

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held **Remotely** on Thursday 16 December 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam
Mr R Bremner
Mrs I Campbell
Miss J Campbell
Mr A Henderson
Mr A MacInnes

Mr D MacKay
Mr G MacKenzie
Mr C Munro
Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Rixson

Non-Members also present:

Ms S Fanet
Mr K Gowans

Mr D Macpherson

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms J MacDonald, Senior Gaelic Translation Officer
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator

Also in attendance:-

Ms F Dalgetty, Fèis Rois
Mr A Donald, Fèis Rois
Mr J Graham, Chief Executive Officer, An Comunn Gàidhealach
Mr A Campbell, President, An Comunn Gàidhealach

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 J Gordon, Ms E Roddick and Mr A Sinclair.

2. Declarations of Interest

Item 3 - Mr C Munro and Mr A Henderson (both non-financial)
Item 4 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)
Item 5 – Mr A Henderson (non-financial)
Item 6 – Mr C Munro (non-financial)
Items 7 and 8 – Mr C Munro (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. Good News

Declarations of Interest:

Mr C Munro declared a non-financial interest as close family members had taken part in a local Blas concert and he himself had participated in a local community project also performed at a Blas event, 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.

Mr A Henderson also declared a non-financial interest as a close family member had taken had been involved in the Small Halls Tour, 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.

The Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- the Scottish Government had awarded Highland Council a £900k capital grant for investment in two Highland schools. Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar had been awarded £650K for a 2 classroom extension - increasing the number of classrooms to 6 – and £250k had been awarded towards the new primary school building at Dunvegan;
- GLAIF funding had been approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG) for a Gaelic cultural project in the Gairloch area. The project would be delivered by the Highland Council Gaelic team in partnership with Gaelic Education staff and key Gaelic and Cultural organisations;
- Alzheimer Scotland West Highland was successful at the BnaG Daily Record Scottish Gaelic Awards. The Highland Council Gaelic Team had supported the initiative and provided support to people living with dementia whose first language was Gaelic. Gaelic Medium pupils from Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh and Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar had engaged in the project;
- the Royal National Mòd had taken place in Inverness between 8-16 October and had been hugely successful, as would be detailed later on in the agenda;
- Fèis Rois, who would shortly be giving a presentation to the Committee, had celebrated 30 years of the Adult Fèis;
- the 2021 Blas Festival had taken place between 19-27 November with 33 live events across the Highlands and Islands. Fèisean nan Gàidheal's agreements with Creative Scotland, HIE and Bòrd na Gàidhlig meant funds from those bodies were also available to Blas. Concerts were organised with partner promoters in each community and Fèisean nan Gàidheal also collaborated with SEALL's Festival of Small Halls, Fèis Rois and Tobar an Dualchais. In addition to the main concert programme, 9 events, all from Highland venues, were livestreamed and were currently still available to view on myplayer. 4 events had been sold out prior to the start of the festival and Fèisean nan Gàidheal predict that the box office income had exceeded predications. Around 125 musicians Had been employed.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News.

4. Highland Culture Collective - Fèis Rois

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest as secretary of Mallaig Heritage Centre 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 any discussion that might arise.

Ms Fiona Dalgetty and Mr Artair Donald from Fèis Rois gave a presentation on the Highland Culture Collective and Fèis Rois. Fèis Rois was a Ross and Cromarty District Council project starting in 1986 and had transferred to charitable status in 1990. It was best known for working with adults and young people and providing residential music making courses. However, it was also known for its Ceilidh Trail, commissions, partnership projects, weekly classes and its work with schools. It now also provided one-to-one music lessons for Care Experienced Young People.

Continuing, details of national and International projects such as "Dandelion" were provided. This had meant Fèis Rois had developed long standing partnerships in countries such as France, Romania, Canada and Australia. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the Adult Fèis had been cancelled but, in its place, an online offering had been provided.

Turning to the Highland Culture Collective, it was explained that this was a £300k project running from July 2021 to September 2022, Fèis Rois being the lead partner. 6 full time jobs had been created with 5 Artists In Residence, Artair Donald being the Drama Artist in Residence. Mr Donald detailed the work he was doing in Mallaig and Acharacle and with Lochaber High School and his plans to expand and further engage with schools in Newtonmeore, Kingussie, Dingwall, Inverness and Farr.

Members commended the plethora of work Fèis Rois undertook and which enabled the Gaelic Language and Culture to be accessible in communities. It provided a whole range of activities to all ages and the energy and enthusiasm was to be applauded. It's close association with Eden Court had been particularly successful and it was hoped this engagement would continue, especially as the theatre had now appointed a Gaelic Officer. Eden Court also had its own in-house production facility and the deepening co-operation was to be welcomed. Such shared partnerships were invaluable, especially when funding was reduced.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Royal National Mòd 2021

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest as a close family member was involved with An Comunn Gàidhealach concert, 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/18/21 dated 1 December 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The 2021 Royal National Mòd was the first face-to-face Mòd since the Glasgow Mòd in 2019. Over 3,500 people had attended with 21 “live” competitions taking place involving 70 “live” competitors. 4 showcase concerts had been held, as well as 25 fringe events, and 16 choirs had been brought together to perform. In terms of its online offering, 86 competitions took place with 415 competitors, The Mòd had attracted 199 items of media coverage, all of which were positive and supportive. An external Independent Evaluation was currently taking place, the results of which would be reported to Highland Council, but it was important to recognise that the benefits were not solely monetary but also in terms of the health benefits, tackling social isolation and the positive promotion of Highland. The online element had been particularly welcomed by those who were housebound and those living overseas. The contribution of volunteers to enable not just the Royal National Mòd to take place but the smaller provincial Mòds was also acknowledged.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the RNM full programme for 2021; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a detailed report was submitted to the next meeting of the Gaelic Committee which would include a financial update and the findings and outcomes of the Consultancy and Media Evaluation Reports.

6. Progress Against Gaelic Language Plan 3

Declaration of Interest: Mr C Munro declared a non-financial interest as he had children in Gaelic Medium Education who were benefitting from some of the activities detailed in the report 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/19/21 dated 1 December 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- it was good to see that many of the indicators had been RAG rated as Green (on target);
- Councillor Rixson was involved with the Locality Planning for Caol and he offered any help he could in developing marketing and awareness to promote the benefits of bilingualism through Gaelic;
- further progress on developing a Gaelic portal on the Council’s website would be welcomed as it was anticipated that greater use would be made of such a tool going forward; and
- in Lochaber great use had been made of the Ranger Service in dealing with the huge influx of visitors. Their interaction with the public had been well received and it was suggested that this also provided an opportunity for them to promote the Gaelic Language and Culture.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress made in both monitoring and implementing GLP3 on a quarterly basis utilising the (PRMS) support delivery of GLP3; and

- ii. the progress and challenges regarding the implementation of some enabling actions in the Plan.

7. Gaelic and Gàidhlig Medium Education Update

Declaration of Interest: Mr C Munro declared a financial interest as a close family member was employed as a Gaelic Medium Education 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/20/21 dated 1 December 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Members commended the good work undertaken to develop Gaelic Medium Education (GME), particular reference being made to the extension of the Bun-sgoil in Lochaber where there had been significant pressures. This had been achieved despite the many challenges that the Covid pandemic had brought;
- the Council was committed to ascertaining the feasibility of a 3-18 GME campus in Inverness and this could possibly be provided in conjunction with other initiatives; and
- there was appreciation for the contribution of Education Officers, Head Teachers and Teaching Staff which had seen the number of Secondary Gaelic Learners in Highland grow in each of the last three years, in contrast to the rest of Scotland where the numbers had declined.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the increasing pupil numbers across provision of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Education in Highland; and
- ii. the areas of current and future development in Education including the progress of the GME Catchment Consultation process.

8. Gaelic Specific Grant Report

Declaration of Interest: Mr C Munro declared a financial interest as a close family member was employed as a Gaelic Medium Education 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/21/21 dated 1 December 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the project with Ainnm Àite na h-Alba and GME schools was a superb way of also engaging with local communities and Members asked to see, in the future, a sample of the output. There was merit too in expanding this to Secondary Schools;

- increasing climate change awareness in GME would generate positive publicity and was a worthwhile project to pursue;
- the formation of the Gaelic Committee and the challenges faced over the last 18 months could not be underestimated;
- the Gaelic Committee was now better placed to gauge the Council's performance against its Gaelic Language Plan (GLP). It was not solely about the here and now but the future going forward;
- Highland Council was the best performing local authority in helping the Scottish Government meet its own GLP targets and the aims and objectives contained in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act. It was important that the Council was in a good position to secure continued funding in the future in terms of the ascertaining the number of Gaelic learners etc. It would be useful for Members to have sight of forecasts of numbers and what funding requirements would be required to ensure it was well positioned as future GLPs were developed; and
- there needed to be a focus on not just Gaelic speakers but new Gaelic speakers as this was the key aim of the Scottish Government's Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act. The Highland Council needed to demonstrate how it could help contribute to this over the next 5-10 years.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the 3 projects outlined in the Gaelic Specific Grant bid;
- ii. the ambitious programme of work that the grant would help to support and that these might need to be adjusted should the full amount not be secured; and
- iii. the application was still under consideration by the Scottish Government with a decision expected early in the New Year.

9. Capital Investment and 3-18 Feasibility

There had been circulated Report No. G/22/21 dated 6 December 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

Capital Planning was not just for the immediate future but for the medium and longer term and it was important to take consideration of where GME would not only be instigated but expanded and to what extent this would challenge any Capital Plan and investment the Council took forward. This was vital if the number of Gaelic learners and speakers were to be increased.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the Council's capital investment in GME;
- ii. and welcomed the recent investment from the Scottish Government; and
- iii. the draft terms of reference for a feasibility study for the expansion of 3-18 Gaelic Medium provision in Inverness.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm