

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held **Remotely** on Tuesday 23 February 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A MacInnes
Mr R Bremner	Mr D Mackay
Mrs I Campbell	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr J Gordon	Mr C Munro
Mr A Henderson	Mr D Rixson

Non-Member also present:

Mr J Finlayson

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Mr R Mackay, Development Officer
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms A MacRae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Ms S MacLennan, Chief Executive, Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Mr J Whannel, Director of Education Bòrd na Gàidhlig

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

Mr C Munro in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A MacKinnon, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs E Roddick and Mr A Sinclair.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 7 – Mr C Munro (financial)

Item 8 – Mr A Henderson (financial) and Mr R Bremner (both financial and non-financial)

Mr R Bremner also declared non-financial interests in any item which might relate to his connection with the following organisations: Caithness & Sutherland Provincial Mòd, Caithness Branch of An Comunn Gàidhealach, Melvich Gaelic Choir, Atomaig Piseag (Gaelic Choir) and the Local Organising Committee – Mòd Ghallaibh 2010.

3. Appointment of Vice Chair

Having been duly proposed and seconded, nominations were received for the position of Vice Chair of the Gaelic Committee as follows:-

Mr R Bremner
Mr A Henderson

On a vote being taken, Mr Bremner received 4 votes and Mr Henderson received 6 votes, with no abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:-

Votes for Mr Bremner

Mr R Bremner, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D Mackay and Mr G MacKenzie

Votes for Mr Henderson

Mr G Adam, Mrs I Campbell, Mr J Gordon, Mr A Henderson, Mr C Munro and Mr D Rixson

The Committee therefore **AGREED** that Mr A Henderson should be Vice Chair of the Gaelic Committee.

4. Good News

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of good news:-

- the Chair welcomed Ministerial and partner support for the Highland Council's annual community development project event, 'Siuthad' which had taken place in November;
- a new project to support Gaelic learning had been launched by MG Alba, offering the most comprehensive approach to learning Scottish Gaelic in a generation. SpeakGaelic would be launched in September 2021 with a course, a dedicated on-demand learning website and complementary programming across BBC ALBA platforms;
- Film G, the annual Gaelic film-making competition, had their highest ever entries. In total, there were 95 films and 9 scripts in this year's entries;
- Hana and Rachel MacNeil, Mallaig Primary School, had received a Scottish Gaelic Innovation In Education Award for Clasrum Air an Oir. FC Sonas were also finalists in this award, for encouraging young people to use Gaelic in community settings using Football challenges; and
- Kilmuir and Staffin Primary schools were congratulated on their successful application to Bòrd na Gàidhlig to support their school community project. The project, awarded £2,200, would provide primarily support and promote extra-curricular Gaelic usage amongst Gaelic Medium pupils by offering more opportunities for pupils to speak Gaelic outwith the class in a variety of settings. Young people would have the opportunity to engage with Gaelic fluent speakers within the local community in an inter-generational project.

5. Presentation – Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Shona MacLennan, Chief Executive Officer and Jim Whannel, Director of Education of Bòrd na Gàidhlig gave a presentation on the role of the Bòrd and the National

Gaelic Language Plan during which she welcomed the increase in collaboration work with Highland Council, particularly at Senior Officer level. Their presentation covered three main themes, namely, using Gaelic, learning Gaelic and promoting Gaelic and how these could be encouraged and enhanced.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- opportunities to provide additional teaching qualifications in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) should be explored. This would generate staff with wider skills sets;
- partnership working was acknowledged, especially during the challenging times faced over the last year. Bòrd na Gàidhlig had had an important role in supporting local authorities and their engagement with Highland Council to help deliver GME during the pandemic had been vital. Nevertheless, it was important to evaluate what had been learnt and Bòrd na Gàidhlig's plans would need to align with this;
- the immersion scheme to move teachers into GME was commended but it was important that these staff were then supported. It was important too to measure their competency;
- an invitation was extended to Bòrd na Gàidhlig to present to the Education Committee to give Members a broader picture of what was happening at national level; and
- information as to the number and location of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Development Officers was requested.

Shona MacLennan and Jim Whannel having been thanked, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Progress against Gaelic Language Plan 3 (Quarterly Report, Monitoring and Scrutiny Process)

There had been circulated Report No. G/1/21 dated 3 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The Chair pointed out that the Council's Gaelic Language Plan tied in with Bòrd na Gàidhlig's one and was at the same mid-way stage. At future Committee meetings there would be a focus on progress being made.

The Committee **NOTED** :-

- i. the quarterly report against Gaelic Language Plan 3 and the positive on-going developments; and
- ii. the challenges regarding the implementation of the enabling actions in the Plan, largely due to the pandemic, which had resulted in some slippage.

7. Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education – Update

Declaration of Interest: Mr C Munro declared a financial interest as a close family member was employed as a Gaelic Medium Teacher 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 him from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. G/2/21 dated 3 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the practical steps which could be taken to encourage the use of Gaelic in the learning process was explored;
- it was important to make as much use as possible of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Education Team and to ensure that partnership and engagement was strong. In addition clarity and clarification was required to ensure all the different pathways linked together;
- given the number of GM schools in Highland, the authority should be given a greater number of GM probationer teachers; and
- information was sought as to the number of pupils learning Gaelic.

The Committee **NOTED** :-

- i. the actions that had been taken to mitigate the impact of Covid on the delivery of the Gaelic Education; and
- ii. the areas of current and future development.

8. BLAS Festival 2020

Declarations of Interest:

Mr A Henderson declared a financial interest on the grounds that a family member occasionally received paid employment from Blas 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.

Mr R Bremner declared both financial and non-financial interests on the grounds of having taken part in previous Blàs programmes both as Fear an Taigh as a member of a participating group and as a house cèilidh host but, as the participation was historic and any future activity was likely to be virtual, 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. G/3/21 dated 3 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the Chair highlighted the excellent value for money that the Blas Festival had offered and, being online, had probably reached a wider audience;
- the Small Halls Festival included as part of Blas was welcomed;
- Blas led the way for other festival going online. Despite initial difficulties, lessons had been learnt and, if necessary, could be run virtually again; and

- attending events could prove expensive in terms of travel and accommodation etc but the format adopted meant that these events could be watched in the comfort of your own home.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the work done to move the festival onto virtual platforms this year; and
- iii. **AGREED** to commend Fèisean nan Gàidheal on the successful delivery of the 2020 Festival.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm