throughout, nor that provided by the Arts Council of Wales for TOSTA Cymru. As mentioned above, we have recently been awarded a further grant from ACW for project work, and have received a provisional offer of E5,000 towards the execution of an independent review and analysis. We have one large invoice outstanding, from our accountants in respect of our 2015-6 audited accounts, which we need to pay as soon as possible.

**4. Upcoming tasks:**

The Co-ordinator’s work in the period between now and the end of December will include

* Seeking approximately E6,000 in Wales and Scotland to enable the independent review to take place
* Co-ordinating production of, and writing, the TOSTA reflections report
* Reporting back to ACW on the progress of TOSTA Cymru this year
* Producing a new issue of ‘Nods and Whispers’
* Meeting with groups in Scotland to develop further collaborations
* Preparing for the launch of the Prifio project in January
* Co-ordinating the fine art exhibition in Bro Ddyfi, which opens in November.

Please contact me if you would like further information on any of the material in this report, or if there is anything you’d like to discuss further.

**Meic Llewellyn, Co-ordinator**

**October 17th 2016.**