

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**  
**Gaelic Committee - 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009**

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	G/08/09

**A NEW APPROACH TO GAELIC FELLOWSHIPS AND RESIDENCIES**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service**

**SUMMARY**

This report outlines a new approach on how the Council may use its funding for Gaelic Fellowships in a more flexible way to assist implementation the Gaelic Language Plan.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Over the past few years the Council has managed two fellowships in the name of Gaelic Literary icons - Iain Crichton Smith and Mary Macpherson (Màiri Mhòr nan Òran). Two post holders have occupied the Crichton Smith Fellowship while the Mairi Mhor Fellowship has been held by the same person since 2002.
- 1.2 At a previous meeting of the Gaelic Committee Members agreed to end the present Màiri Mhòr Fellowship and requested a report on the type and nature of Fellowships which it could offer in the future to assist implementation of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.
- 1.3 Fellowships to date have generally tended to be funded by both the Council and the Scottish Arts Council. However, the Arts Council funding for the Màiri Mhòr Fellowship ceased in 2004 and since that date the salary costs of the post have been fully borne by the Council - although funding for projects, publications and resources has been obtained from various sources.
- 1.4 This report sets out a proposal to set up a scheme of Creative Residencies, which the Committee is invited to consider.

**2. PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 Discussion with the Arts Council has indicated that its funding for Fellowships or Residencies in the future will generally be targeted at individuals linked with an academic institution where in addition to creating opportunities for the continuing professional development of the artist involved, the post holder will commit a substantial portion of their time to research. The type of Fellowship which the Council previously favoured - one where the post holder spent a large part of their time conducting classes or workshops for schools and in the community, while at

the same time developing their own specialism – is less likely to attract SAC funding in the future.

- 2.2 For Gaelic Language and Culture Fellowships or Residencies the most probable partner to help fund these with the Council is Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
- 2.3 The Gaelic Language Plan creates a wide range of Fellowship or Residency type opportunities. The Sgrìobh na Sgìre project, with the Gaelic Books Council as partner, will cater for writing oriented opportunities while Gaelic singing has been the main focus of the Màiri Mhòr Fellowship. Future opportunities could therefore focus on topics such as dance, visual arts, drama, crafts, storytelling, music groups – folk, rock, modern, etc, as well as literature and song.
- 2.4 Rather than employing an individual for a two or three year period, it is suggested that the Council sets up a new scheme entitled Creative Residencies, whereby accomplished and practising Gaelic speaking artists could be contracted for relatively short periods, perhaps in a more defined geographic area, or for a specific project leading to a particular event or to assist with a development of the curriculum in a school or community organisation. This arrangement would increase the opportunities for creativity and flexibility and allow a wider range of experienced 'artists' to become involved.
- 2.5 It is envisaged that Bòrd na Gàidhlig may contribute to or match the Council's commitment to a scheme of this nature on the understanding that it fits with the Gaelic Language Plan and is principally geared to improving and extending the participants' knowledge and acquisition of Gaelic.
- 2.6 The Council has a budget for the salary costs of the current Fellowship in the order of £22k. This sum in itself could fund a number of proposals and, should support from Bord na Gaidhlig or other sources be forthcoming, a much wider range.
- 2.7 Projects could be initiated from a number of different sources, e.g. primary and secondary schools, playgroups, nursery schools, community learning, other Council services, community groups, partner organisations, or from artists themselves. Funding could be allocated on a 'challenge basis' considering the use and content of Gaelic, match funding, duration, innovation, location, anticipated outcomes, etc as well as the fit with the overall Gaelic Language Plan, of each project.
- 2.8 In practical terms, the approach could entail openly advertising a contract of up to 15 months duration for a Creative Residency, at a specified pro rata fee, and invite submission of proposals. The residency advertised would specify the non-creative remit and conditions of the contract but not the creative remit, such as the art form or target audience. This information would have to be part of the submission made in response to the advert, however. On other occasions a specific request could be made for interest from an artist with a particular skill and required for a specific initiative. A selection panel of nominated Members could then consider submissions received and select the most attractive or suitable proposals. As well as individual practicing artists, this approach would create scope for a wider range of those involved in the creative industries to deliver residencies, including bands,

theatre companies, groups of artists, craftworkers and independent companies such as film makers.

- 2.9 The Gaelic Committee is invited to consider and comment on this outline proposal so that further work can be undertaken to develop it and introduce it to Highland Communities. If Members agree to adopt this suggestion it is recommended to review its operation after a three year period to evaluate how effective it has been.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Members are invited to consider and comment on the proposal :-

- (a) to establish a Creative Residencies Scheme using the funding in the Gaelic Budget hitherto devoted to the Màiri Mhòr Fellowship, with the potential to attract matchfunding and,
- (b) to undertake a full review of its effectiveness after an initial three year period.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Education, Culture & Sport Service

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Background Report: Report No G/08/07