

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd  
The Highland Council

Buidheann Buileachaidh na Gàidhlig – 14 Lùnastal 2014  
Gaelic Implementation Group – 14 August 2014

Agenda Item	<b>7</b>
Report No	<b>GIG 16/14</b>

**Scottish Government Consultation Paper on a Gaelic Medium Education Bill**  
**Report by the Director of Education, Culture & Sport**

**Summary**

This Report provides Members with the opportunity to contribute to the Council's response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on a Gaelic Medium Education Bill.

The Report contributes to the delivery of:

- The National Performance Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 16
- Scotland's National Gaelic Language Plan Outcomes and Development Areas relating to **Home & Early Years** and **Education: Schools and Teachers**.
- The Programme of The Highland Council 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'
- The Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

**1. Overview**

- 1.1 The Scottish Government has issued a consultation paper on Gaelic Medium Education (GME). The Council's Draft Response is at **Appendix 1**.
- 1.2 The Council is taking the opportunity to submit its views on Gaelic education in general and specifically on the proposal to introduce legislation to the Scottish Parliament aimed at expanding and improving access to Gaelic medium education in Scotland.
- 1.3 The principal Scottish Government proposal in the consultation paper is that a clear, transparent and consistent process should be put in place whereby Local Authorities can assess parental requests for Gaelic medium education. There are also proposals about the promotion of Gaelic medium education and the preparation of guidance on these matters.
- 1.4 This consultation paper will not invite views on a piece of draft legislation which the SG has prepared previously. Our aim in this exercise is to invite views on particular proposals relating to Gaelic medium education. The views received will be important in shaping the legislation that we intend to prepare for Parliament.
- 1.5 Further detail on Gaelic medium education and on these proposals can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/07/5849> **The Consultation closes on 10 September 2014.**

## 2. Implications

2.1 At present there are no additional Implications associated with this report.

<b>3.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>  The Group is invited to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. comment on the Draft Consultation response at Appendix 1 of this report; and</li><li>ii. agree that it be finalised and submitted to the Scottish Government.</li></ul>
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Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 30 July 2014

Author: Kenneth A Murray

APPENDIX 1

CONSULTATION PAPER ON A GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION BILL  
RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM



**Please Note** this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Title Mr  Ms  Mrs  Miss  Dr  Please tick as appropriate

Surname

MURRAY

Forename

KENNETH

2. Postal Address

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

GLENURQUHART ROAD

INVERNESS

Postcode IV3 5NX

Phone 01463 702800

Email:  
gaelic@highland.gov.uk

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

/

Group/Organisation

Please tick as

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate

Yes  No

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

**(b)** Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

**Please tick ONE of the following boxes**

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

**Please tick as appropriate**

**Yes**  **No**

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

**or**

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

**or**

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

**(d)** We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

**Please tick as appropriate**

**Yes**

## CONSULTATION PAPER ON A GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION BILL

### Consultation Questions

#### *What are your views on Gaelic medium education?*

The Highland Council is enormously supportive of Gaelic Medium Education (GME). We see GME as a critical element in the future of the language. GME will play a crucial role in increasing the overall number of Gaelic speakers; in creating a new generation of Gaelic speakers; as a key plank for bilingual education and the Government's 1+2 Language Learning strategy; and to increase Gaelic's profile and status across Scotland.

We have sought to build a sustainable, strategic GME delivery model. This is based on our Gaelic Pre-school provision feeding through to Primary and Secondary provision across a network of schools in Highland.

The question of resources is pivotal. We would welcome increased revenue support to augment the positive impact of capital support for new Gaelic education provision - from Pre-school through to Secondary. We believe that the expansion of GME has to be properly resourced; and this would include a suitably qualified and trained workforce to deliver and support expansion. We would be pleased to contribute to any resource requirement assessment; including Workforce Planning.

#### *Do you agree that a legislative process should be in place for local authorities on how they respond to parental requests for provision or expansion of Gaelic medium education?*

Yes  No  Don't know

**Explanatory Note:** Highland Council agrees that a clear, transparent and consistent process should be put in place whereby authorities can assess parental requests for Gaelic medium education. We currently publish an online map of where we provide our sustainability model (outlined above); so we make it clear where we presently provide Gaelic education. In that context, we would be keen to contribute to the development of a national process to respond to parental requests for the provision or expansion of Gaelic education.

The varied nature of Gaelic education delivery, which includes standalone Gaelic Medium Primary Schools, Gaelic Medium Primary Schools with English Medium Departments; English Medium Primary Schools, with Gaelic Medium Departments; plus the different Gaelic delivery methods in Secondary; provides a significant challenge.

The process must be flexible and not a "one size fits all". In addition, geographic and demographic challenges must also be borne in mind. Any process to assess demand must be based on the sustainability and long term likely success of provision; and the best use of resources. The process must be clear, efficient and time bound, non-bureaucratic, proportionate and affordable.

***What steps do you think should be taken when a local authority receives a request from parents for Gaelic medium education?***

Parental requests may, for example, be for either a single provision or multiple (group) provisions. However, parental requests could also take the form of a request to migrate a school from EM with a GM Department to GM designation, with an EM Department. There may be other scenarios.

**For single provision requests, steps might include:**

- Acknowledge receipt of request; provide timeframe for response and a named contact for the request.
- LA Area Office (or whoever normally deals with placing requests) will seek to place the young person in the nearest existing Gaelic provision; in consultation with other relevant officials.
- Transporting the young person would also be explored and reasonable travelling distance agreed.
- Depending on distance and length of journey, a decision will be taken by LA Area Office in consultation with other relevant officials with pan-Authority responsibilities.
- If parent/guardian unhappy with LA/Area Office decision; one stage appeal to Director Care & Learning/Head of Education.

**For multiple provision requests, steps might include:**

- Acknowledge receipt; provide timeframe for response and a named contact for the request(s).
- Establish number of children and their ages/stages in education.
- Establish proximity and capacity of nearest GME Schools/Departments.
- LA Area Office (or whoever normally deals with placing requests) will seek to place the young people in the nearest existing Gaelic provision; in consultation with other relevant officials.
- Transporting the young people would also be explored and reasonable travelling distance agreed.
- Can they be placed in existing Gaelic provision?
- Yes. No further action.
- No. Establish reason (distance, insufficient local capacity etc.)

- Is an entirely new GM provision being requested?
- Does this provision fit with our sustainability model?
- Assess potential effect on other education provision in the locality.
- Assess potential for growth from Birth to 3 and upwards.
- Assess Teacher Availability.
- Assess Cost including transport.
- Assess Learning and Teaching Resources - immediate start-up requirements for parents, pupils and teachers.
- Assess possible Inter/Cross Council shared service opportunities if appropriate.
- Undertake thorough assessment of Parental Demand - Consultation process with community, if any required?
- Decision taken as to whether or not a sustainable Gaelic provision can be delivered.
- If parents/guardians unhappy with decision; one stage appeal to a small group of Councillors and Officers.

### ***What are your views on Gaelic medium schools?***

Highland Council is supportive of Gaelic Medium schools. We have one Gaelic Medium Primary School, two Gaelic Medium Primary Schools with English Medium Departments and 22 English Medium Primary Schools with Gaelic Medium Departments. Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Learners are also provided in a network of 16 Secondary Schools.

The Council, in partnership with the Scottish Government, has commenced further expansion of GME through the building of new standalone Gaelic Primary Schools in Ft William and Portree. A new, expanded Gaelic Department has also been factored into plans for a new Inverness Royal Academy.

GM schools are crucial to the growth and vibrancy of Gaelic and having a national network of 3-18 provision would support and underpin longer term sustainability for Gaelic.

***What are the necessary considerations for a local authority when the transition from Gaelic medium in a two stream primary to a stand-alone Gaelic medium school has been requested by parents?***

The Highland Council has experience of this scenario. A full local consultation is advisable to:

- Assess the demand in the community for such a transition.
- Assess the Gaelic pre-school to Secondary feed-through from a sustainability viewpoint
- Assess the potential impact on other GM provision in the area;
- Assess the potential impact on EM provision in the area;
- Factor in less obvious considerations, such as wraparound care;
- Establish the benefits and the cost of the project;
- Maintain community cohesion and engagement.

***Do you believe guidance from central government is necessary in order to create a common understanding and expectation of the arrangements under which Gaelic medium education should operate?***

Yes  No  Don't know

***What issues should be included in such guidance?***

Guidance should be drafted in partnership with Local Authorities and should define, in the first instance, what constitutes Gaelic Medium Education in solely Gaelic Medium Primary Schools. There is also scope for the Guidance to define the other modes of delivering Gaelic Education which, in addition to GME schools, include:

- Pre-school and Primary Language Learning (PLL) or GLPS – linked with the 1+2 Strategy. (National Framework currently being worked on.)
- Gaelic Medium Primary Schools with English Medium Departments. (What might the difference be between these Schools and fully GM schools?)
- English Medium Primary Schools with Gaelic Medium Departments. (What might the difference be between these Schools and fully GM schools?)
- Secondary School phases for Gaelic Medium/Gàidhlig Fluent and Gaelic Learners.

The Guidance would therefore set out what type/level of Gaelic education should be



delivered at Pre-school, Primary and Secondary levels including associated linguistic competence and learning aspirations/targets especially in the early stages.

This would create a clear, shared, national understanding of 3-18 Gaelic Education for pupils, teachers, parents/guardians and officials.

***What are your views on the role that Gaelic medium education has to play in the future of Gaelic?***

As we have mentioned above; GME and other Gaelic education in schools is crucial to a healthy and sustainable future for the language. This must be augmented by more links to Gaelic use and Gaelic visibility in communities and in the media – especially maximising use on social media which is currently so important to young people.

***What other steps could be taken to encourage and promote the growth of Gaelic medium education in Scotland?***

Provided resources are there to meet expansion and expectations:

- Regular and high-level Ministerial support and encouragement;
- More publicity and easily accessible information (especially web/app based), on the academic evidence supporting the benefits of bilingualism;
- More marketing initiatives especially around Gaelic careers including Teaching - Scottish Government/Skills Development Scotland/Bòrd na Gàidhlig/Local Authorities etc.;
- Education Scotland, SQA and SFC would also be very important partners in promoting GME across their significant spheres of influence. Increasing Gaelic profile in their work would provide additional status and credibility to Gaelic Education across Scotland's National Education hierarchy;
- The GTCS could also play an important role in promoting Gaelic Education; by publicising/confirming the status of teaching Gaelic within its formal professional and regulatory processes;
- Some "marketing" support and various types of encouragement for a programme on BBC Scotland TV/Radio (as opposed to BBC Alba) on Gaelic Medium Education and the Benefits of Bilingualism and the remarkable success story of Gaelic education.

***Do you have any further comments to add?***

The principal proposals in the consultation paper are:

1. that statutory guidance should be prepared on the arrangements for the delivery of Gaelic education in schools,
2. that authorities should promote Gaelic medium education within their area, and
3. that a statutory process should be put in place for authorities to assess parental requests for Gaelic medium education.

These will undoubtedly require additional resources and The Highland Council would be pleased to contribute to the Government's consideration of what this might entail; and what benefits for Gaelic Education could follow as a consequence.

We have already mentioned the importance of colleagues in Education Scotland, SQA and SFC in promoting GME. It would also be worthwhile considering if the Gaelic Education landscape might be improved by strengthening the interface between these organisations and Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig. Resources and Translation of Gaelic Education Materials (particularly in the Secondary sector) is hugely important and should be factored into considerations when English resources/materials are being prepared and distributed. Establishing more formal and robust links between these organisations could bring significant benefits and a streamlining of education resource creation, translation and production.

It should also be noted that the growth of Gaelic Education will likely result in staffing and expertise in other support and specialist areas such as Additional Support Needs and Early Years practitioners.

**Thank you.**