

## **The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 27 August 2025 at 2pm.

### **Present:**

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

Mr A MacKintosh  
Mr W MacKay (Remote)  
Mrs K MacLean (Substitute)(Remote)  
Mr D Millar  
Mrs M Paterson

### **Non-Member also present:**

Ms C Gillies

Mr D Macpherson

### **In attendance:**

Mr D Brown, Chief Executive  
Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People  
Ms B Martin-Scott, Chief Officer – Primary Education and Early Years  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr M Vass, Traditional Music Centre Manager, Plockton Music School  
Ms D Graham, Tutor, Plockton Music School  
Anna, Fiona, Leona and Seumas – Plockton Music School pupils  
Mr D Ansdell, Head of Gaelic and Scots for The Scottish Government

**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 D Millar in the Chair**

### **Business**

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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr I Brown and Mr S Coghill.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

#### **3. Recess Powers**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted at the meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be used in relation to the Gaelic Committee.

#### 4. Good News

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

- the Scottish Government had approved the capital funding bid submitted by the Highland Council to support the purchase of a recording studio for the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music at Plockton High School. This would enhance and support the continued delivery of high-quality traditional music education and, in addition to improving the learning environment, would strengthen the Centre's capacity to preserve and promote Scotland's musical heritage;
- the increase in the number of passes achieved by pupils in both Gàidhlig; and Gaelic Learner exams was encouraging;
- the Blàs festival was again going to provide a wide range of musical and cultural events in various venues across Highland;
- competitors and organisers for the Royal National Mod in Lochaber were wished all the best; and
- six new probationer teachers had been employed to various posts across Highland.

The Committee were also provided with a video highlighting various developments and initiatives.

#### 5. PRMS Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/12/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the achievements made to date were commended and Members looked forward to continued success;
- with the positive results achieved in schools it was important this was relayed back to those delivering Gaelic;
- the fact that Highland Council was the leader in the provision of Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland was something to be proud of;
- the breakdown of exam results would be fed back to relevant Committees, whether that be the Education or Gaelic Committees;
- it was important to demonstrate how vast and varied Gaelic was in Highland communities in terms not only in education but also in areas such as sport and leisure; and
- with targets being met it was questioned if the plan was ambitious enough.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. the updates relating to adult Gaelic learning.

#### 6. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/13/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

A presentation was provided by tutors and pupils of the Plockton Music School where Members were provided with the background to how it was set up, one of the first of its kind in Scotland. It was now celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and over that time had nurtured the skills and crafts of young people through some of the best tutors and influential musicians of traditional Scottish music. The Music School had been hugely successful with examples provided of achievements. The pupils in attendance also explained their positive experiences of the Music School and, while recognising the challenges of leaving home, encouraged other young people to accept the opportunity should it arise.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the representatives from Plockton Music School were thanked for attending the Committee. In particular, Councillor Campbell expressed how proud she was to be one of the Local Members and was pleased to see that the much needed improvements to the school, pitch and hostel were now underway;
- attending the Music School opened opportunities for young people to pursue a career in traditional music, should they so wish;
- the commitment required by the young people was acknowledged. However, this usually correlated with a good academic record as well;
- the Music School offered an opportunity to be able to focus on academic studies as well as developing their talent along with others;
- the Music School enabled the talent in Highland to be showcased; and
- this was an excellent example of the holistic and welcoming community that Gaelic provided.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to recognise the leadership shown at Sgoil Chiùil to grow interest and foster Gaelic as part of the ethos in the school; and
- iii. **NOTED** the areas of growth in pupil numbers across 3-18.

## 7. Gaelic Conference – Feedback

There had been circulated Report No. G/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the general feedback from the conference had been positive and it was a good example of the hard work undertaken by the Gaelic team;
- it was questioned how lead Members of the Highland Council could be brought in earlier in the programming of future conferences;
- it was commended that the Highland Council would be continuing with this to encourage Gaelic development given the importance it afforded; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to the co-working in place with fellow agencies that were involved with Gaelic development.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the post-event survey; and
- iii. **AGREED** the next steps.

## 8. Gaelic Specific Grant and Capital Funding Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/15/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was questioned if this funding would also be able to support Gaelic Culture Centres. However, it was indicated that this was not an appropriate avenue but trustees of such Centres could apply for Scottish Government funding separately;
- it was disappointing that Highland Council had not received as much funding as had been applied for taking into account the effect that Highland had influenced the advance of Gaelic in Scotland. Shortfalls in funding had a knock-on effect and forward planning meant funding could not be piecemeal;
- it was essential to encourage current and future Scottish Governments to further resource the promotion of indigenous languages; and
- it was important that the public were informed of what the Gaelic Specific Grant in Highland was being used for.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the three projects and outcomes outlined in the Gaelic Specific Grant bid;
- ii. the programme of work that the grant would help to support and that these were adjusted as the full amount was not secured; and
- iii. the increase in the Gaelic grant offered by Scottish Government.

## 9. Scottish Languages Bill – Census Data

There had been circulated Report No. G/16/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- guidance was still awaited from the Scottish Government and, until this was made available, it was unclear how to formally take this forward. Meantime, it was important to give officers time to analyse information, recognising that this would involve a significant amount of work;
- clarification was required as to what qualified as a linguistic area;
- Inverness was pivotal to the growth of Gaelic. Whilst the number of Gaelic speakers in Inverness would be encouraging, there were likely to be those who were reluctant to state they had Gaelic language skills;
- Skye too would have a substantial number of Gaelic speakers;
- as the population aged, the value of your own indigenous language grew; and
- learning Gaelic at a young age enabled individuals to learn other languages more quickly.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to undertake further assessment of electoral wards which exceed the 20% Gaelic skills threshold and wards which were approaching the 20% threshold;

iii. **AGREED** the next steps set out in section 8 of the report.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm.