

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Implementation Group** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 28 May 2015 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mrs I Campbell (Substitute)
Mr D Fallows
Mr G Farlow
Mr C Fraser
Mr H Fraser
Mr J McGillivray

Mr K MacLeod
Mr F Parr
Mrs M E Paterson
Dr A Sinclair
Ms K Stephen

Also present:

Mr D Millar

In attendance:

Ms C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Service
Mr K A Murray, Gaelic Development Manager, Care and Learning Service
Mr D Macleod, Gaelic Education Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs M A Macleod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs M Mulholland, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms S Paterson, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service
Miss J Green, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Ms F Forrest, Programmes Manager, FilmG

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Group.

Mr H Fraser in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J Gordon.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 4 – Mr D Fallows (non-financial)

3. Good News

A list of Good News items was tabled at the meeting and, after the Chair had drawn specific attention to various issues, the Group **NOTED** the Good News.

4. Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16, Theme 3 “What we will do for Gaelic in the Arts, Media and Heritage” - Implementation Report

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Fallows declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of being a Director of the Society of Badenoch and Strathspey Artists/Iona Gallery but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No GIG/2/15 dated 18 May 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing an update on the implementation of Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 Theme 3, “What we will do for Gaelic in the Arts, Media and Heritage”.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- in relation to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Nova Scotia it was hoped that links could be developed with other countries with lesser used languages such as Ireland and Wales. It was further suggested that this be expanded to include countries such as Australia and New Zealand;
- reference was made to the recent visit by pupils and parents from Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School, Antigonish, and appreciation was expressed to all of those who had welcomed them to the City of Inverness. It was suggested, in this connection, that there was scope to expand Nova Scotia’s MoU to include Antigonish and the surrounding area;
- the money awarded to Fèis Rois from the BBC Performing Arts Fellowship was welcomed;
- tribute was paid to Mrs Jean Urquhart and the Ceilidh Place, Ullapool, for the support given to Fèis Rois in the early days. Fèis Rois had grown and developed and consequently had encouraged other groups to form and increased the use of Gaelic and participation in the Mod;
- BBC Alba had proved to be a useful tool for those learning Gaelic;
- the discussions taking place with the Camanachd Association about forging links with Gaelic was welcomed;
- the introduction of bilingual signs across Highland would be welcomed. The talks regarding Gaelic place names delivered by Ruairidh Maclean were also referred to as these were felt to be hugely important in giving a sense of place; and
- there was merit in investigating links between Gaelic and sculpture.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** progress in implementing the Arts, Media and Heritage Theme in GLP 12-16;
- ii. **AGREED** to continue support for high profile activity and engagement for National linguistic and cultural events for the Highlands;
- iii. **AGREED** continuing engagement with the National Gaelic Arts Strategy;
- iv. **AGREED** that the Council continued to work with partners to host high profile Gaelic-related arts, media and cultural events in Highland to provide economic benefits within the Council area;

- v. **AGREED** to maximise the use of the Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Residency programme in association with our joint MoU; and
- vi. **AGREED** to work on the MoU between the Council and the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia.

5. FilmG Presentation

Flòraidh Forrest, Programmes Manager at FilmG, undertook a detailed presentation during which she provided information on the further development of this national initiative, on Highland Schools' participation and on the recent FilmG National Finals Event that took place in Glasgow.

During discussion, Members welcomed the points highlighted in the presentation and made the following comments:-

- the possibility of FilmG providing screenings of Gaelic films in remote and rural halls was suggested;
- information was sought as to how individuals could access the films promoted by FilmG; and
- by linking up with the Screen Machine facility, some of FilmG's material could be used as "shorts" before the main feature.

Having thanked Ms Forrest, the Group otherwise **NOTED** the Presentation.

6. Celtic Media Festival

There had been circulated Report No GIG/3/15 dated 18 May 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform updating Members of the activities in relation to the 36th Celtic Media Festival (CMF), held at Eden Court, Inverness from 22–24 April 2015. The CMF was supported by the Highland Council, VisitScotland Conference Bid Fund, Inverness Common Good Fund and Creative Scotland. The CMF was also supported by broadcasters and broadcast authorities from other Celtic nations and countries who had lesser used indigenous languages.

In discussion, comments were made as follows:-

- Members were pleased to see that BBC Radio nan Gàidheal had won the Radio Station of the Year category at the CMF. It was suggested, given its attraction to traditional music listeners, that it would be beneficial if announcers could introduce artists in English as well as Gaelic to help broaden the appeal of the artists and music;
- the success of the CMF was acknowledged and it was suggested that, when it returned, it should be expanded by linking it to other things such as dance and education so that fringe events could be organised;
- Eden Court had proved to be an excellent venue for the Festival;
- Patrick's Day (Ireland Ignition Film Productions) had won the Best Feature Length Drama and particular mention was made of the quality of the film; and
- the CMF had proved to be successful in attracting visitors in the past and Members were enthusiastic about it returning to Highland.

The Gaelic Development Officer having been thanked for her work surrounding the Festival, the Group **AGREED** that Officers work to attract the CMF back to the Highlands at the earliest opportunity.

7. Gaelic Language Plan Implementation Fund (GLAIF) Projects 2015-16

There had been circulated Report No GIG/4/15 dated 14 May 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning providing details on the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) applications submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG) for the 2015-16 funding period by the Gaelic Team.

GLAIF had been established to assist public authorities deliver commitments in their Gaelic Language Plans and to support the National Gaelic Language Plan. GLAIF had also been used to assist other public authorities in the delivery of projects ahead of their formal notice to produce a Gaelic Language Plan. Application to GLAIF, for financial year 2015-16, closed on 20 April and all applicants would be informed by BnaG of the decision on their applications by the beginning of July 2015. A detailed summary was given of the submitted projects.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- it was suggested that the wave length of BBC Radio nan Gàidheal could be added to the proposed bilingual Gaelic and English “Fàilte don Ghàidhealtachd” road bilingual signs, an approach adopted in many other parts of the country;
- Members welcomed the one year Gaelic Immersion Course for Teachers which had been specifically designed for teachers wishing to transfer to Gaelic Medium Education; and
- the Gaelic Learning in the Workplace project for Council staff was also supported but it was recognised that many staff were already under pressure from their day job. It would involve a considerable commitment for them to learn Gaelic but there was a lot of will to develop conversational Gaelic skills and the possibility within the project for informal conversational learning should be explored.

The Group **NOTED** the 2015-16 GLAIF Applications submitted by the Council to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

8. All Staff Gaelic Skills Survey

There had been circulated Report No GIG/5/15 dated 16 May 2015 by Head of Policy and Reform providing information on progress in undertaking a Gaelic Skills Survey across Council Services. The Survey was scheduled for commencement in September 2015 and was a Statutory commitment in Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16. It would also inform the training and development elements of the “*What we will do for Gaelic in the Workplace*” Theme in the Council’s Third Gaelic Language Plan, from 2016 onwards.

The Group **NOTED** progress in undertaking a Gaelic Skills Survey across Council Services, as part of our ongoing Gaelic Language Plan commitments.

9. Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16, Theme 2 “What we will do for Gaelic in Education” - Implementation Report

There had been circulated Report No GIG/6/15 dated 13 May 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning providing an update on the implementation of Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 2012-16 Theme 2 “What we will do for Gaelic in Education”. It provided information on a wide range of local and national level initiatives.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- appreciation was expressed about the work taking place surrounding the Scoping Study of Gaelic Pre-School provision in Dingwall. It was encouraging that there were so many pupils wanting to enter Gaelic Medium Education and consideration should be given to providing a Gaelic Medium School for the town;
- confirmation was sought that the Council was able to encourage applicants to the new Classroom Support Assistant posts in Gaelic Medium Units and how children with additional support needs were supported in a Gaelic Medium Education environment;
- discussions should take place with the Scottish Government regarding how Gaelic Medium Education could be delivered as locally as possible, particularly in rural areas;
- regret was expressed at the temporary suspension of Gaelic Medium Education in the Tongue area and it was hoped, at some future point, this could be reintroduced when numbers were healthier or perhaps commence a new provision in Bettyhill. However, the success of Gaelic Medium Education in Thurso was welcomed. There were also other areas in the Farr High School ASG where interest had been expressed and, whilst this was to be encouraged, it was important that any provision made was sustainable;
- Gaelic Medium Education resulted in pupils being bilingual by the age of 6 or 7, the benefits of which would remain with them into the future;
- Gaelic skills could sometimes be lost when pupils moved from a Gaelic Medium Education Primary School to a mainstream Secondary School. As a result, the decision to proceed with the 3-18 Campus at Tain, where Gaelic Education would be provided in a locality from Gaelic Pre School through to Gaelic Secondary School, allowed a radical approach to be considered, the model of which it was hoped could be replicated elsewhere; and
- there could be many reasons why pupils chose not to continue with Gaelic Medium Education in Secondary School. For example, this might be simply a matter of timetabling clashes with other subjects but, often, local solutions could be found to such problems.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** progress in implementing the Education Theme in GLP;
- ii. **AGREED** to urgently seek to resolve the difficulties around Gaelic Medium provision in the Bettyhill/Tongue area;
- iii. **AGREED** to continue to press for Local Authority participation in the Gaelic Probationer Allocation Process; and
- iv. **AGREED** to the updating and publication of all the Gaelic Education statistical data; and the Online Gaelic Education Map.

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm.