

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 25 February 2026 at 2pm.

Present:

Mr R Bremner (Remote)	Dr M Gregson
Mr I Brown	Mr P Logue
Mr S Cameron (Remote)	Mr A MacKintosh
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)	Ms K MacLean (Remote)
Ms C Gillies	Mr D Millar
Mr J Grafton (Remote)	Mrs M Paterson (Remote)

Non-Member also present:

Mr D Macpherson

In attendance:

Mr D Brown, Chief Executive
Ms B Scott, Chief Officer – Primary Education and Early Years
Ms C Macklin, Head of Service, Integrated People Services
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer
Mr R MacKay, Development Officer, Education and Learning
Ms A MacLeod, Gaelic Literacy Development 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 C Macmillan, Chief Executive, Fèisean nan Gàidheal
Ms E Mackenzie, Fèisgoil Manager, Fèisean nan Gàidheal
Mr J Adam, Director, Tourism Resources Company
Ms M Cunningham, President, An Comunn Gàidhealach
Ms P MacLennan, Chief Executive, An Comunn Gàidhealach
Mr I Robertson, Board Member, An Comunn Gàidhealach and Chair, Lochaber Mòd 2025

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 W Mackay.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Good News

A wide range of activities and events were taking place across Highland during World Gaelic Week.

A successful Gaelic day had taken place in Lairg recently, showcasing local talent, following concerns about the visibility of Gaelic in the area.

The Siuthad 2026 careers fair, this year focusing on Gaelic learners and the career opportunities available to them, had attracted 110 pupils from 6 secondary schools.

The Highland Council Gaelic Team, in partnership with the Gaelic Digital Archive Centre at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, had developed an engaging and interactive workshop for S4 to S6 pupils.

Thanks were extended to Fèisgoil and Fèisean nan Gàidheal for their involvement in a recently completed pilot project that delivered Gaelic through games and song across Sutherland.

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

4. BLAS 2025 Events and Economic, Linguistical and Cultural Impact

There had been circulated Report No. G/1/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People and there was a presentation by Mr Calum Alex Macmillan, Chief Executive, Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Ms Eilidh Mackenzie, Fèisgoil Manager, Fèisean nan Gàidheal.

The presentation outlined the long-term impact of the Blas Festival, and highlighted key events and achievements from the 2025 programme, which included concerts, ceilidhs, events, musical and song sessions, and several school performances throughout Highland. Community and visitor feedback had been positive. Planning for Blas 2026 was in the early stages.

Blas had grown from strength to strength over the years. The arts, particularly traditional music, were hugely important in the development and promotion of the Gaelic language. The festival allowed children to perform with their musical heroes and connect to the Gaelic culture. Opportunities to use Gaelic and steps taken to increase confidence in the use of Gaelic were incredibly important. It was hoped that the Council continued to support Blas in the future.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the continuation of annual funding for the BLAS festival, noting that all future allocations remained subject to the Council's annual budget review and external funding constraints;
- ii. **NOTED** that the festival's ability to secure external funding was dependent on The Highland Council providing ongoing annual support. Any reduction or withdrawal of this funding would place the wider funding package at risk;
- iii. **AGREED** to support work on community ownership of Blas with the local promoters and revenue sharing to boost local engagement;
- iv. **AGREED** to encourage that Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnanG) undertook research with their network of promoters to ensure that the promoters had a voice in the programming;

- v. **AGREED** to continue to enhance the metrics for economic impact and Gaelic-language indicators in line with the outcomes of the Gaelic Language Plan;
- vi. **AGREED** to continue to strengthen the links between The Highland Council and the Blas Festival organisers for 2026 event;
- vii. **NOTED** the work undertaken by FnanG and An Comunn Gàidhealach with support from Highland Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig regarding Mòd Academy which took place in Schools across the Lochaber Area in the lead up to the Lochaber Mòd. (Appendix 1); and
- viii. **AGREED** that the Mòd Academy initiative formed part of the Mòd Loch Abar 2025 legacy project.

5. Economic, Linguistic and Cultural Benefits of the Lochaber Royal National Mòd 2025

There had been circulated Report No. G/2/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People and there was a presentation by Mr James Adam, Director, Tourism Resources Company, on behalf of An Comunn Gàidhealach.

The Mòd was said to have attracted over 9,400 attendees and generated £3.9m overall in the Lochaber area, with an excellent return on investment. Feedback suggested that the event had been a great way to meet friends and engage socially and there was a high level of engagement with Fort William as the host town.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, in terms of the connectivity between Provincial and National Mòds and it was asked what plans could be put in place to encourage junior choral members to continue competing at a senior level;
- in response to comments regarding the age demographic, it was thought that the post-event questionnaires were more likely to have been completed by parents or coaches, which could create the impression that the attendee group was older; and
- information was sought, and provided, regarding future funding. It was said that accommodation and venue costs were becoming increasingly challenging.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the details included in the presentation and within the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that the 2029 Mòd would take place in the Highland area; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Officers liaised with An Comunn Gàidhealach Officials to prepare a refreshed Service Delivery Agreement.

6. PRMS Report: Progress against Gaelic Language Plan 2024–29

There had been circulated Report No. G/3/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

It was asked how the Kilmuir Primary School Nursery Case Study might expand going forward.

Information was sought, and provided, in terms of the development of schools delivering Gaelic and the networking support available to Gaelic Medium Education

pupils in secondary schools. It was important to keep the momentum going in terms of the Gaelic Language Plan. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 presented further opportunities, with preparatory work already taking place on Areas of Linguistic Significance.

Members were happy to see targets achieved across the plan and the hard work involved was acknowledged, but it was felt that the good news did not reach far enough. Officers were asked to reflect on how they might actively promote all the work being undertaken and it was said that the role of the Gaelic Committee was fundamental for capturing the breadth of the work of the Gaelic Team.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Gaelic Education

There had been circulated Report No. G/4/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People and there was a presentation by Ms Alison MacLeod, Gaelic Literacy Development Officer.

Members were delighted with the success of the Audiobook Player Pilot Project and they recognised the amount of work involved. It was an intergenerational and collaborative project, linking schools across Highland.

In response to a question on Gaelic Learner Education provision in secondary schools it was confirmed that Highland remained in a strong national position, however, this was dependent on the continued strengthening of collaboration between schools.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the commitment to Gaelic specific Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) focused workstreams alongside partnership working with Education Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and other national bodies to strengthen professional learning pathways, develop high-quality learning resources, and align work with national Gaelic education priorities;
- ii. the positive impact of recent school improvement attainment and achievement focused actions to encourage continued monitoring and evaluation of Gaelic initiatives in schools and their impact and effectiveness; and
- iii. the Scottish Government Gaelic Capital awards and their contribution to improving Gaelic curriculum outcomes for pupils.

8. Internal Gaelic Skills Survey

There had been circulated Report No. G/5/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Conversing in Gaelic, at whatever level, should feel comfortable and it was important to identify and provide comfortable spaces in the workplace where people felt confident enough to try. Gaelic signage was beneficial in this regard. It was hoped

that future surveys would show an increase in the number of people willing to learn and use Gaelic.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the findings of the Gaelic Skills Survey;
- ii. **AGREED** to implement the proposed action plan to address training needs and increase Gaelic visibility in the workplace; and
- iii. **AGREED** to support the development of flexible and accessible Gaelic learning opportunities for staff.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm.