

**Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd  
The Highland Council**

**Buidheann Buileachaidh na Gàidhlig – 23 den Chèitean 2013  
Gaelic Implementation Group – 23 May 2013**

Agenda Item	<b>4</b>
Report No	<b>GIG 6/13</b>

**Presentation by the Principal of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Background to the  
Development of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig**

**Report by the Director of Education, Culture & Sport**

**Summary**

The Report introduces the Principal of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Professor Boyd Robertson, who will give a presentation about Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. The Report also provides a briefing to Members on the background of SMO, and provides detail on current initiatives.

The Report contributes to the delivery of:

- National Performance Indicator Outcomes 13 - 'We take pride in a strong, fair, and inclusive National identity'; and 2 – "We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people".
- Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.
- The Highland Council Corporate Plan and its cross cutting commitment to 'the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area'.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 This briefing paper provides some useful advance information and background on the College; and provides detail of current initiatives.
- 1.2 2013 is a special year for SMO and for everyone associated with it, as they celebrate 40 years since the College was established and since the first short course took place in September 1973.
- 1.3 In achieving a number of significant milestones (see below) and in the fulfilment of its purpose of providing advanced provision relevant to the needs of the Gàidhealtachd and the wider Gaelic community, the Council has been consistent in its support for SMO.
- 1.4 In the past couple of years, the relationship has further developed and has been more clearly mapped out with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and we are currently working in close collaboration with SMO on their visionary developments proposed within the Kilbeg Project. The Council has also given specific support and promotion to the SMO@40 suite of events.

## 2. Milestones and Developments

2.1 The following are some of the notable milestones in the relatively short history of the College:

- **1983** - Delivery of first full-time programme through the medium of Gaelic (HND)
- **1993** - Àrainn Ostaig, extension of campus providing TV studio and student accommodation
- **1997** - Undergraduate degree programmes are developed and validated
- **1998** - Àrainn Chalum Chille, new academic campus, with extended library and main hall
- **2002** - ICCI is opened
- **2003** - SMO awarded Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher Education
- **2004** - Fàs Mòr (Gaelic child-care centre) is established
- **2008** - Fàs building (Centre for Creative and Cultural Industries) is opened
- **2011** - UHI achieves university status
- **2013** - Kilbeg plans are approved

## 3. Status and Recognition

3.1 SMO is recognised as a national and international centre of excellence for the Gaelic language, culture and the arts. The College is an academic partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and has a distinctive role as a specialist institution, operating through the medium of Scottish Gaelic. Given its unique role as Scotland's only Gaelic-medium institution, where degree, postgraduate-level and research-based activities are all conducted in Gaelic, the College has adopted a broad-based but integrated approach in fulfilling its primary mission for the maintenance and revitalisation of the Gaelic language, culture and heritage. See diagram below:



## 4. Education Provision

4.1 SMO offers a range of Gaelic/Gaelic-medium learning and research opportunities, offering academic and linguistic progression that covers a

spectrum of levels (FE/HE) and meeting the education and training needs of learners and more advanced speakers of the language, either through on-site or distance learning provision. The full range of provision, with course summaries is as follows:

SCQ F	FE/HE	Programme Titles and Exit Qualifications
4-6	FE	<b>An Cùrsa Inntrigidh</b> (distance delivered)
7	HE 1	<b>Cert HE An Cùrsa Comais</b> or <b>Gaelic and Communication Course</b> (on-site only)
7	HE 1	<b>Cert HE An Cùrsa Adhartais</b> (distance delivered)
8	HE 2	<b>Dip HE Gaelic and Related Studies</b> (on-site and distance)
8	HE 2	<b>PDA Diploma in Gaelic Media</b> (on-site only)
9 & 10	HE 3/4	<b>BA/BA (Hons) in Gaelic Language and Culture</b> (on-site and distance) <b>BA/BA (Hons) in Gaelic and Development</b> (on-site and distance) <b>BA/BA (Hons) in Gaelic and Media Studies</b> (on-site only) <b>BA/BA (Hons) in Gaelic and Traditional Music</b> (on-site only) <b>MA/MA (Hons) in Gaelic with Education</b> (see note 1)
11	HE M	<b>Pg Cert Editing and Publishing</b> (distance delivered) <b>MSc in Material Culture and Gàidhealtachd History</b> (distance delivered)

Note 1 – offered in collaboration with the University of Aberdeen.

#### 4.2 Further Education Provision

- **An Cùrsa Inntrigidh** (Access to Gaelic Course) is offered through supported distance learning. The Course, which focuses on the acquisition of speaking, listening and understanding skills in order to improve conversational confidence, takes students to a level whereby they may proceed to Higher Education study (*An Cùrsa Comais* or the distance delivered equivalent, *An Cùrsa Adhartais*).
- The Cùrsa Inntrigidh has won two major European Language Teaching Awards. A number of senior secondary pupils undertake An Cùrsa Inntrigidh and there is potential for increased delivery to schools in Highland. (see SMO/THC further collaboration)

#### 4.3 Higher Education Provision

- The undergraduate programmes [Cert HE, Dip HE and BA/BA (Hons)] are offered within a UHI Gaelic and Related Studies Scheme (GRSS) with Level 1 of the Scheme being a Language Foundation Year, with students, depending on differing linguistic abilities on entry, studying either **An Cùrsa Comais** or the **Gaelic and Communication** course to a level of communicative competence allowing full participation subsequently in university level discourse, through the medium of Gaelic.
- **An Cùrsa Adhartais**, which is a distance learning equivalent of An Cùrsa Comais, is offered through part-time study. At Levels 2 and 3, students follow a common Scheme core, together with a broad education in Gaelic-related subjects. At these levels, students choose specialist degree modules in Language and Culture, Gaelic and Development, Traditional Music and Media Studies in preparation for further advanced study at Level SCQF 10. The

honours programmes afford further opportunities for specialist study together with a semester exchange at an overseas university in either Ireland or Canada (Nova Scotia).

#### 4.4 Other Higher Education Provision

- The MA/MA (Hons) Gaelic with Education is a collaborative initiative between UHI and the University of Aberdeen (UofA). Students undertake Years 1 and 2 of the GRSS and a combined programme of UofA education courses and GRSS modules in Years 3 and 4, qualifying students as Gaelic-medium primary teachers and secondary teachers of Gaelic. Three of the graduates were engaged as Gaelic/Gaelic-medium teachers by the Council.
- **The Diploma in Gaelic Media**, is designed to equip individuals for employment in the media enabling them to gain an advanced quality award with production and technical skills, which will facilitate direct entry to a range of jobs in the broadcast industry. The 2-year Course, which includes year-long attachment in the industry, enjoys a very high employment success rate.

#### 4.5 Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- The **STREAP CPD** provision is designed to enable teachers, fluent in Gaelic, to teach their specialist subject through the medium of Gaelic. The programme, designed and jointly delivered by SMO and the University of Aberdeen, is offered on-line and comprises three modules. There are 7 teachers currently enrolled on Streap, with good up-take from teachers based in the Highlands.
- In January 2013, SMO commenced delivery of the CPD in **Leasachadh Cànan/Language Development** (covering language policy and language planning) and the College also developed CPD modules in **Leasachadh Coimhearsnachd/Community Development**.

#### 4.6 Short Courses

- SMO offers a comprehensive range of **short courses**, mainly during Easter and the summer months, including week-long courses in Gaelic, traditional music, Gaelic song and dance. The language courses, which are designed for absolute beginners through to advanced speakers, are taught through a communicative and conversational approach.
- SMO also offers a range of short course for teachers, including Gaelic Language in Primary Schools (GLPS) language training and intensive week-long courses for teachers.
- The College has also delivered Gaelic skills programmes for pupils studying Higher Gaelic (Learners).

#### 5. **Student Numbers** (2012/2013) – (FE/HE)

- There are currently 189 students (120 FTE) studying on the HE programmes, with 171 students registered on An Cùrsa Inntigidh.
- UHI Bursaries - Students studying on UHI degree programmes delivered by SMO have benefitted through the Council's Gaelic bursaries. In the current session, 5 students are in receipt of HC bursary awards under this scheme.

- Short Courses - There were around 740 students attending the Short Course programme in Session 2011/12 (Aug 2011 – July 2012). In the coming year, it is predicted that the numbers will increase with a higher attendance rate recorded and a greater number of courses being offered on-site and in other venues (other parts of Skye, Highlands and Islands, Glasgow, etc.)

## 6. Gaelic in Education

- SMO continues to work collaboratively with schools and with local authorities (particularly Highland Council) to deliver a variety of courses and training opportunities. As an example, the College is involved in the delivery of a National Progression Award in media production and training for senior pupils from 4 schools in the Highlands. The intention is to extend this to more schools in the Highlands.
- SMO also hosts visits and offers programmes to schools across Scotland, schools in Highland in particular.

## 7. Research

- The College's research activity has been greatly enhanced by the inter-university **Soillse** project which focuses on Gaelic education, the usage of Gaelic in the community and on language planning. The Lèirsinn Centre, established in 1992 continues to provide a research and development service for Gaelic-speaking areas and conducts audience research surveys for MG Alba. SMO research staff have conducted important research into language attitudes and abilities in the Western Isles and have recently completed a BnaG contract to undertake research into CPD programme/training for Gaelic community workers.

## 8. Economic, Social and Cultural Contribution

- The College has 87 full-time and 54 part-time staff (check figures) and is one of the largest employers on the island. An economic impact study undertaken in 2012 shows that the College has a considerable economic impact nationally, H&I wide and locally. The economic impact locally is estimated about £3.4m.
- The doubling of the population of Sleat from around 450 in 1971 to the present level of above 900 can be attributed, in no small measure, to the foundation and success of SMO.
- While SMO is a relatively small college in terms of student numbers, it has an impact well beyond its size. This can be seen in the extent to which sectors of the Gaelic economy, for instance broadcasting, teaching, language development and the arts are populated with College alumni. It is estimated that around 20 SMO graduates are employed by The Council as Gaelic-medium primary and Gaelic secondary teachers.

## 9. Gaelic in the Community

- SMO works collaboratively with a number of communities and community bodies to promote language and cultural initiatives.
- As an example, the College has offered short courses in the Trotternish area in partnership with the local community. Lecturing staff are to deliver 5 lectures in the Skye and Lochalsh area and possibly further afield.

- This will form part of the SMO@40 programme, but hopefully the lectures will be part of the longer term strategy of delivery to and working with communities within the Gàidhealtachd.

## 10. Partnerships/ Collaboration

- SMO places great store on collaboration and has instituted partnerships across the range of its activities with institutions in the UK, Eire and Canada. MOUs setting out exchange agreements and teaching and research links, are in place with the following:
  - **Eire**  
University College Dublin  
National University of Ireland  
University of Limerick  
Maynooth
  - **Canada**  
Cape Breton University  
University of Prince Edward Island  
St Francis Xavier University
  - **UK**
  - University of the West of Scotland (UWS)  
Royal Scottish Conservatoire (RCS)
- Examples of the UK collaborations include jointly organised conferences on Scots/Gaelic song in 2010 (with RCS) and a centenary celebration conference on the life and work of Sorley MacLean in 2011 (with UWS).

## 11. Projects and Knowledge Transfer

- Cànan, a multi-media company, organises the successfully Film-G project and is based within the Fàs building which also hosts a number of other significant national cultural and heritage projects such as Tobar an Dualchais/the Kist o' Riches, Faclair na Gàidhlig/Historical Dictionary of Scottish Gaelic and Ainmean Àite na h-Alba/Gaelic Place names of Scotland.
- The Tobar an Dualchais project set out to preserve and digitise the Gaelic and Scots sound archives held in the School of Scottish Studies (University of Edinburgh), recordings from BBC Scotland and the pioneering fieldwork recordings made by John Lorne Campbell of Canna.
- Faclair na Gàidhlig is an inter-university initiative involving the universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh Glasgow and Strathclyde which aims to produce an authoritative historical dictionary of Scottish Gaelic similar to what already exists for Scots.
- Ainmean Àite na h-Alba project is tasked with compiling a database of Gaelic place-names in Scotland for a consortium including The Council and the Ordinance Survey.
- European Projects – SMO continues to be involved as a main partner in Leonardo Projects, e.g. POOLS - producing open on-line learning systems. The current project named TOOLS, involves building a store of reusable subject relevant material automatically linked to on-line dictionaries.

## 12. Arts, Media and Heritage Projects

- In relation to the Arts and Media, SMO has first-class resources including an artist's studio, music studio and TV studio.
- Creative Scotland residencies have been secured for a writer, artist just appointed on May 13th, musician and drama person in residence. The post-holders have also undertaken work within the local community and with local primary and secondary school within the Council area.
- As an example, in March this year a Gaelic Drama Festival was held at SMO which was a success.

## 13. Further Proposed Highland Council and SMO Collaboration

- Delivery of An Cùrsa Inntigridh to senior pupils in secondary schools (using IT)
- Further training and cultural activity programmes in schools (Curriculum for Excellence)
- Further CPD training for Teachers and for community development workers
- Research into language abilities in THC area
- Gaelic in the workplace training (Gaelic Language Plan targets)
- Further development of International links (e.g. Nova Scotia).

## 14. Implications

- 14.1 There are currently no Resource, Legal, Equalities, Climate Change or Risk implications.

<b>15.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
15.1	Members are asked
	a) to note the contents of the report,
	b) comment on, and discuss the points highlighted in the presentation.



Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

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