

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	EDU/4/23

## THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Education Committee

**Date:** 15 February 2023

**Report Title:** Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education – The Highland Council

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This Report informs Members of

- a) An outline of the statutory and legislative frameworks for Gaelic Education with a specific focus on the following themes;
- Gaelic Medium Education – Early Years, Primary and Secondary
  - Gaelic Learner Education – Primary and Broad General Education Phase Secondary Education
  - National Language Plan and The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 3 Priorities
- b) Outlines the key areas of current and future development in Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Education which evidence and provide support towards the growth of Gaelic Education in Highland

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Consider the report and note the provision of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Education across Highland.
- ii. Note the areas of current and future development; and
- iii. Consider what other actions can be taken to support the sustainability and future development of Gaelic Education.

### 3. Implications

#### 3.1 Resource:

The resource implications are within the current main budget stream which include Gaelic Specific Grant, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (Bòrd na Gàidhlig). Also, increasing parental demand for Gaelic Medium provision has direct impact on resources for teacher recruitment. There are ongoing pressures on schools due to the challenges of recruiting Gaelic Medium Teachers.

#### 3.2 Legal:

The Highland Council has a requirement to implement its Gaelic Language Plan under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005.

Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education sets out the key legislative duties places on Bòrd na Gàidhlig and education authorities in relation to this Guidance.

#### 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island):

The Report complies with The Highland Council policies on Equality.

#### 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:

There are no specific risks arising as a consequence of this report.

#### 3.6 Gaelic:

The report enhances Gaelic Development within The Highland Council area and supports the implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan.

### 4. Elements that constitute Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)

#### 4.1 Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education is linked [here](#). The Guidance explains the elements of Gaelic Education and aims to establish a consistent approach and clear expectation for Local Authorities on how it should be delivered.

**Gaelic Medium Education** is an option within Scottish education that gives children and young people an opportunity to become fluent in Gaelic. GME is immersion education. Gaelic is the sole language of learning, teaching and assessment up to the end of Primary 3. From Primary 4m English is introduced. Gaelic remains the predominant language of the classroom.

GME Secondary Education – Gaelic is typically offered as a subject with some schools offering a further proportion of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic.

GME fulfils all the aims and goals of Curriculum for Excellence whilst accruing all the benefits of bilingualism.

Gaelic Medium Education is available in 14 out of 32 Scottish local authorities.

In Scotland, Gaelic Medium Education is available in 61 primary schools and their associated secondaries in Scotland, including dedicated Gaelic Medium schools. An increasing number of early learning and childcare centres, secondary schools and further education centres also provide learning through the medium of Gaelic.

20 GME primary schools are located in The Highland Council area, accounting for approximately one third of all GME primary provision in Scotland. 14 secondary schools in Highland also provide GME for transition from the primary GME.

**Gaelic Learner Education** – GLE is distinct from GME. GLE is delivered to those in English Medium Education as an additional language. It provides young people with an introduction to Gaelic language and culture. This can be provided as part of the 1 plus 2 curricula in primary and BGE and as a Modern Language in secondary school. 17 secondary schools offer Gaelic Learner provision.

Gaelic Learner Education is available in schools.

## 5.0 Statutory and legislative frameworks for Gaelic Education

### 5.1 Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005. **Gaelic Language Plan**

Bòrd na Gàidhlig outline key priorities for Gaelic education and learning within the National Gaelic Language Plan. They state;

“...education, learning and the development of language skills are key priorities in the **National Gaelic Language Plan** and are essential for the future and health of the language. We work in partnership with various individuals and organisations to improve and grow Gaelic education and learning at all levels – for both young people and adults, and for fluent speakers and learners”

The [Gaelic Language \(Scotland\) Act 2005 \(the Act\)](#), seeks to secure the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language.

The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2023 can be read [here](#).

The next iteration of the National Plan is currently in draft and can be viewed [here](#).

The Plan is a statutory document, following the requirements of the Gaelic Language Act, where Highland Council makes a clear commitment to increasing Gaelic usage, increasing the number of Gaelic speakers, enhancing the profile of Gaelic and generating a positive image of the language. For that reason, the Highland Council has a strong focus on Gaelic Medium Education.

#### **The Plan has 6 priority areas which are as follows:**

1. Gaelic in the Home, Early Learning and Childcare
2. Gaelic in the Community
3. Gaelic in Education
4. Gaelic in the Arts, Culture and Heritage
5. Gaelic in the Workplace
6. The Social, Economic and Cultural Value of Gaelic

**Gaelic Language Plan 4** - Our draft strategic priorities are in discussion with Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Please note that the priorities proposed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and shared below are in draft. The Highland Council is engaging with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to co-create a final draft that focuses on the long term sustainable growth of Gaelic in Highland. Draft Strategic Priorities from Bòrd na Gàidhlig will include both corporate and education aims that achieve the 3 overarching aims - Increasing the Use of Gaelic, increasing the Learning of Gaelic and promoting a positive image of Gaelic.

**Policy Implementation** -The Highland Council will continue to, as required by Bord na Gàidhlig (BnaG) to submit an Annual Return which focusses on the Council's key performance indicators (KPI'S) as set out within GLP3 see Appendix 1 of the link attached which is an example of the format and data which is submitted [here](#).

5.2 **Scottish Government Gaelic Plan 2022-27** states that “the position of Gaelic remains fragile. If Gaelic is to have a sustainable future, there needs to be a concerted effort on the part of Government, the public sector, the private sector, community bodies and individual speakers to:

- promote the acquisition of speaking, reading and writing skills in Gaelic
- use and enable the use of Gaelic in a range of social, formal and work settings
- expand the respect for, and visibility, audibility and recognition of Gaelic
- develop the quality, consistency and richness of Gaelic

The Scottish Government GLP commits to embedding Gaelic in all new education policy initiatives. The Highland Council recognise the interdependence between Scottish Government and the GSG outcomes for The Highland Council. The commitment is enhanced by the support from Highland Council who realise these initiatives through continued strong partnership and project delivery with Education Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Stòrlann and the Northern Alliance.

## 6.0 The Highland Council Context

6.1 GME is available in the following locations in Highland - click here to open map: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/18/gaelic\\_medium\\_education](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/18/gaelic_medium_education)

To fulfil the expectations of the Statutory Guidance, Highland Council has promoted GME in Highland schools by producing the following video (funded by Scottish Government) linked [here](#). The video provides information on GME as a short social media promotional tool. It provides information for parents interested in the benefits of Gaelic education.

The Highland Council provision of GME encompasses;

- 19 ELC and Partner Centre provisions
  - 20 primary GME. Within this primary GME provision, 3standalone GME schools 2 Gaelic schools with English Medium Provision and the remainder are schools with GME provision.
  - 20 Secondary schools in Highland currently provide Gàidhlig for fluent and/or Gaelic learners. 14 of these schools offer GME secondary Gàidhlig as part of their Gaelic curriculum and 17 offer Gaelic Learner pathways in BGE and/or senior phase.
  - 7 of our associated secondary provisions currently provide additional subjects through the medium of Gàidhlig at BGE and/or senior phase.
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- Gaelic Learners BGE has also been made available via a Gaelic Teacher working with the Virtual Academy for this session.\*

\*These numbers do not include schools where Gaelic is part of the language learning curriculum in primary schools (1 plus 2).

**Our Context** - Highland Council is the largest provider of Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland. Our education service in total, has 29 secondary schools and 170 primary schools. The total number of operational schools, 199, covers a geographical area nearly the size of Belgium. 48% of our secondary schools offer Gaelic Education. 12% of our primary schools offer GME. The area is a mix of urban, semi urban, and rural and remote areas and we have ambition to provide opportunities for Gaelic across the whole region.

**Challenges – Gaelic Medium Teacher recruitment**

Gaelic is a minority language within the context of majority English use. This is encountered by other minority languages such as Welsh and Irish. Increasingly, significant challenges face our GME provisions across Highland. At the opening of this current school session, there were 15 Gaelic Medium teacher vacancies. There is a significant lack of cover for absent teachers with no GME supply teacher availability and consequently, English medium delivery becomes the default option.

6.2 The following table illustrates where there is access GME in primary and Associated secondary schools. The % of the total school role choosing to follow a GME pathway in the primary school is also illustrated.

For further visual data presentation, a graph has been included in Appendix 1.

School Name 22-23	TOTAL P1-7	GME P1-7	EM P1-7
Acharacle Primary School	49	36	13
Broadford Primary School	81	35	46
Bun-Sgoil Shlèite	60	49	11
Bun-Sgoil Stafainn	39	31	8
Craighill Primary School	208	56	152
Dingwall Primary School	444	79	365
Dunvegan Primary School	45	22	23
Gairloch Primary School	49	13	36
Glenurquhart Primary School	141	15	126
Kilmuir Primary School	19	13	6
Lochcarron Primary School	56	18	38
Mallaig Primary School	65	27	38
Millbank Primary School	255	31	224
Mount Pleasant Primary School	184	14	170
Newtonmore Primary School	113	40	73
Plockton Primary School	40	30	10
Ullapool Primary School	133	75	58
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar	133	133	0
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	161	161	0
Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis	223	223	0

<b>School Name</b>	<b>Associated Secondary Gaelic Provision</b>
Glenurquhart Primary School	Glenurquhart High School
Acharacle Primary School	Ardnamurchan High School
Dingwall Primary School	Dingwall Academy
Gairloch Primary School	Gairloch High School
Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis	Inverness Royal Academy
Newtonmore Primary School	Kingussie High School
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar	Lochaber High School
Mallaig Primary School	Mallaig High School
Millbank Primary School	Nairn Academy
Lochcarron Primary School	Plockton High School
Plockton Primary School	
Broadford Primary School	Portree High School
Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	
Bun-Sgoil Shlèite	
Bun-Sgoil Stafainn	
Dunvegan Primary School	
Kilmuir Primary School	
Craighill Primary School	Tain Royal Academy
Mount Pleasant Primary School	Thurso High School
Ullapool Primary School	Ullapool High School
Applecross Primary School GMPE Request ongoing	Plockton High School

The following tables illustrate pupil numbers in Gaelic Medium Education in Highland schools from 2015-2023.

Cumulative %s from 2017/18 to 2022/23

ELC – 22.76% increase

Primary – 20.17% increase

Cumulative %s from 2017/18 to 2022/23

Secondary Gàidhlig Fluent – 23.16% increase

Secondary GME – 25.81% increase

Secondary GLE – 8.67% increase

The total number of the Highland primary pupils within GME provision as part of the total Highland primary numbers, shows there has been a steady year on year increase in these numbers with extensions and new school builds to several schools where GME provision is available.

This is currently 6.61%.

**Table 1: ELC numbers 2015-2023**

Pupils in publicly funded GME nurseries and partner centres								
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
GM Pupils	256	264	287	307	320	283	307	339
Change		+8	+23	+20	+13	-37	+24	+32
% Change		+3.03%	+8.01%	+6.51%	+4.06%	-13.07%	+7.82%	+9.43%

**Table 2: GME pupils total Highland Pupils 2015-2023**

Pupils in publicly funded primary schools								
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total Highland	17,263	17,381	17,422	17,351	17,316	16,843	16,799	16,657
GM Pupils	881	896	923	963	1,034	1,058	1,082	1,101
% GM Pupils	5.10%	5.16%	5.30%	5.55%	5.97%	6.28%	6.44%	6.61%
% Change		0.06%	0.14%	0.25%	0.42%	0.31%	0.16%	0.17%

**Table 3: Secondary Pupil Numbers**

Pupils in publicly funded secondary schools								
	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Total Highland	13,390	13,337	13,228	13,229	13,458	13,841	14,046	13,903
Fluent Gaelic	328	343	341	373	388	414	438	436
% Fluent Gaelic	2.45%	2.57%	2.58%	2.82%	2.88%	2.99%	3.12%	3.14%
% Change		0.12%	0.01%	0.24%	0.06%	0.11%	0.13%	0.02%
GME Subjects	255	265	259	282	261	286	287	354
% GME Subjects	1.90%	1.99%	1.96%	2.13%	1.94%	2.07%	2.04%	2.55%
% Change		0.09%	-0.03%	0.17%	-0.19%	0.13%	-0.03%	0.51%
Gaelic Learners	1,474	1,829	2,012	1,887	2,131	2,208	2,204	2,030
% Gaelic Learners	11.01%	13.71%	15.21%	14.26%	15.83%	15.95%	15.69%	14.6%
% Change		2.7%	1.5%	-0.95%	1.57%	0.12%	-0.26%	-1.09%

## 7.0 Resource - Grant and funding support

- 7.1 Gaelic Specific Grant - The Highland Council's Gaelic Team submit an annual application to the Scottish Government for Gaelic Specific Grant funding for Gaelic Medium Education.

Outlined in the application are three overarching Project headings -

Project 1 – Gaelic Planning, Policy Implementation and Resources

Project 2 – Gaelic in the Home and in Communities - Learning & Development Projects including 0-3

Project 3 – Gaelic in Early Learning and Childcare, Primary and Secondary Education

Further details on the application and the outcomes can be found linked here – [Item 6 Gaelic Committee](#)

- 7.2 The Gaelic Team provides the support structure for the implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan and Gaelic Education development and aims within the Grant application across Highland.

The *Scheme of Gaelic Specific Grant* covers all areas of Gaelic education from Pre-school, Primary, Secondary, through to adult learning. The Gaelic Team structure supports The Highland Council priorities for all these areas following the targets set in the GLP.

The award for 2022/2023 is £910,000.

This contributes towards delivering against the priorities for Education identified within GLP3 and the 3 project areas outlined in 8.1 which are managed and delivered by the Highland Council Gaelic Team.

- 7.3 The Highland Council requested Gaelic capital grant support from Scottish Government. Grant in Aid was awarded for projects in 2021/22 and 2022/2023. The Highland Council plan to submit a future bid for capital grant support in 2023/24.

2021/22 – A capital grant of £900,000 in connection with the cost of development of Gaelic education at Dunvegan and Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar.

2022/23 - A capital grant of up to £1,394,000, in connection with the cost of development of Gaelic education at Broadford Primary School and Tain Academy.

- 7.4 Funding is also awarded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig via the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF). The GLAIF Funding stream is vitally important for the Gaelic Team as it assists in implementing the key performance indicators of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

- 7.5 BnaG established the GLAIF funding stream to assist public authorities in the delivery of commitments in their Gaelic Language Plan and support the aims and outcomes of the National Gaelic Language Plan. Further information on current GLAIF applications by The Gaelic Team officers is available in a report to the Gaelic Committee on 1st September 2022 under item 8, linked [here](#).

## **8.0 Impact and benefits of Gaelic Education within Highland**

- 8.1 Economic Asset:

Ensuring the sustainability as well as growth of Gaelic Education has reach beyond statutory guidance as well as the widely evidenced accrued educational and cultural benefits.



Gaelic Education within our schools is an interdependent element of the economic asset that a strong Gaelic cultural identity can provide to Highland's economy. Further information on studies can be found [here](#).

Community Learning and Development co-ordinate tutor lead training, both in person and online, across different areas in Highland. The classes are for all levels of learning and also provide support for parent in Gaelic Medium. Further information available [here](#).

Highlands and Islands Enterprise produced its evidence-based [study](#) (2014), and stated:

“Supporting Gaelic is at the heart of our remit for economic and social development in the Highlands and Islands. An important element of our Gaelic Plan is to build on how the language is being used to add economic and social value in a wide variety of circumstances as demonstrated in the HIE-led research report, Ar Stòras Gàidhlig. The resulting report quantified that the combined impact on turnover which was currently attributable to the use of Gaelic totalled £5.6m.”

Highlands and Islands Enterprise promotes that Gaelic language, culture and development can co-exist positively within a background of majority English use. Gaelic language contributes to helping to drive economic growth in Highland.

## 8.2 Benefits of Bi-lingual Education – Positive Cognitive impact:

Dr Maria Garraffa, associate professor at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, provided research in 2020 on ***Language and Cognition in Gaelic-English Young Adult Bilingual Speakers: A Positive Effect of School Immersion Program on Attentional and Grammatical Skills.***

The article on the [research](#) undertaken with Gaelic Medium secondary pupils provides evidence that there are positive cognitive benefits. This includes benefits for pupils when exposure is reduced (those who do not speak Gaelic at home, as with many pupils in Gaelic Medium Education, pupils who do not get the opportunity to use their language skills in their community).

The research has also proven that ‘the positive effects of bilingualism are not contingent upon learning a global, widely spoken language, like French or Spanish, but are also true when it comes to a small heritage language like Gaelic.’

Designation	Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning
Date	2 February 2023
Author	Lena Walker, Gaelic Development Manager

## Appendix 1.

