Agenda Item	**7**
Report No	**G/17/26**

The Highland Council

Committee: **Gaelic**

Date: **18 November 2026**

Report Title: **Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) – Lairg**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - People**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The purpose of the report is to present the outcomes of the Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) assessment process for Lairg Primary School and to seek Members' consideration of the recommendation that GMPE provision should proceed.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to note:-

i. the GMPE assessment findings and recommendation to commence Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Lairg Primary school to meet the demand established;
i. that a recommendation to proceed will deliver on the Highland Council's commitment to promotion and growth of GME; and
ii. considerations on resource required to support the implementation of GME within the Lairg Primary School.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource
The Council's Gaelic teacher expenditure comes from core Council budgets and are not directly funded by Scottish Government Gaelic Specific Grant (GSG).

In 26/27, core budgets will be supported by a GSG contribution of up to 7% of the total cost of Gaelic staffing in Highland schools across 3-18.

The core budget cost for 3-18 Gaelic Education in 26/27 is £7.8M.

3.2 Legal
There is a duty on authorities to promote and support Gaelic education.

GMPE specifically relates to the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. The provisions of the Act for the Gaelic medium primary education (GMPE) request process places duties on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic education primary requests.

3.3 Risk
The statutory GMPE assessment process is underpinned by an assumption in favour of provision where the assessment findings support proceeding.

A decision not to proceed requires local authorities to demonstrate clear, evidence-based reasons for departing from the assessment outcome and its duties to promote and support Gaelic education.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)
None

3.5 Gaelic
Positive impact on delivery of Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan outcomes.

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 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken on 9 October 2026. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there is no impact.

4.3.3	**Impact Assessment Area**	**Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment**
	Equality	• Children and Young People – *no impact* • Children affected by disability – *no impact* • Older adults –*no impact*
	Socio-economic	*no impact*
	Human Rights	*no impact*
	Children's Rights and Well-being	*no impact*
	Island and Mainland Rural	*no impact*
	Climate Change	*no impact*
	Data Rights	*no impact*

5. Background

5.1 The Highland Council received a request, by email, on the 16th of June 2026 under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to assess the need for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) in the Lairg area.

The GMPE Assessment process is outline by the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education – Bòrd na Gàidhlig

The request was submitted by a lead parent on behalf of five children residing within the proposed GMPE Assessment Area. The children range in age from approximately 1 year old to 4 years old at the time of assessment, with dates of birth between June 2022 and June 2025.

5.2 Lairg Primary School forms part of the Golspie Associated School Group (ASG). Historically, access to GME in Tain has been available to some families from the Golspie ASG area through local arrangements and school transport provision. Following a statutory consultation undertaken by Highland Council in 2025, the approved Gaelic Medium catchment area for Tain was extended to include the Golspie ASG, meaning that Lairg now falls within the recognised GME catchment area for Tain provision.

5.3 Gaelic Medium Education – promotion

Promotion of Gaelic Medium Education is undertaken through a strategic and coordinated universal approach with Corporate Communications, aligned to enrolment periods, and focused on areas where provision already exists or is planned.

In areas without existing provision, awareness raising activity is typically supported through targeted community led early years and family engagement approaches, such as 0-3 initiatives, which help to identify and nurture parental interest over time.

This targeted approach reflects the need to prioritise available staffing and financial resources, ensuring that promotional activity can be supported by realistic capacity to develop and sustain provision where demand emerges.

Given the resources available, Gaelic activity is targeted towards areas where there are changes in pupil numbers entering Sgoil-àraich or current Gaelic Medium provision schools. This helps raise awareness of Gaelic Medium Education, support uptake and sustain existing teacher capacity.

In emerging areas, such as Lairg, provision for children aged 0-3 is developed in response to local community interest, supported by universal promotion of Gaelic Medium Education during enrolment periods through Corporate Communications.

6. Assessment

6.1 The request submitted by parents has been reviewed in accordance with the requirements of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

The request identifies a desire for access to Gaelic Medium Primary Education within the assessment area and sets out the reasons why parents consider local provision should be explored. The information provided within the request has been considered as part of this assessment and forms the basis for the subsequent analysis of demand and provision.

GMPE process requires local authorities to prepare a report setting out the decision, the reasons for reaching the decision and when it attends to commence GMPE. Views must be sought from statutory consultees. Statutory factors are listed in the guidance for the request, the guidance states that presumption is in favour of establishing provision.

The profile of demand presented in the request has been reviewed to confirm the number of children including their eligibility under the legislation, and their residence within the designated GMPE Assessment Area. This process established the level of current demand.

The purpose of the GMPE assessment process is to determine whether there is sufficient evidence to justify proceeding to the next stage of establishing provision. A detailed assessment of demand and enrolment intentions would ordinarily follow a decision to proceed, when prospective provision, timescales and delivery arrangements can be clearly communicated to families. As part of the assessment process, parents attending the information meeting on 10 September were encouraged to share information on their GMPE request with other interested families and to register their interest.

Highland Council officers attended a Gaelic awareness public community meeting in Lairg in May 2026 with other Gaelic organisations. The officers made parents aware that the council welcomes GMPE requests if there was interest in GME in the area. The officers also provided information on how Gaelic Learner education is resourced and supported in primary schools in the North area. Prior to this, in February 2025, officers attended the Tain Gaelic Catchment Public Consultation where concerns on

access to Gaelic in Lairg was discussed. In response to this discussion, the minutes noted include 'We welcome the council's commitment to continue to promote the opportunity for parents to submit a request for GMPE in line with the Education Act (Scotland) 2016.'

Highland Council continues to welcome requests and monitor parental demand for GME in the interim for the commencement of GME in Lairg.

Currently the demand sits at 8 pupils of primary school age in 2027/28 with a further 4 registered who are under the age of 5 at the time of the assessment being published.

Full assessment information has been published on the Highland Council's website, for compliance with the guidance.

Statutory Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) Assessment Request - Lairg - Highland Council

7. Statutory Consultee Views

The views and recorded responses of statutory consultees have been published alongside the council's assessment of need for GME in Lairg -

Statutory Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) Assessment Request - Lairg - Highland Council

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The principal recurring cost associated with the establishment of Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) in Lairg would be the provision of an appropriately qualified teaching post. Indicative employment costs are estimated to be up to £68,000 per annum including employer on-costs. This estimate is based on the upper end of current national classroom teacher salary scales and actual costs would depend on the grade and experience of the successful applicant.

Additional costs would be associated with learning resources, staff development, curriculum support, and implementation arrangements required to establish and sustain provision. These costs would be refined as part of implementation planning.

8.2 Current assessment work is considering accommodation requirements within Lairg Primary School. Initial discussions indicate that existing accommodation may be capable of supporting GMPE provision without significant additional estate investment, however this position has not yet been confirmed, and further operational planning is required. Should Members agree to proceed, a detailed implementation plan and final resource assessment would be completed in advance of commencement of provision.

9. Next Steps

9.1 The assessment has concluded that Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) provision should be recommended for establishment in Lairg Primary School subject to consideration by Gaelic Committee and approval by Education Committee.

Confirmation of timescales for the introduction of GME are dependent on staffing recruitment and readiness of school accommodation.

The outcome supports our commitment to Gaelic education and the continued development of Gaelic Medium Education across Highland.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 7 October 2026

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Background Papers: Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education – Bòrd na Gàidhlig