

Agenda Item	5
Report No	G/05/24

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 29 May 2024

Report Title: Gaelic Tourism Strategy and the GLP (Gaelic Language Plan)

Report By: Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The main purpose of the report is to inform Elected Members of the VisitScotland Gaelic Tourism Strategy and the Highland Council's draft Sustainable Tourism Plan which was approved by Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 4 May 2024 for consultation.
- 1.2 Representatives from VisitScotland will give a presentation on the VisitScotland Gaelic Tourism Action Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to discuss and note the report.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource
There will be no additional resources.
- 3.2 Legal
Currently there are no legal implications.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)
Gaelic – Cultural tourism has a positive implication especially in rural and Island communities.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever
An extremely high percentage of promotional literature is designed, developed, and produced online.
- 3.5 Risk

The refreshed Gaelic Language Plan recognises the importance of Gaelic and Cultural Tourism; however, the Council is constrained regarding resources and is prioritising where the funding requires to be targeted.

3.6 Gaelic

The Highland Council has a refreshed Gaelic Language Plan which takes account of Gaelic and culture as this is vital in relation to sustaining, supporting, and developing Gaelic and culture across the Highlands.

4 Gaelic and Cultural Tourism in the Highland Council Area

4.1 Gaelic and its associated culture is considered to be an economic and social asset in the Highlands. In conjunction with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and other partners, The Highland Council commissioned an independent report which researched the impact of Gaelic on businesses and social enterprises. The purpose was to gather information on economic activity and commitment related to Gaelic, in order that the Gaelic community can be better informed when making future decisions. The report found that:

- 60% of the businesses surveyed felt that their use of Gaelic enhanced the value of the language within the community; and
- Gaelic and culture are an asset, especially when used to promote the creative industries, tourism, food and drink.

4.2 The Highlands offer a wealth of Gaelic and cultural tourism opportunities which attract visitors to the area. The Highland Council support and contribute to many of these, including Fèisean, cultural events, the Royal National Mòd, The Storr project, local museums, Na Trad Music Awards and also many independent businesses embrace the positivity of using Gaelic are part of their marketing strategies

4.3 The Highland Council also provides a translation service and works with Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba to ensure that Gaelic place-names on road-signage, street signage and welcome signage to towns and villages are accurate. The Highland Council has cross-service working and also works with other key stakeholders. The visibility of Gaelic creates a sense of place, which generates a linguistic and cultural experience, that recognises the importance of delivering an authentic and memorable visitor experience.

5. Gaelic Tourism Strategy

5.1 On 20 February 2024 a new [Gaelic Tourism Strategy](#) was launched. A collaborative approach was adopted for the development of the strategy and a steering group was formed, of which Highland Council was a member. The strategy highlights an increasing interest in the Gaelic language and culture, from both domestic and international visitors, which creates opportunities for tourism and events businesses across Scotland. Between 2018 and 2021 there was a 72% increase in the number of visitscotland.com users visiting Gaelic related content.

5.2 The strategy sets out five strategic priorities:

- to increase awareness of industry opportunities associated with Gaelic opportunities
- to support the creation of Gaelic experiences through skills and training for the tourism industry
- to increase visitor awareness of Gaelic and maximise opportunities to promote the language, culture and heritage
- establish connections between tourism and other sectors, identifying opportunities for collaboration

- develop research and insights

5.3 VisitScotland also published a Gaelic Tourism Action Plan. This is a working document that details the actions required to fulfil the strategic priorities of the Gaelic Tourism Strategy.

5.4 Local authorities are listed within the Action Plan as lead or participating partners for the following activities:

- Improve coordination and communication across the public agencies with a Gaelic Language Plan.
- Encourage increased engagement with Gaelic through public grant funding programmes.
- Raise awareness of Gaelic opportunities and potential benefits in the tourism, creative industries and food and drink sectors with relevant businesses, Destination Organisations and Community Organisations.
- Celebrate success, generating and showcasing Gaelic case studies across agency channels.
- Raise the profile of the Gaelic Tourism Strategy with Regional Economic Partnerships, making partners aware of the opportunities and encouraging inclusion of Gaelic within regional economic and tourism plans.
- Review partner industry/community event programmes and identify how to embed Gaelic in a proportionate way.
- Provide, through the Business Gateway Service, business advice and financial support for projects which promote Gaelic cultural regeneration and development.
- Define Scotland's Gaelic tourism offering, agreeing the criteria of a Gaelic experience.
- Pool and share data and other information being collated across partners eg Business Panel Surveys

6. Tourism and The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2024–29

6.1 The refreshed Highland Council Gaelic Plan 2024–29 also contains outcomes relating to tourism, including the commitment to continue working with VisitScotland and local tourism organisations and forums to continue to promote Gaelic as a mechanism for attracting tourism and enhancing the visitor experience. An additional outcome listed is to promote the economic benefits of Gaelic to the local business sector.

7. Draft Sustainable Tourism strategy

7.1 On 4 May 2024, the Council's draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy was approved for consultation. The purpose of the strategy is to outline and coordinate the wide range of activities that The Highland Council undertakes to support a sustainable and thriving tourism industry. It sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the tourism sector in Highland and will shape how the Council invests its resources, including future income streams such as the visitor levy and any external funds which can be secured.

The draft Strategy identifies that the Highlands unique cultural heritage, including the Gaelic language, is one of the lead drivers of the industry and that there are significant opportunities in further developing authentic experiences for visitors. Gaelic is also identified as one of the activities the Council will focus on with the aim The Tourism & Inward Investment Team is currently leading on the development of a Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy. The draft Strategy recognises that Gaelic is an important part of the Highland culture and identity, and this will be considered from a tourism perspective. One

of the priorities in the draft Strategy is to “Promote and support the use of the Gaelic language as a means to enrich the visitor experience, strengthen the distinct Highland culture and build on its wider educational, artistic, social and economic importance to the region.”

The draft strategy is to be launched for consultation in mid-May and a final version reported back to committee in the Autumn.

Designation:

Date: 8th May 2024

Author: Morag Anna MacLeod Mitchell (Gaelic Development Officer), Eoina Rodgers (Gaelic Policy Officer) and Douglas Chisholm (Tourism and Inward Investment Team Leader)

Background Papers:

Appendices: