

Agenda Item	11
Report No	G/7/23

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee:	Gaelic Committee
Date:	March 30th 2023
Report Title:	Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill – Consultation Response
Report By:	Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the process undertaken in relation to drafting a response to the draft Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill. The Draft Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill (link attached) [Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill: Scottish Government commitments - Scottish Government - Citizen Space \(consult.gov.scot\)](#) opened for public consultation on August 24th and closed on December 8th 2022. The Highland Council response is included in **Appendix 1** of the report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to:
- Homologate the response

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource
The Bill will have national resource implications
- 3.2 Legal
The Bill will be a legal document
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)
The Bill will generate positive implications for the area
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever
The Workshop was held virtually
- 3.5 Risk
Mitigated any risk as The Highland Council submitted a response
- 3.6 Gaelic

The Bill will generate positive provisions for the promotion and protection of Gaelic. The Highland Council stated that Gaelic is an important part of Scotland's linguistic heritage.

4. Scottish Government Commitment to Gaelic and Scots and a Scottish Languages Bill: Consultation

- 4.1 The Bill aims to promote and protect the Gaelic and Scots languages in Scotland.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government has made several commitments to the Gaelic and Scots languages. There are four key commitments which are regarded as particularly significant with other commitments included within these areas.

The four key commitments are as follows:

- to establish a new strategic approach to Gaelic medium education (GME)
- to explore the creation of a Gàidhealtachd
- to review the structure and functions of Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG)
- to take action on the Scots language.

5. Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill Workshop

- 5.1 A Members' and Officer workshop which was chaired by the Chairperson of the Gaelic Committee took place virtually on November 8th. See **Appendix 2**. Scottish Government Officers were also in attendance and lead the Workshop.

The workshop was deemed a success due to positive engagement, which assisted in developing an open and transparent forum for responses to the consultation. The discussion points raised were used to inform The Highland Council's response to the Bill. The response is included as **Appendix 1**. The response was approved by the Chair of the Gaelic Committee and the Assistant Chief Executive. The response was submitted to Scottish Government in early December.

- 5.2 The Gaelic Team liaised with both Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and the Scottish Government in assisting with the promotion of the Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill public consultation community engagement event which was held at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance

Date: March 13th, 2023

Author: Morag Anna MacLeod Mitchell

Background Papers:

Appendices:

Response ID ANON-HEFY-KM91-E

Submitted to Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill: Scottish Government commitments
Submitted on 2022-12-08 15:43:57

Gaelic medium education (GME)

1 Thinking of barriers, obstacles and solutions - What are the key aspects you feel should be included in a new strategic approach to Gaelic medium education?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

Recruitment and retention

The Highland Council is a key leader in provision of Gaelic Medium Education (GME). There is concern over the lack of GME teachers in both primary and secondary education. The Highland Council Gaelic Team actively promote GME. Subsequently parents request or opt for GME and so we have growth in the numbers of pupils choosing GME pathways. The issue is more acute within rural communities beyond stand-alone Gaelic schools where there is no Gaelic Medium supply. There is a real issue over continuing to promote GME when there are serious challenges over fulfilling the demand due to an inability to recruit.

In addition to this, there are challenges over retaining the teachers which have been recruited, especially within the rural areas where the language is still part of the community.

There is an additional expectation that is asked of GME teachers in terms of creating a Gaelic ethos and closing gaps in Gaelic resourcing in order to fulfil curriculum expectations.

This impacts on both the attractiveness of GME as a career option and also the retention of GME teachers who opt out to go into English Medium for this reason.

Clear, defined and more flexible routes to educational pathways for learning and teaching in Gaelic are required.

Highland Council currently work with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and other specialist further tertiary education establishments, however, there is a requirement to look at measures that will encourage prospective teachers to make that commitment to live and work in areas across Highland.

In addition, housing also has an impact on recruitment to teachers in the Highland area.

2 What steps do you think should be taken to support and promote Gaelic education and to ensure that any new strategic approach to Gaelic medium education is implemented?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

0-3

Further support for GME acknowledges the requirement to include the 0-3 sector within the Bill as this sector plays a crucial role in recruiting and attracting children into the GME stream. The cognitive approach and demands of the pedagogies required for total immersion within this sector should be reflected across the relevant policies. There are a lack of Gaelic immersion opportunities within the 0-3 sector. The Highland Council undertakes workplans in this area as it recognises the value of this to GME, however the lack of early learning and child-care Gaelic speaking staff is a challenge. Quality immersion is crucial at this stage as part of the Gaelic medium/ bilingual education journey. A stronger focus on the training and recruitment of Primary Support Assistant staff is also required as this impacts on the child's experience of GME.

Home and community

While some ad hoc After school programmes are available to pupils, enhancing this provision would support Gaelic Immersion experiences. The Council believes this is something that should be developed with additional funding.

Gaelic Curriculum

Demand for a holistic policy approach to GME is required to meet the needs from across urban and rural areas of Highland. Local Authorities and Gaelic organisations are good at collaborating especially on national projects and initiatives this includes the National Secondary Schools' Gaelic Debate, Spòrs Gàidhlig, Fèis developments and projects, and the Royal National Mòd. This is fundamental contribution to meet the additional expectations of a Gaelic Medium curriculum.

Policy approach

A focus on Additional Support Needs is required and a national impact assessment of resourcing requirements / gaps in this area is overdue. Consideration could be given to developing a specific curriculum for Gaelic-medium education using best practice from other Countries who have minority language curriculum provision.

The establishment of an Education Task Force which would primarily focus on GME and creating clear pathways for Gaelic Education recruitment which could then be highly and effectively promoted within Secondary Education and FE establishments including Universities would be strongly welcomed.

The Quality Assurance of pupil language acquisition requires more robust planning and moderation at all levels of education at a national level. Consideration should be made to how this could be included within the CFE GME curriculum with cognisance of idioms and manageable specialist training for teachers who require support with this.

3 Are there any other points you would like to make about the provision of Gaelic medium education and Gaelic learner education in Scottish education?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

No

Gàidhealtachd

4 Do you have views on what measures should be in place to support Gaelic speakers in areas with significant numbers of speakers?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

The Highland Council believes that consideration should be given to this being defined by a percentage of Gaelic speakers within an area.

This could be measured by targeting areas where there are Gaelic speaking communities.

This could then create policies for areas for the language as part of community factors as well as population density factors.

Language Planning areas from 'grass roots' including Community Trusts should be part of this discussion.

5 Do you have views on how such areas should be defined?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

The definition of a Gàidhealtachd area is an open discussion.

This could be defined by percentage of Gaelic speakers within an area.

Consideration could be given towards on-line communities and/or where there is most activity in relation to a Gàidhealtachd.

6 How would you balance the commitment to put measures in place in areas where there are significant Gaelic speakers with the principle that Gaelic should be a national language for all of Scotland?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

This could be measured by targeting areas where there are Gaelic speaking communities and create policies for areas for the language as part of community and population density.

The Languages Bill could be linked more directly to the Islands Bill with cross service working in relation to the two Bills.

The Gàidhealtachd could have specialist status due to unique needs and a more balanced share of resources.

There has been discussion of the need for more focus on the Gaelic vernacular areas.

The linguistic idiom of Gaelic spoken in vernacular communities is a priceless resource and how this is recognised and highlighted could be considered through a measures adopted for these areas.

There is a language shift as to where Gaelic is used across Scotland and this also needs to be recognised.

Against a backdrop of budget pressures across all sectors, how funding is provided and directed is important to define.

7 Are there any further points you would like to make about the commitment to explore the creation of a Gàidhealtachd and the associated commitments relating to Gaelic use in family and community?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

The Highland Council recognises the need to define what constitutes a Gaidhealtachd area.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

8 Do you have any views on the current duties of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and any suggestions of how these could operate more effectively or efficiently?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

Statutory Gaelic Plans

Consideration should be given to the role of Bòrd na Gàidhlig as this should be reviewed and be more defined in terms of their role within Language Planning and how they can support Local Authorities.

Examples of best practice from our neighbouring Countries including Wales and Ireland should also be considered in relation to operation.

Area Gaelic Plans

Consideration should be given as to whether Gaelic Language Plans are currently the best mechanism for promoting Gaelic development. However, the establishment of a Language Commissioner to scrutinise Gaelic Language Plans could be beneficial.

There are questions regarding whether communities currently have a strong 'voice' to influence strategies within Gaelic Language Planning.

9 Do you have any views on structural changes at Bòrd na Gàidhlig which could strengthen the promotion of and support for Gaelic in Scotland?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

There should be engagement over whether Bòrd na Gàidhlig role and function should be reviewed and be more defined due to the changing needs of Gaelic across Scotland.

What they are able to support and deliver will be determined by the funding allocated to Bòrd na Gàidhlig. However access to longer term funding models, for example over a three year period, rather than annual funding would create more confidence and stability within the sector. This would be positive regarding community development and enable more impact for project funding.

Due to the changing demands in terms of language development in communities and in education being placed on Bòrd na Gàidhlig a review of their role and functions would be appropriate.

Given that the The Gaelic Language (Scotland Act) 2015 has been in force for 17 years, a review of BnG's functions would be appropriate.

There are a well-established number of Community Trusts operating within the Highlands and Islands. Consideration can be made as to whether they currently, have a role within community language planning. Examples of best of practice across Scotland include Ceolas, Portree and Braes Trust, and the Harris Trust.

The Council is of the view that Community Trusts should have major role regarding their local development plans as Gaelic can be one of their local priorities, and the greatest resource are the people and stakeholders within the Trust network. Gaelic communities and that these communities feel they have an agency supporting their own language development needs.

10 Are there any further points you would like to make about the review of the functions and structure of Bòrd na Gàidhlig which seeks to ensure Scotland has the most effective leadership body and network of organisations for the promotion of Gaelic?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

No

Scots Language

11 Thinking of the work of the key Scots bodies as referred to in the paper - What are your views on the work of the Scots bodies? How would you strengthen and add to the work of these bodies?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

Scots' language is hugely important, and their greatest resource is the people who speak and use the language. There are examples where the Scots language is used within school curriculums especially focusing on Burns.

The Scots language is acknowledged and celebrated through the important work of Na Trads and should be strengthened.

12 What are your views on the next steps that should be taken to support the Scots language?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

-

13 Are there any further points you would like to make about the commitment to support the Scots language?

Please put your response - in English, Gaelic or Scots - in the text box:

No

About you

14 What is your name?

Name:
The Highland Council

15 What is your email address?

Email:
gaelic@highland.gov.uk

16 Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

17 What is your organisation?

Organisation:
The Highland Council

18 The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

19 We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

20 I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent

Evaluation

21 Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:
Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.:

It would be helpful to have a word document with consultation questions additional to the e-form.

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:
Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.:

Bùth Obrach

Workshop

Co-chomhairle air Geallaidhean Riaghaltas na h-Alba do Ghàidhlig agus Albais agus Bile nan Cànan Albannach

Scottish Government Commitments to Gaelic and Scots and a Scottish Languages Bill: Consultation

Tha Riaghaltas na h-Alba air grunn gheallaidhean a dhèanamh a thaobh na Gàidhlig agus Albais. Nam measg tha ceithir prìomh gheallaidhean a dh'fhaodar a mheas mar a bhith gu sònraichte cudromach leis na geallaidhean eile a' tighinn fon bhratach aca.

The Scottish Government has made a number of commitments to the Gaelic and Scots languages. Among these there are four key commitments which can be regarded as particularly significant with the other commitments falling under these broad areas.

Prìomh gheallaidhean / The four key commitments are:

- ✓ to establish a new strategic approach to Gaelic Medium Education (GME)
- ✓ to explore the creation of a Gàidhealtachd
- ✓ to review the structure and functions of Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG)
- ✓ to take action on the Scots language.

Where primary legislation is needed for these, the commitment to a Scottish Languages Bill could serve as the legislative vehicle that will enable progress to be made with these commitments.

Date: **8th November 2022**

Time: **1.30pm - 3pm**

Teams link to access Workshop: www.bit.ly/workshop-on-teams

Barrachd fiosrachadh an seo / More information available at:
www.bit.ly/GaelicScotsScottishLanguagesBill

Co-chomhairle / Consultation:
www.bit.ly/ScotGov-GMEsurvey