

Agenda Item	7
Report No	G/7/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Gaelic

Date: 3 June 2026

Report Title: Educational Trust Funds – Gaelic Context and Funding Opportunities

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary overview of the role that Highland Council Educational Trust Funds currently play in supporting Gaelic education, culture, and related activity across Highland.
- 1.2 The report also highlights associated partner activity and funding routes relevant to Gaelic provision, including third sector trusts and partnership bursary schemes.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. note the existing contribution of Educational Trust Funds to Gaelic education and activity;
 - ii. note the wider landscape of affiliated Gaelic trusts and bursary schemes;
 - iii. note the ongoing work to align funding approaches and information sharing across Gaelic-related funding streams.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource
There are no new financial implications arising from this report. Existing Educational Trust awards are made within approved schemes and available free income.
- 3.2 Legal
There are no legal implications. Any awards referenced continue to operate within the terms of approved Trust Schemes and charity law.
- 3.3 Risk
There are no additional risks arising from this report.
- 3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)
There are no health and safety implications.

3.5 Gaelic
This report directly relates to the promotion and support of Gaelic through education, training, and cultural activity

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 report is an information and monitoring update. An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

5. Educational Trust Fund Support for Gaelic

5.1 A number of Highland Council Educational Trust Funds already support Gaelic-related activity within their approved purposes. This includes, but is not limited to:

- grants supporting youth music, traditional music and Fèisean activity;
- educational travel linked to Gaelic cultural exchange;
- bursaries and awards that recognise achievement in Gaelic language and culture.

5.2 Recent discussions at the Educational Trust Fund Sub-Committee have explicitly highlighted the importance of supporting Gaelic education, while also recognising the pressure on limited free income and the need to maximise equity of distribution.

5.3 Members are invited to note the positive outcomes and 'good news' arising from recent Educational Trust Fund awards which support Gaelic culture and education. These include funded activity linked to Gaelic music, youth participation, cultural exchange, and learner progression, where awards have enabled young people and community groups to act as wider ambassadors for Gaelic language and Highland cultural heritage.

5.4 These include county and area-based trusts such as Inverness-shire, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, Duncraig, and Gairloch and Plockton Educational Trusts, where awards have supported Gaelic music, traditional arts, Fèisean activity, youth pipe bands, cultural travel, and community-based learning.

In several cases, awards have enabled young people and groups to represent Highland culture nationally and internationally through Gaelic performance and exchange.

In addition, a number of legacy prizes and bursaries administered through Educational Trust Funds continue to recognise attainment and contribution in Gaelic language and related cultural subjects, reflecting the original intent of trust benefactors and providing a tangible link between historic bequests and contemporary Gaelic outcomes.

- 5.5 In particular, Members are also invited to note a recent good news outcome relating to an individual supported through an Educational Trust Fund award who is undertaking initial teacher education with a Gaelic specialism.

The award provided practical financial support towards study and placement-related costs, helping to remove barriers during training and enabling progression towards a career in Gaelic education.

This reflects the role of Educational Trust Funds in supporting future capacity within the Gaelic teaching workforce, while operating fully within the terms of approved Trust Schemes.

- 5.6 For information, applications to the Highland Council Educational Trust Funds are made through the Council's dedicated Educational Trusts website.

This provides guidance on eligibility, available trusts, application windows and supporting information. Applications are typically invited during set annual rounds, with details published in advance on the website and through Council communications.

Further information is available at <https://highlandcouncilcharitabletrusts.org/> and via the Highland Council website at <https://www.highland.gov.uk> under Education Trust Funds.

6. Partner Trusts and Associated Funding Opportunities

6.1 Urras an Eilein (Skye Gaelic Trust)

Urras an Eilein was established in 1973 by Sir Iain Noble and others to promote Gaelic activity on Skye. The Trust focuses on education, culture, heritage, and history, and has supported a wide range of activity including Gaelic drama, local Mòds, Gaelic playgroups, Gaelic Medium Education, and educational events through Portree High School.

In partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Trust sponsors the annual Sir Iain Noble Memorial Lecture, which continues to attract national profile and high-quality contribution to Gaelic discourse.

- 6.2 Applications to Urras an Eilein (Skye Gaelic Trust) are made directly to the Trust and are not administered by the Council.

Application forms and guidance are published on the Trust's website and are typically submitted to the Trust administrator for consideration by the Trustees.

Applications are assessed against the Trust's charitable purposes, which focus on supporting Gaelic education, culture, heritage, and associated activity on Skye. Timescales and funding availability are set by the Trust and may vary from year to year, with applicants expected to demonstrate clear educational or cultural benefit in line with the Trust's objectives.

Further details and application forms can be found at <https://urras-an-eilein.scot/>

6.2 Highland Council – Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Bursary Scheme

Highland Council works with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig through an established Memorandum of Understanding, which includes the HC–SMO Bursary Scheme. The scheme is now in its twenty-fifth year and, since 2016, has supported around fifty students to undertake studies at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Work is currently underway with SMO to refresh the bursary scheme application process and criteria. This reflects changes in student need, the growing influence of digital and artificial intelligence tools, and the forthcoming designation of Areas of Linguistic Significance.

Feedback from SMO indicates that the scheme is valued and effective, while recognising the importance of adapting to the current operating context.

7. Alignment and Next Steps

- 7.1 There is an opportunity to continue improving visibility and coherence across Gaelic-related funding routes, including Council-administered Educational Trusts, third sector trusts, and partnership bursary schemes.
- 7.2 This includes ensuring clear signposting for applicants who may be unsuccessful through one funding route but eligible through another, while remaining within the constraints of individual trust purposes and governance.
- 7.3 This activity also aligns with the Council's Gaelic Language Plan, particularly in supporting learner progression, increasing opportunities for the use of Gaelic beyond the classroom, and strengthening routes into Gaelic-related careers.

Where Trust purposes allow, awards that support Gaelic education, cultural participation and training contribute positively to the delivery of the Plan's objectives.

Educational Trust Funds are not a delivery mechanism for the Gaelic Language Plan. However, they provide a complementary source of support that can help remove barriers to participation, encourage continuation in Gaelic learning, and support future capacity in areas such as Gaelic Medium Education, while remaining firmly within the governance and intent of individual Trust Schemes.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 20/05/2026

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Appendix 1 – Good News

Appendix 1 – Gaelic and Cultural Good News from Educational Trust Fund Awards

This appendix provides a summary of recent positive outcomes delivered through Educational Trust Fund awards, with a particular focus on activities that support, promote or align with Gaelic language, culture and Highland heritage.

The examples set out below demonstrate how targeted funding is contributing to the sustainability of Gàidhlig, strengthening traditional arts, and enabling young people to engage with and promote Highland culture both locally and internationally.

They highlight a combination of direct Gaelic impacts, such as support for Gaelic education and learning, alongside wider cultural activity rooted in Highland and Gaelic traditions, including music, dance and international cultural exchange.

Collectively, these examples provide evidence of the ongoing contribution Educational Trust Funds make to cultural enrichment, community participation, and the development of future generations of learners, practitioners and ambassadors for Gaelic and Highland culture.

Investing in the Future of Gàidhlig Education

NOT FOR PUBLICATION on the grounds of Disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in Paragraphs 4 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

We are delighted to share a heart-warming update from one of our recent award recipients, Emily, who is currently pursuing her Gaelic teaching degree.

Emily received a £1,000 grant from the Duncraig Educational Trust this year, and she's already putting it to excellent use. The funding has helped her purchase essential teaching resources and supported her during her first practical teaching placement- a vital step in becoming a classroom leader.

"The money has been so helpful, allowing me to buy teaching books and to help with my first teaching placement. I'm very much looking forward to my second year!"

Supporting students like Emily is at the heart of what we do. By easing the financial burden of study, we are helping to ensure that the next generation of Gaelic speakers has passionate, well-equipped teachers in the classroom.

Harmonising Cultures: Highland Students Take Germany by Storm!



We are thrilled to share the incredible success of the Highland Schools Wind Orchestra's recent concert tour and cultural exchange to Bavaria, Germany. This event, which took place from June 21–29, 2025, was made possible in part by a generous grant that ensured the tour's overall success.

Fifty talented young musicians from across the Highlands acted as admirable ambassadors for Scotland as they travelled nearly 2,000 kilometres to visit Inverness' twin-town, Augsburg. Over the course of the week, the students performed four successful outdoor concerts, reaching audiences of hundreds in historic venues like the old Augsburg Armoury and the UNESCO-listed town of Nördlingen.

"It was a great thing to have done and I'm sure they are not the only one to come back having had a very memorable time and such fantastic experiences."

The tour was about much more than just music. For many students, it was a series of "firsts"- their first time in Germany, their first overnight ferry, and their first experience navigating a foreign language and culture. From a sombre and educational visit to the Dachau Concentration Camp to a breathtaking tour of Neuschwanstein Castle, these experiences provided invaluable lessons in history, architecture, and personal development.

Impact at a Glance:

- **Four Successful Concerts:** Performances for diverse audiences, ranging from local peers at St. Stephen's Gymnasium to the public in village squares.
- **Cultural Immersion:** Students embraced new customs and foods, participated in a Mayoral reception, and even joined forces with local German Alpine Horn players and bagpipers.

- **Personal Growth:** Teachers noted a marked increase in student self-reliance, initiative, and social integration throughout the trip.

By supporting projects like the Highland Schools Wind Orchestra tour, the Trust helps broaden the horizons of our young people, fostering independence and building lifelong memories. As one student put it, it was truly a "once in a lifetime opportunity".

From the Misty Isle to the Tuscan Sun: Skye Youth Pipe Band's Italian

Adventure

We are thrilled to share the success of the Skye Youth Pipe Band's Summer journey to Italy, where they served as proud musical ambassadors during the annual Scottish Weekend Festival in Barga.

Known as "the most Scottish town in Italy," Barga provided the perfect backdrop for our talented young pipers and drummers to showcase their skills. After months of intensive practice and dedicated fundraising, the band travelled from Skye to Tuscany to participate in a series of high-profile performances that celebrated the deep historical ties between Scotland and Italy.

"The trip went ahead and was very successful; the band were extremely well received in Italy and many new friendships were formed. It's been a source of motivation and encouragement for our younger players."

The experience was more than just a musical tour; it was a masterclass in independence and cultural exchange. For many of the students in S4–S6, performing in the historic piazza of Barga Vecchia was a defining moment in their musical education, building the confidence required for major international stages.

Impact at a Glance:

- **Cultural Ambassadorship:** The band performed multiple sets throughout the festival, including the iconic march through the winding streets of Barga, drawing crowds of locals and tourists alike.
- **Skill Development:** The high standard of performance required for the festival has motivated the band to set even higher goals, with plans now underway to compete in the World Pipe Band Championships.
- **Community Bonds:** By participating in the Mayoral reception and local festivities, the youngsters strengthened the "Twin Town" spirit and formed lasting bonds with their Italian peers.

Supporting the Skye Youth Pipe Band in this endeavour has not only preserved a vital part of our Highland heritage but has also inspired a new generation of musicians to take their talent to the world stage. We look forward to seeing where their music takes them next!



Highland Harmonies in Iberia: City of Inverness Youth Pipe Band Stun Spanish

Crowds

The Duncraig Educational Trust is proud to highlight the spectacular success of the City of Inverness Youth Pipe Band on their recent cultural and musical tour to Spain.

Following in the footsteps of previous successful tours, this journey saw our local young pipers and drummers travel to participate in the prestigious Festival Intercéltico d'Avilés. The Trust's support was vital in ensuring that the financial barriers of international travel did not stand in the way of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for our talented young musicians.

"The experience of performing on such a massive stage was a dream come true. The crowd's reaction was unlike anything we've experienced back home. It was a true celebration of music and culture."- Participating Band Member

Impact at a Glance:

- **Record-Breaking Performances:** As reported in the *Inverness Courier*, the band performed to massive audiences, including a headline concert where tens of thousands of people gathered to hear traditional Scottish sets blended with modern favourites like AC/DC's "Thunderstruck."
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** By participating in opening ceremonies and street marches alongside bands from across Europe, our youth acted as ambassadors for the Highlands, strengthening international ties through a shared love of Celtic music.
- **Intensive Skill Building:** Navigating the logistics of an international tour and performing in the Spanish heat required immense discipline and teamwork.

The *Courier* noted that the group, led by Pipe Major David Low, showed incredible professionalism throughout the trip.

- Lifelong Memories: Beyond the music, the students immersed themselves in Spanish culture, from local cuisine to historic sightseeing, fostering a global perspective that will stay with them for years to come.

Supporting the City of Inverness Youth Pipe Band is an investment in the cultural heritage of our region. We are delighted to have played a part in helping these young people show the world exactly what the Highlands have to offer.

