

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 28 March 2024 at 10.30am.

### Present:

Mr R Bremner  
Mr I Brown  
Mrs I Campbell  
Mr J Grafton  
Mr P Logue

Mr W Mackay  
Mr C Munro  
Mr P Oldham (substitute)  
Mrs M Paterson

### In attendance:

Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance  
Ms C Macklin, Head of Education, Lifelong Learning & Gaelic Services  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer  
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer  
Mr R MacKay, Development Officer, Education and Learning  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

### Also in attendance:

Mr S Thoumire, Hands Up for Trad

**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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms S Fanet, Mr D Millar, Mr J McGillivray, Ms M Nolan and Mr R Stewart.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest.

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 3 – Mr R Bremner and Mr C Munro

#### Presentation – Good News

At this juncture, the Committee **NOTED** a presentation of Naidheachd Mhath A'Mhàirt 2024/25 by Mr R MacKay and the Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- the schools participating in the Week of Gaelic were thanked. In addition, many community and family events, ceilidhs and classroom learning had taken place;
- 37% of competitors in this year's FilmG competition came from Highland, the largest number from any other Council area in Scotland. This showed the commitment and support of school staff and the creativity, confidence and capability of young people;
- Culturlann had recently picked up the keys to their building in Inverness;
- The Trads were coming to Inverness, as would be explained further during the presentation. The Scottish Government had given Highland £6,000 to take this opportunity forward;
- Christopher Miller-Craig, Head Teacher at Ardnamurchan High School, had retired. The Committee sent their best wishes, recognising how he had driven Gaelic forward in the curriculum and the impact his leadership had had for the language and culture in the area; and
- congratulations were expressed to the students of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig who had received a Comhairle ne Gàidhealtachd bursary to support their studies.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News.

### 3. **Presentation – Hands Up for Trad, Scots Trad Music Awards**

**Transparency Statements: Mr Bremner and Mr Munro declared connections to this item, both having previously been nominees at the Trad Awards but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare.**

There had been provided a presentation by Mr Simon Thoumire, Creative Director of Hands Up for Trad.

Mr Thoumire shared the success of the Trad Awards, and informed the Committee that Hands Up for Trad had been involved with many Gaelic and Scots language projects. This year, they would be working with High Life Highland's Young Musicians and it was confirmed that since their partnership with BBC Alba in 2008, the Trad Awards had benefitted from international exposure, helping to promote Scottish traditional music and Gaelic culture to a global audience.

It was stated that the next World Gaelic Week would run from 24 February to 2 March 2025, and that this year's MG Alba Scots Trad Music Awards were to be held in Inverness on 30 November 2024. The event hoped to bring huge benefits to Inverness and the surrounding areas.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- it was recognised that the event would be a huge opportunity to profile, and reflect upon, Highland culture and traditional music, in a scene that was world renowned and recognised. The Scots language as well as Gaelic had been profiled at Na Trads since its inception and thanks were provided to Mr Thoumire for having steered the Trads in that direction;
- in response to a question, Members learned that there was much more to the event than the night itself and that it was important to involve members of the public from the early stages, which included the opportunity to choose award nominees;

- it was felt that events such as the Trad Awards were important and it was hoped that communities throughout the Highlands could be included in the future;
- it was asked if Hands Up for Trad had kept in touch with the musicians since its inception and it was confirmed that they had, many of whom had become successful in a variety of ways;
- it was felt that the timing of the event was excellent, with November being a quieter tourism month; and
- Hands Up for Trad had applied to the Inverness Common Good Fund for a grant of £16,220 to cover various event costs, and it was hoped relevant Members would look favourably on the application.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

#### **4. Performance against Gaelic Language Plan**

There had been circulated Report No. G/01/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members were reminded to complete a survey which had been shared prior to the meeting as it reflected on their own knowledge of Gaelic, the Gaelic Committee, opportunities to learn Gaelic and how Gaelic worked across the Council;
- officers were thanked for their hard work which had been evidenced by the high percentage of completed and on-target actions in the analysis report. Officers were asked to aim future targets as high as possible in terms of achieving the Gaelic Language Plan;
- the Senior Leadership Group would be evaluating community charging as rental prices for out-of-hours activities had been quite steep;
- an update was sought, and provided, regarding the provision of Gaelic education for adults in Lochaber and any difficulties experienced with school staffing. Members were informed of the Gaelic Language Tutor posts currently advertised. Difficulties were acknowledged but with the Mod coming to Lochaber next year, it was felt that would bring momentum and visibility;
- it was felt that Gaelic education and the use of the language could be further publicised and made more visible in Council buildings, and that face-to-face learning sessions would be a welcome addition to the online sessions;
- it was acknowledged that creating opportunities Highland-wide required funding and resources, however it was hoped this would allow people to come together, using Gaelic as a natural every day language; and
- the Committee was grateful for the support of their partners and stakeholders in facing these challenges.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

#### **5. BLAS Festival, Fèisean nan Gàidheal**

There had been circulated Report No. G/02/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

Information was sought, and provided, regarding the data in section 6 of the report, and it was asked how the percentages of audience satisfaction were measured, and if the online audience attendance was known.

Officers were requested to include numerical amounts in future reports, to support the percentages.

In terms of funding, it was asked how the BLAS Festival and Fèisean nan Gàidheal planned to become more commercial.

The Committee **NOTED** the success of the 2023 BLAS Festival.

## **6. Gaelic Education Update**

There had been circulated Report No. G/03/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members were pleased to learn that Mathain Bheaga Gaelic Playgroup, Dingwall, had established successfully and it was hoped that the number of children attending would increase. Recognition was given to those involved with Cròileagan Nursery, Dingwall, over the past 30 years and Members thanked parents, officers and volunteers for their contribution;
- the Highlands still led the way in terms of numbers and contribution per capita despite the geographical challenge faced. Ongoing challenges included recruitment and retention of Gaelic-speaking teaching staff, as well as teacher numbers in general;
- it was asked that the sustainability of the Gaelic programme be reflected upon. Challenges would increase as the number of children increased, as well as the movement and growth of the population. Staff within the Gaelic programme should feel supported and confident that their investment over the years was not going to be lost;
- in terms of the support required, funding from Scottish Government could be reflected upon; and
- in terms of innovation it was suggested that Gaelic teachings could be broadcast online at the same time as they were being given face-to-face and it was confirmed that this was currently under development.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the key messages from the Inverness 3-18 Gaelic Education Feasibility Study;
- ii. the increase in Gaelic pupil numbers across Highland; and
- iii. the next steps as detailed in paragraph 4.7 of the report.

## **7. Gaelic Language Plan – Bòrd na Gàidhlig Assessment**

There had been circulated Report No. G/04/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

Information was sought, and provided, regarding next steps after Gaelic Language Plan 4 (GLP 4) and it was confirmed that GLP 4, having been approved last year, would be in place for the next 5 years.

It was stated that the Scottish Languages Bill had provision for a National Gaelic Strategy. It was unclear how that would look but would likely be a more strategic model.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to **HOMOLOGATE** the decision taken by the Chief Executive and Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Gaelic Committee, to accept the revised changes to the GLP proposed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig within the required timescale; and
- ii. **AGREED** to the submission of the revised GLP itself, the deadline for which was 9 April 2024.

The meeting ended at 12.25 pm.