



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

COMATAIDH NA GÀIDHLIG: GAELIC CENSUS RESULTS SEMINAR

26 NOVEMBER 2024

Report By Chief Executive

PURPOSE

- 1.1 This Report provides information about an online seminar held on 13th November 2024, which discussed the 2022 Gaelic Census data and Scottish Languages Bill.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 On 13 November 2024, an online seminar, organised by Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, discussed the 2022 Census data and the new Scottish Languages Bill, and their implications for Gaelic. The discussion was led by three guest speakers, including Scotland's Deputy First Minister, Kate Forbes. A summary of the main issues discussed is detailed in 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.

- 3.1 **RECOMMENDATIONS**
It is recommended that the Comhairle note the content of this Report

Contact Officer: Donald Weir, Gaelic Support Officer, Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Appendix: Background Papers:

IMPLICATIONS

The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

COMATAIDH NA GÀIDHLIG: SEIMINEAR THORAIDHEAN A' CHUNNTAIS-SHLUAIGH

26 SAMHAIN 2024

Aithisg leis an Àrd-oifigear

ADHBHAR

- 1.1 Tha an Aithisg seo a' toirt seachad fiosrachadh mu sheiminear air-loidhne a chaidh a chumail air 13^{mh} Samhain 2024 mu dhàta a' Chunntais-shluaigh 2022 a thaobh Gàidhlig agus Bile nan Cànanan Albannach.

GEÀRR-CHUNNTAS

- 2.1 Air 13 Samhain 2024, chaidh seiminear air-loidhne a chumail, air a chur air dòigh le Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, far an deach beachdachadh air dàta a' Chunntais-shluaigh 2022 agus Bile nan Cànanan Albannach, agus a' bhuidh a dh'fhaodadh a bhith aig seo air Gàidhlig. Chaidh an deasbad a stiùireadh le trì òraidichean, nam measg, Ceit Fhoirbeis, Leas-Phrìomh Mhinistear na h-Alba. Tha geàrr-chunntas de na prìomh cuspairean a chaidh an togail ann an 6.1, 6.2 agus 6.3.

- 3.1 **MOLADH**
Thathar a' moladh gun toireadh a' Chomhairle fa-near na tha am broinn na h-Aithisge seo.

Cuir fios gu: Dòmhnall Weir, Oifigear Taic Gàidhlig, Sgioba na Gàidhlig
Fa-sgrìobhadh: Pàipearan Fiosrachaidh

BUAIDH

Tha na leanas mar bhuidhean a thaobh na h-Aithisge.

4.1	Resource Implications	Implications/None	4.1	Buaidhean Stòras	Buaidh/Neo-ni
	Financial	% to be met from Comhairle budgets		Ionmhas	% ris an tèid coinneachadh bho bhuidseatan na Comhairle
	Legal	None		Laghail	Neo-ni
	Staffing	None		Sgiobachd	Neo-ni
	Assets and Property	None		So-mhaoin is Tog	Neo-ni
	Strategic Implications	Implications/None		Buaidhean Ro-innleachdail	Buaidh/Neo-ni
	Risk	None		Cunnart	Neo-ni
	Equalities	None		Co-ionannachd	Neo-ni
	Corporate Strategy	Corporate Strategy Priority 1.5: Gaelic Language & Culture		Ro-innleachd Chorpóra	Ro-innleachd Chorpóra Prìomhachas 1.5: Gàidhlig agus Cultar
	Environmental Impact	None		Buaidh air an Àrainneachd	Neo-ni
	Consultation	None		Co-chomhairleachadh	Neo-ni

BACKGROUND

5.1 Scotland's Census involves the collection of data by National Records of Scotland (NRS) about the characteristics of all of Scotland's people and homes. The 2022 Census collection phase took place between 28 February and 1 June 2022, with late online and paper returns continuing to be accepted beyond this. There has been a Census in Scotland every ten years since 1801, except for 1941. The 2021 Census in Scotland was moved to 2022 because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2 Iain Mac an Tàilleir, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Wilson McLeod, Professor Emeritus, University of Edinburgh and Kate Forbes, Deputy First Minister of Scotland, were the guest speakers at the seminar.

6.1 RESULTS OF SCOTLAND'S CENSUS 2022

- 1.3% of the national population, (69,701 people), were able to speak Gaelic. This is an increase of 17.7% since 2011, when 1.1%, (57,375

FIOSRACHADH

5.1 Bidh National Records of Scotland (NRS) a' cruinneachadh dàta mu shluagh na h-Alba gu lèir agus an dachaighean. Ghabh ùine cruinneachaidh a' Chunntas-sluaigh 2022 àite eadar 28 Gearran agus 1 Ògmhios 2022, le cead air a thoirt seachad dha daoine am fiosrachadh a chur a-steach an dèidh na h-ùine sin. Tha Cunntas-sluaigh air a bhith ann a h-uile deich bliadhna bho 1801, ach ann an 1941. Chaidh Cunntas-sluaigh na h-Alba 2021 a chumail ann an 2022 air sgàth buaidh COVID-19.

5.2 B' e Iain Mac an Tàilleir, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Wilson MacLeòid, Ollamh Emeritus, Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann agus Ceit Fhoirbeis, Leas-Phrìomh Mhinistear na h-Alba, na h-òraidichean aig an t-seiminear.

6.1 TORAIDHEAN CUNNTAS-SLUAIGH NA H-ALBA 2022

- Tha 1.3% de shluagh na h-Alba, (69,701 duine), aig a bheil sgilean labhairt na Gàidhlig. 'S e àrdachadh de 17.7% a tha seo air figearan 2011, nuair a bha

people), said they could speak Gaelic. This represents the biggest increase in Gaelic speaker numbers since the Census began in 1801.

- It is not clear why there has been a 17.7% growth in national Gaelic speaker numbers. There have been no significant national policy changes between 2011 and 2022 in terms of Gaelic, and it was suggested that the success of Gaelic medium education (GME), BBC Alba, Duolingo and SpeakGaelic may have raised the profile of Gaelic enough to generate more interest in the language. It was also suggested that perhaps a degree of social change was occurring, where Gaelic was now being embraced more as part of a wider Scottish identity. However, it was agreed that more research was required to establish the reasons for this big increase in speaker numbers.
- There has also been a growth in Gaelic literacy nationally, with an increase of 33.8% between 2011 and 2022 of people who said that they could speak, read and write Gaelic. It was suggested that this was because of the expansion of GME and Gaelic publishing over the period, and also perhaps because of the expansion of informal opportunities to write in Gaelic, as provided by social media, for example.
- The growth in national speaker numbers is occurring across all council areas in Scotland, apart from the traditional Gaelic speaking areas: the Western Isles; Highland; and Argyll and Bute.
- In the Western Isles, 44.7%, (11,426 people), said that they could speak Gaelic. The corresponding figure for 2011 was 52.3%, representing a drop of 7.6%. This also means that for the first time ever since the Census began

sgilean labhairt aig 1.1% (57,375 duine). 'S e seo an àrdachadh as motha a tha air a bhith ann a thaobh an àireamh de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig bhon a thòisich an Cunntas-sluaigh ann an 1801.

- Chan eil e soilleir carson a tha fàs de 17.7% air a bhith ann a thaobh na h-àireimh de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig. Chan eil atharrachaidhean poileasaidh nàiseanta air a bhith ann eadar 2011 agus 2022 a thaobh Gàidhlig, agus chaidh a thogail gur dòcha gur e soirbheachadh foghlam tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig (FtG), BBC Alba, Duolingo agus SpeakGaelic a tha air ìomhaigh na Gàidhlig a dh'àrdachadh chun ìre far a bheil barrachd ùidh aig daoine sa chànan. Chaidh a thogail cuideachd gur dòcha gun robh atharrachaidhean sòisealta a' tachairt, is gun robhar a' faicann Gàidhlig nas trice a-nis mar phàirt de dh' fhèin-aithne Albannach. Chaidh aontachadh gum feumar rannsachadh a dhèanamh gus faighinn a-mach carson a dh'fhàs an àireamh de luchd-labhairt cho mòr.
- Bha àrdachadh de 33.8% san àireamh de dhaoine gu nàiseanta eadar 2011 agus 2022 a thuit gum b' urrainn dhaibh Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn, a leughadh agus a sgrìobhadh. Chaidh a thogail gur dòcha gum b' e leudachadh air FtG agus fàs foillseachadh na Gàidhlig a bu chòir ri seo, agus cuideachd mar a tha barrachd chothroman ann a-nis, air na meadhanan sòisealta mar esimpleir, Gàidhlig a sgrìobhadh gu neo-fhoirmeil.
- Tha an t-àrdachadh san àireamh de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig a' tachairt ann an gach sgìre Comhairle ann an Alba, ach sna sgìrean far a bheilear air a bhith a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig gu traidiseanta: na h-Eileanan Siar; a' Ghàidhealtachd; agus Earra Ghàidheal is Bhòid.
- Sna h-Eileanan Siar, thuit 44.7%, (11,426 duine), gum b' urrainn dhaibh Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn. Ann an 2011, bha 52.3% ann aig an robh sgilean labhairt, a' ciallachadh gu bheil lùghdachadh san àireamh sin de 7.6%.

in 1801, Gaelic speakers are in a minority in every council area in Scotland.

- In Scalpay, North Uist, Grimsay, Benbecula, South Uist, Eriskay, Barra and Vatersay, Gaelic was still spoken by a majority of people. This was, nevertheless, a relatively small total of 3,191 people, and it represented only 27.9% of Gaelic speakers in the Western Isles as a whole.
- In addition, less than one person in twenty in Scotland, (4.6%), who had Gaelic skills, lived somewhere where the language was spoken by a majority of people. This raised the question, how often do Gaelic speakers get the opportunity to speak Gaelic?
- Questions were raised, however, as to the efficacy of the Census in terms of producing a true picture of Gaelic speaker numbers nationally. Concerns were expressed about the self-assessment nature of the Census, which could lead to inconsistencies and inaccuracies, and the binary nature of questions in terms of gaining a nuanced understanding of the situation. There was also no question in the Census relating to frequency of Gaelic usage.

6.2 SCOTTISH LANGUAGES BILL

- Questions were raised in terms of the “Areas of Linguistic Significance” (ALS) designation proposed in the Bill, where enhanced Government support would be available in such areas for Gaelic usage and learning. Such support would be available for areas where at least 20% of the population had Gaelic language skills. However, it was felt that 20% was too low a threshold, because it included those who only understood Gaelic,

Tha seo cuideachd a’ ciallachadh, airson a’ chiad uair a-riamh, bho thòisich an Cunntas ann an 1801, gu bheil luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann am beag-chuid anns a h-uile sgìre comhairle ann an Alba.

- Ann an Scalpaigh, Uibhist a Tuath, Griomasaidh, Beinn na Fadhla, Uibhist a Deas, Èirisgeigh, Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh, tha mòr-chuid de dhaoine fhathast a’ bruidhinn Gàidhlig. Ach, chan e seo ach àireamh beag de 3,191 duine gu lèir, agus chan e ach 27.9% de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig sna h-Eileanan a tha seo.
- A bharrachd air sin, tha nas lugha na aon duine anns gach fichead ann an Alba, (4.6%), aig a bheil a’ Ghàidhlig a’ fuireach ann an sgìrean far a bheil an cànan aig a’ mhòr-chuid. Tha sin a’ togail na ceist, dè cho tric ’s a gheibh luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig cothrom Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn?
- Chaidh ceistean a thogail, ge-tà, a thaobh de cho èifeachdach ’s a tha an Cunntas-sluaigh ann a bhith a’ toirt dhuinn dealbh dhà-rìribh air na h-àireamhan de luchd-labhairt gu nàiseanta. Chaidh draghan a thogail mu nàdar fèin-mheasaidh a’ Chunntais, a dh’fhaodadh adhbharachadh mhearachdan is neo-chunbhalachdan, agus mar nach eil na ceistean a tha ann an cruth dà-roghainn a’ toirt seachad tuigse mhionaideach air an t-suidheachadh. A bharrachd air sin, cha robh ceist ann a thaobh dè cho tric ’s bhathas a’ cleachdadh na Gàidhlig.

6.2 BILE NAN CÀNANAN ALBANNACH

- Chaidh ceistean a thogail mu ainmeachadh sgìrean mar “Sgìrean Gàidhlig Sònraichte” (SGS) ann am Bile nan Cànanan Albannach, far a bhiodh taic an Riaghaltais ann dha sgìrean mar seo airson cleachdadh is ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig. Bhiodh taic ri fhaighinn airson sgìrean le co-dhiù 20% den t-sluagh aig a bha sgìlean Gàidhlig. Ach, bhathar a’ faireachdainn gun robh 20% ro ìosal, oir bha seo a’ gabhail a-steach an fheadhainn a thuig Gàidhlig a-

and it compared unfavourably with Wales, for example, where a similar scheme had a 40% threshold.

- Furthermore, only 15% of the Scottish population who can speak Gaelic lived in areas where 20% of the population have Gaelic skills. Therefore, the question was asked whether the ALS scheme would make a meaningful difference to the level of Gaelic usage across the country.
- The Deputy First Minister believed that the most important thing was to find ways to support Gaelic speaking communities. The Scottish Government wanted to increase Bòrd na Gàidhlig's powers to support communities and education, with a particular focus on communities. However, positive change could not happen through legislation alone, and grassroots community initiatives must already be in place in order to make meaningful progress. Increasing numbers of speakers was not the only yardstick of success, and the priority of the Deputy First Minister was to strengthen Gàidhlig as a living, community language.

mhàin, agus cha robh e cho math ri sgeama coltach ri seo sa Chuimrigh, mar eisimpleir, far a dh'fheumas an cànan a bhith aig 40%.

- A thuilleadh air sin, chan eil ach 15% de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann an Alba a' fuireach ann an sgìrean far a bheil 20% den t-sluagh le sgilean Gàidhlig. Mar sin, chaidh ceist a thogal mu cho èifeachdach 's a bhiodh an sgeama SGS a thaobh cleachdadh na Gàidhlig san dùthaich air fad.
- A rèir an Leas-Phrìomh Mhinistear, 's e an rud as cudromaiche dòigh a lorg gus taic a chur ri na coimhearsnachdan far a bheilear a' bruidhinn Gàidhlig. Tha Riaghaltas na h-Alba airson 's gum bi e mar phàirt nas motha de dleastanasan Bòrd na Gàidhlig a bhith a' cur taic ri coimhearsnachdan is foghlam, le cuideam gu h-àraid air coimhearsnachdan. Ach, cha tig piseach air cùisean bho reachdas a-mhàin, agus feumaidh iomairtean coimhearsnachd a bhith stèidhichte mar-thà gus adhartas dhà-rìribh a dhèanamh. Chan e àireamhan de luchd-labhairt a-mhàin an aon slat-tomhais a thaobh soirbheachais, agus 's e prìomhachas an Leas-Phrìomh Mhinistear Gàidhlig a neartachadh mar chànan bheòthail sa choimhearsnachd.

6.3 KEY QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THE SEMINAR

- What has led to the large 17.7% increase in Gaelic speaker numbers nationally?
- Can the majority Gaelic speaking communities in the Western Isles be maintained?
- How are networks of speakers being encouraged and supported in areas of Scotland where speaker numbers have risen?
- Can GME be developed and expanded?

6.3 PRÌOMH CHEISTEAN AG ÈIRIDH BHON T-SEIMINEAR

- Carson a bha àrdachadh mòr de 17.7% san àireamh de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig gu nàiseanta?
- An tèid na coimhearsnachdan far a bheil mòr-chuid aig a bheil sgìlean labhairt na Gàidhlig sna h-Eileanan Siar a ghlèidheadh?
- Ciamar a thathar a' brosnachadh agus a' cur taic ri lionraidhean de luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann an sgìrean de dh'Alba far an deach an àireamh de luchd-labhairt àrdachadh?
- An gabh FtG a leasachadh agus a leudachadh?