

Agenda Item	7
Report No	G/04/24

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 28 March 2024

Report Title: Gaelic Language Plan – Bòrd na Gàidhlig Assessment

Report By: Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This Report informs Members of

- a) An update on the renewal process for The Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan (GLP).
- b) The timeline for resubmission of the GLP to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Agree to homologate the decision taken by the Chief Executive and Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Gaelic Committee, to accept the revised changes to the GLP proposed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig within the required timescale; and
- ii. Agree to the submission of the revised GLP itself, the deadline for which is 9 April 2024.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – Funding for the implementation of the GLP will be sought through the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Highland Council and other funding streams, where appropriate.
- 3.2 Legal - The Highland Council is required to have an approved GLP in accordance with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 ('the 2005 Act').

The amended GLP must be resubmitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig by the 9th of April, in accordance with the requirements of the 2005 Act.

- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) - The Report complies with The Highland Council policies on Equality.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever - The Gaelic Team currently attend meetings online and virtually, thus reducing the requirement for business travel.
- 3.5 Risk - There are no anticipated risk implications arising from this report.
- 3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people).
- There are no Health and Safety risk implications arising from this report.
- 3.6 Gaelic - The GLP is a statutory framework by which The Highland Council area supports the Gaelic language and culture. Therefore, the implications of this report are positive for Gaelic.

4. Background - The Highland Council's draft GLP

- 4.1 Under the 2005 Act, The Highland Council is required to have a GLP in place. The Highland Council's fourth edition of their GLP was refreshed in early 2023 and a public consultation on the plan was initiated. The responses received from the public consultation enabled the Council to enhance the draft plan before it was submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for assessment on the 6th of June 2023.
- 4.2 On the 9th of January 2024 the Highland Council received Bòrd na Gàidhlig's formal assessment of the draft GLP with a list of proposed modifications. The Highland Council informed Bòrd na Gàidhlig of their intention to resubmit the draft plan by the 9th of April 2024, taking account of the proposed amendments.

5. Proposed Modifications to the draft GLP

- 5.1 Bòrd na Gàidhlig's formal assessment of the GLP was received by the Highland Council on the 9th of January. Included in the assessment was a list of necessary amendments and recommended amendments to be made to the GLP with regard to the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Statutory Guidance on Developing Gaelic Language Plans. We were required to respond to Bòrd na Gàidhlig by the 9th of February to inform them that we agree or disagree with the proposed modifications.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive and Interim Executive Chief Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Gaelic Committee, agreed to the proposed modifications to the GLP within the required timescale and communicated this to Bòrd na Gàidhlig on the 8th of February. Bòrd na Gàidhlig have asked that the final GLP be submitted, taking account of the necessary recommendations, by the 9th of April.
- 5.3 The amendments proposed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig were sub-divided into "General Necessary Amendments" and "General Recommended Amendments".
- 5.4 Further detail on the proposed amendments is provided in Appendix 1.

6. Bòrd na Gàidhlig's commendation of good practice within the draft GLP

- 6.1 Bòrd na Gàidhlig highlighted the following points of good practice:
 - a. The Highland Council's focus on standardisation and mainstreaming Gaelic throughout services,
 - b. Highland's continued provision of GME evidences the commitment and recognition that GME education is at its most successful when it is fully immersive for pupils, and when an entire school career can be delivered through the medium of Gaelic,

- c. The Highland Council's bilingual policy, Guidelines on the use of Gaelic in the services we offer, and its implementation,
- d. The use of Gaelic proofreading was received positively and identified as best practice,
- e. The Highland Council's positive commitments to engage with and support Gaelic communities in the section on "Supporting Vernacular Communities",
- f. And The Highland Council was also commended for the positive engagement with schools and communities and the improvement in numbers of responses achieved during the public consultation.

6. Resubmission of the draft GLP to Bòrd na Gàidhlig

- 6.1 The GLP will be amended in accordance with Bòrd na Gàidhlig's recommendations and will be resubmitted by the 9th of April 2024.

Designation:

Date: 21 February 2024

Author: Eoina Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer

Background Papers:

Appendices: Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Assessment of the Highland Council's Draft Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029: General Necessary Amendments and General Recommended Amendments

Appendix 1

Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s Assessment of the Highland Council’s Draft Gaelic Language Plan 2024–2029: General Necessary Amendments and General Recommended Amendments

General Necessary Amendments (GNA)

The following necessary amendments are required throughout edition four:

1. Increase in provision

The *Guidance on Developing Gaelic Language Plans* states that there should be incremental increase in Gaelic provision with each new edition of a Gaelic language plan. The strategic priorities and corporate service actions should be reviewed to ensure they commit to an increase in provision from the previous editions rather than a continuation at the same level. To reflect this, the Actions Required sections should demonstrate new targets or an increase in provision of existing activities. For instance:

- In the third edition (2018-2023) the following was given as current practice: “Worked with partners to organise and expand the ‘Gaelic Family Learning Week’ initiative,” and the following Enabling Action was included, “Work with partners to organise and expand initiatives such as the Gaelic Family Learning Week”. The commitment in the draft fourth edition (2023-2028) is: “In partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, deliver the annual Gaelic Family Learning Week”. A commitment to develop and/or increase this provision should be included for 2023-2028 – if this is not possible, it should be retained in the “Current Practice” section and not included as an Action Required.
- At Strategic Priority 1.1, an “Action Required” is to “Develop opportunities for inter-generational activities” delivered on an ongoing basis. The commitment to, “Provide opportunities for inter generational Gaelic usage between senior citizens and young people” was introduced in edition two (2012-2016). In edition three, it was included as current practice (“Provided opportunities for inter-generational Gaelic usage”) and as an action (“Provide opportunities for inter-generational Gaelic usage between senior citizens and young people”) to be delivered during May each year. It would be useful to either have more information on how this activity will be developed/increased as an Action Required in edition four or, if provision is to continue at the same level, it should be moved to “Current Practice”.

For advice on how to present current practice, see General Recommended Amendment 1 below.

2. SMART targets

All Actions Required should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound - phrases such as, “Consideration will be given to...” , “Explore the possibility of...”, “Identify potential next steps...”, “...this may include provision of...”, should be omitted. To enable the Highland Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to measure progress for activities which continue to be delivered from edition three, “Ongoing” and “During the lifetime of the plan” should be omitted and replaced with target dates. If an activity will happen regularly during edition four this should

be specified e.g “Yearly throughout edition four”, “yearly, throughout this edition”, etc.

3. Highland Council Gaelic policy: *Guidelines on the Use of Gaelic in the services we offer*

In the Corporate Services Aims section it should be ensured that information given as current practice is aligned with the refreshed HC Gaelic services guidelines referred to in edition four for the following areas:

- Press, publicity, advertising and exhibitions
- Official Notices, Public Notices and Recruitment Advertisements
- Council website

4. Aligning with the Act

Under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, and as stated in edition four, HC has one Gaelic language plan which requires to be reviewed at least every five years with new editions published. Therefore, references throughout this document to “last plan”, “each plan” etc should be omitted and replaced with “the previous edition”, “each edition” etc.

5. National Gaelic Language Plan (NGLP)

The Bòrd is happy for edition four to be based on the four themes of:

1. Communities and Home;
2. Media, Arts, Culture and Heritage;
3. Business and the Economy; and
4. Education.

However, as these themes are not aligned with the current NGLP 2018-2023 and the next NGLP has not been agreed or published, reference to them being based on the NGLP should be omitted.

6. Strategic Priorities

Presentation of the strategic priorities developed with Bòrd na Gàidhlig should be reviewed to reflect the current NGLP 2018-2023 and its key priorities which are “increasing the use of Gaelic”; “increasing the learning of Gaelic”; and “promoting a positive image of Gaelic”. It should be clarified that BnG and HC agreed a set of strategic priorities rather than high-level aims.

7. Gaelic Education

- a. Edition four sets out that the term “Gaelic education” is used for both GME and GLE. To support those not familiar with Gaelic education, it should be clarified which is being referred to for specific commitments and other key Gaelic education information.
- b. In the section on “Gaelic Education in the Highland Council Area” it should be acknowledged that there are some pupils in GME for whom Gaelic is their first language and/or the language of the home.

8. External dependencies

- The Bòrd welcomes working in partnership. However, as this is HC's statutory

Gaelic plan, external organisations - such as "key local and national organisations" - should not be included as responsible (or jointly responsible) for implementation of strategic priorities or corporate service commitments.

- No commitments should be included which are reliant on gaining future external funding

9. Time-line:

- No target dates prior to the Bòrd's formal approval date should be retained. If approval is in 2024, the timescales of the plan should be ammended to 2024-2029.
- In the strategic priorities section there are no target dates given after year four. As edition four runs for five years there should be actions delivered in year five.
- To ensure edition four remains current across the 5-year time frame, information specific to the time of writing - such as the political make up of the Council - should either be omitted or it should be stated that the information was current at the time of writing.

10. Increasing Gaelic language capacity and usage

The induction, training and usage commitments should be strengthened to ensure that HC increases its capacity to provide Gaelic services and to become a workplace where Gaelic and bilingualism is normalised. If the Council intends to rely on digital provision for staff training, there should be additional commitments stating that HC will enable staff to consolidate and use their skills in live situations, to aid the transition from passive learning of the language to active use and communication.

11. Tranparency and accessibility

The following information is included in Appendix 1:

<i>Feedback Received</i>	<i>Action Taken</i>
<i>A considerable number of respondents reported that the draft Plan was too lengthy and difficult to read.</i>	<i>The Plan has been re-designed by a graphic designer to shorten it and to make it easier to read.</i>

It is noted that the post-public consultation draft plan sent to the Bòrd for formal assessment is lengthy at over 90 pages long. The Bòrd recommends that Gaelic language plans are focused, clear and easy to understand for the public. The Bòrd's general required and recommended changes in this assessment regarding SMART targets and making a clear separation between current practice and new activities will help to achieve the Council's aim to shorten the document.

General Recommended Amendments (GRA)

The following amendments are recommended throughout edition four:

1. Presentation of current practice

- Activities ongoing from the previous edition(s) should be presented separately as Current Practice and not also included in the Required Actions sections which should focus on new activities.
- Current Practice sections should inform the public, external stakeholders and

Council staff about services and strategies which continue to be actively delivered including, where possible, the current level of provision as a baseline to measure future progress. It should not contain information on activities which have come to an end.

- In the Strategic Priorities section, the Bòrd recommends that – in line with the corporate service aims section - information about current practice is included for each activity in the tables rather than a separate bullet point list. We suggest this is done through adding an additional column. This will enable progress to be tracked over time.
- If HC wishes to present additional information on actions/achievements completed during editions one to three we suggest this is published separately - for instance, on the same webpage as the Gaelic language plan. This would also make edition four shorter and key information more accessible. Alternatively, the information could be included as an appendix.