

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 3 June 2026 at 2.00pm.

### Present:

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

### Non-Member also present:

Mr J Finlayson (Remote)  
Mr P Oldham (Remote)

### In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People  
Ms C Macklin, Head of Service, Integrated People Services  
Mr D Martin, Strategic Lead, Integrated People Services  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer  
Mr R MacKay, Development Officer, Education and Learning  
Ms L Collie, Project Officer (Active Travel)  
Ms D Roberts, Principal Teacher, Tongue Primary School  
Ms M Mulholland, Community Learning & Development Officer, Primary and Early Years Education  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs G MacPherson, Senior Committee Officer  
Mr C Ross, Committee Officer

### Also in attendance:

Mr D Mackenzie, Gaelic Development Officer, Skills Development Scotland  
Ms E Mackenzie, Fèisgoil Manager, Fèisean nan Gàidheal

**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

An apology for absence was 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 Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

#### **Seachdain na Gàidhlig**

A lot of good work was taking place across Highland bringing Gaelic medium pupils and learners together to celebrate the language. As part of the week, Tobar an Dualchais had visited 6 schools in Highland delivering a workshop on how to use their resource database and the new interactive map to find recordings from their area.

#### **Ullapool High School**

Pupils had developed and organised a Gaelic Sports Day for other GME Secondary pupils. Special congratulations went to Thurso High School who were awarded the shield for the strongest effort to use Gaelic.

#### **FilmG**

There had been a high number of entries of Gaelic Short Films from across Highland, many of which had been short listed for the finals scheduled to take place in Glasgow on 11 June.

#### **Cuach na Cloinne**

The annual Cuach na Cloinne football competition was taking place at Bught Park, Inverness with teams from across Scotland. Councillor Ian Brown, a member of the Gaelic Committee, was in attendance and would present the winners with the Cuach na Cloinne.

#### **Skye Provincial Mod**

The competitors at the previous week's Provincial Mod were thanked and the winners congratulated for their excellent performances and for the high skills displayed in the musical events and the high quality of Gaelic.

### **4. Inverness City Centre Wayfinding Project**

There was a presentation by Lizbeth Collie, Project Officer (Active Travel).

The presentation outlined the rationale behind the project, and how it had improved the condition and durability of signage, navigation and footfall to west of the River Ness, as well as the promotion of active travel. The central focus on Gaelic in the signage was emphasised throughout the presentation.

The project was welcomed and it highlighted the importance and contribution of Gaelic to the Highland tourism sector. In response to a question regarding a fingerpost for Cultarlann, it was explained that due to space restrictions it had not been possible to include all desired destinations.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

## **5. Fèis-sgoil Gaelic Learners North Area Project**

There were presentations by Ms Eilidh Mackenzie, Fèisgoil Manager, Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Ms Dee Roberts, Principal Teacher, Tongue Primary School where they outlined the progress in establishing and promoting Gaelic education in schools and highlighted the challenges of teacher confidence and capacity.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the initiatives were welcomed;
- Members commended the accessible Gaelic education and learning opportunities that had been extended across Highland; and
- it was proposed that the creation of an online Gaelic learning platform be considered. The opportunity this might bring to expand Gaelic learning globally and act as a revenue stream was suggested.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentations.

## **6. Siuthad! Annual Gaelic Careers Event**

There had been circulated Report No. G/6/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People and there was a presentation by Mr Derek MacKenzie, Skills Development Scotland.

Siuthad was a unique event primarily for S2/S3 Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Learner pupils, organised by Highland Council and Skills Development Scotland, with funding also provided from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The event aimed to encourage continued study of Gaelic and highlight the wide range of careers available with exhibitions and interactive workshops.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the Chair, having attended this year's event, was encouraged to see so many young people present and hoped that the Council would continue to support the event for many years to come;
- it was important to promote career opportunities as early as possible, and Members welcomed that they were also shared with Gaelic Learners;
- it was asked if there had been any discussions with Workforce North in respect of promoting the Gaelic language as part of the workplace, and acknowledging the language as part of the Workforce North vision. In

response, initial discussions had taken place and promotional material had been produced;

- speaking a second language was recognised as beneficial; and
- pupils were inspired after participating in events such as Siuthad and FilmG and it was welcomed that Skills Development Scotland took this seriously.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of this Siuthad update report;
- ii. **AGREED** to continue to support the participation of secondary pupils in Siuthad; and
- iii. **AGREED** to continue to work with Skills Development Scotland to organise Siuthad.

## 7. Charitable Trusts Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/7/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

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

## 8. Scottish Languages Act - Areas of Linguistic Significance Progress Report

There had been circulated Report No. G/8/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Prior to discussion, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee made it clear that what was proposed was a framework for consultation on Areas of Linguistic Significance (ALS), not a finalised designation model. The proposal to consult on a Highland-wide approach was a starting point for engagement. While targeted intervention in stronger Gaelic communities was essential, this should not come at the cost of a balanced Highland-wide approach to consult and seek feedback from all areas. Gaelic in Highland existed on a continuum and sustaining the language required both strengthening traditional communities as well as supporting emerging or developing ones. The consultation would allow feedback on where communities might meet the other criteria of ALS and a whole authority consultation would assess if a more refined approach was needed. If only one part was considered in the consultation, it would rely heavily on a single destination criterion to define priority in the consultation, hence why the wider place-based approach was needed.

The Scottish Language Act set out the criteria by which an area might be considered for designation. These were:- if it contained a significant number of people with Gaelic language skills (taken to be 20% of the area's population); historical connections to Gaelic; Education provision; and Gaelic Cultural activity. The recommendations had been arrived at following input, scrutiny and oversight

of officers, senior management and Elected Members, thus presenting a corporate position. The public were encouraged to engage with the consultation so views could inform the final approach. The Scottish Language Act 2025 was a landmark moment for Gaelic and, by granting it official status, was a positive step forward. It offered a strong legislative framework for growth as well as signalling a national commitment to the future of the language.

Disappointment was expressed at the tone of recent social media posts where officers and Members had been identified. Whilst accepting the importance of public scrutiny, this was unacceptable behaviour. All work undertaken had been within the Council's expected standards and conduct and officers had carried out their duties in a respectful and professional manner.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- this was one of the most important reports that had come before the Gaelic Committee which had huge potential for both the language and the Highlands;
- it was acknowledged some areas might not want to be identified as an ALS but there were others already working on Gaelic Language Plans;
- the consultation exercise was a huge amount of work;
- it was important there were opportunities for the entire region but it was recognised there were different levels of Gaelic;
- the involvement of the wider Highland community was essential;
- the personal experience of Members' Gaelic learning was explained and it was important that there were safe spaces for learners to listen, understand and talk without the fear of making mistakes;
- communities had to be given opportunities and communication was important. Nothing had been decided yet – this was the first step in the process;
- Members had to think about this as a matter affecting the whole Highlands, not just their own area;
- Members and officers' commitment to deliver Gaelic was commended, often going beyond what was required. It was important all worked together cooperatively and considerately to ensure all Highland, with variable degrees of Gaelic interest, were offered the opportunity to deliver Gaelic language and heritage when opportunities arose;
- the consultation process commenced in September and there was no presumptive conclusion as to what would come forth;
- a Highland-wide approach would ensure all areas could be considered as an ALS in terms of the Act following representation and to demonstrate the inclusive nature of the presentation; and
- the steps to the consultation laid out in the report were reasonable and any argument otherwise was unreasonable.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the provisions of the Scottish Languages Act 2025 relating to Areas of Linguistic Significance;
- ii. **NOTED** that Corporate Management Team had approved a whole authority ALS approach;

- iii. **AGREED** that a whole-authority designation, supported by a place based delivery framework, provided the most proportionate and effective way to implement ALS in Highland;
- iv. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council that the Gaelic Committee's Scheme of Delegation be amended to allocate responsibility for oversight of Gaelic Areas of Linguistic Significance designation processes; and
- v. **NOTED** that further reports would be brought to the Committee on delivery phasing, governance and consultation.

## 9. Gaelic Language Plan Progress Report

There had been circulated Report No. G/9/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. contents of this PRMS progress report;
- ii. submission and positive assessment of the Council's Bòrd na Gàidhlig annual return for May 2024 to May 2025; and
- iii. Council's response to the BBC Royal Charter consultation, as included in the appendices.

## 10. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/10/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members were encouraged by the positive progress being made in Gaelic education across Highland, however, it was important to look critically at the progress made. The value of joint working between this Committee and the Education Committee was highlighted;
- ongoing challenges across Highland included geography, resource pressures, and the number of schools;
- representation should be made to new Scottish Government Ministers in terms of the support sought, given Highland's leading role in Gaelic Medium Education delivery;
- there was concern that many pupils chose not to study Gaelic after S3; and
- there was no statutory requirement to deliver Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and it was asked if this could be explored with the Scottish

Government. However, the Gaelic Team was committed to supporting and promoting GLE, and had a long history of delivering this.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to welcome the continued expansion of Gaelic Education in the North Area;
- ii. **AGREED** to recognise the growth across sectors for Gaelic pupil numbers; and
- iii. **NOTED** Seachdain na Gàidhlig activities and commitment from schools to contribute and participate in the annual initiative.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm.