

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 29 May 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner	Ms K MacLean (substitute, remote)
Mrs I Campbell (remote)	Mr J McGillivray
Ms S Fanet	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr J Grafton	Mr C Munro
Mr P Logue	Mrs M Paterson
Mr W MacKay (remote)	Mr R Stewart

Non Members Present:

Mr J Finlayson (remote)

In attendance:

Mr D Brown, Chief Executive
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
Ms A Smith, Corporate Improvement Project Manager – Storr Project
Mr D Chisholm, Tourism and Inward Investment Team Leader
Ms S Paterson, Community Learning and Development Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Ms A Armstrong and Ms L Hamilton, Visit Scotland
Mr M Campbell, Culturlann
Mr D Steele, Active Schools Co-ordinator, High Life Highland

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 Mr I Brown and Ms M Nolan.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Item 5 – Mr C Munro

3. Good News

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News audio visual presentation and thanks were afforded to Mr R MacKay for the preparation involved.

4. Cultarlann – Presentation

Mr M Campbell made a presentation to the Committee on Cultarlann, a gathering place for people with an interest in the Gaelic language and culture. Cultarlann Inbhir Nis had recently purchased the former East Church and was transforming it into a hub with a café, retail area, meeting space etc.

Thanks were afforded to Mr Campbell for his introduction and Members welcomed the news of, and were inspired by, the upcoming developments planned for the old church building.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the church made a beautiful wedding venue and it was exciting that the historical building had been put to good use;
- in response to questions regarding what Cultarlann could offer, it was confirmed that there were plans to hold Gaelic speaking classes and events where locals, tourists and overseas students would be welcomed;
- there were limited opportunities for children in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) to speak Gaelic socially outside of school and, in response to a question, it was confirmed that there were plans to further develop social speaking, with Cultarlann already working with a local GME School; and
- it was asked if there was a plan to have an audio visual display, such as an immersive experience, and it was confirmed that this was in the early stages of development and dependent on funding.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Gaelic Tourism Strategy and GLP – Report and Presentation

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Director of Skye Connect. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. G/05/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

Ms A Armstrong of Visit Scotland made a presentation to the Committee on the Gaelic Tourism Strategy for Scotland.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was queried whether the Council had the ability to include the Gaelic Tourism Strategy on the agendas of Area Committees or Council-fed forums. Further, it

was said that Ward Business Meetings and Community Councils might have the ability to highlight this focus;

- with some areas having a greater relationship with the Gaelic language than others, it was important to focus locally too;
- with pressure on budgets for services and infrastructure, and with the Gaelic language included in Council considerations, it was asked how the Gaelic Committee might feed into ongoing discussions;
- it was said that the Tourism Visitor Levy should be considered, given that the Visitor Levy Bill was passed in the Scottish Parliament on 28 May 2024;
- referring to section 4.1 in the report, Members were glad to see that Gaelic and culture were considered an asset, especially in the promotion of food and drink;
- Members were reminded that the BLAS Festival boosted local economy and extended the tourist season. The festival could be seen to generate income for Highland communities, High Life Highland and the Council. It also used remote venues such as Kinlochleven Theatre and, if this ceased, it was a missed opportunity to bring Gaelic culture and income to such communities. It was queried what plans the Council had to make sure the festival remained sustainable thereby generating income for both the Council and local communities;
- there was a suggestion to link with communities of similar cultures, such as Irish, Breton and Welsh;
- it was asked if weddings could be included in the Strategy. In addition to being a multi-million pound industry, it was an important aspect of Highland culture, with visitors travelling to the Highlands from all over the world to get married in traditional Scottish ceremonies, with pipes, clarsachs, quaichs and kilts;
- it was also asked if sub aqua exploration, namely scuba diving, could be showcased as it was an industry ripe for development across Highland, most particularly in the west of Scotland; and
- Ms Armstrong introduced Ms Hamilton to the Committee. Ms Hamilton would be working with the delivery group to take the Gaelic Tourism Strategy and delivery plan forward.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and presentation.

6. Performance against Gaelic Language Plan 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/06/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. that the next PRMS report available would be a transitional report between the current GLP and the refreshed GLP.

7. Gaelic Language Plan Update and Strategic Funding

There had been circulated Report No. G/07/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

8. Choose to Lead Gaelic Leadership Programme

There had been circulated Report No. G/08/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was the responsibility of this Committee to encourage everyday use of the Gaelic language;
- the Programme was an important extension of school life for GME pupils, allowing young people to meet with other communities and make friends for life. It was hoped that the Council would continue its support;
- Mr Steele was an example of the success, speaking both languages;
- young people who had attended leadership courses like these in the past had gained confidence and had earned the respect of their peers, and to have the facility in the Gaelic language was important;
- Members welcomed the use of Gaelic in sports and, in response to a question, it was confirmed that in Skye young primary-aged pupils participated in multi-sport, which included a mixture of activities, and, in Lochaber, senior pupils led football and multi-sports;
- in terms of numbers of GME pupils taking part, it was felt that more GME pupils could be involved and it was asked if secondary schools that did not provide GME in senior phases were included (as there might have been senior pupils who had an interest in attending);
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that 50 young people had attended the courses but many more pupils were on the Leadership Programme. The courses were at full capacity at the moment with staff limited to Mr Steele and one assistant; and
- Learners of Gaelic were welcome to attend and an example was provided regarding bilingual delivery of the course.

This Committee **NOTED** the report.

9. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/09/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members were directed to section 6.1 of the report, and reminded of the successful partnership between workforce planning, education officers and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, and the successful recruiting to GME posts. This progress was seen to be a victory and staff were thanked for their hard work in this regard;
- in section 3 of the report, it was asked if neurodivergence could be included in the considerations and an example was provided where a young person struggled to learn two secondary languages at the same time;
- the recruitment of probationer teachers in primary schools should be celebrated but the number of Gaelic speaking secondary teachers was still an issue. The Council should continue to encourage young people in GME to consider teaching and it was asked what this Committee could do to support probationer teachers in general;
- a barrier for teachers coming to Highland was housing and Services across the Council must work together to accommodate young people who wanted to work in

GME in Highland. An example was provided whereby vacant nearby accommodation, in this case the school house, was kept available and formed part of the advertisement of a teaching post. The post was recruited and the teacher moved into the school house;

- information was sought, and provided, regarding the consideration of turning small schools in rural areas, threatened with closure, into digital hubs;
- in terms of the Gaelic Specific Grant, it was asked if the grant kept up with inflation and clarification was sought, and provided, regarding any restrictions. The Grant could not be used for capital projects and was subject to competing demands from other local authorities;
- in terms of section 4.1 of the report, it was confirmed that the one term post had been a successful pilot and the position now offered a one year secondment; and
- it was suggested that Kate Forbes MSP be invited to discuss Gaelic matters relating to Highland, with a focus particularly on teaching.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the areas of development and progress in Gaelic Education and Gaelic Education teacher recruitment; and
- ii. the 3 projects outlined in the Gaelic Specific Grant bid and award from Scottish Government for 2024/2025 that the grant will help to support.

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm