

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Implementation Group** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 1 February 2017 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Farlow
Mr C Fraser
Mr H Fraser
Mr S Fuller
Mr J Gordon

Mr J McGillivray
Mr K MacLeod
Mrs M E Paterson
Dr A Sinclair

Non-Member also present:

Mr A Millar

In attendance:

Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning
Mrs N Young, Area Care & Learning Manager – West, Care and Learning Service
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mr R Mackay, Gaelic 1+2 Languages Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs M A Macleod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms D Grant, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs M Mulholland, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms S Paterson, Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mr C Morrison, Gaelic Education Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms J MacDonald, Senior Translation Officer, Care and Learning Service
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:-

Ms S MacLennan, Chief Executive, Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Mr D Campbell, Chief Executive, MG ALBA
Mr A MacLennan, Head Teacher of e-Sgoil, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr F Parr and Ms K Stephen.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Good News

There had been tabled a list of Good News items involving and promoting the Gaelic language and culture.

The Group **NOTED** the Good News.

4. Presentation – Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Over the last year, Bòrd na Gàidhlig had been developing the next iteration of the National Gaelic Language Plan (NGLP) which was to go out to consultation for 3 months. Following on from the NGLP 2012-17, the new plan would prioritise learning and using Gaelic. Also, on 1 February 2017, the provisions of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, which related to Gaelic medium education, was to come into force and the implementation and impact of the Statutory Guidance featured strongly in the draft Plan. Ms Shona MacLennan, Chief Executive of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, gave an overview of the work currently undertaken by Bòrd na Gàidhlig in relation to the above.

During a detailed presentation Ms MacLennan set out the background of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and how it used its £5.5m budget to promote access to the Gaelic language and culture. In the development of its third National Gaelic Language Plan it was hoped to encourage as many contributors to comment on its content as possible. It would take into consideration the successes of the previous Plan as well as what had not worked so well. Turning to education and to the legislative guidance in relation to the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, the number of pupils in Gaelic Medium Education at P1 stage was highlighted and a significant proportion of this was in Highland. This new legislation would give parents the right to ask for Gaelic Education to be provided and set out a framework which education authorities were required to follow in coming to a decision regarding the request.

In discussion, the following points were made:-

- the achievements of Bòrd na Gàidhlig in strengthening Gaelic was welcomed;
- reference was made to the Gaelic Language Plan developed by the Crofters Commission and it was pointed out that many crofters spoke Gaelic;
- the introduction of Gaelic by many public bodies was welcomed as it brought the language into everyday use, an example being the use of bilingual road signs;
- the Scottish Parliament had signed up to UNESCO's sustainable goals for development and there was merit in Bòrd na Gàidhlig exploring how to exploit the culture element of this;
- Gaelic should be given the same statutory empowerment that the Welsh language had;
- information was sought, and received, as to what support could be provided to parents in Bonar Bridge wishing to establish a Gaelic Medium Unit;
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig involvement with the European Charter for Minority Languages was raised. This charter encouraged the use of Gaelic at a grass roots level and it would be useful to see Bòrd na Gàidhlig's last progress report to this body;
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig should investigate the possibility of funding for sparsely populated areas in Highland to see how funding could be pulled down using the auspices of various European bodies and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. In many of these rural areas it was often problematic to engage with Gaelic given transport difficulties etc;

- some parents were worried that choosing Gaelic Medium Education might be seen by others as endangering the viability of the English Medium Unit; and
- reference was made to the success of MUZZY, an online method of teaching children a second language. The opportunities and benefits for children of bilingualism were well recognised and it was suggested that it could be adapted to teach Gaelic. In this regard, the existing online Gaelic websites such as Go! Gaelic for children was highlighted.

Appreciation having been expressed to Ms MacLennan, the Group:-

- NOTED** the presentation; and
- AGREED** that Bòrd na Gàidhlig's last report to the European Charter for Minority Languages be circulated Members.

5. Presentation - MG ALBA

Mr Donald Campbell, Chief Executive of MG ALBA undertook a presentation on proposals seeking increased BBC investment in BBC ALBA under the new BBC Charter, which started on 1 January. Highland Council had supported this through letters of support to the Director General.

During a presentation Mr Campbell set out the three strands of MG ALBA: BBC ALBA, Learn Gaelic and FilmG. Taking each in turn he explained that it had been recognised that the broadcasting medium was not the best method to teach Gaelic and accordingly Learn Gaelic had been developed. It was important that Gaelic had a presence in the digital world and accordingly this website had been produced providing a variety of facilities to learners including sound files and an online dictionary. FilmG, a short film completion, sought to develop the talent of young people through the medium of Gaelic and many of the submissions received came from Highland, the submissions from Gairloch High School being cited as a specific example. BBC ALBA, like many other television channels, was facing challenges from competitors such as Netflix and Amazon Prime but it did have a loyal audience representing 14% of the viewing population of Scotland. However the age profile was quite high so it was recognised that the challenge would be to attract younger viewers, something which might be addressed in part if the channel was given an additional allocation to broadcast new programming.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the progress made by MG ALBA over recent years was welcomed. In particular, BBC ALBA brought the Gaelic language and culture to a wide audience;
- English subtitles should be provided for Gaelic songs;
- the benefit of FilmG for schools and community groups was immense and it gave young people an opportunity to become involved in media projects and to use their Gaelic language skills;
- Scottish MPs should be lobbied with a view to increasing MG ALBA's funding so that a comparable share of the television licence fee was spent in Scotland;
- BBC ALBA provided an alternative to what mainstream television broadcast;
- the amount of repeated programmes on BBC ALBA was recognised but, in many cases, was welcomed. It was recognised however that there were certain types of programmes which did not lend themselves to being repeated; and
- although televising football on BBC ALBA was not welcomed by all, it was a mechanism by which to raise awareness of Gaelic and to introduce it to

communities and audience sectors who had not previously been exposed to the language.

Appreciation having been expressed to Mr Campbell, the Group otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

6. **A Fairer Deal for BBC ALBA, the Framework Agreement Scottish Gaelic Broadcasting**

There had been circulated Report No GIG/1/17 dated 9 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning seeking homologation of the response that the Highland Council submitted to the Director General of the BBC and the BBC's Director of Nations and Regions.

Discussion took place around the terminology used in the report which suggested that MG Alba might not be successful in securing a guarantee of 20 hours per week of new programmes despite assurances in the responses received from the BBC that they were committed to supporting the Gaelic language through broadcasting in a new Charter. The positive nature of the responses was welcomed but it was important that this submission was also honoured.

The Group **AGREED** to homologate the response as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

7. **Presentation – e-Sgoil**

Mr Angus MacLennan, Head Teacher of e-Sgoil, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, undertook a presentation on the developments of e-Sgoil, a Scotland wide educational resource, based in the Western Isles.

e-Sgoil had been devised in response to difficulties in attracting a Maths teacher to Barra. As a result Maths had been delivered using digital technology and, in so doing, it had also highlighted that the way young people learned subjects had changed. A number of projects which e-Sgoil had already undertaken were explained including providing Gàidhlig to Hazlehead and Bishopbriggs Academies; providing fiddle and brass tuition; Gaelic learner courses for Modern Apprenticeships; and supporting the delivery of Gaelic Medium subjects.

Based in Stornoway, he referred to e-Sgoil's ongoing collaboration with other Councils, including Highland Council. He also detailed the technology used which included Glow, Office 365, Yammer, One Drive and Vscene. He assured Members that the aim of e-Sgoil was not to reduce teacher numbers but to offer a way of delivering education during a time when many Councils were facing difficult financial constraints, falling school roles and a need to promote equity regardless of geographical location.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the benefit which e-Sgoil had for Highland Council was considerable and Members were informed that Physics was currently being taught in Plockton High School using this technology. It could also be used across all other areas of the curriculum and it was hoped that the framework created by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar could be built on;
- faced with closure/mothballing of schools in fragile areas an alternative could be to look at digital learning; and

- similar approaches had worked elsewhere, the Australian outback cited as a particular example.

Mr MacLennan having been thanked, the Group otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

8. Gaelic Language Plan – Draft Annual Implementation Report 2016-17

There had been circulated Report No GIG/2/17 dated 20 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning providing a draft summary, for approval, of the 2016-17 Annual Implementation Report in relation to the Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 2012-16.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the level of detail contained in the report was welcomed and officers were commended for the many achievements detailed;
- looking to GLP3 it was hoped that the success of GLP2 could be replicated;
- clarification was sought as to the money that was specifically ring fenced for Gaelic. Until this was ascertained it would be difficult to ensure maximum use was made of it, especially given the current economic climate;
- the success of the Blas Festival was acknowledged; and
- the number of schools which had run Film Workshops was welcomed as were their many achievements.

The Group **AGREED** the Draft Annual Implementation Report covering the period 1 January 2016 to 31 January 2017.

9. 1+2 Languages Development (Gaelic)

There had been circulated Report No GIG/3/17 dated 24 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning informing Members of the current status of the Gaelic 1+2 Languages training and development programme, namely through:-

- the rollout of Gaelic Language training courses for teachers with very little Gaelic knowledge
- the rollout of Gaelic 1+ 2 pedagogy courses for teachers with existing Gaelic knowledge
- the development of high quality resources to equip both groups of teachers with the necessary tools to deliver their teaching; and
- the development of clear Gaelic language learning pathways for teachers' own personal development.

Following a summary of the report, Members emphasised the importance of Gaelic in giving a sense of place. The Gaelic language and culture was intrinsic to education in the Highlands and should form part of the Curriculum for Excellence.

It was also confirmed that the Council offered residential language learning courses but the courses referred to in the report was for Go! Gaelic and was intended for teachers with little Gaelic experience.

The Group **NOTED** the Gaelic 1+2 development to date and its outcomes.

10. Revised Policy on Gaelic Medium Transport

There had been circulated Report No GIG/4/17 dated 24 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning seeking views on a revised policy for the provision of transport to Gaelic Medium Education (GME). The Policy also encompassed transport to denominational schools, the latter section being outwith the scope of this Group.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the proposal not to place a sole child of infant age on a bus with secondary age pupils was, it was suggested, positively prejudicing Gaelic Medium as this practise was already taking place in some areas with English Medium pupils;
- the use of an older pupil to act as a mentor on such transport was suggested;
- there was concern that the policy might be used as a mechanism not to allow additional provision at a local level, although the guarantee of an annual review would address this;
- to reduce travel and to deliver Gaelic education as locally as possible, the Council should look at how it could use new technologies and how full advantage could be made of the roll out of chrome devices;
- reference was made to the Sutherland pilot of a community transport scheme and which had also taken pupils to school; and
- clarification was sought, and received, in relation to the Associated School Groups for Craighill Primary and Tain Royal Academy. In particular, it was suggested that Rosehall and Lairg Primaries would be better included as part of the Craighill Primary area.

The Group **AGREED** that their comments on the draft Policy be reported to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee for decision.

11. Development of the Third Iteration of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan

There had been circulated Report No GIG/5/17 dated 20 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning informing Members of progress and strategic planning in relation to the drafting, consultation and the submission to Bord na Gàidhlig of the Highland Council's 3rd Generation Gaelic Language Plan (GLP3).

It was hoped that the new Administration would ensure that the GLP3 would progress and that the new Council would take ownership of it and ensure finance was available to fund the various elements of it. The success of GLP2 was acknowledged and there were many aspects in which would continue into the new Plan. The priorities identified by Bord na Gàidhlig had also been taken into account.

The Group:-

- i. **AGREED** the summarised draft high level aims which Bord na Gàidhlig submitted to the Council, as a focus for the development of GLP3;
- ii. **AGREED** a timeframe in relation to the drafting, consultation and the presenting of draft GLP3 to Gaelic Implementation Group meetings and the full Highland Council; and
- iii. **NOTED** that Digital Technology would also be included in the list of draft High Level Aims.

Valedictory

The Chairman expressed his appreciation to his fellow Members and officers for their hard work in taking Gaelic forward over the previous Council term. During this time two Gaelic Language Plans had been produced and he hoped that the success of Gaelic would continue in the new Council. In response, Members expressed their appreciation to the Chair for the inclusive approach adopted.

The meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.