**Consultation on the Draft Scottish Government Gaelic Language Plan 2015-20**

**Analysis of Responses**

**Introduction**

On 27 April 2015 the Scottish Government published their draft Gaelic Language Plan for 2015-20.

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 established Bòrd na Gàidhlig as the principal public body in Scotland tasked with securing the status of Gaelic and promoting the use and understanding of the Gaelic language. Under the Act, Bòrd na Gàidhlig may issue a notice to any Scottish public authority, requiring it to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan. The Gaelic Language Plan must set out the measures to be taken by the authority in relation to the use of the Gaelic language in connection with the exercise of the authority’s functions.

The preparation of Gaelic Language Plans by public authorities ensures that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising its status and profile and creating practical opportunities for its use.

The Scottish Government was among the first six public authorities to develop and implement a Gaelic Language Plan, in which it laid out the steps it would take to increase the use of Gaelic in its daily operations, as well as how it would support Bòrd na Gàidhlig in the fulfilment of the commitments made in the National Gaelic Language Plan. As part of the process set out in the 2005 Act, Gaelic Language Plans are up for renewal every 5 years, and this is the second iteration of the Scottish Government’s Gaelic Language Plan.

**The Consultation**

The consultation on the Draft Plan ran between 27 April and 22 June 2015, and invited comments on the proposed commitments made by the Scottish Government with regard to:

* Identity and Visibility,
* Communications and Publications,
* Staffing and Training,

as well as inviting further comments on the Plan.

**Responses**

A total of 9 responses were received, as listed at **Annex A.** These came from public bodies, one local authority, an independent Gaelic arts organisation and several individuals.

As the consultation was held bilingually, 2 responses were received in Gaelic and 7 were received in English.

Where respondents have given permission for their response to be made public, these are available at the Scottish Government’s consultation site at <http://consult.scotland.gov.uk>.

**Overall findings**

The overall response to the consultation showed general support for the commitments made in the Scottish Government’s Gaelic Language Plan, particularly regarding its role in achieving the aims of Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s National Gaelic Language Plan.

Several points were raised regarding specific commitments within the Scottish Government’s areas of operation, e.g. visibility of Gaelic in SG buildings and staff training. Some revisions were suggested to clarify these commitments. Other points were raised regarding how the commitments made in this plan applied to SG Agencies, NDPBs and other public authorities operating in Scotland, and the importance of the SG leading by example for these organisations.

Several respondents mentioned specific points regarding Gaelic education policy, and the Gaelic provisions outlined in the Education Bill currently before Parliament.

**Next Steps**

We would like to thank all organisations and individuals who responded to the consultation. The comments from the consultation have been, where possible, incorporated into the Scottish Government’s Gaelic Language Plan 2015-20. This has been submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for approval in line with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and will be published once agreement has been reached between the Bòrd and Scottish Ministers.

**Assessment of Responses**

**Question 1(a) – What are your views on the Scottish Government’s Core Commitments in Chapter II, regarding Identity and Visibility?**

It was acknowledged by most respondents that good progress has been made in this area by the Scottish Government since it first produced a Gaelic Language Plan in 2010, and recognised that our ongoing commitments and High Level Aims will help to further increase the profile of Gaelic in Scotland.

Specific points were raised in response to this question regarding the visibility of Gaelic in signs, letterheads and the SG logo, all sectors which have seen good progress but will continue to be developed further.

**Question 1(b) – What are your views on the Scottish Government’s Core Commitments in Chapter II, regarding Communications and Publications?**

New commitments introduced in this section, for example the availability of a Gaelic speaking spokesperson for media statements, and the increase of Gaelic presence on SG websites and social media, were acknowledged as positive steps.

One organisation responding to the consultation requested that good practice and policy developed by the Scottish Government regarding its use of Gaelic be made available and shared with public bodies and authorities. This suggestion contains elements already in place through the Scottish Government’s involvement with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the GMòr networking group of Gaelic Officers.

**Question 1(c) – What are your views on the Scottish Government’s Core Commitments in Chapter II, regarding Staffing and Training?**

Availability of Gaelic language training for Scottish Government staff was mentioned by several respondents as an important part of the Scottish Government’s commitment to the Gaelic language. Clarification was requested regarding some aspects of this commitment, but the aim to support staff who wish to learn Gaelic was welcomed.

One respondent requested that any training resources developed by the Scottish Government for staff training in Gaelic be made available for other public sector bodies.

**Question 2 – Do you have anything further to suggest regarding the Scottish Government’s Gaelic Plan as a whole?**

This question elicited a great range of responses and suggestions from all respondents, with several respondents commenting on Gaelic education and the Scottish Government’s role in its delivery specifically.

The Scottish Government’s role in setting a direction and example for all public sector bodies in Scotland was mentioned by many respondents. The importance of close collaboration and sharing of good practice and resources was highlighted as a priority in achieving the aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan.

Specific points mentioned in response to this question included:

* National Gaelic education demographics – could more detail be included regarding different levels of Gaelic education?
* Gaelic medium education – one respondent mentioned possible drawbacks of Gaelic medium only schools, with compulsory English, Gaelic & 1 other language recommended in schools across Scotland instead.
* Another respondent referred specifically to the Gaelic provisions in the Education Bill currently before Parliament, and that strengthening these should be a priority in the delivery of the Scottish Government’s commitments regarding raising the number of Gaelic speakers and the delivery of the National Gaelic Language Plan.
* The importance of Gaelic as an economic and social asset – one respondent requested that this be included in the commitments regarding the National Gaelic Language Plan.

**Scottish Government Response**

The Scottish Government welcomes all responses received to the consultation, and the variety of views on its Draft Gaelic Language Plan.

Based on the feedback received, several amendments were made to the Plan before its submission to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for approval. These aim to clarify several aspects of the commitments made by the Scottish Government with regard to Gaelic in its areas of operation and its role in achieving the aims of the National Gaelic Language Plan.

The Scottish Government will continue to explore further opportunities to share good practice between organisations with Gaelic Language Plans, and those developing Gaelic Language Plans in the future.

Finally, some comments which were received went beyond the scope of the Gaelic Language Plan, but will add value to our discussions with others.

**Annex A – List of Consultation Respondents**

**Individuals**

Mr Allan Cook, Perth

Prof Wilson McLeod, University of Edinburgh

*(+ 2 anonymous respondents)*

**Organisations**

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Fèisean nan Gàidheal

Highlands and Islands Enterprise Limited

Scottish Qualifications Authority