

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar



Gaelic Language Plan 2023 - 2028

This Plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and was approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 7 November 2023



Foreword

I am delighted to support Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan for 2023-2028. We have implemented the three previous Plans successfully, and this fourth iteration of the Plan naturally builds and seeks to develop the strategic commitments made, and which are refreshed and updated later in this document. The Plan complements and enhances the Comhairle's own Gaelic Policy and reflects our wish both to deserve and enhance our reputation for strong and effective support of the Gaelic language, so evident since the establishment of the Comhairle 48 years ago.

In this Plan we outline our vision for the next four years, setting out aims and measurable objectives across our entire spectrum of services, including encouragement and support for our Elected Members and our employees, to lead by example in using and learning Gaelic skills. The largest employer in the Western Isles, the Comhairle is also in the fortunate position of having both Elected Members and many employees who are not just supportive of Gaelic, but who use it as their language of business and personal choice. Our commitment is always to build on that commitment by promoting true parity of esteem between Gaelic and English. In so doing, we continue to work and encourage our Community Planning Partners, many of which also recognise Gaelic as a working language and a cultural, economic and societal asset which supports jobs and businesses, in addition to community wellbeing throughout the Western Isles.

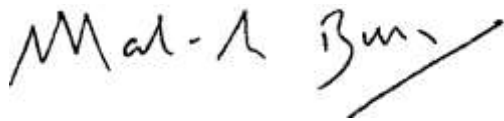
We have continued to see a growth in the percentage of children entering Gaelic Medium Education, with an increase of 7% in 2022/23, continuing the upward trend of recent years. Our Gaelic First Policy, adopted in 2019 and, crucially, work done by our Early Years' Service at the 0-3 Level, have been instrumental in achieving this ongoing increase. The Department of Education, Skills and Children's Services has also promoted Pàrant is Pàiste (Parent and Toddler) Groups across the Western Isles, with an important focus of enabling parental engagement. e-Sgoil, which performed so well throughout Scotland during the Covid Pandemic, continues to develop its National Offer, providing Gaelic Medium teaching across Scotland to Primary and Secondary students, including at Nat5, Higher and Advanced Higher levels. In addition, it delivers essential and innovative curriculum-enhancing programmes of Gaelic Classes during term times and holidays for pupils of all ages. Our learning opportunities for adults also form an important part of our work, taking account of new initiatives for learning Gaelic, including community classes across the Islands. These are tailored for all levels of learner, and are delivered in partnership with our local university, the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

The Comhairle recognises that Gaelic faces formidable challenges, even in its own heartland, and our aim is to respond to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, the National Gaelic Language Plan and national guidance provided by Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig, with whom we continue to have a close and productive relationship. But the aim of all the Comhairle's policies and plans is to support and encourage Gaelic as part of the very fabric of community life in the

Western Isles, and it is perhaps that specific area, of targeted community support for the language, which will be our policy focus throughout the duration of this Plan.

The Comhairle, recognising that its own financial resources have reduced in recent years, and are likely to continue to reduce, will seek to deliver the Plan in active and open partnership with statutory and community partners and, critically, with communities themselves.

I commend this, our fourth Gaelic Language Plan, to the Comhairle, to Government and to the communities of the Western Isles.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Malcolm Burr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Malcolm Burr

Chief Executive,
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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1. INTRODUCTION

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar¹ is the local authority for the Western Isles. It is the largest employer in the Isles and has its main office in the largest population settlement in the Isles, the town of Stornoway in the Isle of Lewis. The Comhairle employs some 2,200 people throughout the Isles, from Lewis to Barra, and delivers a wide range of daily services to the communities of the Isles. The Comhairle has four Departments: Chief Executive's; Education, Skills and Children's Services; Communities; Assets, Finance and Resources; and the Health and Social Care Partnership.

According to the most recent figures from the Office for National Statistics, 26,830 people live in the Western Isles², and 61.2% of the population, aged 3 and over, have Gaelic skills. There are 11 electoral wards across the Isles, and 29 Members are elected to the Comhairle, many of whom in every Comhairle term have Gaelic skills. The Comhairle therefore not only recognises that Gaelic is an inalienable part of the lives, identity and heritage of the inhabitants of the Western Isles, but as an official language of Scotland, Gaelic is also an integral part of the country's heritage, national identity and cultural life.

The Comhairle therefore supports the objectives set out in the National Gaelic Language Plan, which aims to arrest the decline, and to plan for the growth, in the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland. The Comhairle has accordingly put in place the necessary structures and initiatives in this Plan, which aim to ensure that Gaelic has a sustainable future as an economic, social and cultural asset for the Western Isles.

GAELIC IN COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Services

The Comhairle's Gaelic Policy, Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and Gaelic Language Plan promote and support the use, learning and promotion of Gaelic in the Western Isles. As the Gaelic Policy and Corporate Strategy state, respectively:

The Western Isles should be a fundamentally bilingual community, in which Gaelic and English have equal validity as languages of communication.

The Comhairle, in partnership, is committed to creating a sustainable future for Gaelic language and culture in the Outer Hebrides and to ensuring that the Outer Hebrides are recognised and continue to be supported by national organisations for their contribution in support of Gaelic, linguistically and economically.

¹ Referred to as "the Comhairle" throughout.

² "Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2019". (Office for National Statistics).

Furthermore, in November 2022, a new “Gaelic First” Policy was approved by the Comhairle, which makes a clear commitment to promoting a Gaelic First ethos in all areas of Comhairle operations, and promoting the social, cultural, economic and educational value of Gaelic to the Isles. In order to implement this Policy, it is intended that the Comhairle will lead by example and increase the number of staff who use Gaelic on an inclusive and everyday basis. As the Policy states:

It is the Comhairle’s duty to lead by example by focusing on encouraging the use of Gaelic in both formal and community settings. This means increasing the use of Gaelic in all areas of Comhairle operation, especially in the Comhairle Chamber, and ensuring that front-line services are available bilingually.

Many of the community services that the Comhairle delivers, therefore, are through the medium of Gaelic, or support the use of Gaelic, including in education and learning, health and social care, and economic development. There is also a budget for Gaelic community projects. The Comhairle’s media communications and social media communications are in Gaelic and English, and the Comhairle’s website is bilingual. Anyone contacting the Comhairle in Gaelic will receive a reply in Gaelic, whether on the telephone, or through e-mail or letter, and Gaelic speakers are available in reception areas. (Telephone calls are transferred to Gaelic speakers if necessary). The Comhairle’s e-mail system includes a “G” designation beside the names of all staff who are willing to use Gaelic, and a “*Bruìdhinn rium sa Ghàidhlig*” [“*Speak to me in Gaelic*”] logo in e-mail signatures is being increasingly used, thus helping to prevent a default to English usage by staff.

Signage on and in Comhairle buildings, street signage, and many road signs are bilingual, and placename signage for villages in the Isles is in Gaelic only. There is bilingual content in all Comhairle publications and exhibitions, and information relating to all elections in the Isles is bilingual. Democratic services within the Comhairle itself are delivered bilingually, where all agendas and minutes, and some reports, are in bilingual format, and there is a right to use Gaelic in all committees. Simultaneous interpretation services are always available for non-Gaelic speakers. Wherever capacity allows, simultaneous interpretation is also provided by Officers for public meetings.

Many elected Members are Gaelic speakers, use the language in debates in the Comhairle Chamber, and make themselves available for interviews in the Gaelic media. A Gaelic Committee, “Comataidh na Gàidhlig”, therefore meets every Committee series, which discusses Gaelic development within the Comhairle itself and in the communities of the Western Isles, and a team of Gaelic officers, “Sgioba na Gàidhlig”, ensures that the Comhairle’s Gaelic Plan and Gaelic Policy are implemented in the organisation on a day-to-day basis. The Sgioba and Gaelic Communications Officer also ensure that the quality of Gaelic language in all corporate information and communications is high.

Education and Learning

There are 21 pre-school sgoiltean-àraich (nurseries) offering Gaelic medium education (GME), in addition to 15 cròileagan (playgroup) partner providers, and Pàrant is Pàiste (Parent and Toddler) groups have been established across the Isles for parents and 0-3 aged children. A Family Learning service also offers bespoke Gaelic lessons to parents online which supports

children in GME. GME is also offered in 18 out of 20 primary schools in the Western Isles. An established majority of children is now enrolling in GME in P1, with 54% of all children enrolling in P1 in 2022/23 being enrolled in GME. This has been enabled largely by the Comhairle's Gaelic Enrolment Strategy, and the decision taken in December 2019 to establish a "Gaelic First" policy for nursery to P2 enrolments in the Western Isles, starting from 2020/21. This entails that GME is deemed the default choice for parents enrolling their children, unless specifically requested otherwise. In addition, in February 2023, the "Strategy for Gaelic Education in the Western Isles" was approved. It is intended that this strategy will provide school leaders and staff with guidance, support, and best practice to ensure the best quality teaching and equity in the delivery of GME from 0-18 in the Western Isles. Schools and Early Years settings will therefore be able to plan collaboratively with partner agencies and communities to ensure progression in learning across all curriculum areas, particularly at transitional stages: from home into Early Years; from Early Years to P1; between P7 and S1, and from the Broad General Education (BGE) into the Senior Phase.

There are four secondary schools in the Isles, which, in conjunction with online delivery available through e-Sgoil, deliver Gàidhlig (Fluent Speakers) and Gaelic (Learners) in S1 and S2, and offer Gaelic (Learners) and a range of Gaelic medium subjects for S3 and the Senior Phase, including: Gàidhlig (Fluent Speakers); Geography; History; Modern Studies; Religious and Moral Education; Music; Art; and Spanish. Programmes of Gaelic medium curriculum-enhancing sessions for P1 to Senior Phase pupils are also delivered by e-Sgoil, and Gaelic medium Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) are available in Creative and Digital Media, Social Services and Healthcare, and Children and Young People. The Comhairle also extensively promotes and supports Gaelic medium arts activity in the Isles, with much centred on youth-based participation, and extracurricular activities across the Isles in Gaelic for primary and secondary pupils are delivered in conjunction with Comunn na Gàidhlig and other organisations.

A new Gaelic policy for the Education, Skills and Children's Services Department places an emphasis on creating a stronger Gaelic ethos in schools. A stronger Gaelic ethos assists pupils in learning Gaelic, helps to build their fluency in Gaelic, and provides them with real-life opportunities to use the language outside of the classroom itself. It also encourages those with no Gaelic skills to learn the language and take part in Gaelic cultural activities. Promoted members of staff are encouraged therefore to lead by example and speak to pupils, with Gaelic skills, at all times in Gaelic, whether in formal or informal settings within the school itself, or in extracurricular contexts.

There are a range of Gaelic learning classes for adult learners across the Isles. These are delivered by e-Sgoil and the Comhairle's Learning Shop, in co-operation with UHI North, West and Hebrides, whether face-to-face or online, catering for complete learners, those wishing to improve their spoken or written skills, or those who wish conversation practice. Many Comhairle staff attend Gaelic classes, and the Comhairle's Modern Apprentices, as a condition of their employment, must attend appropriate Gaelic classes.

GAELIC IN SCOTLAND

Scotland's Census in 2011 revealed that 87,056 people aged 3 and over in Scotland, representing 1.7% of the national population, had Gaelic language skills. Of these 87,056 people:

- 37.2% had full skills in Gaelic, i.e. they could understand, speak, read and write Gaelic;
- 66.2% could speak Gaelic;
- 7.0% were able to read and/or write but not speak Gaelic, and;
- 26.8% were able to understand Gaelic, but could not speak, read or write it.

Highland, with 16,596 people, the Western Isles, (referred to as "Eilean Siar" in the Census report), with 16,489, and Glasgow City with 9,469, were the three council areas with the largest numbers of people with some kind of Gaelic language ability. (See **Figure 1**). Indeed, these three council areas comprised 48.9% of all those with some Gaelic language skills nationally.

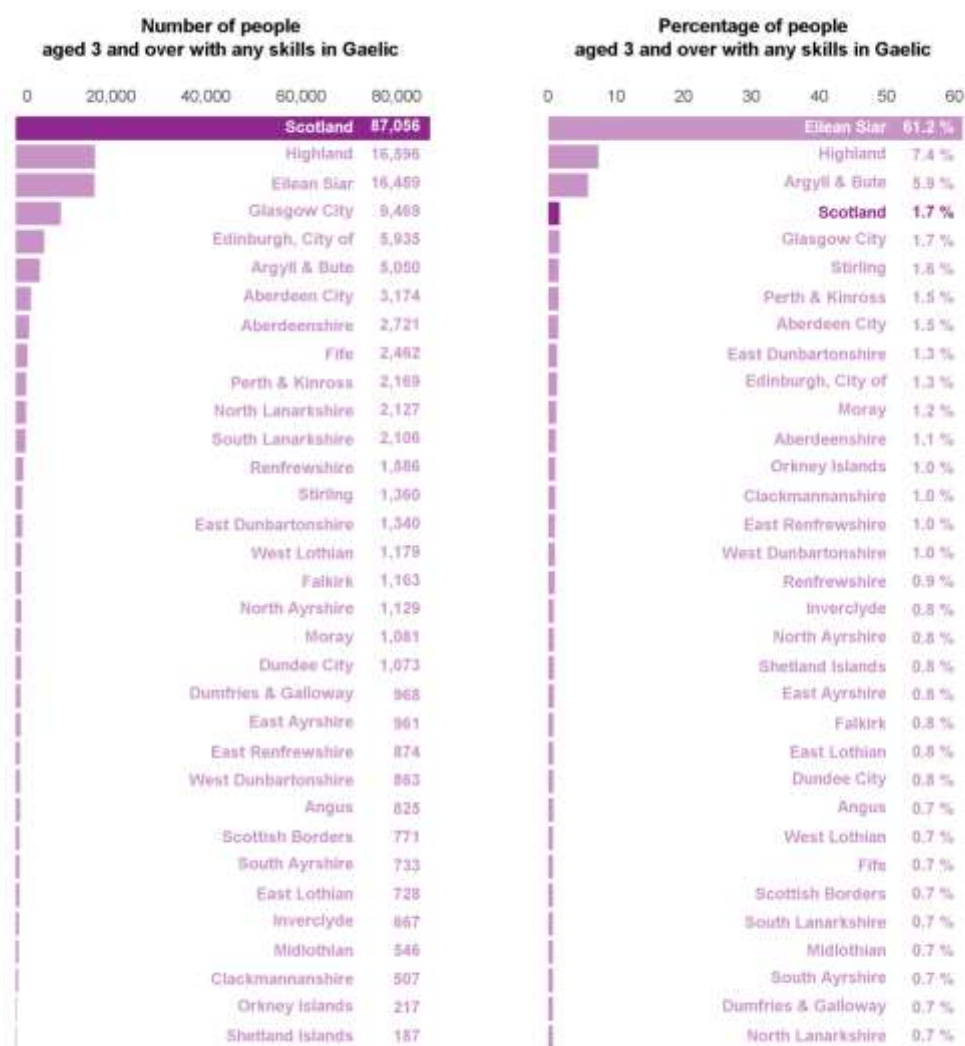
The percentage of people aged 3 and over with some Gaelic language skills was highest in the Western Isles, with 61.2% of the total population. Highland with 7.4%, and Argyll & Bute with 5.9%, contained the second and third highest percentages of those with Gaelic skills. The City of Edinburgh and the City of Glasgow had 1.3% and 1.7%, respectively. (See **Figure 1**).

The Western Isles with 52.3% of the population, had the highest proportion of those who could speak Gaelic. Highland with 5.4%, and Argyll and Bute with 4.0%, had the second and third highest concentrations, respectively.

Nationally, 0.49% of the Scottish population, aged 3 and over, reported using Gaelic at home. 40.2% of all Gaelic speakers reported using Gaelic at home. The Western Isles with 73.7%, Highland with 41.5%, and Argyll and Bute with 33.4%, were the three council areas where Gaelic speakers most commonly spoke Gaelic at home.

41.4% of all Gaelic-speaking children, aged 5 to 11, lived in households where all adults had some Gaelic language skills, 22.5% lived in households where some, (but not all), adults had some Gaelic language skills, and 36.1% lived in households where no adults had any Gaelic language skills.

Figure 1: Number of people in Scotland with Gaelic skills, and percentages by region³



THE GAELIC LANGUAGE (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was passed by the Scottish Parliament with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect to the English language.

One of the key features of the 2005 Act is the provision enabling Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to prepare a Gaelic language plan. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising the status and profile of the language and creating practical opportunities for its use.

This document is Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan, prepared within the framework of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. It sets out how the Comhairle will use

³ From *Scotland's Census 2011: Gaelic report (part 1)*, 30 September 2015.

Gaelic in the operation of its functions, how it will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how it will promote and develop Gaelic.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the Act and having regard to the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans.

THE NATIONAL GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar fully supports the two main aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028, namely to:

- *Increase the use of Gaelic*
- *Increase the learning of Gaelic*

The Comhairle is therefore committed to developing the use and learning of Gaelic in the Isles, which will assist in the implementation of the two main aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan.

INTERNAL GAELIC CAPACITY AUDIT

In preparing the Comhairle's new Gaelic Language Plan for 2023-2028, the Comhairle carried out an anonymous, online survey during Summer 2022 of the Gaelic skills of all Comhairle staff and Members. The survey asked 13 questions relating to Gaelic skills, usage and learning amongst staff and Members, with an opportunity at the end of the survey for further comment.

It was intended that this survey would assist both in determining the scope of aims and actions in the new Gaelic Plan, and in identifying any gaps or difficulties in accessing learning provision for staff or Members who wished to learn Gaelic skills. In total, 308 staff and Members completed the survey, with a healthy representation of responses from each Department and Members.

The main findings were as follows:

- 55.1% of staff and Members indicated that they have conversational ability in Gaelic, and 30.6% use Gaelic on a majority of workdays.
- 42.75% of staff and Members wish to learn or improve Gaelic skills. An almost identical figure of 42.7% would like to use Gaelic more often in the workplace. This suggests that if more staff and Members accessed Gaelic learning opportunities it could lead to a corresponding increase in Gaelic usage in the workplace. Work must therefore continue to develop the range of Gaelic learning classes that are available for staff and Members.

- Many staff indicated that they had latent or rusty Gaelic skills, or just lacked confidence. In order to unlock this potential, they must be encouraged to take up Gaelic learning opportunities.
- Lack of time, and increased pressures on management at the time of reduction in employee numbers and the post-Covid environment emerged as barriers to Gaelic learning amongst some staff and Members. This stresses the need to provide as wide a range of Gaelic learning options as possible, to offer maximum flexibility for staff and Members.

Up-to-date data on the Gaelic skills and needs of staff and Members will be maintained during the lifetime of this Plan.

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar prepared a draft of its Gaelic Language Plan for 2023-2028, in terms of Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which was approved by its Comataidh na Gàidhlig on 27 September 2022. The draft Plan then went out to a period of six weeks public consultation, beginning on 30 September, and concluding on 11 November 2022. As a result of this consultation process, a number of amendments were suggested, which were included in the draft Plan.

A number of individuals and organisations took part in the consultation process. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they welcomed the draft Plan, and that it would help to ensure that Gaelic had a sustainable future in the Western Isles.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

EQUAL RESPECT

Under the terms of the 2005 Act, Bòrd na Gàidhlig works with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect to the English language, and the Bòrd in turn expects that public authorities will demonstrate in their plans how the principle will be achieved and maintained in practice.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will therefore ensure that where Gaelic is included as part of our operations and services, that they are of an equal standard and quality to those that we provide in English.

ACTIVE OFFER

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will continue to make an active offer of our Gaelic services to our employees and the public. This will ensure that where Gaelic services are made available by the Comhairle, Gaelic users are made aware of their existence, and are actively encouraged to use them.

This will take the responsibility away from the individual to ask for the service and will give Gaelic users the confidence to know that their needs will be met if that is their choice.

We will ensure that our Gaelic language services are as accessible as our English language services.

NORMALISING OF GAELIC USAGE

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will ensure that opportunities for the public and our staff to use Gaelic are normalised, in support of the National Gaelic Language Plan’s aims.

This Plan is the fourth iteration of the Comhairle’s Gaelic Language Plan, the Comhairle having undertaken detailed reviews of the outcomes and progress of the 2019-2022 Plan. Accordingly, the actions included in this Plan are considered to be of primary importance in terms of increasing the use and learning of Gaelic in the Western Isles.

All commitments in previous iterations of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Gaelic Language Plan which have already been fulfilled, and continue to be implemented successfully, are carried forward.

3. PLAN COMMITMENTS

HIGH LEVEL AIMS

In preparation for the issuing of the statutory notice to prepare a new Gaelic language plan, Bòrd na Gàidhlig held discussions at a senior level with the Comhairle. These discussions focussed on how the functions of the Comhairle would progress the aims of the current National Gaelic Language Plan.

The agreed outcomes from these discussions, in the form of “High Level Aims”, create a set of strategic priorities to be incorporated in this Plan, and will link to the priorities of the National Plan.

Strategic Priority	Increase the use of Gaelic in Comhairle services, so that Gaelic is increasingly normalised within all Comhairle services.
Desired Outcome	Increased use of Gaelic in Comhairle services
Current Practice	The Comhairle already delivers a wide range of services through the medium of Gaelic in terms of the first three iterations of its Gaelic Language Plan and its Gaelic Policy.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Head of HR, Heads of Service, Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate a Comhairle-wide staff survey about Gaelic usage in Comhairle services. This will provide an overview of existing capacity to fulfil the Comhairle’s commitments in terms of

	<p>Gaelic service delivery. This will assist in identifying any gaps in provision and ascertaining what support or development needs are required.</p> <p>Target Date: November 2023</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Gaelic essential and desirable criteria to make it feasible for staff to acquire Gaelic skills in a structured and supported manner. Sgioba na Gàidhlig to work with HR on this. <p>Target Date: December 2023</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take forward, with regard to the linguistic capacity of staff, the Comhairle's commitments in terms of service delivery, and ensure that Gaelic use is as normalised as possible across the full range of Comhairle services. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of Gaelic desirable and essential posts during the lifetime of the Plan. <p>Target Date: Increasing every year until 2028</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a holistic approach to immersive Gaelic education by actively recruiting Gaelic speaking staff to all support services: speech and language therapy, health visiting services, psychological services, sport & health, etc. <p>Target Date: Increasing every year until 2028</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all partner agencies strive to have capacity to deliver services to educational establishments bilingually. <p>Target Date: Monitored annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comataidh na Gàidhlig to scrutinise progress annually. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

Strategic Priority	Ensure all developments taken forward by the Comhairle embed Gaelic from inception.
Desired Outcome	Gaelic, whenever possible, is embedded in Comhairle developments
Current Practice	Gaelic is promoted in a range of Comhairle developments, projects and initiatives.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service, Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that when Comhairle developments, projects or initiatives are being scoped, account is taken of the potential impact on Gaelic, and of the potential to promote the language. A Gaelic seminar will therefore be organised by Sgioba na Gàidhlig involving all Departmental Managers to clarify the aims and objectives of the Gaelic First Policy, and to establish roles and responsibilities. <p>Target Date: January 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly review policy statements and commitments in order to identify areas where Gaelic could be proactively incorporated. <p>Target Date: Throughout the duration of the Plan</p>

Strategic Priority	Continue to examine the merits of Gaelic standalone schools in the Western Isles in line with Government policy and the National Gaelic Language Plan.
Desired Outcome	Conclusion as to the best way forward for Gaelic in Western Isles schools, following appraisal of independent evidence concerning good practice in GME and of the impact of dual language model schools on immersion.
Current Practice	Gaelic medium units are in 18 out of 20 Primary schools in the Isles, and in addition to Gaelic as a subject, up to 8 subjects are delivered through the medium of Gaelic in some Secondary schools. In addition, e-Sgoil offers curriculum-enhancing Gaelic medium classes.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulate a questionnaire to parents to ascertain support for: standalone Gaelic schools; the Comhairle’s current approach to Gaelic education; or any other alternatives to promote and secure the future of Gaelic in schools. Target Date: January 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With reference to the results of the parental survey, discuss at Member Officer Working Group level the merits of: standalone Gaelic schools; the Comhairle’s current approach to Gaelic education; and any other alternatives to promote and secure the future of Gaelic in schools. Target Date: Early 2024

Strategic Priority	Extend the GM secondary curriculum offer equitably across all schools in line with national developments linked to the OECD review.
Desired Outcome	An expanded range of GM classes
Current Practice	In addition to Gaelic as a subject, 8 subjects are delivered through the medium of Gaelic in Secondary schools: Gàidhlig (Fluent Speakers); Geography; History; Modern Studies; Religious and Moral Education; Music; Art; and Spanish. e-Sgoil also offers programmes of curriculum-enhancing Gaelic medium classes delivered online. Particular emphasis is required in delivering GM courses that reflect the needs of the local economy, and which will encourage young people who wish to live in the islands to use ‘everyday’ Gaelic in both work and social settings ⁴ .

⁴ “Everyday” language here refers to conversational language use that naturally occurs in everyday life. See: Luo M., Robbins M.L., Martin M. and Demiray B. (2019) “Real-Life Language Use Across Different Interlocutors: A Naturalistic Observation Study of Adults Varying in Age”, *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (25 June, 2019), pp.1-15, and; Illés E., Akcan S. (2017) “Bringing Real-life Language Use into EFL Classrooms”, *ELT Journal, Volume 71, Issue 1*, (January 2017), pp.3–12.

Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Heads of Schools, Headteachers and Head of e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand GM provision in accordance with available teaching capacity. Use inter-school or e-Sgoil digital delivery when necessary, in order to build resilience and ensure more equitable provision of specialist input. Target Date: Throughout the duration of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refocus the curriculum on courses and programmes more closely aligned to Gaelic essential jobs and local labour market intelligence (LLMI). Liaise therefore with schools, local employers and UHI to ensure that there is a common understanding with regard to the need to link language and local economic opportunity in the curriculum. Target Date: Work to start November 2023

Strategic Priority	Increase the normalisation of Gaelic within projects and initiatives which are funded or otherwise supported by the Comhairle.
Desired Outcome	Increased use of Gaelic in projects and initiatives funded by the Comhairle
Current Practice	The Comhairle strongly promotes Gaelic in projects that it funds, and there is a specific fund for community projects that develop the use or learning of Gaelic.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, and Heads of Service, Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Comhairle funding for Gaelic community projects which involve the meaningful use, learning or promotion of the language. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that promotion of Gaelic in organisations in receipt of Comhairle funding is a pre-condition of funding. Sgioba na Gàidhlig will actively monitor the use or promotion of Gaelic in these organisations and re-direct funding if necessary. Target Date: Monitored throughout the duration of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with contractors who provide services for the Comhairle to engage with, and increase, the use of Gaelic within their services. Target Date: Throughout the duration of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require third party contractors to give appropriate consideration to the use and promotion of Gaelic when the Comhairle is tendering work. Target Date: Throughout the duration of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure best value and maximise impact by making sure that the Comhairle and other organisations have common goals and strategies, and that duplication and waste is avoided. Target Date: Annually

3.1 CORPORATE SERVICE AIMS

STATUS

Desired Outcome	Bilingual Signage Signage will always include Gaelic and English as part of any renewal process.
Current Practice	Bilingual signage is on, and in, all Comhairle buildings. It is erected on a replacement basis.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain policy of erecting new bilingual signage on a replacement basis, ensuring that Gaelic and English lettering are of equal size. Complete inventory of current signage to ensure compliance with policy. Target Date: 2024 Increase use of bilingual signage for temporary usage, e.g. 'Meeting in Progress', etc. Target Date: 2024 Replace signs proactively should funding be made available and prepare a prioritised schedule of replacement. Target Date: Within the lifetime of the Plan

INFORMATION

Desired Outcome	Reception and Telephone Where Gaelic speaking staff can provide these services in Gaelic to the public, they are supported to do so, and the service is promoted to the public. If there are not staff available to deliver this, capacity will be built through training and recruitment.
Current Practice	Reception staff in Comhairle buildings are usually available to deal with enquiries in Gaelic in person or on the telephone.
Responsibility	Director for Assets, Finance and Resources, Head of HR, and Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that staff are rostered in such a way that there is always a Gaelic speaker in reception areas. Target Date: Annually Revise Gaelic essential and desirable criteria to make it feasible for public-facing staff to acquire Gaelic skills in a structured and supported manner. Target Date: December 2023 Sgioba na Gàidhlig to provide awareness raising sessions and training where required for staff across the Comhairle to

	<p>answer telephones with a Gaelic greeting, e.g. “Madainn mhath”.</p> <p>Target Date: 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update our list of staff from each Department to whom a telephone call in Gaelic can be transferred. <p>Target Date: Early 2024</p>

Desired Outcome	Written Communication Written communication in Gaelic with the Comhairle is always accepted, and replies will be provided in Gaelic in accordance with the general policy.
Current Practice	The policy of the Comhairle is to reply in Gaelic to any written Gaelic communication made to the Comhairle.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and circulate guidance on best practice for staff, emphasising the need to provide responses in Gaelic, to Gaelic letters or e-mails. Sgioba na Gàidhlig will provide support. <p>Target Date: 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that a Gaelic response to any letter or e-mail written to the Comhairle in Gaelic will have the same response time as a letter or e-mail in English. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate written correspondence in Gaelic with any individual or organisation known to use Gaelic. Sgioba na Gàidhlig will assist. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop consistent usage across the Comhairle for bilingual e-mail signatures, contact details and out-of-office messages. <p>Target Date: 2024</p>

Desired Outcome	News Releases and Social Media High profile news releases or social media communications by the Comhairle are released bilingually, and all news releases or social media communications related to Gaelic are circulated in Gaelic only.
Current Practice	Most important press releases and social media communications are circulated bilingually, and all that are related to Gaelic are circulated in Gaelic.
Responsibility	Gaelic Communications Officer
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all important press releases and social media communications are circulated in both Gaelic and English. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint a dedicated Gaelic medium Communications Assistant. <p>Target Date: Autumn 2023</p>
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Desired Outcome	<p>Website Gaelic content on the Comhairle website is increased, with a focus on pages with the highest reach.</p>
Current Practice	There is a lot of Gaelic content already on the Comhairle website, and a Gaelic tab on the homepage provides two levels of navigation for Gaelic on many pages.
Responsibility	Head of I.T. and Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase bilingual content throughout the website particularly with regard to pages with most visits by users. Target Date: Work to start early 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update translated content on website pages by informing Sgioba na Gàidhlig as soon as possible. Target Date: Annually

STAFF AND MEMBERS

Desired Outcome	<p>Induction Knowledge of the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan and Gaelic training opportunities are embedded in new staff inductions.</p>
Current Practice	New staff are made aware of Gaelic learning opportunities and actively encouraged to take advantage of such.
Responsibility	Head of HR and Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare information packs for new staff and Members about Gaelic learning opportunities, the cognitive benefits of GME for children, and the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan. Target Date: Early 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise Gaelic awareness training sessions for new staff and Members. Target Date: To begin in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build in specific questions related to progress with regard to Gaelic language acquisition into interviews and annual review processes. Target Date: December 2023

Desired Outcome	<p>Gaelic Skills Training Gaelic language skills training and development, delivered to Comhairle staff and Members, particularly in relation to implementing the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan.</p>
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Current Practice	There are a range of Gaelic learning options at different levels for Comhairle staff and Members, from beginner to fluent speaker, including: a range of <i>SpeakGaelic</i> classes; <i>Ùlpan</i> classes; various conversation classes at different levels; the <i>Cothrom Cabadaich</i> online conversation circle; <i>Gaelic for Fluent Speakers</i> grammar classes; <i>Gaelic for Work Purposes</i> classes; UHI Gaelic courses and modules; and Nat5 and Higher Gaelic classes. These are delivered face-to-face and online by e-Sgoil and the Comhairle’s Learning Shop, in co-operation with UHI North, West and Hebrides.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service, with e-Sgoil and the Comhairle’s Learning Shop in co-operation with UHI North, West and Hebrides
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop and advertise regularly a tailored suite of Gaelic learning options, appropriate to individuals’ needs, whether for beginners or those wishing to improve their skills, delivered face-to-face or online, or at different times of the day. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt an increasingly flexible and creative approach to facilitation of learning for staff and monitor take-up rate of classes. Target Date: Beginning in November 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer new, accredited “Turas” and “Tog” classes, free-of-charge, to improve the fluency and confidence in Gaelic of all Comhairle Education staff who wish to improve their ability to teach in GME. Target Date: From September 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly encourage Section Heads and Line Managers to release staff to take up Gaelic learning opportunities in terms of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). The role of senior staff is key in this regard. A Gaelic seminar will therefore be organised by Sgioba na Gàidhlig involving all Departmental Managers to clarify the aims and objectives of the Gaelic First Policy, and to establish roles and responsibilities. Target Date: Early 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate, if necessary, with other public sector bodies to generate sustainable cohorts of learners. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly monitor numbers accessing Gaelic learning across all Departments, and drop-out rates, in order to improve provision and deal with any difficulties arising from access to provision. Develop a digest with key staff language learning targets. Target Date: Monitoring to begin November 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that staff and Members have regular opportunities to provide feedback on courses in order to assist in developing the best possible learning resources. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure funding remains in place so that staff and Members need not pay for Gaelic classes. <p>Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise Gaelic media training sessions for Members. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a Gaelic assistance page/online toolkit for staff, including soundfiles, Gaelic phrases and workplace terminology, and include it in the Employee Pages on the intranet. <p>Target Date: 2025</p>

Desired Outcome	Using Gaelic Comhairle staff and Members with Gaelic skills are encouraged to use Gaelic more often.
Current Practice	The results of Gaelic audits show that there is a high degree of Gaelic usage amongst Members and staff across the Comhairle in both formal and informal settings.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Heads of Service and Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Section Heads and Line Managers with Gaelic skills to lead by example in using Gaelic whenever possible. A Gaelic seminar will therefore be organised by Sgioba na Gàidhlig involving all Departmental Managers to clarify the aims and objectives of the Gaelic First Policy, and to establish roles and responsibilities. <p>Target Date: January 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage Committee Chairpersons with Gaelic skills to lead by example in using Gaelic, and at the start of meetings remind all those present of their right to use Gaelic. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce and circulate guidance on best practice for staff on the importance of Gaelic usage in terms of the Comhairle's Gaelic Policy, Corporate Strategy and Language Plan, and to assist in creating a stronger Gaelic ethos in the Comhairle. <p>Target Date: 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate a Comhairle-wide all-staff survey in order to find out where and when staff with Gaelic skills use Gaelic most and least, and whether there are any factors which prevent them from doing so. <p>Target Date: November 2023</p>

Desired Outcome	Gaelic Awareness Gaelic awareness training sessions are delivered for Comhairle staff and Members, with priority given to senior staff and staff who deal directly with the public.
Current Practice	Staff and Members understand the importance of Gaelic to the Comhairle and the communities of the Isles and are kept informed of Gaelic learning opportunities and developments.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Sgioba na Gàidhlig and Gaelic Communications Officer
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise Gaelic awareness sessions for new staff and Members, and for senior staff and staff who deal directly with the public. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase provision to staff and Members of information relating to Gaelic news, developments and learning opportunities. The new Gaelic medium Communications assistant will lead on this. Target Date: Autumn 2023

Desired Outcome	Recruitment Gaelic is named as an essential and/or desirable skill in an ever-increasing number of job descriptions in order to increase the ability of the Comhairle to deliver Gaelic services more effectively. This will also demonstrate a genuine and clear commitment to employing a bilingual workforce.
Current Practice	There are a significant number of Gaelic essential and desirable posts in the Comhairle.
Responsibility	Head of HR and Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the range of Gaelic essential and desirable posts in the Comhairle, particularly in areas where there is a shortage of Gaelic provision, such as in Gaelic childcare and additional support needs (ASN) services. Target Date: Increasing every year until 2028
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants for Gaelic essential posts must demonstrate the level of proficiency in Gaelic⁵ that is required for each post. Proficiency in these skills will be assessed at interview, and support will be provided for successful applicants who wish to develop their Gaelic skills further. Sgioba na Gàidhlig to assist. Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan

⁵ The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels of language proficiency will be used to assess the Gaelic competency of applicants.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss the merits of requiring all new staff to learn or improve Gaelic skills as part of ongoing CPD in order to assist in the delivery of the Comhairle’s Gaelic First Policy. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertise Gaelic-essential posts in Gaelic only and Gaelic desirable posts in bilingual format. Sgioba na Gàidhlig will provide translations. Target Date: Annually

3.2 HOME, 0-3 AND EARLY YEARS

ENROLMENT AND SUPPORTING PARENTS

Desired Outcome	Increase in the number of children enrolling in GM nurseries to 70% by the end of this Plan (0-3 and Early Years)
Current Practice	Working towards increasing GM enrolments again following the Covid-19 pandemic
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Early Years Service, Gaelic Education Manager, Gaelic Early Years Co-ordinator
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement and publicise the benefits of the Comhairle’s Gaelic First policy for nursery to P2 enrolments, where GME is deemed the default choice for parents and carers enrolling their children, unless specifically stated otherwise. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with parents and prospective parents to promote the benefits of bilingualism and GME. Target Date: Increasing engagement from 2023 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with other organisations, such as the NHS, in promoting GME to parents and prospective parents. Target Date: Increasing engagement from 2023 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively support the re-establishment of Pàrant is Pàiste (Parent and Toddler) groups across the Western Isles. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Gaelic medium childcare and pre-school education readily available in every school catchment area. Address any difficulties that arise in provision immediately. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track children’s progress in order to ensure that any individual problems are addressed as effectively and quickly as possible. Hold appointments with parents and carers to discuss progress. Target Date: Annually

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure through succession planning and a workplace development programme, that there are enough staff to meet the 70% target. <p>Target Date: 2028</p>
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Desired Outcome	Increased engagement with parents and prospective parents regarding the benefits of bilingualism (0-3 and Early Years)
Current Practice	Much work is being done by the Gaelic Education Manager and Gaelic Early Years Co-ordinator to engage with parents and prospective parents in terms of the benefits of GME.
Responsibility	Gaelic Education Manager, Gaelic Early Years Co-ordinator, Multimedia Unit
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit materials promoting bilingualism and GME currently available. <p>Target Date: 2025</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure more GM materials are widely available and that relevant agencies, e.g. health visitors, midwives and Early Years workers, actively promote them. <p>Target Date: 2023 onwards</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with parents, carers and prospective parents to promote the benefits of bilingualism e.g. continue to work towards re-establishing Pàrant is Pàiste groups across the Isles. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer webinars and other inputs for targeted audiences with regards to the benefits of GME. <p>Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan</p>

Desired Outcome	Provision of more opportunities for parents to learn Gaelic along with their children (0-3 and Early Years)
Current Practice	A variety of Gaelic learning opportunities are available for parents, carers and their children.
Responsibility	Gaelic Education Manager, Gaelic Early Years Co-ordinator, Multimedia Unit
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that a variety of Gaelic learning options are available to parents and carers considering GME for their children at the earliest possible stage, in order to provide support for their children's learning. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a visual exemplar of learning pathways for parents and carers. <p>Target Date: Early 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit current learning and teaching materials and identify any gaps in provision. <p>Target Date: 2025</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a range of activities which give children and parents the chance to use Gaelic with each other in a supportive setting, in face-to-face events and in online sessions, e.g. Gaelic Bookbug sessions, <i>Leugh & Seinn le Linda</i>, Dug's Discovery Den sessions, <i>Tachartasan Teaghlach</i>, and <i>Thig a Chluich</i> sessions. In addition, organise such sessions and events during school holidays. Target Date: Develop more activities during the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to organise and develop online Gaelic Family Learning sessions, which include family reading, drop-in sessions for homework support, additional conversation opportunities, and bespoke lessons for parents and carers to help build their confidence in Gaelic. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop resources for Gaelic learning, e.g. the ongoing work to create a bespoke app for the 0-3 age group and their parents/carers, which includes BookBug sessions, songs by Fèisean nan Gàidheal and video content specifically targeted at the terminology used at Early Years level. Target Date: Develop more resources during the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that every parent or carer of a child in GME has access to a Gaelic learners programme and community learning support network, and promote the <i>Gaelic4parents</i> website, which provides resources and support for parents. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop effective partnership working with Comunn nam Pàrant officers, and ensure in co-operation with Comunn na Gàidhlig officers, that Gaelic usage is supported as effectively as possible within the community setting. Target Date: Annually

CURRICULUM

Desired Outcome	Delivery of a fully Gaelic curriculum, and enhancement of the range of subjects and experiences available to support pupils and parents with Gaelic language acquisition (0-3 and Early Years)
Current Practice	The curriculum is entirely GM, and other opportunities for learning are being developed regularly. The Comhairle's new "Strategy for Gaelic Education in the Western Isles" will ensure staff have the appropriate guidance, support, and best practice to ensure the best quality teaching and equity in the delivery of GME from 0-18 in the Western Isles.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services, Gaelic Education Manager, e-Sgoil

Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the delivery of the Early Years GME curriculum is entirely through Gaelic, in line with national advice in Curriculum for Excellence guidance. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement and monitor roll-out of the “Strategy for Gaelic in the Western Isles”. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gaelic early learning and childcare (ELC) must continue to be led by Gaelic speaking ELC practitioners who hold the relevant childcare qualifications and are able to deliver total Gaelic immersion, through play, songs, stories, activities and games. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that if English medium education (EME) and Early Years GME children meet in the same premises, (in terms of the Scottish Government’s provision of 1,140 hours of free early learning and childcare), this does not compromise total immersion within the GME setting. This will be achieved by reinforcing to educational practitioners the importance of Early Years immersion. Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with other agencies to ensure a variety of options in terms of GME for their children are available to parents at the earliest possible stage. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage a move away from translated materials which do not incorporate best practice in linguistics, and instead develop Gaelic-specific resources. Target Date: 2024 onwards

Desired Outcome	Refocussing the Early Level curriculum (Experiences & Outcomes) to ensure that pupils become fluent in listening and talking (Early Years)
Current Practice	The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown necessitated the development of a Gaelic Recovery Curriculum by the Comhairle, recognising the disruption to Gaelic language learning by pupils caused by Covid-19, (in particular, listening and talking), that inevitably occurred as a result.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Headteachers, Gaelic Education Manager
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce advice and guidelines based on examples of good practice and international research. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise promotional material which outlines the rationale and benefits of this approach for teachers, parents and carers. Target Date: 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a range of inputs into nursery and outwith the school day which gives children the chance to use Gaelic, e.g. <i>Leugh agus Seinn le Linda</i>. <p>Target Date: Increase inputs during the lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange CLPL opportunities for staff. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

STAFF AND TRAINING

Desired Outcome	Increase in staff delivering 0-3 and Early Years teaching and services (0-3 and Early Years)
Current Practice	The Comhairle delivers excellent 0-3 and Early Years services, but there is a need for more trained staff with Gaelic skills.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Head of HR, Employability Services Manager
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Comhairle recruitment practice to prioritise the Gaelic language, to reflect more accurately the large percentage of children in GME and their needs. Vacant posts to be re-designated as Gaelic essential or desirable. <p>Target Date: Work to begin in 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise a meeting of all interested organisations to discuss a strategic approach to GM recruitment, linked closely to educational, social and economic benefits. <p>Target Date: February 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify employment opportunities where Gaelic language skills would be advantageous. <p>Target Date: Work to begin in 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongly encourage, in terms of CLPL, increased Early Years employee enrolment in Gaelic learning classes and training. Any Early Years relief staff to have access to suitable Gaelic learning opportunities. Promote “Turas” and “Tog” classes to Education staff. <p>Target Date: From September 2023 onwards</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear recruitment pathways for Early Years staff posts and increase opportunities for recruitment of more senior staff. <p>Target Date: 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the Gaelic medium SVQ 3 Social Services (Children and Young People) (SCQF level 7) course, (suitable for individuals who are currently in employment and who wish to obtain a formal qualification), and the Gaelic medium FAs in Social Services (Children and Young People) (SCQF level 6), in order to assist with recruitment to 0-3 and Early Years posts. Increase numbers undertaking FAs. <p>Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit for Gaelic Language Acquisition Practitioner apprenticeships, to assist teaching staff in improving the Gaelic learning experience for GME children, working towards an SVQ Level 3 in Social Services (Children and Young People). Target Date: 2023 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure that all Comhairle apprentices, including childcare apprentices, sign up to the Gaelic learning programme as a condition of their employment. This will enable greater Gaelic-essential recruitment in terms of childcare. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target pupils in the senior phase of GME, under the Developing the Young Work Force (DYW) Programme, to help staff in 0-3 and Early Years settings, while offering career pathways in Gaelic. Target Date: 2023 onwards

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS (ASN)

Desired Outcome	Enhancement of GM ASN provision through the use of technology (Early Years)
Current Practice	There is much scope for the development of ASN support services.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children's Services, Gaelic Education Manager, Gaelic Early Years Co-ordinator
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate across Local Authorities to identify ASN staff capacity. Target Date: 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide staff training in delivering and facilitating ASN provision. Target Date: 2024 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance Gaelic-specific CLPL opportunities for staff through facilitation of specialist inputs. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver sessions for children with ASN as part of Family Learning. Target Date: 2024

3.3 EDUCATION: PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND POST-SCHOOL

ENROLMENT AND SUPPORTING PARENTS

Desired Outcome	Increase in the number of children enrolling in GME schools at P1 to 70% by the end of this Plan (Primary)
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Current Practice	The implementation of the Comhairle’s Gaelic First Policy in recent years has led to a consistent majority of enrolments in GME at P1 across schools in the Isles.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Headteachers, Gaelic Education Manager
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the transition from GM nursery to P1 GME, continue to work closely with parents and carers to promote the benefits of bilingualism and GME. Assisted by implementation of the “Strategy for Gaelic Education in the Western Isles”. Target Date: Work on this to increase from 2023 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Headteachers to endeavour to commit parents to enrol their children in GME, in the transition from GM nursery to P1 GME. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to track children’s progress, in order to ensure that any problems arising are addressed as quickly as possible. Hold appointments with parents and carers to discuss progress. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor GME drop-out rates in primary schools and arrange appointments quickly with parents and carers to discuss the reasons for this. Carry out annual surveys on the reasons why some parents choose to enrol their children in EME rather than GME. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure through succession planning and a workplace development programme, that there are enough staff to meet the 70% target. Target Date: 2028

Desired Outcome	Enhancement of the range of language learning options available to support parents of pupils in GME (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	There are a range of Gaelic learning options for parents and carers, and for family learning.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Senior Education Officers, e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit current learning and teaching materials and identify any gaps in provision. Target Date: 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that there are progression pathways for adult learners that are continuous, coherent and include certification, as appropriate. Create a visual exemplar of learning pathways for parents and carers. Target Date: Early 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise and pilot flexible programmes and resources in conjunction with parent focus groups. e.g. face-to-face classes, online classes, evening classes. <p>Target Date: From 2023 onwards</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with agencies to ensure a variety of Gaelic learning options are available to parents and carers at the earliest possible stage, in order to support their child(ren)'s learning. This would include: a range of <i>SpeakGaelic</i> classes; <i>Ùlpan</i> classes; various conversation classes at different levels; the <i>Cothrom Cabadaich</i> online conversation circle; <i>Gaelic for Fluent Speakers</i> grammar classes; <i>Gaelic for Work Purposes</i> classes; UHI Gaelic courses and modules; and Nat5 and Higher Gaelic classes. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that every parent of a child in GME has access to a Gaelic learners' programme and community learning support network. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate, if necessary, with other public sector bodies to generate sustainable cohorts of learners, or to enhance the learning experience. <p>Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of this Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to organise and develop online Gaelic Family Learning sessions, including family reading, drop-in sessions for homework support, additional conversation opportunities, and bespoke lessons for parents and carers to build their confidence in Gaelic. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote resources such as the <i>Gaelic4parents</i> website, which provides practical support for parents, e.g. Gaelic homework. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

Desired Outcome	Increased support and encouragement for non-GME pupils (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	The Comhairle provides strong support for Gaelic learning in EM settings in terms of the 1+2 Language Learning Approach.
Responsibility	Chief officer for Education & Children's Services, Senior Education Officers, Headteachers
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to increase the number of pupils studying Gaelic as learners through the 1+2 Language Learning Approach, improving transition at key stages, particularly from primary to secondary. <p>Target Date: Increasing every year until 2028</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase support for EM schools that have opted for Gaelic as an L2 or L3 language, as part of the 1+2 Language Learning Approach. Target Date: From 2023 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make full provision for pupils who are not in GM classes to engage in activities related to Gàidhlig, or the Gaelic Learners' curriculum. Confident Gaelic speaking staff should always be deployed in Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) classes where possible. Target Date: Monitored annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to make Gàidhlig and Gaelic (Learners) courses available in S1 and S2 and enable and encourage pupils to continue with Gaelic classes as part of their language entitlement. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot a GM immersion centre for pupils with little or no Gaelic skills who join a GM primary school from another school with no GM provision. Target Date: 2026

CURRICULUM

Desired Outcome	Review of approach to GM curriculum and resource creation (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	Work is ongoing on this. The Comhairle's new "Strategy for Gaelic Education in the Western Isles" will ensure staff have the appropriate guidance, support, and best practice to ensure the best quality teaching and equity in the delivery of GME from 0-18 in the Western Isles.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children's Services, Headteachers, e-Sgoil, Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the range of subjects offered in GM, to include more practical or vocational subjects as well as academic subjects, in order to counteract the drop-off in pupil numbers after S2, e.g. development of a GM eco-tourism course for BGE pupils. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With reference to the results of the Gaelic attitudinal survey of 16-25 year-olds⁶, Sgioba na Gàidhlig will organise a follow-

⁶ In April-June 2023, Sgioba na Gàidhlig surveyed attitudes towards Gaelic amongst 16-25 year-olds in the Isles, which showed that 76.9% would recommend GME to others, but only 40.4% agreed that GM Senior Phase subjects were appropriate to their interests and career aspirations. The survey was launched on 13th April 2023, with the option of completing it in Gaelic or in English. It consisted of 33 questions, which were a mix of dichotomous multiple-choice, multiple-choice and open-ended questions, which gave respondents ample opportunity to express their views on Gaelic. 322 people completed the survey by the time it closed on 30th June 2023, (237 people in English, and 85 in Gaelic), producing a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data in the answers. The average age of respondents was 20.8 years, and 49.5% described themselves as "Fluent Speakers".

	<p>up consultation with Senior Phase pupils in all four secondary schools to ascertain in more detail their views on the curriculum.</p> <p>Target Date: Beginning October 2023</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage a move away from translated materials which do not incorporate best practice in linguistics, and instead, develop new Gaelic-specific resources. <p>Target Date: 2024 onwards</p>

Desired Outcome	Enhancement of the curriculum with a variety of GM opportunities within and outwith the school day to strengthen Gaelic immersion (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	Work on enriching the curriculum is ongoing and has been a significant part of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Headteachers, e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify gaps in GM inserts and collaborate with partners to agree on how the gaps are to be filled. Review and evaluate impact of new inserts. <p>Target Date: 2025</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote opportunities for inter-school collaboration and pupil-led learning. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise programmes of activities including competitions, e.g. <i>Deasbad Beag</i> and <i>Dileab an t-Siorraidh</i> competitions for P4-7 pupils, cultural exchange programmes, summer schools, outdoor learning, etc. <p>Target Date: Develop more activities during the lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop innovative, IT-based approaches to activities which ensure that they are sustainable and cost-effective, e.g. the online <i>Deasbad Beag</i> competition. <p>Target Date: Develop more activities during the lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop curriculum-enhancing programmes that are focussed on improving pupils’ spoken Gaelic skills, e.g. <i>Misneachd</i> sessions for pupils ranging from P1-S6, which were developed by e-Sgoil as a result of Covid-19 lockdown’s negative impact on pupils’ skills and confidence in speaking Gaelic. <p>Target Date: Develop more activities during the lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise the number of secondary pupils having an active involvement in Gaelic culture and creative arts, e.g. participation in national Gaelic competitions such as <i>Deasbad Nàiseanta nan Àrd-sgoiltean</i> and <i>FilmG</i>.

	<p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In co-operation with Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG), employ Gaelic Youth Workers from amongst Community Learning & Development (CLD) staff to co-ordinate Gaelic extracurricular youth activities in 'natural' community settings. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop the Gaelic curriculum offer for Primary and Secondary pupils available through e-Sgoil in order to build resilience and ensure more equitable provision of specialist inputs, regardless of pupils' locations. <p>Target Date: Keep developing offer until 2028</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to develop partnerships with other educative bodies, arts centres and social enterprise agencies, such as UHI North, West and Hebrides, An Lanntair, Ceòlas, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig and CnaG, with a focus on developing the use and teaching of Gaelic for pupils, both in the class and in communities. <p>Target Date: Build on partnerships throughout lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support initiatives which involve Gaelic medium sports activities, such as the Gaelic medium <i>Cuach na Cloinne</i> football competition for school pupils across the Isles. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

Desired Outcome	Facilitating equity of access to SQA qualifications (Secondary Senior Phase)
Current Practice	Gaelic (Learners), Gàidhlig (Fluent Speakers), and GM Geography, History, Modern Studies, Religious and Moral Education, Music, Art and Spanish are available as subjects.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children's Services, e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with SQA to enhance the range of GM subjects available for SQA certification. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review SQA tariff/UCAS points to reflect the status of achieving SQA certification in GM. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise strategies which maximise opportunities for schools to collaborate, with regard to presentation of pupils for qualifications in Gaelic and GM in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. <p>Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan</p>

PREPARING PUPILS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Desired Outcome	Promotion of Gaelic Applied Learning qualifications and enhance the relevance of Gaelic work placements (Secondary Senior Phase)
Current Practice	The Comhairle provides a range of support for pupils in terms of preparation for post-school employment.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Headteachers, e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the range of, and access to, Applied Learning qualifications to ensure that Gaelic is used in practical settings. Target Date: Review in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit current GM work experience placements and provide guidelines for providers and students. Identify gaps, and how to address them. Target Date: 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Gaelic through interactive, work-related learning DYW sessions, to prepare pupils for the transition into the world of work. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Gaelic medium FAs, such as apprenticeships in Creative & Digital Media, and Social Services & Healthcare. Expand this provision as opportunities become available. Increase numbers undertaking FAs. Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Scottish Government’s youth employment strategies, such as <i>Insight</i> and 16+ Activity Agreements to help prepare young people for employment, including Gaelic-related jobs. Target Date: Annually

Gaelic Ethos

Desired Outcome	A stronger Gaelic ethos in schools, leading to more Gaelic usage, and more support for pupils’ learning (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	Principal Teachers (PTs) of Gaelic work collaboratively to promote Gaelic usage and awareness, increase the curriculum offer, and enhance out-of-school activities.
Responsibility	Gaelic PTs, Headteachers
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage teaching and support staff with Gaelic skills to speak Gaelic whenever possible to pupils, including in extracurricular contexts. Senior and promoted staff will lead by example. Produce and circulate guidance on best practice. Target Date: 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PTs of GME in Secondary schools to continue to work collaboratively to promote Gaelic usage in schools and enhance extracurricular Gaelic activities. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that schools reception staff have Gaelic skills and use them whenever possible. Gaelic training will be offered. Revise Gaelic essential and desirable criteria to make it feasible for public-facing staff to acquire Gaelic skills in a structured and supported manner. Target Date: December 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Gaelic plays a key role in whole-school activities in primary and secondary schools, for the benefit of both Gaelic and English medium pupils. Pupil participation in Gaelic cultural activities such as music and drama should therefore be maximised. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and facilitate the teaching of P.E. and sports in primary schools through the medium of Gaelic whenever possible. Target Date: Review of Gaelic medium sports activity in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage initiatives such as the S6 Gaelic badge scheme to increase use of Gaelic amongst Senior Phase pupils, and between Senior Phase and BGE pupils in secondary schools. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers to encourage Gaelic speaking children who are enrolled in EME to use and develop their Gaelic language skills, nonetheless. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that where Gaelic and English medium provision are together in one primary school, all pupils nonetheless have the opportunity to learn Gaelic skills as part of GLE and the 1+2 Approach to language learning. Target Date: Annually

STAFF AND TRAINING

Desired Outcome	Enhancement of support for GM teachers (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	Teachers are supported and encouraged to retrain as GM teachers.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children's Services, Headteachers, e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support qualified EM teachers who have knowledge of Gaelic to retrain for GME⁷. The new, accredited

⁷ Gaelic will now be funded under the Scottish Government's Teaching Bursary scheme. See www.teachingbursaryinScotland.co.uk

	<p>“Turas” and “Tog” classes, free-of-charge, will be offered to improve the fluency and confidence in Gaelic of all Comhairle Education staff who wish to improve their ability to teach in GME.</p> <p>Target Date: From September 2023 onwards</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise a meeting of all interested organisations to discuss a strategic approach to GM recruitment, linked closely to educational, social and economic benefits. <p>Target Date: February 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Teacher Training establishments to develop ways of supporting GM teachers throughout their training period and on an ongoing basis, e.g. e-Sgoil mentoring Sabhal Mòr Ostaig PGDE students for second subject qualification. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that teachers who have come through the support programme are deployed in such a way as to further develop their language skills. <p>Target Date: Reviewed annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing CLPL and networking opportunities for GM teachers once qualified. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with agencies to ensure a variety of options in terms of Gaelic learning are available to teaching staff, including: a range of <i>SpeakGaelic</i> classes; <i>Ùlpan</i> classes; various conversation classes at different levels; the <i>Cothrom Cabadaich</i> online conversation circle; <i>Gaelic for Fluent Speakers</i> grammar classes; <i>Gaelic for Work Purposes</i> classes; UHI Gaelic courses and modules; and Nat5 and Higher Gaelic classes. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that there are progression pathways for teaching staff to be trained for GM that are continuous, flexible, coherent and include certification, as appropriate. Create a visual exemplar of learning pathways for Education staff. <p>Target Date: 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the <i>Go! Gaelic</i> programme which provides training, support and resources to equip teachers with the Gaelic language skills to deliver Gaelic as L2 or L3 from Early to Second Level in primary school. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

Desired Outcome	A long-term plan is in place to recruit more Gaelic staff in a range of posts (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	Work is ongoing to achieve this.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, Senior Education Officers

Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Comhairle recruitment practice to prioritise Gaelic, to reflect more accurately the large percentage of children in GME and their needs. Vacant posts to be re-designated as Gaelic essential or desirable. Target Date: Work to begin in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify more employment opportunities in teaching and support staff positions where Gaelic language skills would be advantageous. Target Date: Work to begin in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to reinforce the benefits of employing staff able to teach in bilingual settings. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the range of subjects offered in GM, to include more practical or vocational subjects as well as academic subjects, and put in place a long-term succession planning and workforce development programme to ensure that there are enough qualified staff to deliver GME effectively across all areas. Target Date: 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish progression pathways for the training of GM staff in a wider range of posts, e.g. in educational psychology and speech and language therapy, and classroom assistants, etc. Create a visual exemplar of learning pathways. Target Date: 2024

ASN

Desired Outcome	Enhancement of GM ASN provision (Primary and Secondary)
Current Practice	More provision of GM ASN support is required.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children's Services, Senior Education Officers, e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit more GM staff to posts in educational psychology and speech and language therapy, in order to support, e.g. GM pupils with dyslexia. Target Date: Increasing until 2028
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASN development areas will be highlighted and responded to as part of a policy review process. Target Date: 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate across Local Authorities to identify staff ASN capacity. Target Date: 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide staff training in delivering and facilitating ASN provision. Target Date: 2024 onwards
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance Gaelic-specific CLPL opportunities for staff through facilitation of specialist inputs.

Target Date: 2024

POST-SCHOOL

Desired Outcome	Provision of bespoke Gaelic classes for adults at various levels
Current Practice	There are a range of Gaelic learning options for adult learners.
Responsibility	Chief Officer for Education & Children’s Services, e-Sgoil
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit current learning and teaching materials and identify any gaps in provision. Target Date: 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with agencies to ensure a variety of options in terms of Gaelic learning are available to adults, including: <i>SpeakGaelic</i> classes, conversational classes, <i>Gaelic for Fluent Speakers</i> classes, SQA courses, and UHI modules, etc., and that a mixture of face-to-face, online and evening classes are available to offer maximum flexibility to learners. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that there are progression pathways for adult learners that are continuous, flexible, coherent and include certification, as appropriate. Create a visual exemplar of learning pathways. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate, if necessary, with other public sector bodies to generate sustainable cohorts of learners, or to enhance the learning experience. Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to require Modern Apprentices, young people aged 16+ who are being paid while training for employment at the Comhairle, to attend Gaelic learning classes as part of their contract of employment. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide GM training for Modern Apprentices in a range of disciplines, including childcare, tourism, social care, and as Gaelic language assistants. Target Date: Increasing until 2028. Reviewed annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to run and develop the Gaelic Student Placement Scheme for college and university students in the Isles. Target Date: Annually. Review of Scheme in November 2023
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the Gaelic skills base of Comhairle and Community Planning Partnership staff, and of parents of children in GME, by continuing to provide a range of Gaelic classes free-of-charge. Target Date: Annually

3.4 COMMUNITIES

Gaelic development in Western Isles communities is inextricably linked to, and rooted in, other development strategies, such as the development of economic opportunities, the provision of affordable housing and full digital connectivity, for example, which all support and build resilient communities where Gaelic speakers can live and prosper. As the Comhairle's **Corporate Strategy 2022-2027** states:

Resilient communities and quality of life are measured by themes such as the Gaelic language and culture, our population and demographics, the natural environment, our crofting communities, housing quality and availability, transport and connectivity, the economy and jobs, community safety, health and wellbeing and support networks. These are all interconnected and do not stand alone as a measure of success.

The Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan strengthens the Comhairle's educational, community and economic contribution.

Indeed, there is an inter-dependence between economic development and Gaelic development. This is because Gaelic has been demonstrated to be an economic and business asset⁸, and economic growth, in turn, creates the conditions whereby Gaelic speakers can continue to live and work in Western Isles communities. Therefore, there are cross-cutting and complimentary strategies which are in place to support and build communities, which ensure a more joined-up and holistic approach to community development.

These strategies include the aforementioned Corporate Strategy 2022-2027, which sets out the strategic direction of the Comhairle for each Comhairle term in terms of supporting Western Isles communities to thrive and prosper. It includes the following strategic priorities and outcomes:

Strengthen the Local Economy

Outcomes: deliver the projects associated with the Islands Deal; digitalisation investment delivers outcomes for the community; investment in our buildings and infrastructure; increased level of skills across our communities and workforce; and growth in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) demonstrated.

Support Resilient Communities with Good Quality of Life

Outcomes: the natural heritage, Gaelic language and culture of our communities is supported and promoted; people receive the care and support they need to live healthy and independent lives; planning and infrastructure meet the needs of our communities; our communities are safe, inclusive, and resilient; and reduce inequality and poverty and promote social mobility.

In addition, the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP) comprises public agencies in the Western Isles, including the Comhairle, working together with communities

⁸ *Ar Stòras Gàidhlig – The Economic and Social Value of Gaelic as an Asset*, (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, May 2014).

to plan and deliver better services. The OHCPP works with communities on the **Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017-2027**, (which replaces the Single Outcome Agreement for the Outer Hebrides 2013-2023), and the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy is complementary to this. In order to improve outcomes for the communities of the Isles, an improvement in the age structure of populations is required. A primary focus of the LOIP is therefore on the creation of well-paid, full-time employment opportunities for the younger working age population, with associated skills development, which is vital to sustaining and creating populations of Gaelic speakers. Sufficient affordable and smart housing provisions are also required throughout the Isles to accommodate target population increases, and there is potential to grow a number of sectors through better use of existing assets including: Gaelic language and culture; community ownership; renewables; and tourism. Another key aim is to facilitate career progression without people needing to leave the Isles, which will be supported by increased local provision of further and higher education.

Other strategies in the Isles which feed into this Gaelic Plan include:

The **Tourism Outer Hebrides 2030 Strategy**, which sets out the strategic framework for growing tourism and the visitor economy in the Isles and is delivered through a leadership group comprising Outer Hebrides Tourism, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and VisitScotland. The promotion of Gaelic language and culture is recognised as key in creating tourist experiences that are appealing to visitors, such as *Fèis Cheilteach Innse Gall* (HebCelt) and *Eilean Dorcha* festivals, and Ceòlas summer schools. Gaelic learning opportunities for visitors are also promoted as part of these events, and the Gaelic skills development of staff is a key aspect of programme delivery.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government's **National Islands Plan**, arising from the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018, has been prepared to help meet the unique needs of Scotland's islands. It seeks to create the best environment for sustainable growth and empowered communities and recognises that Gaelic makes an important contribution to sustainable economic development in Isles communities. It includes the following Strategic Objectives: ensure that opportunities to develop the wellbeing of the Gaelic language and an increase the number of speakers and users are considered as part of sustainable economic development; ensure that the effect on Gaelic language development is considered from the outset in island-specific policies and initiatives and that these link to statutory Gaelic language plans; and work with public authorities and community groups in increasing the use and visibility of Gaelic in Gaelic speaking island communities.

Finally, the **Islands Growth Deal** will provide a ten-year package of investment from the UK and Scottish Governments that will seek to drive economic growth and the creation of sustainable jobs, with an agreed programme which provides scope for development in three key areas: leading the way to a low carbon future; supporting growth and future industries; and thriving sustainable communities of Gaelic speakers.

Therefore, all of these plans and strategies necessarily underpin, feed into, and facilitate the implementation of this Gaelic Language Plan.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

Desired Outcome	Increased support for Gaelic usage in communities aligned to other local infrastructure improvement priorities
Current Practice	Gaelic has been identified as an economic and cultural asset and development priority. There is a commitment in the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2022-2027, and the OHCPP's Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2027, to support and promote Gaelic in the communities of the Western Isles.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Corporate Management Team, e-Sgoil, Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Complimentary Strategic Planning Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain and re-vitalise communities through improvements to housing quality and energy efficiency. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) • Realise the equitable provision of affordable new housing for each Isles community. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) • Provide affordable superfast broadband connectivity across the Isles. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) • Review progress of the above actions through Performance Management Update reports for each Committee Series, and for the public through the Comhairle's service business plan progress reports, published on the Comhairle website. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP)
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, and where demand exists, discuss new and viable models for community-led Gaelic revitalisation. This could include Gaelic development trusts, where language planning is rooted in a holistic community development framework that supports new enterprises, employment opportunities and family Gaelic support schemes. A series of meetings will be held in communities in the Isles to ascertain the views of residents on this. Target Date: 2026
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with the Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig the possibility of creating a designated 'Gàidhealtachd' area, including the Isles, to strengthen support for Gaelic communities. This is based on an acknowledgment that particular legislation, structures and funding are required to ensure the viability of Gaelic speaking communities. Target Date: Ongoing discussions annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide financial support for initiatives to create 'Gaelic hubs' in the community, which provide physical spaces for Gaelic usage as the default language of communication, create employment opportunities locally, host Gaelic medium events and promote the language generally.

	<p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen digital inclusion through e-Sgoil, as they work in partnership with Scottish Government, Education Scotland, and Regional Improvement Collaboratives. This ensures more equitable provision of specialist input for Gaelic learning across communities. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that Gaelic is included and prioritised in activity resulting from the National Islands Plan. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide a Gaelic development budget for community projects across the Isles which involve the meaningful use, learning or promotion of Gaelic, with a particular emphasis on encouraging young people to speak Gaelic and supporting parents of children in GME. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In working closely with Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP) to deliver new affordable housing throughout the Isles, ensure that Gaelic is used in the naming of new developments. <p>Target Date: Work to begin in 2024</p>

EMPLOYMENT

Desired Outcome	Increased support for creating employment, including Gaelic-related jobs, aligned to other local improvement priorities
Current Practice	Gaelic has been identified as an economic and cultural asset and development priority in the Comhairle’s Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and in the OHCPP’s Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017-2027.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Corporate Management Team, Arts Development Officer, e-Sgoil
Complimentary Strategic Planning Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of jobs focussed on key growth sectors, such as tourism, food and drink, creative industries, business services, energy, construction. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) Focus on job creation, including Gaelic jobs, for the younger working age population, and provide scope for career progression without needing to leave the islands. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) Work to increase applications for foundation and modern apprenticeships, and local College and University courses, particularly those connected to key growth sectors, such as tourism, food and drink, creative industries, business services, energy, construction. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review progress of the above actions through Performance Management Update reports for each Committee Series, and for the public through the Comhairle’s service business plan progress reports, published on the Comhairle website. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP)
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify employment opportunities in the Comhairle where Gaelic language skills would be advantageous. Target Date: Work to begin in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Comhairle recruitment practice to reflect more accurately the need to provide Gaelic community services. Vacant posts to be re-designated Gaelic essential or desirable. Target Date: Work to begin in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Comhairle recruitment practice to prioritise the Gaelic language, to reflect the large percentage of children in GME and their needs. Vacant posts to be re-designated as Gaelic essential or desirable. Target Date: Work to begin in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with partner agencies to revise HR recruitment practices to reflect the Comhairle’s Gaelic First Policy. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase recruitment to GM posts and ensure that there are progression pathways for GME teaching that are continuous, flexible, coherent and include certification, as appropriate. Create a visual exemplar of recruitment pathways. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all Comhairle apprentices sign up to the Gaelic learning programme as a condition of their employment. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim to increase the range of Gaelic FAs and Modern Apprenticeships, which can support an expansion of job opportunities for young people in Gaelic-related posts in tourism, media, teaching, childcare, social care, and in key growth sectors identified in the Corporate Strategy. Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide scope for career progression for young people in these Gaelic-related posts, so that they do not have to leave the Isles in search of opportunities. Create a visual exemplar of recruitment pathways. Target Date: 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the Gaelic medium SVQ courses in order to assist with recruitment to childcare, 0-3 and Early Years posts. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target pupils in the senior phase of GME, under the Developing the Young Work Force (DYW) Programme, to

	<p>create career pathways in Gaelic, and to help reduce the number of young people leaving the Isles in search of work opportunities.</p> <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support, with arts, media and heritage sector partners, the expansion of employment opportunities in the creative and cultural industries sector across the Isles. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that employment opportunities arising from the Islands Growth Deal’s Outer Hebrides Destination Development project remain geographically distributed amongst Gaelic communities. <p>Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve opportunities for parents of GM children to be economically active by continuing to make access to Gaelic medium childcare available in every school catchment area. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the Gaelic skills base of Comhairle and Community Planning Partnership staff, and of parents of children in GME, by continuing to provide a range of Gaelic classes free-of-charge. <p>Target Date: Aim to increase numbers every year till 2028</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead by example and lobby other organisations to become more pro-active in terms of ensuring that their staffing and use of Gaelic reflect the nature of the bilingual community they serve. <p>Target Date: Work to begin in 2024</p>

BUSINESS AND TOURISM

Desired Outcome	Increased support for businesses, including Gaelic-related businesses, aligned to other local improvement priorities
Current Practice	Gaelic has been identified as an economic and cultural asset and development priority in the Comhairle’s Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and in the OHCPP’s Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) 2017-2027.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Corporate Management Team
Complimentary Strategic Planning Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase support for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to be established and grow through greater use of Gaelic as a recognised economic asset. This applies, in particular, to the visitor economy and tourism. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) Use the Gaelic language and culture to the best economic advantage and promote the economic benefits arising from the use of Gaelic in economic activities. There is potential to

	<p>grow a number of sectors through better use of existing assets including Gaelic language and culture. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Business Gateway start up numbers, with associated development support. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) • Ensure proportional investment is made regionally between islands, towns and rural communities. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) • Attract inward investment by making accessible and attractive business locations and premises, and associated infrastructure, available in all areas of the islands. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) • Review progress of the above actions through Performance Management Update reports for each Committee Series, and for the public through the Comhairle’s service business plan progress reports, published on the Comhairle website. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) • Promote Gaelic language and culture, with associated staff Gaelic training opportunities, because it is recognised as key in creating cultural experiences that are appealing to tourists. (Tourism Outer Hebrides 2030 Strategy) • Continue to work with Outer Hebrides Tourism partners to deliver ‘Outer Hebrides’ branded initiatives. (Tourism Outer Hebrides 2030 Strategy)
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of Gaelic enterprises and businesses demonstrating a viable business model. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and support businesses to use Gaelic as an economic asset, as identified in the Corporate Strategy, particularly in the tourism, creative industries and food and drink sectors. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide, through the Business Gateway service, capital support and a range of financial advice and support for projects which promote Gaelic cultural regeneration and development. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and support projects involving the use and promotion of Gaelic culture and language, which are key to attracting visitors to the Isles, e.g. <i>Fèis Cheilteach Innse Gall (HebCelt)</i> and <i>Eilean Dorcha</i> festivals, and Ceòlas summer schools. Aim to increase support for more events. Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide, through the Business Gateway service, direct financial support for tourism-related projects which promote

	<p>the use of Gaelic, and work with tourism partners such as VisitScotland to support such initiatives.</p> <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Gaelic residential learning projects which involve homestays with Gaelic speaking families in the local B&B/accommodation sector. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

GAELIC IN THE ARTS AND HERITAGE

Desired Outcome	An increase in Gaelic-related arts and heritage activity, particularly amongst young people
Current Practice	A range of Gaelic-related arts, (both traditional and modern), and heritage activity is promoted and supported throughout the Isles.
Responsibility	Chief Executive, Directors, Corporate Management Team, Multimedia Unit, Arts Development Officer
Complimentary Strategic Planning Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support, promote and champion the Gaelic language, culture and heritage of the Isles, acknowledging its importance to the communities who live here, and its appeal to the tourist economy. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP) Review progress of the above actions through Performance Management Update reports for each Committee Series, and for the public through the Comhairle’s service business plan progress reports, published on the Comhairle website. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP)
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners, fund and support as wide a range as possible of arts and heritage projects in the Isles which use or promote the use or learning of Gaelic. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide core funding to the main creative hub organisations in the Isles, e.g. An Lanntair, Taigh Chearsabhagh, Fèis Cheilteach Innse Gall, Ceòlas, Fèisean nan Gaidheal, Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean. This enables them to lever in support from external sources and retain jobs within communities. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on developing a cohesive and interlinked strategic approach between arts and heritage, and the public and private sector, to provide support to creative and cultural projects led by the community. Facilitate access to Business Gateway, and other, support. <p>Target Date: Work to begin in 2025</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support skills development, business growth and innovation within the creative and cultural industries in the Isles. Facilitate access to Business Gateway, and other, funding.

	<p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to fund projects encouraging young people to participate in Gaelic medium arts activities, such as the <i>FilmG</i> competition, and work with schools as part of a strategy to stimulate interest in Gaelic medium arts activity amongst young people. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work closely with organisations like An Comunn Gàidhealach and Fèisean nan Gàidheal in supporting events which promote traditional Gaelic cultural activity, such as local Mòds and fèisean, and maximising the number of young people having an active involvement in traditional Gaelic culture. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, through the Comhairle’s Multimedia Unit, digital resources to support and promote Gaelic medium arts activity amongst school pupils and young people. <p>Target Date: Increase resources during lifetime of the Plan</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support high-profile events which promote traditional Gaelic cultural activity, e.g. local Mòds, Ceòlas summer schools, <i>Fèis Cheilteach Innse Gall</i>, <i>Eilean Dorcha</i> festival, etc. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Outer Hebrides Tourism partners, support and promote Gaelic learning opportunities and projects attached to major cultural events which attracts a large number of visitors to the Isles, such as <i>Fèis Cheilteach Innse Gall</i>. e.g. Gaelic taster sessions, or organised tours in Gaelic. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer practical advice and support for community Comainn Eachdraidh (Historical Societies) and continue to support Comainn Eachdraidh projects which use or promote Gaelic. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean, to deliver a fully bilingual museum and archive service, a bilingual heritage service website, and strategy to develop the Gaelic skills of staff. <p>Target Date: 2026</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work closely with the Outer Hebrides Heritage Forum (Comann Dualchas Innse Gall), which enables community heritage organisations across the Isles to work collaboratively and to undertake projects which involve the researching, recording, and sharing of the Gaelic heritage of the Isles. <p>Target Date: Annually</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean will continue to work in partnership with heritage organisations across the Isles on the steering group of the <i>Great Place Project, Dualchas do Dhaoine 2021-2031</i>, to share skills, expertise and resources for mutual benefit, to support and deliver heritage-led economic development and build sustainability into the heritage sector in the Isles. Target Date: Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support initiatives which involve Gaelic medium sports activities, and, as a matter of urgency, develop capacity in current Comhairle staffing to deliver activities, in particular, for young people, through the medium of Gaelic in sports centres. Target Date: Work to begin November 2023

SOCIAL CARE

Desired Outcome	A high percentage of Gaelic speakers employed in care services and an increase in the use of Gaelic in care services
Current Practice	The Comhairle provides a range of care services through the medium of Gaelic, and always tries to realise some clients' preferences for Gaelic carers.
Responsibility	Head of Community Care, Customer Services Manager
Complimentary Strategic Planning Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure those who are elderly or in need receive the care and support they need. (Corporate Strategy and LOIP)
Actions Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint as many Gaelic speaking staff as necessary in care homes and day centres to care for the high percentage of Gaelic speaking clients with dementia, as part of reminiscence therapy. Undertake review of staff capacity. Target Date: 2025
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more staff in care homes and day centres to improve their Gaelic skills. Identify "Gaelic champions" from amongst younger members of staff, who will lead by example in the use of Gaelic in interactions with clients and other staff. Target Date: Work to begin in 2024
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities Co-ordinators in care homes to develop the use of Gaelic through Gaelic-related activities and events involving clients, staff and visitors, and reminiscence sessions for clients. Target Date: Throughout the lifetime of the Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Gaelic speaking carers in the Comhairle's <i>Care at Home Service</i> when clients indicate a preference for this and

	<p>seek to recruit more Gaelic speakers to health visiting services.</p> <p>Target Date: Annually</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that as many telephone operators of the Comhairle’s <i>Faire</i> careline community alarm service as possible have Gaelic skills. This is particularly important, given that many elderly clients find it more natural and reassuring to communicate in Gaelic. <p>Target Date: Annually. Review in 2024</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the capacity of staff to deliver specialist services in Gaelic, to Gaelic speaking children with disabilities. Children with disabilities must never be excluded from GME. <p>Target Date: Work to begin in 2024</p>

4. LINKS TO THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar recognises that Gaelic is not only an inalienable part of the lives, identity and cultural heritage of the people of the Western Isles, but that, as an official language of Scotland, it is also an integral part of the country’s heritage, national identity and cultural life as a whole.

The Comhairle is therefore committed to creating the conditions whereby Gaelic usage and learning can be supported and expanded for the wellbeing and economic benefit of the communities of the Isles. The Comhairle also seeks to support national strategies, plans and initiatives that aim to strengthen the position of Gaelic as a national language, and in doing so, to build more inclusive, diverse and successful communities. In order to do this, this Gaelic Language Plan, as the distillation of shared objectives of Community Planning Partnerships in the Isles, supports the Scottish Government’s **National Performance Framework (NPF)**, with its headline purpose: to create a more successful country. In particular, this Gaelic Language Plan intends to assist in advancing the following priorities of the NPF:

Purpose

- Give opportunities to all people living in Scotland;
- Increase the wellbeing of people living in Scotland, and;
- Create sustainable and inclusive growth.

Outcomes

- People live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe;
- People are creative and their vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely;
- People are well-educated, skilled and able to contribute to society, and;

- People have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone.

Full details of the National Performance Framework can be accessed at <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

5. LINKS TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The Comhairle recognises the necessity of collaborative working with Community Planning Partners to support and expand the use and learning of Gaelic in the Western Isles, and to align development plans in order to deliver shared objectives for the language and for the wellbeing of communities. This is because Gaelic development in Western Isles communities is interconnected to, and inseparable from, other development priorities, such as housing quality and availability, jobs and economic growth, and digital connectivity, which all assist in building resilient communities where Gaelic speakers can live and prosper. In fact, there is an inter-dependence between economic development and Gaelic development, because Gaelic has been shown to be an economic asset, and economic growth, in turn, creates the conditions whereby Gaelic speakers can continue to live and work in Western Isles communities.

The Comhairle will therefore actively engage with Community Planning Partners in delivering this Gaelic Language Plan, the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2022-2027, Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2027, Outer Hebrides Creative & Cultural Industries Strategy, and Tourism Outer Hebrides 2030 Strategy. Regionally, as members of Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI), the Comhairle will be active in supporting the CoHI commitment to ensure that Gaelic is integrated into economic and community development support workstreams across the Highlands and Islands, and to collaborate to promote and grow Gaelic, which can assist in delivering transformational economic change in many communities within the region.

6. PUBLICATION

PUBLISHING AND PUBLICISING THE PLAN

INTERNAL

All Departments within the Comhairle have been consulted in the preparation of this Gaelic Language Plan, with clear targets and remits of responsibility assigned to the relevant staff concerned. All staff will be informed when the final version of the Plan has been approved and it will be published on the Comhairle's intranet in Gaelic and in English. All staff will also

have opportunity to contribute to the Plan during its progress, and Sections will be encouraged to review how they can add value to the delivery of the Plan, if possible.

EXTERNAL

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan will be published in Gaelic and in English on our website. In addition, we will:

- Issue a bilingual press release announcing the Plan;
- Publicise the Plan through a variety of social media platforms;
- Distribute copies to arms-length organisations and other third-party organisations, explaining their role in the delivery of the Plan;
- Distribute copies of the Plan to key stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors;
- Distribute copies of the Plan to relevant Gaelic organisations and other interested bodies, and;
- Make hard copies available on request.

7. RESOURCING THE PLAN

The costs of implementing this Plan are generally mainstreamed within existing Departmental budgets, reflecting the integrity of Gaelic in the life and work of the Comhairle. Nevertheless, opportunities to identify additional funding to develop aspects of the Plan even further will be accessed, recognising the pressures of funding key Local Government services, which are unlikely to diminish. Working in partnership and sharing resources at all levels with partners are ever more important. Many actions in the Plan have minimal resource implications and are the result of changes to Member and employee practice.

8. MONITORING THE PLAN

Progress in terms of the delivery of actions contained within this Plan will be the subject of annual progress reports submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig during the lifetime of the Plan. In compiling this report, Departments will be asked what progress has been made in terms of actions for which they have responsibility, and, if necessary, they will have the opportunity to report any difficulties that have arisen in delivering these actions. This report will be compiled by Sgioba na Gàidhlig. In addition, the progress of the Plan will also be scrutinised in detail by the Comhairle's Gaelic Committee, Comataidh na Gàidhlig, meetings of which are held throughout the year.

9. THE GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN IN THE COMHAIRLE

OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PLAN

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for preparation, delivery and monitoring of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan. He can be contacted as follows:

Malcolm Burr
Chief Executive Officer
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Sandwick Road
Stornoway
HS1 2BW
m.burr@cne-siar.gov.uk

DAY-TO-DAY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PLAN

The Gaelic Support and Policy Officers have day-to-day responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan. Queries regarding the day-to-day operation of the plan should be addressed to:

Dòmhnall Weir
Gaelic Support Officer
Chief Executive's Department
donald.weir@cne-siar.gov.uk

Angus MacLennan
Gaelic Policy Officer
Chief Executive's Department
amaclennan1a@gnes.net

GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING GROUP

In order to ensure that this Gaelic Language Plan is embedded across the corporate structure of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the Comhairle will establish a cross-Departmental Gaelic Language Plan implementation group, with Member support, which will monitor the progress of the Plan on a quarterly basis. It is hoped that, in this way, any potential areas of difficulty in terms of implementation can be addressed at an early stage.

ENGAGING WITH STAFF

All Departments within the Comhairle have been consulted in the preparation of this Plan, with clear remits of responsibility assigned to the relevant staff concerned. All staff will have opportunity to contribute to the Plan during its progress, and Sections will be encouraged to

review how they can add value to the delivery of the Plan, if possible. In publishing the Plan, Sgioba na Gàidhlig will also offer to make themselves available at all times for advice and assistance in implementing aspects of the Plan.

ARM'S LENGTH ORGANISATIONS AND THIRD PARTIES

The Comhairle will emphasise its commitments to Gaelic usage and promotion in terms of its Gaelic Language Plan with arms-length organisations and other third parties when the Comhairle is tendering work to businesses, and to businesses who deliver services on its behalf.

APPENDIX 1 – INTERNAL GAELIC CAPACITY AUDIT

Comhairle Staff Gaelic Skills and Needs Survey 2022

In preparing the Comhairle's new Gaelic Language Plan for 2023-2028, the Comhairle carried out an anonymous, semi-structured Microsoft Forms survey during Summer 2022, (from 13/6/22 to 31/8/22), of the Gaelic skills of all Comhairle staff and Members. The survey asked 13 questions relating to Gaelic skills, usage and learning amongst staff and Members, with an opportunity at the end of the survey for further comment.

It was intended that this survey would assist both in determining the scope of aims and actions in the new Gaelic Plan, and in identifying any gaps or difficulties in accessing learning provision for staff or Members who wished to learn Gaelic skills. In total, 308 staff and Members completed the survey, with a healthy representation of responses from each Department and Members. The results of the survey were expressed in terms of percentages of staff and Members, and the most commonly occurring themes in comments made, and were therefore a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. The results, with some relevant observations, are as below.

Question 1

Which Department do you work in?

Education, Skills and Children's Services – 27.7%

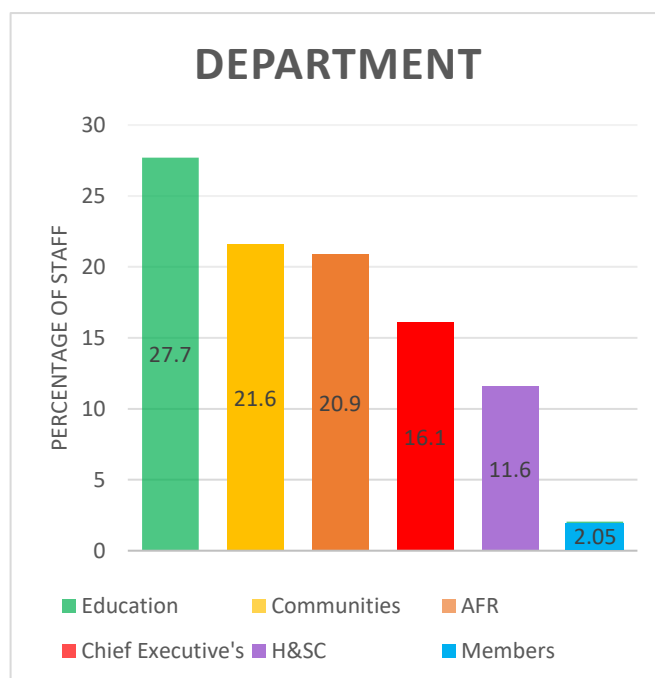
Communities – 21.6%

Assets, Finance and Resources (AFR) – 20.9%

Chief Executive's – 16.1%

Health and Social Care (H&SC) – 11.6%

Members – 2.05%



Question 2

How fluent are you in Gaelic?

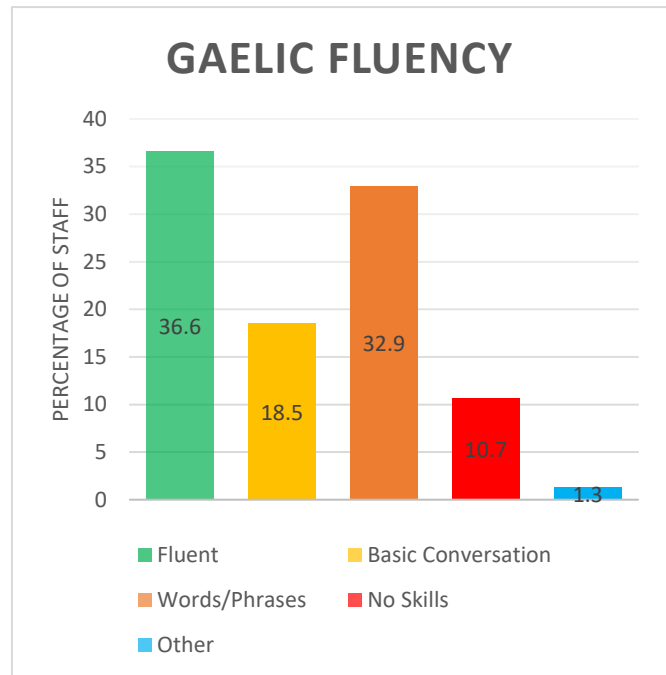
I'm a fluent speaker – 36.6%

I have basic conversational skills – 18.5%

I know some words and phrases – 32.9%

I have no spoken Gaelic skills – 10.7%

Other – 1.3%



Observations

- This means that 55.1% of staff and Members who completed the survey have conversational ability in Gaelic to at least some extent. This compares to the equivalent figure of 59.0% from the previous all-staff Gaelic survey in 2017.
- 88.0% have at least some level of Gaelic knowledge or skills. This compares to the equivalent figure of 85.3% in 2017.
- In 2017 the figure for 'Fluent' members of staff was 42.2%, which represents a fall of 5.6%.

Question 3

How well do you understand Gaelic?

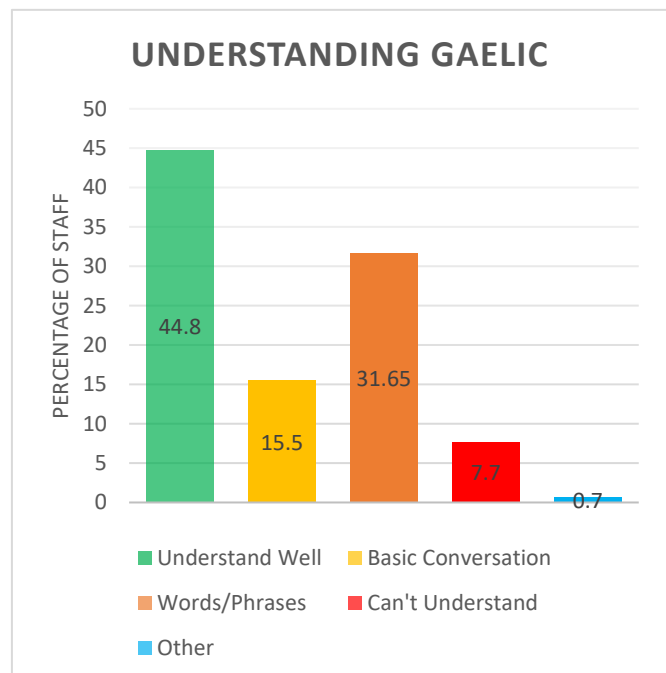
I understand Gaelic very well – 44.8%

I can follow basic conversation – 15.15%

I can only understand some words and phrases – 31.65%

I can't understand any Gaelic – 7.7%

Other – 0.7%



Observations

- This means that 60.3% of staff and Members are able to understand at least basic conversation in Gaelic. (In 2017, 75.5% stated that they could understand Gaelic 'Very Well' and 'A Little'.)

Question 4

How well can you read Gaelic?

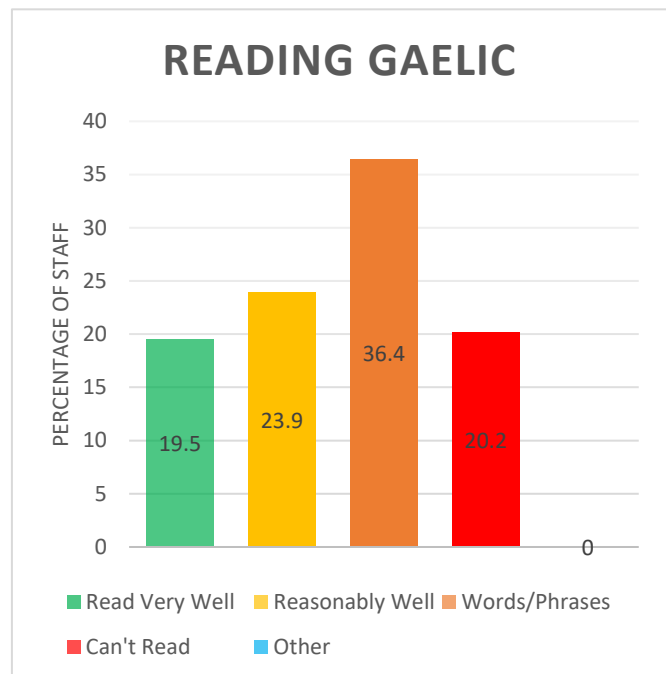
I can read Gaelic very well – 19.5%

I can read Gaelic reasonably well – 23.9%

I can only read some words and phrases – 36.4%

I can't read any Gaelic – 20.2%

Other – 0%



Observations

- Only 43.4% in total have the ability to read Gaelic to at least some degree of competence.

Question 5

How well can you write Gaelic?

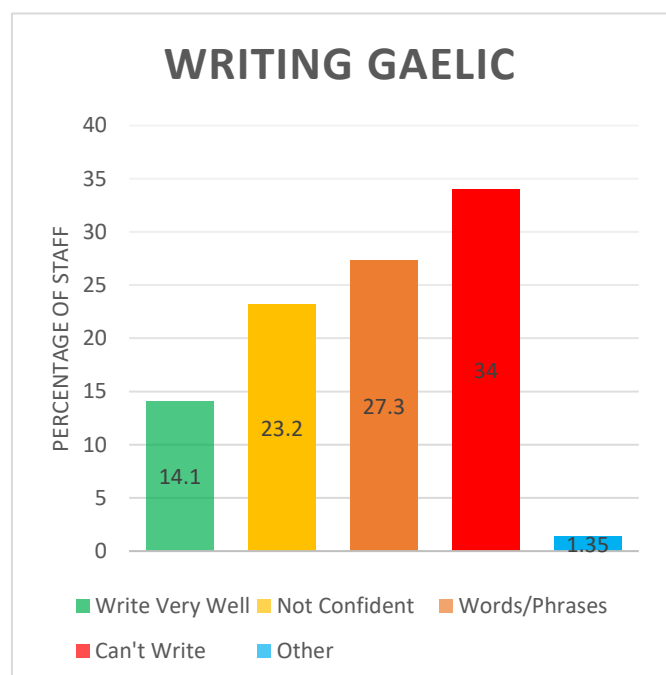
I can write Gaelic very well – 14.1%

I can write Gaelic, but I'm not confident – 23.2%

I can only write words and phrases – 27.3%

I can't write any Gaelic – 34.0%

Other – 1.35%



Observations

- Only 14.1% can write Gaelic very well, despite 36.6% indicating that they were 'Fluent Speakers' (Question 2)

Question 6

How often do you use Gaelic in your workplace?

Every Day – 17.35%

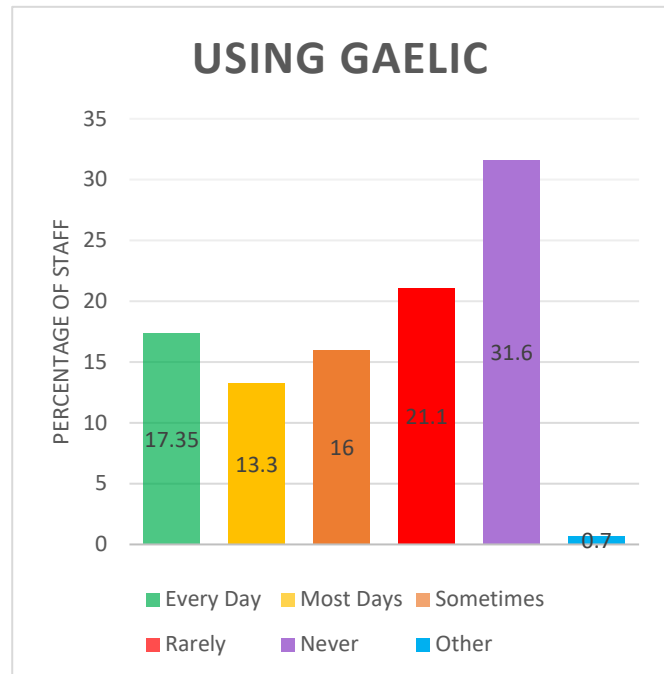
Most Days – 13.3%

Sometimes – 16.0%

Rarely – 21.1%

Never – 31.6%

Other – 0.7%



Observations

- 30.6% in total use Gaelic during at least a majority of days, but 55.1% (see Question 2) of those who completed the survey indicated that they have conversational ability to at least some extent.
- In the 2017 survey, 46.6% said they used Gaelic 'Every day', compared to just 17.35% in 2022.
- 31.6% 'never' use Gaelic, compared to 22.6% in the 2017 survey.

Question 7

If you use Gaelic in the workplace, please use the box below to tell us when and where you typically use it.

After coded analysis of responses, four very strong themes emerged in answer to this question:

As part of the job – 91 respondents mentioned this.

Informally with colleagues – 75 respondents mentioned this.

With the public or other organisations – 69 respondents mentioned this.

Formally with colleagues – 40 respondents mentioned this.

Observations

- It is clear that Gaelic is used in a wide range of situations in the Comhairle, both formally and informally. Although it is very important that the language remains a key aspect of

Comhairle service delivery, (particularly in the context of health and social care), it is particularly encouraging to see a high level of informal and socialised usage of Gaelic between staff and Members.

Some typical responses include the following:

- *“I use Gaelic as part of my job as well as informally with colleagues and Gaelic-speaking members of the public that I deal with.”*
- *“Speak it regularly to colleagues who speak the language.”*
- *“Speak, write and read Gaelic as part of my job.”*
- *“Gaelic is part of my job - I speak Gaelic to colleagues, managers, elected members and clients/ public.”*
- *“Mainly informally to colleagues, members. Also in emails where I know the recipient can read Gaelic.”*
- *“When carrying out visits in the community where Gaelic is preferred language.”*
- *“When responding to anyone that has spoken or written in Gaelic.”*
- *“As part of the job and informally to colleagues.”*
- *“Some of my older clients who have additional needs converse in Gaelic and are relying on someone who can converse with them to address their needs.”*
- *“Both as part of my job and to speak both formally and informally to colleagues.”*

Question 8

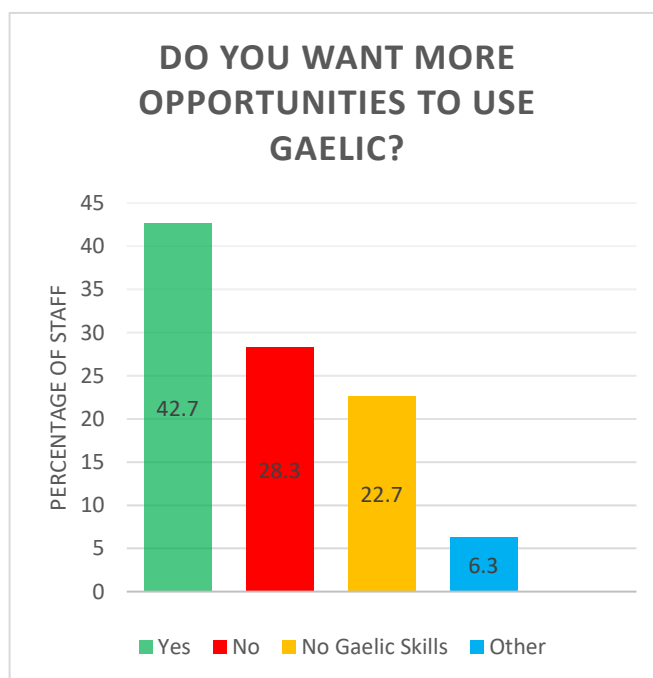
Would you like more opportunities to use Gaelic in the workplace?

Yes – 42.7%

No – 28.3%

I haven't got Gaelic skills – 22.7%

Other – 6.3%



Observations

- With 42.7%, a clear majority of those with Gaelic skills would like the opportunity to use them more often in the workplace. However, it is not clear what percentage of those who said “No” perhaps said so because they felt that they used a lot of Gaelic already. Therefore, a more detailed survey of Gaelic usage will take place, an action to be

completed in the Comhairle’s Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028 (pp.11-12), in order to provide a more granular analysis of language usage.

- The majority of those who said “Other” pointed out that they wished to use Gaelic more in particular scenarios related to their work, rather than generally.

Question 9

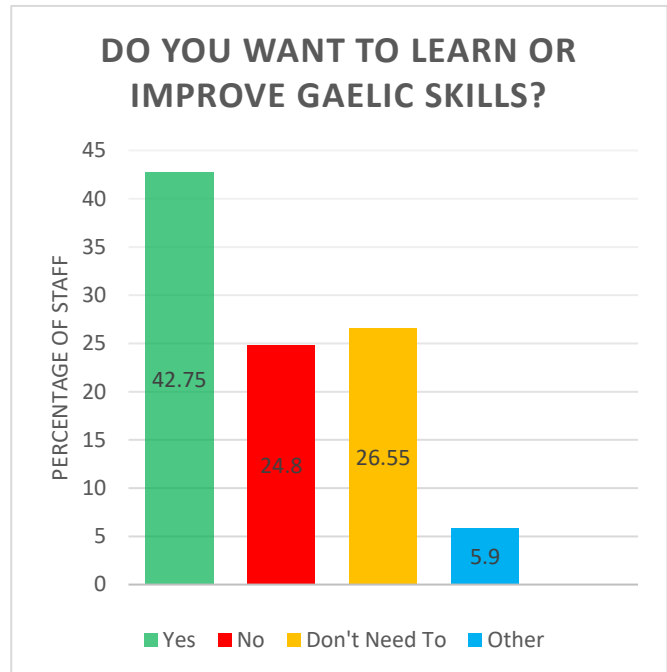
Would you like to learn Gaelic or improve your Gaelic skills?

Yes – 42.75%

No – 24.8%

I don't need to – 26.55%

Other – 5.9%



Observations

- With 42.75%, the largest number of staff and Members said they would like the opportunity to learn or improve Gaelic skills. It is almost the same percentage as those who would like to use more Gaelic in the workplace, as established by the results of Question 8 (42.7%). This suggests that if more staff and Members accessed Gaelic learning opportunities it could lead to a corresponding increase in Gaelic usage in the workplace.
- The majority of those who said “Other” pointed out that they wished to learn or improve Gaelic skills for particular purposes related to their work.

Question 10

If you want to learn Gaelic or improve your Gaelic skills, could you tell us why in the box below?

After coded analysis of responses, a large variety of themes emerged in answer to this question, the most popular of which were as follows:

Personal wish to improve Gaelic skills – 53 respondents mentioned this.

Gaelic is important to the culture and identity of the Isles – 33 respondents mentioned this.

To assist in completion of work duties – 22 respondents mentioned this.

To feel more integrated in Gaelic communities/workplace – 14 respondents mentioned this.

An interest in learning languages in general – 7 respondents mentioned this.

To support children’s Gaelic learning – 6 respondents mentioned this.

Observations

- **Most respondents who said that they wished to improve their Gaelic skills said so because they felt that they lacked confidence in their Gaelic skills, or had got rusty, or wished to improve their reading & writing skills, specifically. Cultural identity, and the wish to feel more integrated, also emerged as key themes, and the fact that improved Gaelic skills would assist in respondents’ day-to-day work. This indicates that there is significant demand for Gaelic courses and learning opportunities.**

Some typical responses include the following:

- *“To improve my conversational skills both at work and socially.”*
- *“To be more effective/flexible at work, and to encourage my children to speak more Gaelic at home (they default to English for my benefit).”*
- *“Because I think that Gaelic is an incredibly important part of the islands' culture and heritage and that we should be accordingly proud of it.”*
- *“Additional opportunities to speak Gaelic, as well as improve my writing and reading skills.”*
- *“I feel that it is important and respectful to embrace local culture and language. Additionally, having grown up in a Welsh speaking area and attended a Welsh-medium school I can empathise with the WI's efforts to keep Gaelic alive and thriving.”*
- *“To enable communication with some clients that prefer to use Gaelic.”*
- *“I would like to be more confident in my written Gaelic and also be more confident when reading Gaelic.”*
- *“It's a bilingual local authority and we should be active promoters of the language, not just in schools.”*
- *“It is an intrinsic part of the local community and an important part of local identity. It would be respectful of me to communicate with service users, friends and neighbours in Gaelic.”*
- *“To be a better integrated member of the community.”*

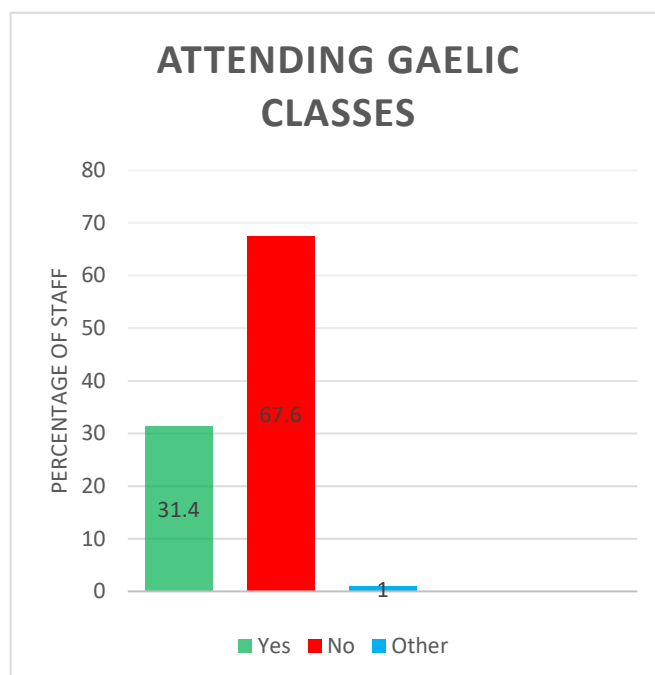
Question 11

Have you ever attended any Gaelic classes or training since you began working at the Comhairle?

Yes – 31.4%

No – 67.6%

Other – 1%



Observations

- Almost a third of all respondents have enrolled on Gaelic classes. This represents a high level of interest in Gaelic learning.
- A more detailed survey of Gaelic usage will take place, an action to be completed in the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028 (pp.11-12), in order to provide a more detailed analysis of language learning in the Comhairle. This is mainly to establish why staff and Members are *not* accessing Gaelic learning opportunities.

Question 12

If you answered "Yes" to Question 11, could you tell us in the box below what classes or training you have attended?

The main responses were as follows:

Ùlpan (UHI N,W & IG) – 44 respondents mentioned this.

Modern Apprentice Classes (UHI N,W & IG/e-Sgoil) – 9 respondents mentioned this.

Grammar (UHI N,W & IG) – 6 respondents mentioned this.

Cùrsa Comais (UHI N,W & IG) – 5 respondents mentioned this.

SpeakGaelic (UHI N,W & IG/e-Sgoil) – 4 respondents mentioned this.

Nat 5 (e-Sgoil) – 3 respondents mentioned this.

Conversation (UHI N,W & IG) – 3 respondents mentioned this.

Gaelic in the Workplace Classes (UHI N,W & IG) – 2 respondents mentioned this.

Cùrsa Inntigidh (SMO) – 1 respondent mentioned this.

Cùrsa Adhartais (SMO) – 1 respondent mentioned this.

Duolingo – 1 respondent mentioned this.

Observations

- The results reflect the longstanding pre-eminence of Ùlpan classes as the learning option which was most readily available for staff and Members for many years. SpeakGaelic classes have, however, superseded Ùlpan as the most popular learning option since they began to be delivered widely in Summer 2022.
- The results also show that there is significant demand for Gaelic learning opportunities and that a wide range of classes, suited to different needs, are being accessed.

Question 13

If you have you encountered any problems with your Gaelic classes or training, or in trying to access Gaelic classes or training, could you please use the box below to tell us about this?

The main responses were as follows:

Lack of time for classes – 21 respondents mentioned this.

There were no problems – 10 respondents mentioned this.

Manager discouraged attendance of classes – 8 respondents mentioned this.

Problems with the classes/teaching methodology – 3 respondents mentioned this.

Observations

- Anecdotally, lack of time to attend classes has been an issue for some time. We must continue to expand the range of Gaelic learning options available, tailored to the requirements of individual staff and Members.
- There has been line manager discouragement of attendance at Gaelic classes because of increased pressures at a time of reduction in employee numbers and the post-COVID environment. This stresses the need to provide as wide a range of Gaelic options as possible, to offer maximum flexibility for staff and Members.
- There is a mistaken belief that staff would have to pay for classes. In fact, Bòrd na Gàidhlig fund a range of SpeakGaelic and Ùlpan classes which are free for Comhairle staff. Messaging about Gaelic learning opportunities must therefore be stronger.

Some typical responses include the following:

- *“All training was readily available and easy to access.”*
- *“I enrolled on Ulpan class but due to being short staffed, my line manager at the time told me I had to cancel. Haven't tried again since as that was very discouraging.”*
- *“My main barrier is lack of time, both at work and at home.”*
- *“I would have liked to continue my Gaelic classes but I do not have time to accommodate any classes now.”*
- *“The opportunity to learn in the workplace was great, however in reality I missed a very large number of classes due to my own workload naturally needing to take priority. Therefore the progress I made was limited - not due to teacher who was amazing.”*
- *“No problems and I am hoping SpeakGaelic is offered again.”*

- *“I requested to attend Gaelic classes when I started in my role but was told there was no funding available.”*
- *“Practising and finding time to attend classes were the main problems.”*
- *“Ulpan was not successful, mainly due to the pressure of work and IT issues.”*

Question 14

Please use the box below if you have any other comments.

After coded analysis of responses, a large variety of themes emerged in answer to this question, the most popular of which were as follows:

More Gaelic should be spoken in the workplace – 13 respondents mentioned this.

Want to learn/improve Gaelic skills – 8 respondents mentioned this.

Manager discouraged attendance of classes – 5 respondents mentioned this.

Lack of time for classes – 3 respondents mentioned this.

Comhairle should set an example by using more Gaelic – 3 respondents mentioned this.

Observations

- Although a relatively small number of comments were made in answer to Question 14, it is clear that there is considerable support for the increased use of Gaelic in the workplace in order to deliver more services in Gaelic. The Comhairle is also perceived to have an important role in promoting the language and leading by example.
- There is also a lot of interest amongst staff and Members in learning Gaelic skills, but once again, it was stressed by some that lack of time, and line manager discouragement, were major inhibitors to Gaelic learning. There has been line manager discouragement of attendance at Gaelic classes because of increased pressures at a time of reduction in employee numbers and the post-COVID environment. This stresses, again, the need to provide as wide a range of Gaelic options as possible, to offer maximum flexibility for staff and Members.

Some typical responses include the following:

- *“I think that having Gaelic is essential to my role working with young people and community.”*
- *“I think it is really important that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is seen to set an example with the use of Gaelic. This is such a unique selling point for the islands and such a strong indicator of the islands' unique history and culture. It should be something everyone is proud of! Instead I feel many people are blissfully unaware of the historic importance of Gaelic while others feel the need to apologise for it.”*
- *“Tried to learn [but] management were dead against it. No idea why, kinda annoyed me and put me off trying to learn.”*
- *“As the local authority for the part of the world where Gaelic is used most as a community language, we need to support more Gaelic usage in the workplace.”*
- *“A busy work routine has prevented me from signing up to other Gaelic Classes.”*

- *“I think Gaelic should be a priority with frond of house staff that deal with the public on a daily basis, some customers much prefer to converse in Gaelic than English.”*
- *“I am going to start classes.”*
- *“Would very much like to attend classes but find times difficult.”*
- *“I'd like to see the Comhairle returning to having more emphasis on the use of Gaelic at Council Meetings and in our day to day work.”*

APPENDIX 2 – CONSULTATION

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028 Public Consultation

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar prepared a draft of its Gaelic Language Plan for 2023-2028, in terms of Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which was approved by its Comataidh na Gàidhlig on 27 September 2022. The draft Plan then went out to a period of six weeks public consultation, beginning on 30 September, and concluding on 11 November 2022. As a result of this consultation process, a number of amendments were suggested, which were included in the draft Plan.

A number of individuals and organisations took part in the consultation process, and 15 written responses were received. The vast majority of respondents indicated that they welcomed the draft Plan, and that it would help to ensure that Gaelic had a sustainable future in the Western Isles. All responses were considered carefully, and a small number of amendments were made to the draft Plan, based on these responses. These amendments were then duly approved by Committee.

The following comments were typical of those made with respect to the draft Plan.

The Plan Generally

The draft Plan was generally very well received by those who took part in the consultation. The following comments were typical:

“The plan looks very solid, and appropriately ambitious. Some excellent aspirations, and indeed essential ones.”

“[We welcome] the commitments in this draft Gaelic Language Plan, the 4th iteration from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. We recognise the importance of the Gaelic speaking communities in the Western Isles to the future survival of Gaelic and support all efforts to maintain these communities.”

“Tha mi air am plana agaibh a leughadh agus feumaidh mi ràdh gu bheil e fìor mhath nam bheachd – gu h-àraid a thaobh an amais gus cothroman ionnsachaidh Gàidhlig a chur air dòigh don luchd-obrach agaibh.” [“I have read your plan and must say that it is very good in my opinion – particularly in terms of the aim to deliver Gaelic learning opportunities for your staff.”]

“[The Plan] will be of great importance to the islands if implemented fully.”

“It is great to see many aspirations towards supporting learners and encouraging new speakers, such as through learning opportunities for staff and parents, support for communities, ensuring new staff have knowledge of the Comhairle’s Gaelic Language Plan, ensuring Gaelic training opportunities are embedded in new staff inductions.”

The majority of comments made concerned the areas of education and communities.

Education

The following points in the draft Plan were praised in particular by respondents in terms of commitments to developing Gaelic education:

- Early Years Officers liaising with parents and prospective parents on the benefits of GME for children;

“The focus on Gaelic in the Home and the Early Years in the plan is to be commended. Inter-generational transmission of the language must be nurtured and protected if Gaelic is to flourish as a language in the communities of the Western Isles.”

- Concrete targets linked to Gaelic enrolment;

“I think more enrolment in GME would help the Gaelic language in schools and would help to decrease segregation of pupils into separate GM and EM streams.”

- The piloting a GM immersion centre;
- A stronger Gaelic ethos in schools;

“An emphasis on creating a stronger Gaelic ethos in all schools offering Gaelic provision in the new Gaelic policy for the Education, Skills and Children’s Services Department is welcome.”

- Examining the merits of Gaelic standalone schools in the Western Isles;

“We strongly support the aspiration for standalone schools as the gold standard for GME.”

- Encouraging a move away from translated materials which do not incorporate best practice in linguistics, and instead develop Gaelic-specific resources;
- Engaging linguistic and cultural experts to review and advise on development of materials;
- Expanding the range of subjects delivered through Gaelic;

- Continuing to develop the Gaelic curriculum offer for Primary and Secondary pupils available through e-Sgoil;

“e-Sgoil - we recognise the role of e-sgoil as a curriculum enhancing tool which has a role to play in certain elements of education.”

- Review the range of subjects offered in GME, to include more practical or vocational subjects;
- The development of important services such as speech therapy for Gaelic pupils;
- Making full provision for pupils who are not in GME classes to engage in activities related to Gàidhlig, or the Gaelic Learners’ curriculum. Extra-curricular activities should be more readily available in Gaelic, providing a fun learning opportunity;
- Facilitating equity of access to SQA qualifications;
- Expanding Gaelic learning opportunities for adults, which supports Gaelic learning for their children.

The following recommendations were made, and amendments to the draft Plan were included accordingly:

“There needs to be more collaboration with the NHS to ensure that parents are correctly advised on bilingualism and the advantages of speaking Gaelic and encouraged to use Gaelic with their children.” [p.21]

“It would be useful to survey parents on an annual basis on their reasons for opting out of GME and choosing EME for their children.” [p.27]

“Could a more holistic approach to education be explored, such as by art centres offering Gaelic music/art tuition to expand the Gaelic curriculum?” [p.31]

Communities

The following points in the draft Plan were praised in particular by respondents in terms of commitments to the growth of Gaelic in communities:

- More Gaelic essential jobs;
- Linking the Gaelic Plan to other local improvement strategies;
- More affordable housing in Gaelic communities;

“New placenames or names of new housing schemes etc. should always be in Gaelic with consideration for the local names that might exist.”

- Delivering GM courses that reflect the needs of the local economy;

- Liaising with schools, local employers and UHI to ensure that there is a common understanding with regard to the need to link language and local economic opportunity in the curriculum;
- Better broadband connectivity in rural areas;
- Working to increase applications for foundation and modern apprenticeships, and local College and University courses, particularly those connected to key growth sectors, such as tourism, food and drink, creative industries, business services, energy, construction;

“Assistance should be given to UHI and forward planning done to ensure they can deliver courses through Gaelic that most benefit the local economy and allow for greater retention of young people, for example in care, media, hospitality, tourism, retail, teaching, early years, construction, etc.”

- Pushing Gaelic as an economic asset;
- Increased support for businesses, including Gaelic-related businesses, aligned to other local improvement priorities;
- Strengthening digital inclusion through e-Sgoil;
- A high percentage of Gaelic speakers employed in care services and an increase in the use of Gaelic in care services;
- Ensuring that all Comhairle Apprentices sign up to the Gaelic learning programme as a condition of their employment;
- Funding and supporting as wide a range as possible of arts and heritage projects which use or promote the use or learning of Gaelic;

The following recommendations were made, and amendments to the draft Plan were included accordingly:

“Perhaps partnerships with VisitScotland, Outer Hebrides Tourism etc. could be explored to ensure [that pushing Gaelic as an economic asset] is happening to a greater degree.” [pp.43-44]

“There [should be] reference to the Great Place Strategy [and] Comann Dualchas Innse Gall/ Outer Hebrides Heritage Forum.” [p.46]