

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday, 12 December 2025 at 10.00am.

### **Present:**

Mr R Bremner  
Mr I Brown  
Mr S Cameron  
Mrs I Campbell  
Ms C Gillies  
Mr J Grafton

Dr M Gregson  
Mr P Logue  
Mr W MacKay  
Ms K MacLean  
Mr D Millar  
Mrs M Paterson

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

Ms L Johnston

### **In attendance:**

Mr D Brown, Chief Executive  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer  
Mr R MacKay, Development Officer, Education and Learning  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr C Ferguson, Gaelic Development Officer, Alba Football Alliance  
Mr A Campbell, Alba Football Alliance  
Mr D Reid, Head of Sports Development, High Life Highland

**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 A MacKintosh.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

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

The Royal National Mod had been a huge success and a full report, including its economic impact to the Lochaber area, would be taken to the next Gaelic Committee.

Bun Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh had been awarded a gold award by the Music Education Partnership, for their commitment to musical education and development.

Gaelic and Scots were now formally recognised as official languages of Scotland. This landmark change, introduced through the Scottish Languages Act 2025 and effective from St Andrew's Day, represented a major step forward in language policy.

Members congratulated the pupils from Thurso High School and Dingwall Academy who took part in the National Gaelic Schools Debate.

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

#### **4. Celtic Nations Cup Report – Gaelic Community Event**

There had circulated Report No. G/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People and there was a presentation by Calum Ferguson, Gaelic Development Officer, Alba Football Alliance.

Mr Ferguson provided an insight into the origin of Alba Football Alliance (FA) and how it had developed since. The initiative began in March 2020 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. A sudden shift towards online platforms provided an opportunity to produce a series of Gaelic videos for households. Support followed from the Council's Gaelic team and the process revealed the potential of blending Gaelic and football together. Alba FA became the representative organisation using football to connect, inspire and grow the Gaelic language, and had since evolved to deliver a series of curricular and extra-curricular activities, including holiday camps, across Highland and beyond.

The Celtic Nations Cup launched in Germany in 2024. After returning from Germany, Mr Ferguson saw players taking the lead in their communities. Harry Nicolson, a former Gaelic Medium pupil from Inverness, was now using Gaelic actively within his career as captain of Alba FA men's team and Clachnacuddin Football Club. This year's event in Highland saw a cultural gathering of over 300 people and included a community youth session which was attended by 83 players, the highest ever attendance at a youth event.

The programme was made possible through collaboration with Highland Council and High Life Highland. Partnership discussions were underway with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other local authorities in order to meet the demand across communities.

Members felt this was an excellent example of ensuring that Gaelic was for life, not just the classroom.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. the development of the Celtic Nations Cup and its role in promoting Gaelic and bringing communities together.

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

There had been circulated Report No. G/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Highland Council remained the largest local authority provider in the delivery of Gaelic Education;
- teacher recruitment remained a challenge, particularly the retention of probationary teachers; and
- information was sought, and provided, regarding how the Scottish Government planned to support the Council in meeting the commitments to the Gaelic Language Plan, and if there was enough funding within the Gaelic Specific Grant to do so.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress towards securing Gaelic Medium provision in Lochaline Primary school;
- ii. the development of the Gaelic education in-service programme as a strategic response to the *Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education*, which placed a duty on education authorities to support high-quality Gaelic provision; and
- iii. the contribution of events such as the In-service and Oideas podcast series in marking the 40-year milestone of Gaelic Medium Education (GME), and continued engagement with reflective and practitioner-led initiatives that strengthened the visibility and impact of Gaelic education in Highland.

## 6. PRMS Report

There had been circulated Report No. G/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Information was sought, and provided, in terms of Gaelic provision at Raasay Primary School, which was said to be unique.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to accelerate the Gaelic Language Plan action to create an online Gaelic business resource.

## 7. Cross-service Gaelic Language Plan Implementation

There had been circulated Report No. G/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 8. High Life Highland Progress Report

There had been circulated Report No. G/21/25 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland.

Darren Reid, Head of High Life Highland's Sports Development, provided an introduction to the report, which presented how High Life Highland supported and promoted Gaelic language and culture, and how this supported the Gaelic Language Plan. This included the provision of day-to-day services in addition to supporting the

Royal National Mod in Lochaber and the keenly awaited opening of the Inverness Castle Experience.

Members who had already visited the Inverness Castle Experience spoke very highly of the exhibition, with one Member calling it emotive. A visit was highly recommended by all.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## **9. Gaelic 1 Plus 2 Progress Report**

There had been circulated Report No. G/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Members welcomed the availability of opportunities for smaller communities in Caithness, particularly where recruiting Gaelic teachers continued to be challenging. Clarification was sought, and provided, in terms of sustainability and measuring the outcome of live lessons. Support was in place, and it was hoped that teachers would make use of it. The live lessons were 40 minutes in length, and would be best after lunch. Teachers would download PowerPoint games and they would become an accessible and valuable self contained unit of learning.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the continued development of Gaelic 1+2 support across the Authority;
- ii. the progress made with Mòd Academy towards supporting pupils and schools in Lochaber with their Gaelic learning and to increase the uptake of Gaelic Learner competitions at the Royal National Mòd 2025; and
- iii. the progress made with Blasad class lessons to develop Gaelic in Sutherland and Caithness schools and to assist achieving the target of 70% of primary schools delivering Gaelic as an L2 or an L3 language.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.