



10 REASONS WHY MANX IS A WASTE OF TIME / EFFORT / MONEY

1. The language is dead.

Well it never died! Although declining as a community language between 1870-1920, the language was always spoken throughout the 20th century, although admittedly by a declining number of native speakers initially and later language enthusiasts. Languages decline in usage not because they are inferior but because of complex economic, social and political factors operating against them; a change in this context can see minority languages playing a more important role in their community. This is the case today in the Island. Moreover, those who believe Manx Gaelic can't handle modern terminology often aren't aware that there is no English word for Café, Tattoo or Bungalow and that it's only in the last 30 years that English has developed the vocabulary necessary for the Internet.

2. The Government has enough to worry about without financing Manx.

Indeed! The language received pretty much no state assistance for the 1500 years between 400 and 1990! We are overdue a few pounds. The only financial support for the language today comes from the Manx Heritage Foundation and the Dept. of Education. The indigenous language/culture/music of the Island receives very little support in comparison to 'high art' and sport on the Island.

3. Children should learn proper stuff at school and not waste their time on Manx.

Although there are key skills to be learnt at school, education is very much about broadening the horizons of children, encouraging them to find out about the world we live in and developing good 'citizenship' skills. The language and accompanying culture can provide a 'rooted' identity for students and can illustrate the links between the traditional and modern, global and local. Moreover, cultural and environmental degradation often go hand in hand. Disappearing rainforests and disappearing languages have a similar story to share and this is a story we will need to be educated about.

4. We should learn French/Mandarin instead.

We have enough room in our heads for several languages. By learning Manx it doesn't mean we can't fit Spanish in too. Most speakers of Manx know several languages and are probably much more multilingual than the rest of the population. The children at the Bunscoill have learnt French through the medium of Manx whilst they have also been introduced (pen friends etc) to Irish and Scottish Gaelic. They are likely to be keen linguists of the future. Manx speakers often note the irony of being told they should speak other more 'useful' languages by monolingual English speakers.

5. Manx is socially divisive.

Manx is not exclusive. You don't have to be called Juan Kaighen from Cregneash to speak the language. The Island has changed much recently; Manx speakers are aware that this social and economic change has generated income that has been crucial in funding many recent language programmes: they wish this to continue. Whether you are from Port St. Mary, Portsmouth, Port Moresby or Port Elizabeth but want to call this Island your home then the language is as much yours as it is Juan Kaighen's.





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6. The broader Manx community will not benefit from more Manx Gaelic.

The recent up turn in fortunes for the language is a good news story for the Island. People outside of the Island are interested in these developments and it can illustrate to others that there is more to the Island than the TT races and off-shore finance. So far film crews from France, Germany, Spain, Ireland and Scotland have filmed at the Bunscoill as have 'Countryfile', BBC news and ITV. The Manx Language Officer has appeared live talking about Manx on TV News and has been involved in a feature with Lenny Henry on the Paul O'Grady show. Language activists have also been on Good Morning TV on ITV. This is all good PR for the Island.

7. There is no economic gain to be had from Manx Gaelic.

The Island's unique culture can add value to the Island as a destination. An increasing number of jobs require knowledge of the language whilst Moonjier Veggey operates a successful network of nurseries and playgroups. As has been demonstrated on a small scale in the Isle of Skye and London on a metropolitan level high worth individuals, whilst predominately moving to an area for economic reasons, generally stay in a location because of the backdrop of culture/arts/environment/education. The language and culture of the Island is something that the intellectually curious (and by definition the talented and economically active) see as something that is attractive and different about the Island.

8. There is no demand for Manx.

The 2001 Mori poll recorded that 19% of people were interested in learning Manx and another 5% very interested. The recent Culture and Heritage Survey conducted for the Branding exercise indicated that 75% of people thought that language and culture were important for national identity; nearly 50% would like to be more involved with Manx culture; nearly 75% had some agreement that there should be more funds to promote the language; 86% thought there should probably be more encouragement for children to learn the language.

9. Gaelic is of no benefit to local business.

In a competitive market place 'localism' can 'add value' to a company and give it an edge over non-Manx competitors at very little or no extra cost. The key is to use the language in ways that are appropriate and relevant.

10. Manx is a thing of the past and has no modern relevance.

Manx is very much a modern language with an ancient history. The Bunscoill illustrates the benefits of bilingual education; the language is providing good PR for the Island; linguists from Norway, Jersey and elsewhere have visited the Bunscoill to find out more about our education methods; the language can distinguish the Island from other jurisdictions (they don't speak Manx in the Isle of Wight). Many commentators (Jeremy Paxman / Paul Krugman et al.) have stressed the importance of a positive national identity in creating a competitive edge for jurisdictions. The Manx Gaelic narrative in our Island is one that has a right to exist and should be given 'Freedom to Flourish'.

Manx Heritage Foundation - Supporting Manx Culture

