

## **The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 2pm.

### **Present:**

Mr R Bremner (Remote)  
Mr I Brown  
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)  
Ms S Fanet  
Mr J Grafton  
Dr M Gregson

Mr P Logue  
Mr A MacKintosh  
Mr J McGillivray (Remote)  
Mr D Millar  
Mr C Munro  
Mrs M Paterson

### **Non-Members also present:**

Mr S Coghill (Remote)  
Mr A Graham

Mr W MacKay (Remote)

### **In attendance:**

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People  
Ms A Jansson, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer  
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer  
Ms J MacDonald, Senior Gaelic Translation Officer  
Ms S Paterson, Community Learning and Development Officer  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr A Cormack, Chief Executive Officer, Fèisean nan Gàidheal  
Mr C A Macmillan, Development Manager (Inverness), Fèisean nan Gàidheal  
Mrs S McLennan, Principal Teacher, and 3 pupils from Inverness Royal Academy

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.**

**Mr C Munro in the Chair**

### **Business**

#### **1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 4 – Mr C Munro

#### **3. Good News**

The Committee were provided with a short video highlighting various developments and initiatives as well as items of good news.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- strengthening the link with Cape Breton was welcomed;
- Members were reminded, in relation to the Mod Academy, that the Royal National Mod was taking place in Fort William in October and preparations were now getting under way;
- Seachdain Na Gàidhilig had been launched at Muirtown Primary School by Joy Dunlop and the Leader of Highland Council; and
- the Gaelic Café and Awareness Day at Mount Pleasant Primary was commended and it was hoped that the terrific work taking place would continue.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news as presented.

#### **4. Blas 2024 Update**

**Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a close family member performed at Blas and received a small payment. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. G/1/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People, accompanied by a presentation by Blas. The presentation showed how Blas fitted in with Fèisean nan Gàidheal's wider work and its engagement with communities. A recap of Blas 2024 was provided together with what could be expected this year when Blas took place between 5-13 September.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- thanks were extended to Fèisean nan Gàidheal for running Blas. Not only did it help local economies but it provided immense joy and pleasure for those attending events;
- the brilliant sustained provision was commended and it was important the Council supported this;
- it was important to provide opportunities to get involved for those who did not speak the language so that they too could feel part of the Gaelic community and to feel included as part of that culture. Blas did this;
- the programme that Blas had provided had extended over the years;
- it was queried if there was scope of providing an avenue of learning Gaelic through Blas in Highland or if this was a duplication of what others were doing;
- it was important Blas provided an opportunity for engagement across Highland but it was recognised that this depended on budgets and the availability of promoters;
- the economic benefit of £8.4 million over 20 years demonstrated the economic benefit of investing in Gaelic;
- Blas events had an international audience; and
- Blas had put Gaelic into a cultural context and provided an opportunity to use the language outside schools.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and the associated appendix.

#### **5. Gaelic Education Update**

There had been circulated Report No. G/2/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People. In amplification of this, a presentation was provided by Mrs McLennan, Principal Teacher at Inverness Royal Academy, accompanied by three pupils. As part of her Personal Development, Mrs McLennan had sought to develop the ethos of Gaelic throughout the school through subjects, pupils and staff. It had proved to be an important and positive initiative with the message being that Gaelic belonged to everyone in the school community. The various approaches encouraging all to engage were described, such as “Gaelvember,” and the positive reactions generated.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Mrs McLennan and the pupils were commended for their excellent presentation. The pupils were ambassadors for their school, Gaelic language learning and the wider community;
- it was encouraging that the staff had willingly engaged;
- it was important to recognise that pupils did not always need to pursue further education to find a job where they could use Gaelic;
- Gaelic was alive and well in the Highlands and investment had been well made;
- the use of Gaelic in the Council Chamber was commended;
- the excellent provision of Gaelic Medium Education was welcomed. This had not always been the case;
- it would be good for schools to come together as this would provide an opportunity for pupils to socialise and share their passion for Gaelic with fellow students of the same age. Spors Gàidhlig and Fèisean were examples of this
- developing a social media presence would enable a platform whereby what was happening with Gaelic could be shared with other pupils, including those non-Gaelic speaking pupils;
- the incorporation of Gaelic on signage in the school was welcomed; and
- staffing levels were an issue if the same level of service was to be maintained.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to welcome the continued expansion of GME and GE education in Highland; and
- iii. **AGREED** to recognise the leadership shown at the IRA to grow interest and involvement in Gaelic across the school.

## 6. Strategic Funding Gaelic Language Plan

There had been circulated Report No. G/3/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was suggested that, with single year budgets for projects, if an arts/cultural strategy would provide a base for longer term sustainable visions for collaborative working. High Life Highland delivered the Council’s wider Gaelic outcomes but its cultural aspirations and strategic approach were also mapped out in the Cultural Language Plan; and
- information was sought as to the number of Gaelic speakers in Care Homes. In addition, an update was also sought, and provided, as to the current position

regarding the partnership between Gaelic Medium Education and Care Homes to ensure there was an intergenerational approach to Gaelic.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the current funding allocations for Gaelic organisations;
- ii. **NOTED** that modifications to the funding allocated to organisations would directly impact other organisations. The allocations were listed in paragraph 5.2 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** that the organisations listed along with other Gaelic organisations were supported with yearly partnership funding but that this funding varied from year to year in alignment with the targets in the Gaelic Language Plan (GLP).

## 7. PRMS Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/4/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. the progress made in relation to GLP corporate service aims, as outlined in section 6 of the report.

## 8. CLD – GLP Strategic Priorities

There had been circulated Report No. G/5/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

A request was made for officers to gather evidence for Inverness to be considered as an area of special linguistic significance for Gaelic in terms of the current Scottish Languages Bill being considered by the Scottish Parliament given the number of successful initiatives for both young and old through education and the arts. Gaelic in Inverness was on the move and had much potential. In response, it was pointed out that during the renewal of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan cognisance was taken of the Scottish Language Bill and officers were working closely with the Scottish Government around the consultation on the Bill. This was ongoing as was the analysis of the impact of being identified as an area of linguistic significance would have on communities and Gaelic Medium Education.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

This was the last meeting of the Gaelic Committee over which the Chair would preside. On behalf of Committee Members, the Vice Chair paid tribute to his hard work, commitment and dedication since the Gaelic Committee had been re-established over the last 4½ years ago.

The meeting ended at 3.55 pm.