

**Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd
The Highland Council**

**Buidheann Buileachaidh na Gàidhlig – 25 Lùnastal 2015
Gaelic Implementation Group – 25 August 2015**

Agenda Item	5
Report No	GIG 7/15

The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16: Review and Renewal

Report by the Report by the Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This Report provides Members with information on factors that could influence the preparation of, and consultation on, the Council's third generation Gaelic Language Plan (GLP3), from 2016 onwards. Members are asked to agree to formally propose extending our current GLP 2012-16, to 2017. This is in order to align our next Plan with ongoing legislative developments and other forthcoming national initiatives as outlined below.

The Report contributes to the delivery of:

- The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework;
- The Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig's National Gaelic Language Plan;
- The Highland Single Outcome Agreement;
- The Council's programme commitment for Gaelic language; and
- The Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

1 Policy Context and Background

- 1.1 The Council's second Statutory Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16, was approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 18 September 2012 under the Gaelic Language Scotland Act 2005.
- 1.2 Our third Statutory Gaelic Language Plan (GLP3); was therefore due for formulation, consultation and approval by the Council over the forthcoming year; and scheduled for Statutory Approval by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on or before 18 September 2016.
- 1.3 The Gaelic Implementation Group oversees implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan and considers all relevant factors relating to its remit. Members will note that early discussion has taken place with Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG) Chief Executives on potential issues that might affect the timeframe for preparing Highland's GLP 3; particularly national factors that might influence its content, targets, funding, direction and delivery.
- 1.4 On 16 April 2015, the Chief Executive of Bòrd na Gàidhlig wrote to the Council's Chief Executive stating that the present iteration of the Highland Council's Statutory Gaelic Language Plan expires on 18 September 2016.

2. Factors for Consideration

- 2.1 As mentioned above, the early discussions with Bòrd na Gàidhlig Chief Executives over the past several months, revolved around the potential

impact that external matters might have on Highland's GLP3. The following have been identified as factors that require to be taken into account in setting a realistic timeframe for the Council preparing, consulting on and approving, a sustainable and robust GLP3.

2.2 **The Education (Scotland) Bill** was introduced to Parliament on 23 March 2015. This Bill, where it relates to Gaelic, proposes that:

- Local Authorities should have a formal process for assessing requests from parents for Gaelic Education;
- Local Authorities should promote Gaelic Education; and
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig will have a Statutory obligation to prepare National Guidance on Gaelic Education.

2.2.1 Given Highland's prominent position in the provision of Gaelic Education, we are closely involved with this legislation and we will keep Members informed of the potential impact on the Council's delivery on Gaelic and Gaelic Education.

2.2.2 Until we know the implications for Local Authorities of the final Education (Scotland) Act 2016; and the detail of National Guidance on Guidance on Gaelic Education and the final Parental Request Assessment Process; it is impossible to prepare and consult on GLP3 with any confidence.

2.2.3 It is also possible that the Bill could be enacted before the National Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education and the Parental Request Assessment Process have been finalised. In these circumstances, this would fundamentally impact on the preparation of a Highland Gaelic Education Strategy, which is envisaged as an integral part of GLP3.

2.3 The **Scottish Parliament Election** is scheduled to take place on 5 May 2016. Following this national outcomes will be consulted on and this will provide a refreshed context for linking our work on Gaelic Language Plans with those of partners and through the Single Outcome Agreement and its successor documents. These changes are also contained in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and a timescale for implementing them is not yet provided but we will be clearer on timescales over the next 12 months.

2.3.1 In addition, a Budget and Spending Review are envisaged post-Election; and that may potentially impact on funding and delivery at national and local levels.

2.4 Bòrd na Gàidhlig will also be preparing a **National Gaelic Language Plan for 2017 onwards**. This Plan will undoubtedly be influenced by outcomes from the Education (Scotland) Bill/Act and, in addition, national funding for Gaelic Education and Gaelic Language Plan Implementation would likely be included in a post-Election Budget and Spending Review.

2.5 Alongside the run-up to **Council Elections in 2017**, the foregoing are clearly factors that might influence the content, targets, funding, direction and delivery of Highland's GLP3. It would be prudent to ensure that we have a clear view of the impact on the Council of these various issues; and it would therefore be appropriate to formally seek an extension to the Council's current Plan. This is to ensure that GLP3 is properly prepared and future-proofed;

and aligned appropriately with the National Gaelic Language Plan from 2017 onwards.

- 2.6 Finally, the request to extend our GLP2 from a four to a five year Plan does not contravene legislation; as evidenced by **Section 7 (2) of the Gaelic Language Scotland Act 2005**.

3. Review and Renewal of GLP 2012-16 – Official Notification

- 3.1 Bòrd na Gàidhlig's letter of 16 April to the Council's Chief Executive about review and renewal of our Gaelic Plan (see 1.2 above), mentions "*Expectations of High-level Aims*" in a new GLP3.
- 3.2 The letter states that "*Bòrd na Gàidhlig is in the process of determining the high-level aims it will be seeking from your Gaelic Language Plan and **these will be sent to you after they have received agreement in principle** with the Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, Dr Alasdair Allan.*"
- 3.3 In formulating GLP3 with a true sense of partnership, it would be courteous and sensible for Bòrd na Gàidhlig to take forward with the Council, any potential statutory requirement of it, or statutory imposition on it, prior to submission to Ministers. In order to ensure that Ministers takes cognisance of the Council's views and is aware of the contextual background of any high level aim in our Plan; the Council would wish to agree Draft high level aims with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, before Ministerial consideration.

4. Implications

- 4.1 There are resource and risk implications of not deferring the renewal of the GLP 3. These relate to abortive work and duplicated effort if the GLP 3 is amended in advance of planned change especially at national level. If GLP 3 is renewed in 2016 it would have to be renewed again in 2017. There are no other known implications at this time.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Members are asked to:

- agree that the Council approaches Bòrd na Gàidhlig to formally seek a one year extension to Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 to 2017; in order to ensure that GLP3 is properly prepared and aligned with forthcoming legislation and the National Gaelic Language Plan 2017; and
- agree that Bòrd na Gàidhlig is asked to formally agree a draft of the expectations of high-level aims relating to GLP 3 with the Council, prior to their submission to the Minister for agreement in principle.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform
Date: 16 July 2015
Author: Kenneth A Murray, Gaelic Development Manager.