

Agenda Item	8
Report No	G/5/22

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 2 March 2022

Report Title: Supporting and Growing Gaelic in our Communities - Workshop

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Gaelic Committee Members of the proposal to host an internal workshop to provide an opportunity to consider how to support and grow Gaelic in our Communities, including consideration of the findings of the published study on the Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Consider the outline of the workshop;
 - ii. Discuss and agree the proposed outcomes.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – the intention is for seminar to be hosted as a virtual event and so it will have minimal resourcing impacts, mainly requiring officer time rather than funds.
- 3.2 Legal - The Highland Council is required to implement its Gaelic Language Plan under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005. The workshop will help to inform the development of the next iteration of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) – this will have consciously positive equality, poverty, rural and island implications as the workshop is focused on how to grow and sustain Gaelic vernacular communities
- 3.6 Gaelic – the seminar demonstrates that the Council is ambitious about preserving and growing the Gaelic language across all the sectors and age groups and values the educational, social, cultural and economic benefits of the language.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – the workshop will take place virtually so there are no climate change implications arising from the proposals outlined in this report.

3.5 Risk - there are no risk implications

4. **Proposed Outcomes and Purpose of the Workshop**

- 4.1 In July 2020 the UHI published a study on the Gaelic Crisis in The Vernacular Community. The study was based upon a comprehensive sociolinguistic survey of the state of Gaelic in the Western Isles, Skye and Tiree. It identified a mismatch between current Gaelic policies at a national level and the extent of the crisis; and pressed for a shift in public policy assumptions from a sole dependence on the school system for creating the next generation of fluent Gaelic speakers.
- 4.2 The purpose of the internal workshop is to explore in what ways the Council could support Gaelic communities to thrive and to identify how best to engage with the Scottish Government, stakeholders and agencies in-order to adjust policy approaches to both align and prioritise the use of limited resources to best effect. Likewise, the workshop will look at how a range of Council services could assist in promoting and sustaining Gaelic communities in Highland.
- 4.3 The focus is therefore not on education provision, but more about addressing some of the systemic issues that impact rural areas more generally which in turn may assist in building sustainable communities.

5. **Workshop Outline**

- 5.1 The workshop will consist of 3 presentations each followed by a Q&A and discussion.
1. Professor Conchúr Ó Giollagáin will open the workshop with an introduction and overview of the Vernacular Study. Professor Conchúr is the Director of the UHI Language Sciences Institute and the Director of the Soillse sociolinguistic research network. Conchúr Ó Giollagáin is a Gaelic Research Professor in the University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland. Iain Caimbeul who co-authored the study, is a Research Fellow in the UHI Language Sciences Institute.
 2. Senior Pupils from Portree High School will deliver a presentation and will represent Skye's youth voice at the Workshop. Education Officers are in the process of engagement with Portree High School Senior Management Team and pupils to agree the outcomes of their presentation.
 3. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO) will update on the learning and next steps arising from their recent seminar 'An t-Slighe air Adhart' (The Way Forward).
- 5.2 After the presentations the workshop will break into three virtual breakout rooms, facilitated by a Highland Council Strategic Chairperson and senior officer, and will cover the following topics:
- Access to rural services
 - Economy & Tourism
 - Culture

Following the breakout room focused discussions; invitees will re-group and agree on actions based on the discussion outcomes.

5.3 In addition to Council members and officers, it is intended to invite key public sector representatives to help inform the discussion on next steps including, Bord na Gàidhlig, Scottish Government officials, HIE and HLH.

6. **SMO - An t-Slighe air Adhart' (The Way Forward)**

On January 14th 2022, SMO, held an online Gaelic seminar - An t-Slighe air Adhart. Approximately 200 people attended the event which was opened and introduced by the Principal of SMO Dr Gillian Munro and Chaired by Professor Rob Dunbar, with a key-note address from the Director of Fèisean nan Gaidheal. Key organisations including Comunn na Gaidhlig and An Comann Gàidhealach gave examples of community development and language initiatives. Academics from Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities who study and lecture in, and about the Gaelic language played key roles in the seminar.

While acknowledging challenges that are ahead, the event focused on existing successful language initiatives and how these initiatives can be sustained, and their success maintained in the coming years.

7. **Gaelic Language Plan renewal**

7.1 The outcomes of the workshop will form part of the stakeholder work for GLP renewal. The agreed actions will directly input into the process for drafting high level aims of the Gaelic Language Plan 4, and engagement with BnaG as part of the formal consultation process.

Designation: ECO, Performance and Governance

Date: 16 February 2022

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Background Papers: