

The Highland Council
Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee
18 February 2015

Agenda Item	8
Report No	PDI 5/15

The Economic and Social Value of Gaelic as an Asset

Report by the Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary

The Highland Council, together with partners, commissioned independent consultants to consider, evaluate and robustly evidence the current and potential use of Gaelic as an asset to the economy and society of the Highlands and Islands, and of Scotland as a whole. This report informs Members of the findings of the study and outlines a number of its key conclusions.

Support for the Gaelic Language is a key element in the Council's Programme, with a commitment to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages. The Council is also committed to pursuing the opportunities for economic development that are presented by the Gaelic language. This commitment is enshrined within the Council's Gaelic language Plan 2012 to 2016.

1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose behind the commissioning of the report was to build up an evidence base to inform future public sector activities and investment in Gaelic related business development activities, social enterprise support, and community development services.
- 1.2 Public sector support has been crucial in reversing the decline of the Gaelic language. In particular, support has been targeted towards stimulating the growth in Gaelic medium education and the cultural, media and arts sector. The report looks to take stock of these developments and to examine how Gaelic can further contribute. The Council's Gaelic Language Plan commits it to creating and supporting initiatives that strengthen the use and profile of Gaelic within general economic development and tourism in the Highlands. This strategic approach involves the development of a strategy for the Gaelic jobs market that includes careers advice, skills acquisition, further and higher education, and work experience opportunities. The report looks to take stock of these developments, and to examine how Gaelic can further contribute, both economically and socially, to the wellbeing of the country, as well as being seen as an asset that adds value to economic/social activity. The report is available online at <http://www.hie.co.uk/community-support/support-for-gaelic-development/gaelic-research.html>.

2. Key Findings

2.1 The primary research activity utilised four methods of research, listed as follows:

- two e-surveys, one for businesses and social enterprises, and the other for community groups and organisation;
- one-to-one consultations with key stakeholders and partners;
- one-to-one consultations with a sample selection of businesses, social enterprises and community groups; and
- face-to-face focus group consultations with sample selection of businesses, social enterprises and community groups.

2.2 As a result of the research the following key findings were identified:

- Gaelic is used by more than 60% of the businesses/social enterprises respondents (150), as a key element of their main activities, products or services;
- almost 2/3 of businesses consulted saw Gaelic as being an important element in the success of their business;
- Gaelic is particularly important to businesses operating in the Creative Industries;
- 70% of businesses recognised Gaelic as an asset to their business;
- almost 60% of businesses/social enterprises that already utilise Gaelic see additional opportunities to make more use of the language;
- 1/3 of businesses that saw the language as an asset, provided measurement of the value to their businesses. Of these 34 businesses, the turnover attributed to the impact of Gaelic was in the region of £4million; and
- 60% of businesses surveyed felt that their use of Gaelic enhanced the value of the language within the community.

3 Conclusions

3.1 The report identified a number of sectors where Gaelic is more obviously an asset. These are the Creative Industries, Tourism, and Food and Drink. A number of key benefits to businesses and enterprises from using Gaelic are identified:

- the language enhances the distinctiveness and uniqueness of products and services;
- it adds an air of authenticity and provenance to products and services; and
- it increases the appeal of products and services to target markets.

3.2 As a result of the research a number of key benefits to businesses from using Gaelic as an asset are outlined. 50% of businesses surveyed thought that a major advantage of utilising the language was that it enhances distinctiveness and uniqueness. 70% of businesses thought that these benefits were major/moderate, but that there were also other benefits in terms of enhancing the overall image of the area and of raising the profile of their products and services in specific areas. It was also felt that Gaelic was an asset when it came to differentiating products and services from that of competitors, and that it could help them attract new customers in existing markets.

3.3 The report uses a number of case studies to emphasise the types of businesses using Gaelic as an asset. They cover all the sectors identified in paragraph 3.1, and include businesses such as The Aros Visitor Centre in Skye, the Blas Festival and Sabhal mor Ostaig.

4. Implications

4.1 There are no resource, legal, equality, rural or climate change/Carbon Clever implications arising from this report.

4.2 The report highlights the positive impact of the Council's support for Gaelic.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the contents of this report, and to support the ongoing promotion of the Gaelic language as an economic and social asset through the delivery of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

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