

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	5
Report No	G/11/26

Committee: Gaelic Committee

Date: 26 August 2026

Report Title: Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Between Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive – People

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

The main purpose of the report is to provide Elected Members with an update of the refreshed MoU between The Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO). Also to introduce senior representatives from SMO to deliver a presentation which will focus on the following:-

- The economic benefits of SMO within the local area.
- The ways in which Gaelic, culture, community, economy and housing are working collaboratively to support sustainable communities.
- The contribution of SMO to education and skills development.
- How current projects support and enhance collaboration across these areas, while also highlighting the wider impact of SMO's work.

1.1 The Highland Council have maintained a long-standing collaborative relationship with SMO in support of Gaelic development, education, training, research and cultural activity across the areas which SMO deliver to and for.

1.2 As a National Centre for Gaelic and Culture, SMO plays a significant role in delivering higher and further education, research, teacher education, creative industries development and community engagement. The proposed refreshed MoU seeks to further formalise and strengthen the partnership for the period 2026–2029, providing a strategic framework through which The Highland Council and SMO can continue to work together to support the continued growth and stability of Gaelic.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. note the impact of SMO and associated activities in supporting Gaelic language, culture and economic development;
- ii. agree opportunities for continued collaboration; and
- iii. agree the draft revised Memorandum of Understanding

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

The current initiatives are developed within current budgets, however, regarding any new initiatives and developments will require additional funding from other funding streams, external organisations and partners.

3.2 Legal

There are no implications.

3.3 Risk

Currently no risk implications.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

There are no risks arising as a direct result of this report.

3.5 Gaelic

Very positive implications in relation to the current Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) Outcomes relating to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

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. Draft MoU

5.1 The draft MoU agreement aligns with national and local priorities including:

- The National Gaelic Language Plan.
- The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan.
- Community Learning and Development priorities.
- Economic and community regeneration objectives.
- Cultural and heritage development objectives.
- Area and national ambitions for Gaelic medium and Gaelic learner education.

The Revised MoU is detailed in **Appendix 1**.

6. Strategic Context

6.1 The MoU will strengthen joint working to support Gaelic across all themes within the GLP.

6.2 Communities and Home

Strategic Priority 1.1 – Increase support for all Gaelic users and learners, in their communities, and in the networks in which they operate.

- Continue to support and increase extra-curricular activities which are delivered through Gaelic.
- In liaison with Gaelic organisations, increase opportunities for GME pupils to engage in Gaelic arts, music and culture.
- In partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, we organise and deliver the annual Seachdain nan Deugairean project.

Strategic Priority 1.2 – Provide initiatives to encourage Gaelic language learning for young people and families in the home

- The Gaelic Family Learning Week was delivered in partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Media, Arts, Culture and Heritage

Strategic Priority 2.1 – Gaelic Media and Arts output – create opportunities for expression, skills, access, participation and creativity.

- We collaborate SMO in relation to the current MoU.
- Work in partnership with other local and national organisations to support Gaelic cultural activities across the Highlands.

Business and the Economy

Strategic Priority 3.1 – Use Gaelic in businesses and social enterprises, and as an economic asset in Scotland.

- Work with relevant agencies and partners such as HIE, SDS, VisitScotland, SMO, Creative Scotland, Historic Scotland and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to realise the economic benefits of Gaelic and its culture.
- Work with relevant agencies and partners to develop a Creative Industries (Arts) Economic Impact Study. This action links to the Media, Arts, Culture and Heritage theme.

Education

Strategic Priority 4.1 – Deliver continued promotion and growth in GME and GLE at all levels including delivery of Gaelic as a modern language, with 70%* of primary schools providing Gaelic as an L2 and L3 to increase the provision of Gaelic across the authority.

- Annually promote and support Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) for all Gaelic education providers e.g. Additional Teaching Qualification (ATQ) in Gaelic pathway for secondary teachers to expand Gaelic as a modern language in secondary schools.
- Support and grow GME early years, primary and secondary pupil numbers through ongoing tracking of pupil numbers.
- We collaborate with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO) in relation to the current MoU, including the promotion of training opportunities, supporting student

placements, supporting interview selection processes and collaboration on projects to support professional enquiry and development.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – People

Date: 9th July 2026

Author: Morag Anna MacLeod Mitchell

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Draft revised MoU

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Between The Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig 2026 - 2029

1. Introduction and Purpose

This revised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishes a framework for collaboration between The Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

Both parties share a commitment to the promotion, development, and sustainability of Gaelic, Arts, and Culture. Through this partnership, the organisations will jointly support and foster lifelong learning, education, arts, and training, contributing to the continued growth of Gaelic across education within and out with education, heritage, culture, creative industries. Also, within the remit of the Highland Council where support can be provided for Economic Development and Infrastructure.

2. Areas of Collaboration

The Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig agree to explore and develop partnership opportunities that build upon our mutual aims, expertise, and shared interests.

These include:

- Gaelic education and lifelong learning including families
- Take account of the Areas of Linguistic Significance
- Research and knowledge exchange
- Visual arts, drama, and film
- Students
- Oral heritage and cultural traditions
- Topographical naming and place-based knowledge
- Broadcasting and digital/media platforms
- Music and wider creative industries
- Economic and infrastructure

This work will support the promotion and increased visibility of Gaelic across both educational settings, and the creative and cultural sectors including the economic and infrastructure areas.

3. Partnership Working and Governance

A joint Working Group (Committee) will be established, with members nominated by both organisations, and sub-groups according to the requirements.

The Working Group will (Committee):

- Provide strategic oversight of collaborative activity
- Identify and develop opportunities for joint initiatives
- Meet regularly to monitor progress and outcomes

- Promote achievements and future priorities
- The Working Group will develop and maintain an annual operational plan identifying agreed priorities, lead officers, key activities and intended outcomes.

4. Future Development

The Working Group will identify and recommend areas for future development. These may include:

- Jointly delivered programmes across different levels of education and training
- Collaborative research initiatives for Education
- Projects to strengthen learning Gaelic in the area
- Creative sector
- Economic developments linked to Gaelic, Cultural Heritage, infrastructure and housing

5. Resources and Sustainability

Both parties recognise that the success and sustainability of the revised MoU are dependent on the availability of appropriate funding and resources.

Each organisation will:

- Seek to support agreed activities within its available capacity
- Work collaboratively to identify and secure external funding where appropriate

6. Review and Duration

This MoU will remain in effect from the date of signing and will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant, effective, and aligned with shared strategic priorities.

7. Termination

This MoU may be:

- Terminated at any time by mutual agreement between both parties; or
- Terminated by either organisation providing 3 months' written notice

8. Status of Agreement

This Memorandum of Understanding reflects the intentions of both parties to collaborate in good faith. It does not create legally binding obligations unless otherwise agreed through subsequent project-specific agreements.

9. Signatories

Signed for and on behalf of:

The Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig