

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
GAELIC COMMITTEE – 5 JUNE 2008

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	G/14/08

PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH SABHAL MÒR OSTAIG AND FÀS

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Summary

The Gaelic Language Plan identifies a commitment to developing improved collaboration between the Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig the Gaelic College in Sleat. This collaboration seeks to develop a range of initiatives to support the learning and teaching process for pupils, to continuing professional development for teaching and support staff in schools and other staff within Education, Culture and Sport and to staff in other Council services who wish to learn the language.

This report provides information on the initial discussions which have taken place on the above issues. A further report will be taken to Committee in due course.

1. Background

- 1.1 A number of meetings have taken place involving Authority staff, staff at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and also staff in Bòrd na Gàidhlig. These discussions have explored the possibility of collaborative working between the Council and Sabhal Mòr with a view to supporting developments in the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.
- 1.3 Within the Gaelic Language Plan and ECS service plan the following developments have been identified:-
 - Improving access to Gaelic for all pupils in Highland schools
 - Expanding Gaelic Medium subject teaching in secondary schools
 - Continuing Professional Development in Gaelic for staff in all Council services
 - Developing expressive arts provision in collaboration with FÀS to support **A Curriculum for Excellence** and other service developments.

2. Access to Gaelic in Highland Schools

- 2.1 The Gaelic Language Plan has identified a priority to develop a multi-media learning resource to support pupils' knowledge and understanding of Gaelic. This resource is intended not only to include Gaelic language but also to support developments in **A Curriculum for Excellence** and will focus on the language, heritage, culture and traditions of Gaelic. A number of resources are already available, produced by the Council, Sabhal Mòr, Stòrlann and other agencies. It is proposed that the current range of resources will be reviewed with a view to producing a coherent set of learning materials for use in primary and secondary schools.

3. Gaelic Medium Subject Teaching in Secondary Schools

- 3.1 There is a significant need to further develop the range of Gaelic Medium subject teaching in secondary education provision. The Gaelic Language Plan gives a commitment to developing, over the period of the Plan, up to five subjects to be made available through the medium of Gaelic. Currently the range of Gaelic Medium subject teaching in secondary schools, not only in Highland but nationally, is low. There is need for a national strategy to further support the delivery of Gaelic Medium subject teaching in secondary schools.

A wider range of learning and teaching approaches is required, including the possibility of further online courses such as the Geography Online course which has already been developed. In addition, there is need to consider ways in which the staff in secondary education, who have Gaelic as a language, might be encouraged and supported, through continuing professional development, to deliver their subject courses in Gaelic Medium as well as in English. A course has been developed to support this approach – the Streap course. However, this course has a very low uptake nationally and has not enabled significant progress to be made in delivering a wider range of subject Gaelic Medium teaching in secondary schools. Consideration also requires to be given to the accreditation of such training as part of teachers continuing professional development and possibly contributing to the chartered teachers status.

It is proposed that a working group be established with representatives from the Council, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Storlann (the Gaelic resources company) and Bòrd na Gàidhlig in order to develop a strategy to support the further development of Gaelic Medium secondary provision. It is proposed that a meeting with the relevant parties, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig will be progressed in June.

4. Continuing Professional Development

- 4.1 In pursuing the objectives and priorities of the Gaelic Language Plan it is necessary to develop a range of language courses to support staff, not only in the Education, Culture and Sport Service but across the Council as a whole. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and other agencies such as Clì provide a range of Gaelic language training courses to support individuals who wish to acquire the language at various levels. This would include provision from basic beginners language through to specialised courses on grammar and Gaelic orthography.

It is necessary to co-ordinate the range of language courses available for a range of providers and to establish clear pathways for learners.

5. Supporting Expressive Arts in Collaboration with Fàs

- 5.1 Fàs will be an incubator for new, small cultural industries and will assist existing small and medium enterprises to develop and succeed, within a Gaelic context. As such, it will be a key partner in delivering on the Programme for Administration's commitment to develop the cultural industries within Highland. It will create opportunities for people starting out in the sector, and senior school pupils with particular talent and ambition in the field, to benefit from placements & mentoring with the residencies and business units based at Fàs. Whilst Fàs's primary function

is to grow Gaelic related cultural industries, it is hoped that, through discussion, Fàs can provide some support for the development of cultural industries in general, via outreach activities and broadcasting best practice.

The opening of the new FÀS facility on the Sabhal Mòr campus provides an excellent opportunity to develop collaboration between the Education, Culture and Sport Service and the range of companies and specialist staff located in the new FÀS facility. There are significant opportunities which could be devised from such a collaboration to the benefit of staff and pupils within Gaelic Medium education and staff across the whole of the Education, Culture and Sport Service. The Centre of Excellence for Traditional Music based in Plockton High School is now well established and has gained a national if not international reputation. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig currently provides a BA degree course in Gaelic and traditional music. There is therefore scope for closer collaboration between the college and the Centre of Excellence for Traditional Music. In addition, the residency scheme for professionals located in Fàs provides an opportunity for collaboration with schools. It is proposed in the first instance that discussions take place involving Portree High School, Plockton High School and Mallaig High School with the college with a view to progressing collaboration in this area of activity.

- 5.2 There is also the possibility of various placements, of staff and pupils, between the Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in order to support Gaelic developments not only in schools and in the Council but also in the college and in the Gaelic economy.

6. Recommendation

6.1 Members are invited to note:

- the current areas that have been identified for closer collaborative working between the Council and Sabhal Mòr
- confirm the proposals in this paper, and
- to agree to further reports being received in due course once these proposals have been further discussed and developed.

Signature:

Designation: Head of Education Services

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Background Papers