

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 30 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (Remote)	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mr R Bremner	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Mr I Brown	Mr C Munro
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)	Ms M Nolan (Remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mrs M Paterson
Mr J Grafton (Remote)	Mr R Stewart (Remote)
Mr P Logue (Remote)	

Non-Members also present:

Mr J Finlayson

In attendance:

Mr S Fraser, Head of Legal and Governance
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms M Mulholland, Community Learning and Development Officer
Ms J MacDonald, Senior Translation Officer (Remote)
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Miss R Ross, Committee Officer

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. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms L Niven.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

3. Good News

With Members having highlighted specific achievements, the Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- Gaelic probationer teachers were welcomed to schools across the Highlands, a record number having taken up posts;
- funding had been received from Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Gaelic Language Plan Fund. This funding would assist with Gaelic extra-curricular activities and project development including 0-3;
- the Blas Festival was due to take place on 1-9 September with a great programme of events in venues across the Highlands

- the Gaelic tutor training which took place in Inverness had been well received by all who attended;
- Members were pleased to see such an extensive Gaelic Summer Activities Programme;
- the Làithean Cultair – Culture Days in Kilmuir and Staffin schools were a success;
- FC Sonas football activities and events had been well attended and the young people enjoyed participating and using their linguistic skills; and
- the Gaelic Team worked very closely with organisations including High Life Highland, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, An Comunn, Fèis Rois, community groups and trusts, Spòrs Gàidhlig, FC Sonas, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comunn na Gàidhlig, Skills Development Scotland, Ainmean Àite na h-Alba, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, SQA and many more organisations. This was to be commended.

4. Presentation - Ainmean Àite na h-Alba

Ms Eilidh Scammell, Manager of at Ainmean Àite na h-Alba (AÀA), gave a presentation to the Committee on how the Gaelic Place Names partnership was working to support the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan. She explained the role of AÀA and its origins, aims, funding and projects underway.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Highland Council was doing a power of work to promote Gaelic;
- Gaelic place names were key to Highland's heritage and history and often gave an insight to what might have taken place there in the past;
- AÀA database of 4,774 place names demonstrated the huge degree of research it had carried out;
- an example was provided where the introduction of Gaelic to street names had kicked off a resurgence in bilingualism and it was hoped, in consultation with Local Members, this could be replicated elsewhere;
- people would not tolerate signs being mis-spelt in English so it was not acceptable for them to be mis-spelt in Gaelic. Mis-spelt signs attracted negative publicity;
- if Gaelic place names were dispensed with, people would soon forget the bilingual nature of the area and, in many cases, Gaelic had been the first language;
- the use of Gaelic place names also showed respect to Gaelic speakers;
- having Gaelic on signs and maps raised the visibility of the language.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Gaelic Translation

There had been circulated Report No. G/14/23 dated 14 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the Gaelic Translation Service, which is managed by a sole translation officer, was thanked for the considerable amount of work achieved;
- it was suggested that Members, particularly when communicating with external organisations, could use bilingual electronic signatures to highlight the language;

- Highland Council needed to be compliant with its own bilingual policy and it was important that there was consistency across the board;
- it was recognised that there were financial constraints but the possibility of simultaneous translation at Gaelic Committees was encouraged. There were challenges to this however insofar as how to provide a translation to those participating remotely;
- the Gaelic Translation Service provided by the Council and the Council's bilingual policy should be reinforced across services and developers and contractors in particular should be made aware and/or reminded that the use of Google Translate for signage was unacceptable due to the potential for mistakes to be made; and
- Gaelic place-names are determined in consultation with AÀA, with an awareness of the importance of preserving local dialectal forms where possible.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work that has been undertaken in relation to Gaelic translation; and
- ii. the areas of current and future development.

6. Performance against Gaelic Language Plan 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/16/23 dated 8 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the increase in pupil numbers was to be welcomed but it was feared that the shortage of Gaelic speaking education staff could have a detrimental impact on this, especially with an increasing demand for Gaelic Medium teachers in the Central Belt. However, Highland had taken a successful "grow your own" approach and, in partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, had successfully increased the number of probationers in Highland; and
- Gaelic provided opportunities for young people and it was important to show the benefits of bilingualism. A recent visit of young people to Donegal, Ireland had demonstrated to them that other areas, including Wales, were promoting and investing in indigenous languages. Bilingualism provided young people with real life skills.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Gaelic Education

There had been circulated Report No. G/16/23 dated 8 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the increase in demand for Gaelic Medium Education in Dingwall was applauded and the new Head Teacher was keen to promote it;
- the report highlighted the importance of how Highland Council was supporting the Scottish Government aim what they wanted to achieve through the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act, especially through Gaelic Medium Education. It was important to highlight this to Education Scotland and the Scottish Government in order Highland Council received the support required to sustain and strengthen this;

- there were challenges in the ability to provide teachers in every area where there was a demand for Gaelic Medium Education, not just in the traditional Gaelic speaking areas;
- there were limitations when pupils reached secondary schools and many felt there was no option to continue with their Gaelic studies and some would leave with no Gaelic Higher qualification, not only a loss to the individual but to the Gaelic speaking community. Reference was made to the low numbers who had sat Higher Gaelic, given the much larger number who had been in Gaelic. However, others pointed out that Gaelic Medium Education was much more about a holistic approach to language immersion than academia and that Gaelic Medium Education was also there to support Gaelic as a language of the community; and
- there were potential difficulties in providing Gaelic Medium environments as numbers grew.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the update on the Inverness 3-18 Gaelic Education Feasibility Study;
- ii. the current position of the Applecross Gaelic Medium Education request; and
- iii. the catchment consultation process and update for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Dingwall and Nairn Gaelic Medium provisions.

8. Gaelic Provision and Support – Birth to 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/17/23 dated 2 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- birth to 3 is a very important sector that was often overlooked;
- the 25% decrease in the number of children under 1 year of age could lead to problems across Highland;
- exposure to Gaelic in the early years of life was incredibly important and could have many positive effects throughout life including making it easier to learn other languages in the future; and
- information was sought and provided on which areas were seeing an increased demand for 0-3 Gaelic services.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to invite the author/s of the national research report on the Birth to Three Sector and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to a future Gaelic Committee

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm.