

Agenda Item	<b>5</b>
Report No	<b>G/14/21</b>

## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** Gaelic Committee

**Date:** 16 September 2021

**Report Title:** Bilingual Signage Policy Refresh and Redesign

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Committee on the steps being taken to refresh The Highland Council's bilingual signage policy, including a summary of proposed amendments and additions for consideration.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i) note the work that has been undertaken in relation to the bilingual policy refresh; and
  - ii) consider and agree the proposed changes.

### **3. Implications**

- 3.1 Resource – The resource implications are within the current main budget stream which include core Council budget and Gaelic Specific Grant.
- 3.2 Legal – The Highland Council has a requirement to implement its Gaelic Language Plan under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – The report complies with The Highland Council's policies on equality and accessibility. There are no adverse socio-economic, rural or island implications.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – The Gaelic Team currently attend all meetings online and virtually, thus reducing the requirement for business travel.

- 3.5 Risk – It is important that the Council has clear, up-to-date, and user-friendly bilingual policy guidance to enable compliance with the policy, and to ensure implementation of The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2018–2023 (GLP3), as well as the National Gaelic Language Plan.
- 3.6 Gaelic – This report has positive implications regarding the preservation and development of Gaelic language and culture, as the bilingual policy ensures Gaelic has a visual presence on road, street and building signage across the Highland area, as well as in print and publications, and in other contexts.

#### **4. Bilingual Signage Policy Redraft and Redesign – Introduction**

- 4.1 The *Guidelines on bilingual signage for Highland Council staff and additional Guidance for the use of Gaelic* document was produced in 2010 and requires review.

o **[Guidelines on bilingual signage for Highland Council staff](#)**

This document is currently being refreshed and is scheduled for redesign by the Council's Graphic Designer. Contact details will be updated and references will be aligned with the current Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan and National Gaelic Language Plan. Some practical points will be added to strengthen the policy and align it with current practice. This report details the proposed amendments and additions to the policy.

- 4.2 The Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba (AÀA) partnership was formed in 2006, following on from the Gaelic Names Liaison Committee. The Council continues to work in partnership with AÀA as the national advisory partnership on Gaelic place-names and consults with it, as a matter of policy, to ensure correct forms of Gaelic place-names on signage and documents.
- 4.3 As new and replacement road and street signs are erected as required, there are still signs in situ which pre-date AÀA and do not comply with current HC policy. Consequently, it is important that the bilingual policy is followed so that signage becomes increasingly consistent.
- 4.4 The refreshed document will provide opportunities to reinforce the bilingual policy – which is very much a cross-service policy – throughout the Council. It is essential for staff awareness of the Council's legal duties under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and will be useful to refer to at staff inductions and refresher training.
- 4.5 The current complete document is only available on the Council's intranet, and it is proposed that the refreshed policy document should be made available on the Council website. A summary version is currently available on the HC website: [Gaelic signage policy](#). However, this version does not cover all aspects of the signage policy and has led to confusion, with some assuming that this is the complete policy. It is consequently proposed that this be removed and replaced by the new policy document.

#### **5. Proposed General Amendments**

- 5.1 The existing document is entitled: *Guidelines on bilingual signage for Highland Council staff and additional Guidance for the use of Gaelic*. It is suggested that the new policy document be given a more concise title such as: *Highland Council Guidelines for Bilingual (Gaelic and English) Signage and Other Texts*.

- 5.2 The following paragraph in the Introduction of the policy will be extended to cover print and publications:

‘As part of its Plan Commitments, the Highland Council has undertaken to support the Gaelic language by raising its visual profile across the area. This includes commitments to bilingual (Gaelic and English) signage and use of bilingual text in print and publications.’

- 5.3 Contact details of staff and services will be updated, with email addresses replacing telephone numbers.

- 5.4 References will be aligned with the current Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2018–2023 and National Gaelic Language Plan 2018–2023. Gaelic versions of suggested appropriate suffix terms will be aligned with AÀA’s Recommended Terms, which is part of its Gaelic Place-name Policy 2020. References will be updated to the current [Gaelic Orthographic Conventions \(2009\)](#) which can be downloaded from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) website.

## **6 Design and Layout**

- 6.1 The refreshed policy will be streamlined and sections will be more clearly presented – Road Signage, Street Signage, Building Signage, Print and Publications etc – and will also have a Contents page.

- 6.2 There will be a reduction in the ‘how not to’ photographs, and remaining photographs will be clearly marked with a red cross or a green tick, to avoid any confusion. New photographs will also be added.

## **7 Proposed Procedural Amendments**

- 7.1 The Gaelic Translation Service (GTS) was newly established when the current policy was published and officers are instructed to contact AÀA directly. Current practice is that officers contact the GTS in the first instance, and this has many advantages. Flowcharts will be updated and the following text will be added to the Introduction:

‘For assistance with Gaelic translation or proof-reading, officers should contact Jo MacDonald, Senior Translation Officer (STO), on [jo.macdonald@highland.gov.uk](mailto:jo.macdonald@highland.gov.uk)

Where Gaelic place-names are required, the STO will consult with Ainmean Àite na h-Alba – Gaelic Place-names of Scotland (AÀA) in order to determine the correct forms.

It is important that consultation with AÀA is via the STO as the Gaelic Translation Service keeps a record of all road, street and building signage used across The Highland Council area. This will also ensure consistency as well as an opportunity to proofread templates.

If replacement signs are already bilingual, it is important to check the Gaelic as recommendations may have changed.

Sufficient time should be allocated to planning new signage projects. Although some translation requests can be returned almost immediately, some may involve significant research and may take several weeks.’

- 7.2 A request to provide brief background information on street names and their location to assist the translation process will be included. For example, it is important to know

whether 'Ross Road' refers to the surname or the area, or whether 'MacDonald Street' is named after a male or female in order to ensure accurate translations.

7.3 A requirement to send sign templates back to the GTS for proof-reading prior to manufacture, to ensure that there are no errors or typos, will be included. This will protect against negative publicity and replacement costs.

7.4 *'Names clearly not of Gaelic origin, and where no identifiable historic or local Gaelic usage exists, should be left in their 'English' form.'*

It is suggested that this be amended to emphasise the importance of consultation: 'Following consultation with AAA, names clearly not of Gaelic origin, and where no identifiable historic or local Gaelic usage exists, should be left in their 'English' form.'

## 8 Proposed Substantive Amendments

8.1 Whenever signs are erected or replaced for rivers and other natural features in the Highland Council area, these will be bilingual. As with road and street signage, Gaelic will be placed above English and will be in green unless there is an alternative design scheme.

8.2 Place-names where Gaelic and English spellings are *exactly* the same are relatively rare. When such place-names appear on signs, the place-name will be presented twice – the Gaelic in green above and the English in black below as with other bilingual road signage. This will maintain design symmetry and will clearly show the Gaelic and English forms.

8.3 Regarding street signs, it may be that some existing signage in a locality or development is in English only. Developers and community councils are encouraged to progress bilingual signage and should not avoid doing so in order to maintain consistency with other monolingual signage.

8.4 In 2009, following a meeting of the Council, there was a change from an initial blanket policy of bilingual street name signage across the Highland area to a position of allowing local consultation on new and replacement street name signs, while stressing that bilingual signs should be encouraged. (This did not affect road directional and gateway welcome signs which must be bilingual across the Highland area.)

While the 'default' position is for bilingual street signage, and while community councils tend to be supportive, monolingual street signs are occasionally erected. The Gaelic Team has received queries from members of the public who often assume there is a policy requirement for all street signs to be bilingual.

The Gaelic Translation Service (GTS) maintains logs of all signage administered. However, monolingual signage does not require GTS input and consequently it is impossible to know the percentages of bilingual and monolingual signs which are erected. Given the extent of the Highland area, it is not possible to monitor this.

It is proposed that a system be implemented whereby the GTS is informed of monolingual street name signs which are erected following local consultation. This could be explored in conjunction with the Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG) Team. This would promote transparency and accountability, and would provide the Gaelic Team with a clearer overall picture of the implementation of the bilingual signage policy regarding street signs.

- 8.5 References to the availability of funding via Comunn na Gàidhlig's bilingual signage scheme will be removed as this scheme no longer exists. This will be replaced with:
- 'The Council's Gaelic Translation Service can provide translation and proofreading assistance to external organisations wishing to erect signage in The Highland Council area.'
- 8.6 The current practice of providing Gaelic-only signage in GME standalone settings will also be formally included. Recognising that some settings may use shared classrooms, a 'best practice' caveat will be added as follows:
- 'In order to support the immersion experience, signage will be in Gaelic-only in standalone Gaelic schools. In schools and settings which have both Gaelic and English provision, best practice would be to have Gaelic-only signage in Gaelic areas and bilingual signs in the rest of the building, in accordance with wider HC policy.'
- 8.7 Plaques for official openings of Council-owned buildings and properties will be bilingual.
- 8.8 Lift commands in Council-owned buildings and properties will be bilingual.
- 8.9 Exhibitions and displays in Council-owned buildings and properties will be bilingual or contain some Gaelic content.
- 8.10 Reference to 'audio tapes, video or DVDs' will be modernised to 'audio-visual and multi-media presentations.'
- 8.11 *'Wherever possible, the Gaelic language content should have a brief introduction to give explanation and context to what it is and why it is there.'*
- This will be amended to:
- 'Where appropriate, the Gaelic language content should have a brief introduction to give explanation and context to what it is and why it is there.'
- 8.12 With reference to colour differentiation between the languages, particularly on interpretation panels and in documents, the following will be added:
- 'A lighter shade of the same colour on either language is not acceptable as this does not achieve equal design prominence.'
- 8.13 The existing logo text refers to the 'new' HC logo. This will be amended to:
- 'The Council logo gives equal status to English and Gaelic. Guidance on the correct use of the logo is available on the Council's website: [www.highland.gov.uk](http://www.highland.gov.uk) on the A-Z under 'L' for logos or via: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/logoguidance>'
- 8.14 The section entitled Website will be updated to:
- 'The Council is committed to providing information on the web in English and Gaelic.'

Press releases relating to Gaelic matters appear in Gaelic first on the Council's website, followed by English, under a bilingual heading.

It is a commitment of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan 2018–2023 that Gaelic elements on the Council website will be increased, restructured, and consolidated as part of the developing digitisation process.'

- 8.15 The current document pre-dates the formation of High Life Highland (HLH). While HLH has its own corporate branding and colours, it does align closely with the HC's bilingual policy. Given its importance regarding building signage and marketing texts, it may be appropriate to refer to HLH in the current document with wording such as:

'High Life Highland is a charity registered in Scotland, formed on the 1st October 2011 by The Highland Council. HLH develops and promotes opportunities in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing across nine services throughout the whole of the Highlands, for both residents and visitors. The Highland Council's Gaelic Translation Service provides in-kind formatting, design, translation and proofreading assistance to HLH for use on signage and in various texts.'

- 8.16 Appendices 1 & 2 have been updated by the Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG) Team. This includes guidance on street-naming and use of themes, particularly those with local historical or cultural connections. Details of the number of times certain names appear in the Highland area have been refreshed. For example, there are 31 Station Roads, 23 High Streets, and 11 Main Streets, while 18 streets begin with Cameron and 40 with Castle.
- 8.17 It may be that the Roads Department will want to add more detail and they will be consulted before the document is finalised.
- 8.18 The Council's Graphic Designer is currently preparing a *Signage Specification for Contractors* document. It is intended to incorporate elements from this document – particularly practical detail of fonts and sign sizes, etc – into the bilingual policy, and to link them together. The design of the bilingual policy will be similar and this could be an accompanying or complementary document.

## **9. Consultation and Next Steps**

- 9.1 Consultation is currently underway with colleagues in the Gaelic Team and across the Council regarding the policy document refresh. AAA has also been consulted. So far, there have been no problems or issues raised with the proposed changes.
- 9.2 Once the consultation is complete, the refreshed policy and guidance will come to the Full Council for approval prior to being submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

Date: 18.08.21

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Background Papers: N/A