

Agenda Item	7
Report No	G/20/25

The Highland Council

Committee: Gaelic

Date: 19 November 2025

Report Title: Cross-service Gaelic Language Plan Implementation

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the cross-service implementation of the Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2024–29 (GLP). It highlights recent developments, collaborative initiatives and upcoming actions aimed at strengthening Gaelic capacity and visibility across council services.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource - The delivery of the GLP is funded by The Highland Council, Scottish Government grants and various Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG) funding streams.
- 3.2 Legal - Under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, The Highland Council has a statutory duty to have a Gaelic Language Plan. The statutory duty includes the obligation to implement and accurately report GLP commitments.
- 3.3 Risk - There are no risks arising as a direct consequence of this report.
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) - There are no Health and Safety implications arising as a direct consequence of this report.
- 3.5 Gaelic - There are very positive implications regarding the preservation and development of the Gaelic language and culture within Highland Council.

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. Gaelic Language Plan Implementation Group

5.1 The GLP Implementation Group was established to oversee and coordinate delivery of the GLP across Council services. It includes representatives from Corporate, People, Place, High Life Highland and Youth Engagement. The chairs of both the Gaelic and Education Committees have also been invited to the group.

Key functions:

- Monitor progress and identify challenges.
- Align Gaelic actions with wider council strategies.
- Foster collaboration and shared responsibility.

Recent activity:

- First meeting held in August 2025.
- Terms of Reference agreed.
- Standing agenda items include youth voice, service updates, communications and monitoring.

Actions agreed at the first meeting:

- Assess and develop cross-service Gaelic awareness sessions to enhance staff understanding and support the integration of Gaelic within service delivery.
- Explore the potential for senior secondary pupils (S4-S6) to support Gaelic adult learning classes as part of their skills development, building on previous practice in Portree; this will be reviewed to assess feasibility and current applicability across schools.
- Strengthen promotion of Gaelic classes by developing easily shareable content for social media and internal channels.
- Review opportunities to incorporate youth voice into existing engagement platforms, including the *Suithad* event for secondary pupils, with consideration of age-appropriate approaches and potential collaboration with partner organisations.
- Maintain regular updates on national developments relevant to Gaelic, including progress on implementing the Scottish Languages Act; share strategic information from the SG Collaborative Group on Faster Rate of Progress; and establish contact with the Youth Convener to support youth engagement.

The next meeting of the group is scheduled for 26 November 2025.

6. Post-Conference Gaelic Team Workshop

6.1 Following the Highland Council Gaelic in the Economy conference in May 2025, an internal workshop was held with Gaelic officers to reflect on outcomes and identify opportunities and priorities for cross-service integration of the conference outcomes.

Workshop outcomes:

- Recognition of the need for stronger links with other Council services.
- Agreement to explore joint initiatives, shared training and improved internal communications.
- Commitment to embedding Gaelic more visibly in service delivery and public engagement.
- Improved alignment between Gaelic policies and wider council strategies to ensure that Gaelic commitments are embedded in planning and policy development across services.
- Establishment of a monthly strategic catch-up with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) to maintain ongoing dialogue and explore partnership opportunities. Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is expected to join these meetings in due course.
- Development of an online resource to support businesses in incorporating Gaelic and recognising its economic value. This initiative is a Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) outcome originally scheduled for 2027, but has been brought forward in response to increased interest and recognised need. It will be developed in partnership with Business Gateway.
- Planning of a Gaelic Medium Education (GME) In-Service Day in February 2026, featuring a keynote address on “Gaelic and its Wider Impact: Beyond Education”. The session will focus on Gaelic as a cultural, social, and economic asset, and the role of schools in sustaining and growing the language.

7. Staff Training and Development

- 7.1 A new ‘Gaelic in the Workplace’ Traineeship course is currently in the testing and refinement phase. The course is being developed in collaboration with the Traineeship team and aims to raise awareness of Gaelic. Once the course content and delivery format have been finalised, options to increase accessibility will be explored. This will help ensure that High Life Highland and other service staff can also access the course.

8. Internal Gaelic Capacity and Skills Audit

- 8.1 An internal survey is planned to assess Gaelic language skills across the Council workforce. The purpose of the survey is to provide a baseline for current Gaelic capacity and skills; tailor support and training to staff needs; and to highlight opportunities for collaboration and shared delivery. This will help to inform future planning and resource allocation to grow the skills and capability within the organisation and measure the impact of this activity in future years. The results of the survey will be reported at a future meeting of the Gaelic Committee.

9. Youth Engagement and Participation

- 9.1 Youth voice has been embedded in the Gaelic Language Plan renewal and implementation process from the outset. The GLP Implementation Group is committed to ensuring that young people have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development and delivery of Gaelic-related policies and initiatives. The Gaelic Team has been working with HLH and the Youth Convener to ensure Youth Voice is included in Gaelic development planning.

Current engagement activity planning includes:

- Collaboration with schools and pupil councils to gather feedback and ideas.

- Exploration of opportunities to integrate youth voice into events such as *Suithad*, in partnership with Skills Development Scotland.
- Engagement with the Youth Convener and relevant partner organisations to identify inclusive and effective approaches.
- Consideration of informal and community-based methods to reach a broader demographic of young people.

10. Communications and Visibility

- 10.1 Increasing the visibility and accessibility of Gaelic-related opportunities is a key aspect of the Gaelic Language Plan's implementation. Work is ongoing across services to strengthen internal and external communications, with collaborative input from the Training Team, High Life Highland, the Web Project Design Team and Corporate Communications.

This has included co-ordinated efforts to improve the promotion of Gaelic classes and initiatives, ensure Gaelic content is appropriately represented in the Council's website redevelopment and develop consistent messaging across communication platforms. These actions support a more integrated approach to Gaelic visibility and engagement across Highland Council.

- 10.2 A communications and engagement officer with specific responsibility for Gaelic and Gaelic-related activities took up post at Easter this year.

This has helped to increase awareness of the work of Gaelic teams and the Council's Gaelic committee, as well as to highlight language or cultural projects and opportunities taking place within our schools and communities. Communication activities also include working alongside partner agencies such as An Comunn Gàidhealach to promote the Royal National Mòd and encourage attendance and participation in this year's event being held in Lochaber.

Gaelic related news and activity has risen markedly across the Council's various channels in recent months. Around 50 separate social media posts, including news releases, videos and photographs, has driven better engagement and reach. The additional communications officer post has helped to contribute towards key Gaelic Plan aims of increasing and normalising Gaelic content and activities across Council services.

- 10.3 Cross-service collaboration is central to the successful delivery of the GLP. The initiatives outlined in this report demonstrate a growing commitment across services to embed Gaelic meaningfully in Council operations, engage staff and support the Gaelic Language.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 8 October 2025

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Background Papers: n/a

Appendices: n/a