

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 2 March 2022 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr D MacKay
Mr R Bremner (VC)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs I Campbell	Mr C Munro
Miss J Campbell	Mrs M Paterson
Mr A Henderson (VC)	Mr D Rixson

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer (VC)
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator (VC)
Mr A MacInnes, administrative Assistant

Also in attendance:-

Ms J Dunlop, Director, World Gaelic Week (VC)
Mr G McFarlane, Administrator, World Gaelic Week (VC)
Mr J Graham, Chief Executive Officer, An Comunn Gàidhealach
Mr A Barnett, Mod Convener and Director, 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 A MacInnes, Ms E Roddick and Mr A Sinclair.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

Item 5 – Mr A Henderson (Declaration of Interest)

Mr R Bremner – (Transparency Statement) in any item, given his connection with a number of Gaelic organisations, but having read the reports and considered the content, he did not believe these connections amounted to a Declaration of Interest.

3. Good News

The Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- two Gaelic posts within the Council were currently being advertised, namely, Gaelic Youth Engagement Officer and Graduate Intern (Gaelic and Social Media).
- the Inverness Castle and *Spirit of the Highlands and Islands* project team had implemented Gaelic language in various project outputs. The project had received funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig to create two new Gaelic Advisor posts within the project team to provide guidance on the inclusion of Gaelic language and culture in project outputs and in the design of the new visitor attraction in Inverness Castle.
- the Council's financial contribution had enabled Fèisean nan Gàidheal to attract additional funding from Creative Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and HIE to run the Blas Festival. This year's festival had included partnership working with Tobar an Dualchais, VisitScotland, National Library of Scotland, SEALL's Festival of Small Halls and St Andrew's Fair Saturday.
- of the 91 submissions this year to FilmG, 49 were from Highland schools. The Chair also informed the Committee of the various Highland winners and their categories.
- West Highland Way Project, and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park had made initial contact with the Gaelic Team to seek support and advise on using and including Gaelic within their project Gaelic People, Place and Passion which would form part of the Year of Scotland's Stories. The aim was to bring Gaelic to a wider audience and celebrate the use of the language along the West Highland Way, especially as part of the route was within the Highland area.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News.

4. World Gaelic Week

There had been circulated Report No. G/1/22 dated 16 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance. Ms Joy Dunlop, Director and Mr Grant McFarlane, Administrator of World Gaelic Week gave a presentation on the first World Gaelic Week which was to be held between 21-27 March 2022.

The purpose of World Gaelic Week was to celebrate the Gaelic Language and Culture. It aimed to increase the uptake and use of Gaelic and the number of learners and to promote a positive image of Gaelic. An official Programme of events had been drawn up in collaboration with other partners, both in person and online. Local community events were also going to take place and, to assist such events, resources in the form of a toolkit were available. A resource pack had also been prepared for schools, both in Gaelic and English Medium. It was hoped as wide a range of programme as possible could be achieved so that there would be something for everyone to take part in. Gaelic played an important role and had a significant positive effect on the economy and, looking towards Gaelic Week, it was important to highlight existing activity.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- amongst the events being explored by the Gaelic Team, the development of a "Gaelic phrase/place name of the day" promoted on Social Media Platforms was welcomed. This would grab attention and was a good way to get visitors to the area to interact;

- during the Covid pandemic and the various lockdowns, Gaelic speakers had less opportunity to interact with each other and Gaelic Week would reinvigorate this by providing an opportunity to get back together;
- further information was sought about the “Tea & Shortbread in the Garden, Portree” event and whether or not this required to be booked in advance; and
- additional information on the timetable would be useful.

The Chairman having thanked Ms Dunlop and Mr McFarlane, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the World Gaelic Week initiative; and
- AGREED** the proposed Highland Council events which would contribute to the World Gaelic Week initiative.

5. Royal National Mòd 2021

Declaration of Interest:- Mr A Henderson declared an interest as fees to artistes were listed and family members had received payment and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting.

There had been circulated Report No. G/2/22 dated 1 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- congratulations were extended to all those involved in running a successful Mòd in difficult circumstances. Those who had attended the Mòd had enjoyed it immensely and it was pleasing to see the Special Gathering had been able to go ahead;
- the online offering had been well received by people of all ages;
- the Mòd had had a good economic benefit for Inverness during what was an inordinate time;
- a creative approach had been adopted when the need to look for alternative venues had arisen and this was to be commended; and
- the Royal National Mòd in 2021 had taken place in a very different way than before. The Council’s own Gaelic Team were to be commended for the support they had shown. The Mòd this year was to take place in Perth and it was important that the lessons learnt from 2021 were taken forward and allow the continuation of the hybrid model to allow participants to take part remotely.

The representatives from An Comunn present referred to the previous item and informed Members that they too were taking part in World Gaelic Week. Turning to the Mòd it was pointed out that the report before Committee today was not just an economic statement but also an event evaluation. The hybrid model had allowed participants and attendees to take part from around the world and this was only to be welcomed and encouraged. The challenges involved were acknowledged but the help of Highland Council, both financially and in kind, was much appreciated.

The Chair having wished An Comunn best wishes for their preparation for the 2022 Perth Royal National Mòd, the Committee **NOTED**:-

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- i. the findings of the Royal National Mòd Evaluation; and
- ii. the Innes and Campbell Communications report.

6. Progress Against Gaelic Language Plan 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/3/21 dated 16 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- with reference to the Gaelic Garden at the redevelopment of Inverness Castle Project, there were synergies with the aims of the Council's Climate Change Working Group and many historical writings about the use of flowers and herbs in medicine were referred to. There was huge interest in this, offering tremendous possibilities;
- one of the commissions, submitted to Spirit: 360 (an artists' commissioning programme to develop unique pieces based on stories submitted to the *Spirit of the Highlands and Islands*), was to write and record a piece of traditional Scottish music inspired by feral goats. Reference was made to poetry written by an emigrant to Canada called "Of Goats and Men", full of place names of the writer's home country of Scotland. Goats had been important in our medieval economy with goat hair from Rum even being transported to America for wigs;
- it was important to be mindful of the upcoming National Census. Given Highland's position, in terms of Gaelic Medium Education, Gaelic speakers etc, it was vital to ensure that the results of the census generated a fruitful outcome in terms of funding. Lobbying had taken place with the Scottish Government about the how best to shape the census questions but there had been no change as to how to gather this information to ensure a good return. It was questioned how the Council could evidence this better; and
- the Chair informed Members that Bòrd na Gàidhlig had been working with the Scottish Government about how to evidence success.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress made in both monitoring and implementing Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 3 on a quarterly basis utilising the Performance and Risk Management System support delivery of GLP3;
- ii. the progress and challenges regarding the implementation of some enabling actions in the Plan;
- iii. that challenges were largely due to the pandemic, which had impacted some projected project implementation and completion dates. However, the Gaelic Team had and continued to endeavour to adapt to an on-line or a blended approach to deliver the enabling actions.

7. Gaelic Language Plan Renewal

There had been circulated Report No. G/4/22 dated 16 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

In introducing the report and in referring to the previous item, officers indicated that as part of the Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) Renewal, there was an intention to issue a

survey, post the Council elections, to provide a baseline in Highland and this would allow the Council to measure the impact of the next iteration of the GLP.

Members reflected on the progress on what had been achieved since the Council's first GLP in 2008, the first in Scotland, to the position reached in 2022. It was important to reflect on the progress which had been made and evidence that in GLP4. If the Council provided opportunities in terms of education and learners this had to be evidenced regarding how progressive and sustainable it was. Highland Council had worked hard to get where it was in terms of promoting Gaelic and it was vital to do everything to support it. Progression from Primary Gaelic Medium Education into Secondary Gaelic Medium Education still remained an issue but, by working with partners, there were opportunities to be grasped to benefit pupils in the 12-18 age group.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the process for Gaelic Language Plan renewal;
- ii. **NOTED** the planning implications and challenges regarding the renewal process;
- iii. **AGREED** that Gaelic language plans were unique to each public authority and subsequent editions of Gaelic language plans should show incremental progress towards delivery of the corporate service aims over time; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the Gaelic Committee review that the measures in place, or needed to be put in place, to monitor effectively the sustainability and progressive increase in the number of Gaelic speakers, and their continued use of the language and the opportunities afforded them.

8. Supporting and Growing Gaelic in our Communities - Workshop

There had been circulated Report No. G/5/22 dated 16 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The workshop was proposed to take place in April 2022 but it was questioned, with the forthcoming Highland Council elections in May 2022, if this was the best time to carry out a workshop, given the potential of Councillors either leaving or not be re-elected. However, other Members felt that there was considerable experience within the current Council which would help inform and develop GLP4. Post elections, there would be other issues needing to be addressed and it would be better to start the process as soon as possible rather than delay it any further.

There was a huge thirst for Gaelic at the moment and it was important to move forward at pace with it. Staff and Members should also be encouraged to participate to comment on the issues raised at the workshop and to encourage Gaelic to be better incorporated into Council meetings. Pupils of Portree High School were to be involved in the workshop and this was a positive move regarding how best to involve schools and pupils in the development of the Plan.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outline of the workshop; and
- ii. **AGREED** the proposed outcomes.

At the conclusion of formal business, the Chair reflected on the last 18 months of the Gaelic Committee and thanked Members for their sincerity when giving their view during that time. He thanked the Gaelic Team for their work undertaken during a challenging time and to Democratic Services for their support and advice.

The meeting concluded at 12.40 pm