

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 26 August 2026 at 2pm.

Present:

Mr R Bremner (remote)
Mr I Brown
Mr S Cameron (remote)
Mrs I Campbell (remote)
Ms C Gillies

Dr M Gregson
Mr P Logue
Ms K MacLean
Mr D Millar

Non-Member also present:

Ms L Johnston
Mr D Macpherson

Mrs M Ross (remote)
Mr R Stewart

In attendance:

Ms B Martin-Scott, Chief Officer (Primary)
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 C Dallas, Education Support Officer (Early Years)
Mr K MacKenzie, Corporate Comms and Engagement Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Ross, Committee Officer

M MacLeod

Dr G Munro, Principal, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
Dr M MacLeod, Vice Principal, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

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 J Grafton, Mr A MacKintosh and Mrs M Paterson.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Recess Powers

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted at the meeting on 25 June 2026 did not require to be used in relation to the Gaelic Committee.

4. Good News

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

40 Years of Gaelic Medium Education (GME)

The video shown to Members showed the variety of events that had taken place from a Football Festival ran by Alba FA to family ceilidhs held in Portree and Staffin. In Inverness, a ceilidh was held in Cultarlann to celebrate the development of GME from the early days in Bun-Sgoil a' Mheadhain to where it was now in Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis where former and current pupils, parents and teachers were invited to celebrate the 40-year milestone.

Blas

The Blas Festival was due to start on 4 September where a wide variety of Gaelic cultural and musical events were held across Highland. It brought top class musicians direct to village halls and centres to local communities.

Qualifications Scotland Results

There had been an increase in the number of pupils that passed both Gàidhlig Fluent and Gaelic Learner exams. There had been an increase of 21 pupils successfully passing those exams.

FilmG Awards

The successful Highland winners at the Glasgow FilmG Awards held in June were congratulated. There were winners across all three age categories, highlighting the growing interest and skills level of our Gaelic speakers.

Primary One Pupils

There had been an increase in numbers of Primary One pupils starting school in GME across Highland. Dingwall Primary had the highest ever intake with 17 pupils this year.

5. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – Memorandum of Understanding

There had been circulated Report No. G/11/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People. This was accompanied by a presentation from Dr Munro and Dr MacLeod, which highlighted Sabhal Mòr Ostaig as a leading organisation in Gaelic learning, research and culture. It focused on the organisation's unique education provision and the efforts made to engage communities with Gaelic. The importance of continued collaboration between the Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig was made clear.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the presentation and report were welcomed;
- Members highlighted the importance of continued collaboration between the Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to help advance Gaelic education;
- Members were encouraged to visit Sabhal Mòr Ostaig campus to further appreciate the work carried out by the organisation;
- it was queried if there were any collaborative solutions to the lack of Gaelic teachers in Highland schools. It was understood that Gaelic officers were researching the viability of a part-time Professional Graduate or Postgraduate Diploma in Education teaching qualification which could help address the issue sustainably; and
- reference was made to the importance of instilling confidence in Gaelic learners to aid the growth of Gaelic outside of the educational setting and in everyday life in communities and professional settings.

The Committee:-

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

6. Seachdain na Gàidhlig – Corporate Communications and Engagement

There had been circulated Report No. G/12/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members encouraged the Corporate Communications team to further emphasise the presence of Seachdain na Gàidhlig advertising within the Council Headquarters building;
- the success of the programme was praised;
- information regarding what aspect of the programme could be developed and improved for 2027 was sought, however it was advised that the Gaelic Development or Gaelic Education team would be best suited to provide an answer;
- Members expressed support for the proposal of including Gaelic translations on service-related materials, such bus tickets and receipts. Introducing the public to Gaelic through innovative and subtle methods such as this was praised. However, concern was raised that services had been prioritising cost over the promotion of Gaelic when such proposals had been made;
- Members discussed the benefits of expanding Gaelic learning opportunities to all communities by grounding the Gaelic education in local contexts, for example through the use of local place-names as a starting point for learning; and
- the benefits of Gaelic immersion courses were referenced and in response to a question it was confirmed that there was a number of immersion courses available.

The Committee is invited to **NOTED**:-

- i. the report;
- ii. the activity in support of Seachdain na Gàidhlig 2026; and
- iii. the successful efforts to increase the number of Gaelic-related projects promoted through press releases and social media in 2025-26.

7. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/13/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People. This was accompanied by a presentation from Ms Dallas, Education Support Officer, which highlighted the excellent HMle Inspection of Mallaig Gaelic Nursery. The Nursery had been graded as “Very Good” across the Quality Indicators, a rare occurrence. This reflected the efforts of staff, the quality of

provision, the community and cultural links and the commitment to the Gaelic Language.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members congratulated Mallaig Nursery on the glowing Inspection report, setting a new benchmark for others;
- some Mallaig Nursery parents were Gaelic learners and this enhanced the links with the community;
- there were 1,900 Gaelic learner pupils in Highland secondary school out of 3,200 for the whole of Scotland. It would be useful for Highland to compare itself with the other local authorities. Overall, this was a tribute to the success of introducing Gaelic in Highland;
- the overall trend was that the number of Gaelic learners increased and it was hoped this would continue; and
- Members were delighted that GME was also starting at Lochaline Primary and it was important to continue looking at new areas where Gaelic could be introduced.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. positive outcome of the HMIE inspection of Mallaig Sgoil-àraich, recognising the strengths identified and the contribution of the setting to Gaelic Medium Early Learning and Childcare provision within Highland;
- ii. progress of Highland Council's current performance in relation to L2 and L3 language learning, including progress against national expectations and the ongoing work to support language learning across schools; and
- iii. continued growth in Gaelic Education across Highland and the importance of sustaining capacity to meet future demand.

8. Gaelic Language Plan Progress Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/14/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the hard work of the team implementing the Gaelic Language Plan was acknowledged;
- information was sought, and provided, as to the reasons why Culloden Academy no longer offered Gaelic Learner education to pupils wishing to continue with the language and how this was to be addressed; and
- with many place names across Highland originating from Gaelic, a new Gaelic Place Names course, developed in association with Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba, was being developed for employees and Members. This was warmly welcomed as it would raise awareness and understanding across Council services and with some Members indicating their willingness to participate.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the PRMS progress report.

9. Gaelic Specific Grant 2026/27

There had been circulated Report No. G/15/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Having recognised the positive report, the Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. 3 projects and outcomes outlined in the Gaelic Specific Grant bid;
- ii. programme of work that the grant would help to support and that these were adjusted as the full amount was not secured; and
- iii. maintained level of £940,000 in the Gaelic grant offered by Scottish Government.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm.