

Agenda Item	5
Report No	G/7/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 4 June 2025

Report Title: Post-event report: Gaelic Conference

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a post-event summary of the Gaelic conference, which was organised by The Highland Council. The event took place on the 1 May 2025 in Eden Court, Inverness.
- 1.2 Following the successful delivery of the Gaelic conference, key actions have been identified to ensure the outcomes of the event lead to progress.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note the report;
 - ii. Consider and note the key messages from the conference; and
 - iii. Agree next steps in section 9.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource
The delivery of the Gaelic Language Plan is funded by The Highland Council, Scottish Government grants and various Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG) funding streams.

The conference funded with support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The contract for delivering the Gaelic Conference was awarded to 21CC on 12 September 2024 through procurement. The final cost for the event was £29,900.
- 3.2 Legal
The Highland Council has a statutory duty to have a Gaelic Language Plan in terms of Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. The duty includes an obligation to implement and accurately report commitments.
- 3.3 Risk

Risks identified include resourcing pressures impacting the ability of Highland Council to fulfil the conference recommendations.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)
No risk identified.

3.5 Gaelic
Positive impact on the delivery of Gaelic Language Plan outcomes relating to the Business and the Economy theme.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Background

5.1 The Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan has a clear focus on increasing Gaelic usage and the number of Gaelic speakers. The Highland Council continues to support the language across services and with key partners, to contribute to the broad educational, social, cultural and economic value and wellbeing of the Highlands.

5.2 The purpose of the 1-day conference was to evidence the cultural value and impact of Gaelic's economic potential in business and employability across The Highlands. The Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan includes a key strategic priority for business and the economy. This includes the use of Gaelic in businesses and social enterprises, and as an economic asset in Scotland. The conference aimed to include voices from a broad range of sectors and levels of familiarity with Gaelic to encourage enhanced networking and knowledge-exchange. Stakeholders from across Highlands as well as guests from across Scotland were invited at the conference to capture networking opportunities.

5.3 The contract for event management of the conference was awarded to 21CC in September 2024 as shared at a previous Gaelic Committee. This was awarded through procurement using an invitation to quote process.

5.4 Eden Court was selected as event location due to their central location and commitment to Gaelic, recognising the cultural and economic impact of Gaelic as part of their cultural hub. Eden Court's Gaelic officer also attended conference planning ahead of the event to support with the agenda and inform discussion on the successful delivery of the event. By working collaboratively with Eden Court, the Council has been able to support their Gaelic Plan. Eden Court is named in the

Highland Council's Gaelic Plan a delivery partner for drama, media and cultural events. Further information available at [Gaelic | Eden Court](#).

6. Agenda and Format

- 6.1 The conference was designed to bring together a broad and varied range of stakeholders. This included individuals and organisations within Gaelic industries and those less traditionally involved, with relevant perspectives and the ability to support and inform discussion on Gaelic economic development. The agenda, including details on speakers and organisations, is available to view at gaelicconference.com
- 6.2 The day included networking opportunities built around the speakers with a registration breakfast on arrival, networking lunch and a networking opportunity on the mezzanine level in Eden Court following the conference's closing panel debate.
- 6.3 Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic, Kate Forbes MSP, provided a pre-recorded message for sharing at the conference, sharing a key message;
- "It is our challenge to enable Gaelic to thrive in key sectors of the economy, revitalising rural places and our language through entrepreneurship, as well as to tackle deeper economic issues such as transport, housing and population retention, all of which can undermine the resilience of Gaelic communities."*
- 6.4 Ardnamurchan High School band, Sealladh, performed live music on the mezzanine level during the networking lunch. The band are a unique group on the local youth traditional music scene, a music group who also sing in Gaelic. The group are a great example of enterprise in Gaelic education in Ardnamurchan High School. They reinvest in their band through their social enterprise activity and act as role models to inspire younger people to continue the group, enabling the school to continue their promotion of Gaelic music, culture and ethos for all pupils.
- 6.5 Council Leader Raymond Bremner opened the conference with an introduction on Gaelic in Highland Council with a briefing on the goals of the Conference. This was followed by Councillor Alex Graham who gave an introduction and overview of the speakers and their planned contributions throughout the day.

The following speakers presented:

James Graham (CEO) An Comunn Gàidhealach – The Royal National Mòd

Ian Smith – Tìree Distillery

Calum Maclean – Broadcaster

Calum Ferguson Alba FA – A Voice for Gaelic in Football

Joanna Peteranna – Director Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Cornilius Chikwama – Economist (via video link)

Alison Bell and Amy MacLeod – High Life Highland, Inverness Castle Experience

John Morrison – Chair MG Alba

The Highland's Council's Chief Executive, Derek Brown, addressed delegates in Gaelic, sharing key messages about Gaelic and the economy ahead of the panel discussion with speakers from the event. The Council Leader chaired the panel, taking questions on a range of discussion points related to the conference for delegates and speakers on the panel to engage and respond to. Two Senior GME

pupils from Inverness Royal Academy, Charlotte Burton and Daniel Cowan, S6, joined the Panel for the final session of the day

7. Attendance

7.1 A total of 101 delegates registered for the conference.

Please see **Appendix 1** for full list of organisations registered with one or more representatives.

8. Discussion Outcomes

8.1 The conference demonstrated fresh evidence of the cultural value and economic potential of Gaelic in business and employability across the Highlands. A common theme throughout all presentations shared the importance of acquiring knowledge and awareness to recognise Gaelic as having tangible benefits across multiple sectors from community, business and tourism to media, cultural and arts. Each speaker gave their contribution with evidence to support and illustrate Gaelic's economic benefits and outcomes.

The discussions shared how Gaelic benefits the Highlands through both enrichment and appreciation of place and history. This was presented as a key message that emerged throughout the conference.

Another important theme of the event was to broaden Gaelic language opportunities for young people outside of a school setting.

Joanna Peteranna, HIE Director, has shared her thoughts in a Blog discussion on the Gaelic Conference [Embracing Gaelic in business and community/Gabhail ri Gàidhlig ann an gnothachas is coimhearsnachd | HIE](#) including how *“the event emphasised the crucial social and economic role that Gaelic plays in our vibrant communities. It highlights how promoting Gaelic can stimulate economic growth and enhance community resilience.”*

9 Gaelic Conference Next Steps

9.1 A further report will be taken to the next Gaelic Committee with the post conference survey results. The survey is currently collecting information on what insights were gained by delegates attending the conference, the most helpful sessions, relevance of content, connections made and the likelihood of future collaboration following attendance. The survey also seeks information on future requirements for improvements and any other comments about the event.

9.2 The Gaelic Team will arrange a Highland Council officer workshop to consider the key messages from both the evidence presented at the Conference and the survey returns. This will inform next steps and the delivery of business and economic outcomes for the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan going forward.

Designation: Kate Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 17 May 2025

Author: Lena Walker and Eoina Rodgers

List of organisations registered at the Gaelic Conference:

Highland Council
Scottish Government
MG ALBA
Feisean nan Gaidheal
Feis Rois
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
University of Highlands and Islands
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
An Comann Gaidhealach
Education Scotland
Comann nam Parant
Storlann
CNAG
Alba FA
Cheryl Heggie Highland Dancing
SEALL
Ardnamurchan High School
Bun-sgoil Ghàidhig Inbhir Nis
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Inverness Impact Hub
Eden Court
High Life Highland – Inverness Castle Experience
Skills Development Scotland
Comann Nam Parant Portree
Culturlann Inbhir Nis
WJM
West Highland Chamber of Commerce
Inverness Royal Academy
Inverness Airport
Brora Heritage Centre
Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn
Social Enterprise Academy
Lasair
Ness Historical Society
Tobar an Dualchais
Glenwyvis Distillery
West Highland Museum
Scotlands Nature Agency

Appendix 2 Conference_25_In _Pictures



