

**Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd
The Highland Council**

**Buidheann Buileachaidh na Gàidhlig 1 An Gearran 2017
Gaelic Implementation Group 1 February 2017**

Agenda Item	6
Report No	GIG 1/17

**A Fairer Deal for BBC ALBA, the Framework Agreement Scottish Gaelic
Broadcasting**

Report by the Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report asks Members to homologate the response that the Highland Council submitted to the Director General of the BBC and the BBC's Director of Nations and Regions.

1. Background

- 1.1 On December 16 2016, The Chief Executive of MG ALBA contacted both the Chair of the Gaelic Implementation Group, and the Chief Executive of the Highland Council in relation to updating the Highland Council on the [Framework Agreement](#), which accompanies the new Royal Charter.
- 1.2 This commits the BBC to a Gaelic television service and to supporting MG ALBA, which is a welcome development. In addition, the correspondence thanked the Highland Council for its support in achieving this.

2. Update

- 2.1 MG ALBA has still to secure a guarantee of 10 hours per week of new programmes for BBC ALBA, showing parity of esteem for the two indigenous languages channels which it supports - BBC ALBA (Gaelic) and S4C (Wales).
- 2.2 This is a pivotal time for BBC ALBA as the BBC will make new investment decisions by March 2017. They have requested that the Highland Council provides additional support, as this could be influential for BBC ALBA during that decision making process.

3 Response

- 3.1 **Appendix 1** attached, are the same responses to both the Director General and the Director of Nations and Regions submitted by the Council Leader and the Chairperson of the Gaelic Implementation Group.

4 Implications

- 4.1 There are no rural, legal, equality, risk, and climate change/ carbon clever implications associated with this report at present.

- 4.2 Should MG ALBA be successful in securing a guarantee of 10 hours per week, this would greatly enhance, and create positive influences in relation to Gaelic at both a local and national levels.

Recommendation

Members are asked to homologate the response at Appendix 1.

Designation: Norma A. Young Care & Learning Manager

Date: 09 January 2017

Authors: Morag Anna MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer



Lord Hall of Birkenhead
 Director General of the BBC
 BBC Audience Services
 PO Box 1922
 Darlington
 DEL3 0UR

17 January 2017
 MD/rm

Dear Lord Hall,

BROADCASTING – BBC ALBA

On 15 July we took the opportunity to write to you urging the BBC to ensure that under the new Charter audiences in Scotland gets a fairer deal regarding the future of the BBC especially in relation to the case for supporting and developing Gaelic Media.

We received your response on 18 July which informed us that the White Paper proposals were well underway and, I quote *'we'll have more detail on how we intend to improve our overall service provision in Scotland later this year. The licence fee settlement, while welcome, does bring funding challenges which we'll have to take account of during our planning. I'll ensure you are kept informed of developments as the Charter process continues'*.

We note that on 15 December you published the Framework Agreement between Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the BBC which was presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

The Highland Council has a total land area of 26,484 square kilometres with a population of 232,950 which includes very rural and scattered communities, large towns and a City. These diverse areas are steeped in Gaelic language and heritage, and in 2017 we will continue to contribute strongly to the revitalisation of Gaelic in our area through learning, Gaelic medium education, culture, music, events and jobs.

As Leader of the Highland Council, I wish to take this opportunity to express the opportunity that the BBC has to build on the successful base that is BBC ALBA and Radio nan Gàidheal. These are crucial resources in our area, and for significant numbers of people they form part of the fabric of their lives, providing news, entertainment and local knowledge as well as – through broadcasting and production – skills and employment.

We recognise that BBC ALBA has achieved a great deal since its inception 8 years ago, but it is imperative that the implementation of the Framework Agreement commits the BBC to building on the next stage of the channel's life, confident in the knowledge of the esteem in which the Gaelic community holds the BBC and the good outcomes that will come from increased BBC investment in Gaelic.

It is important that the BBC has a clear vision and a robust policy for indigenous minority language broadcasting, and that Gaelic broadcasting should be central to this. This policy commitment should be adequately and separately funded. There should, for example, be no question of setting Gaelic language broadcasting in competition for funds with English language output for audiences in Scotland.

At present BBC ALBA, due to its financial constraints, serves neither children nor young people nearly well enough, particularly those who are in Gaelic medium education. News provision does not extend into the weekend and learners have to make do with dated programming. These are examples of the areas that BBC could and should address to great effect under the new Charter.

We urge you to find the resources to make a meaningful investment in BBC ALBA to address these shortcomings and to build in its early success. I request that you take our views on board and I would be happy to discuss further if that would be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Margaret Davidson
Leader of The Highland Council

*c.c. Councillor Hamish Fraser, Highland Council
Donald Campbell CE, BBC Scotland*



Mr Ken McQuarrie
 Director of Nations and Regions,
 BBC Scotland,
 Zone 3.02,
 Pacific Quay,
 Glasgow,
 G51 1DA

17 January 2017
 MD/rm

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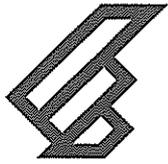
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BBC Scotland

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Councillor Margaret Davidson
 Leader
 Highland Council
 Glenurquhart Road
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20 January 2017

Dear Councillor Davidson

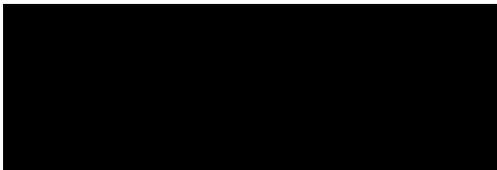
Many thanks for your letter of 17 January to the BBC Director-General, Lord Hall, who has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I note the points you make about BBC ALBA and the issues you raise about the important part that Gaelic broadcasting has to play in supporting the Gaelic language in Scotland and, in particular, its role in supporting employment and skills development in the Highlands and Islands. I also note the points you make about the importance of a policy statement to underpin the BBC's approach and commitment to indigenous language broadcasting.

Please be assured that, with the BBC's commitment to supporting the Gaelic language through broadcasting now enshrined in a new Charter, we will continue to work closely with colleagues in MG ALBA and in other agencies to ensure that BBC ALBA and BBC Radio nan Gaidheal can continue to grow and develop. We are currently in very productive discussions with MG ALBA on such issues and I will be very happy to keep you apprised of any resultant developments.

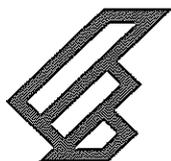
Thank you for your continuing support for the BBC and for our Gaelic broadcast services and for your input to the debate on the BBC Charter. May I wish you and all at Highland Council a prosperous and successful 2017.

With all best wishes



Ian Small
 Head of Public Policy & Corporate Affairs
 BBC Scotland

cc Councillor Hamish Fraser, Highland Council
 cc Donald Campbell, Chief Executive, MG ALBA



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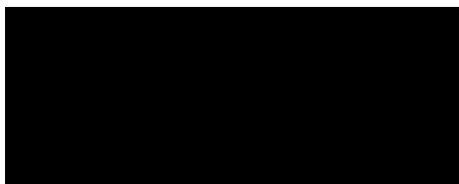
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Ian Small
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