

CNPA response to the public consultations of the draft National Plan for Gaelic and Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans

Thank you for providing the Cairngorms National Park Authority with the opportunity to respond to the public consultation of the draft National Plan for Gaelic and Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans. As suggested, I will structure our response around the questions proposed in the consultation documents.

Q1. Is the vision of the draft Plan one in which you can share?

The Vision: Gaelic as the language of choice for an ever-increasing number of Scots and others, with an expanding core of mother-tongue speakers, and with a dynamic culture in a diverse language community. This is the vision which recognises Gaelic as a national asset and responsibility for Scotland, entails no diminution in status or support for other languages in Scotland, indigenous or immigrant, and places Gaelic in the vanguard of a heightened awareness and appreciation of the multilingual mix of Scotland, past and present.

As three of the four National Park aims; to conserve and enhance the areas natural and cultural heritage, to promote understanding and enjoyment of the Park's special qualities and to promote sustainable economic and social development of local communities, support the proposed long term vision for the National Gaelic Plan the Park Authority can share and support this vision. According to the 2001 national census, of the 16,024 people living in the Park 290 people speak Gaelic representing 1.8% of the Park's population and 0.5% of Scotland's total Gaelic speaking population. The majority of these live in the Newtonmore and Kingussie area, however, the recent production of a Gaelic place names leaflet demonstrates that Gaelic has had an impact to some extent across the whole of the Park.

Q2. In the light of your response to the above question, are the proposed sectoral projects essential to the meeting of the action area aims for 2012? If not, why not?

Vitality action area aim: to stabilise the number of fluent Gaelic speakers, to promote use and to lay the foundation for growth

Sectoral project: Research, dissemination and implementation of strategies for acquisition and use of Gaelic in the home, community and workplace.

Status action area aim: to achieve the popular recognition of Gaelic as a personal and national asset

Sectoral project: Promotion of community and institutional support for Gaelic as a first language through community language plans and other initiatives.

Education action area aim: to expand the provision and uptake of Gaelic education at all levels

Sectoral project: Increase access to Gaelic-medium education, and to the enhanced education experience of dedicated Gaelic schools.

Culture action area aim: to achieve wider use of Gaelic in Scottish cultural life

Sectoral project: A marketing and promotion strategy for Gaelic cultural projects and activities.

Communications action area aim: To achieve greater and broader access to, and presence for, Gaelic in all media

Sectoral project: A Gaelic television channel as a key part of an integrated Gaelic digital service.

Given that these aims are to be achieved in a five year time frame, these sectoral projects are likely to be most effective if they focus on areas where there are significant numbers of Gaelic speakers (40% or more). However, whilst these projects are less likely to make a cost-effective impact on areas where there are low numbers of local Gaelic speakers, there are some priorities for action identified in the Plan which can make a positive impact in areas with a smaller Gaelic community. The Cairngorms National Park Authority, despite having only 0.5% of the national Gaelic speaking population resident in the Park, has taken on initiatives which encourage and facilitate the use of the language such as providing Gaelic awareness training for all staff, including Gaelic on the Park's entry point signage and markers and the production of the Gaelic place names leaflet which helps residents and visitors appreciate which place names have Gaelic language origins and understand what they mean. In addition a cultural audit is planned for 2007/08 which will help to identify what impact Gaelic has on the cultural heritage within the Park.

Q3. Are the outcomes for the 20 themes and the priorities for tackling them correctly outlined and prioritised? If not, why not?

Yes, they seem to be correctly outlined and prioritised.

Q4. In the light of your response to the above question, what projects do you view as being essential to implementing these priorities?

In order to stabilise and establish a firm foundation for fluent Gaelic speakers it is essential to start in the home and within communities where there are a

significant number of Gaelic speakers. Once a firm base has been established this can gradually be developed into surrounding/other areas where people may have an interest in learning Gaelic. The projects focusing on supporting Gaelic use in the home and in the community should therefore be a priority in areas where there are significant numbers of Gaelic speakers. The Cairngorms National Park Authority will consider how this affects Gaelic speaking communities within the Park when we have the results of the Park-wide cultural audit being carried out in 2007/08 and come to develop our Gaelic Language Plan in 2008/09.

Q5. And are there the right organisations identified as being the primary players in implementing these priorities?

Yes - though it is not clear which public bodies specifically may be primary players in implementing the priorities.

Q6. How do you see yourselves contributing to the success of the National Plan?

The Cairngorms National Park Authority has produced a National Park Plan which is due to be submitted to Ministers by the end of 2006. The Park Plan clearly sets out strategic objectives to be achieved in 25 years time as well as priorities for action over the next 5 years which are to be delivered collectively in partnership with public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The Park Authority's role is to co-ordinate the collective delivery of the Park Plan and to ensure that the four National Park aims are achieved.

One of the long term strategic objectives focuses on conserving and enhancing the Park and aims to ensure cultures and traditions associated with the people and communities of the Park will be well recognised and continue to evolve as part of a living culture that secures tomorrow's cultural heritage. The term "cultural heritage" as defined in the Scottish National Park legislation includes "language, traditions, ways of life and literary associations of people places and landscapes"(see page 17 of the Act.) This will clearly include the Gaelic language.

To help achieve this strategic objective, a culture and traditions audit will be carried out in 2007/08 to establish a sound knowledge of the cultural tradition of the Park which can be used to improve communication and co-operation between those involved in conserving and promoting cultural traditions in the Park. The promotion of local cultural traditions by communities and others will also be supported. This should directly contribute towards the Culture: Heritage section of the National Plan for Gaelic by sharing information on Gaelic Heritage with relevant partner organisations to improve Gaelic heritage interpretation in areas where this plays a significant part of a local community's cultural heritage.

In addition, a strategic objective focusing on enjoying and understanding the Park aims to develop and maintain a wide range of opportunities for visitors to experience and enjoy the special qualities, distinctiveness and natural and cultural heritage of the Park. This will include helping visitors discover and understand the Park through activities, events and products that promote the Park's special qualities such as the use of Gaelic within relevant communities. This will contribute towards the Culture: Cultural Activity section of the National Plan for Gaelic.

To help achieve this strategic objective, specific actions have been identified including communities telling their stories about their place in the Park and residents and visitors identifying and capturing what is special for them about the Park and how these qualities change over time - through an oral history project for example. Where Gaelic has a strong association with a particular community this will be identified, captured and promoted to help visitors and residents raise their understanding of Gaelic and the role it plays in the cultural heritage of particular communities.

Finally, the Park Authority will produce its own Gaelic Language Plan during the next five years which will ensure that the use of Gaelic is taken into consideration across all of the Park Authorities activities. This Plan could also provide advice and guidance for other organisations operating in the Park to encourage them to take Gaelic into consideration as part of their activities.

In general the Cairngorms National Park Authority feel the vision set out in the National Plan for Gaelic is one that can be supported, however, it is strongly recommended that the priority for action, particularly during the first five years, should focus on communities where there are currently significant numbers of Gaelic speakers. This will be the most effective way to make an impact on stabilising and establishing a firm foundation for fluent Gaelic speakers in Scotland on which to build a dynamic Gaelic culture in a diverse language community.

CNPA response to the public consultation of the Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans

Q1. Are you satisfied with the interpretation of equal respect on page 8?

The Gaelic Act secures the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to English. In preparing guidance and giving advice and assistance Bord na Gaidhlig must seek to give effect, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, to the principle that the Gaelic and English languages should be accorded equal respect. Equal respect does not mean identical treatment. The extent to which a public authority will be required to use Gaelic in its operations will be affected by the number of Gaelic users it serves, the potential for further developing its Gaelic-medium services, guidance under the Gaelic Act and representations from the public. Equal respect does mean that public authorities are expected to respond to Gaelic users as generously and supportively as possible. It means

that, where Gaelic-medium services are available, public authorities act proactively to inform the public of such services and encourage the public to use them. Requests to use Gaelic should never be greeted with grudging acquiescence. Where Gaelic-medium services are offered, public authorities should ensure that they are of the same standard as English-medium services in terms of quality and timeliness. Where Gaelic and English are presented in parallel, Gaelic will be accepted by the public authority, and will be dealt with on the basis of equality.

Yes - the interpretation of equal respect gives adequate guidance on how this should be applied in practice. However, some specific examples of good practice may be useful. The interpretation of terms such as equal respect will require an element of judgement using the number of Gaelic speakers and potential Gaelic speakers as well as Gaelic traditions within an area as a guide.

Q2. Are the issues concerning the level of provision on pages 9-10 adequately tackled?

Yes, the guidance on the level of provision makes it clear that Gaelic Language Plans should aim for growth on a progressive basis but recognises that this may be restricted to particular geographical locations or to particular functions carried out by the Authority.

Q3. Is the advice in each section clear and helpful?

Yes - however, it may be useful to add in some information as to when or under what circumstances it is appropriate or expected that these types of examples should be included in a Gaelic Language Plan.

Q4. Are the suggestions from page 14 for the content of a Gaelic language plan comprehensive enough and appropriate to the requirements of Gaelic development?

Yes - but see comments above.

Q5. Are the percentages proposed on pages 18-19 and page 22 for the triggering of various policy provision and employment requirements, realistic and appropriate?

It is not clear what having a 'Gaelic Language Skill' means. The percentages proposed are not appropriate or realistic if this includes those who

are starting to learn Gaelic or simply are able to read Gaelic. If 'Gaelic Language Skill' refers to fluent Gaelic speakers the percentages proposed still appear to be ambitious, particularly those relating to employment on page 22 where all staff in a particular function are required to be fluent Gaelic speakers. It would seem to be more appropriate to suggest that where 40% of a population consists of fluent Gaelic speakers an adequate representation of staff who are fluent in Gaelic should be available at all times.

Q6. Would the draft guidance adequately assist in drawing up a Gaelic language plan?

Yes - however the requirements under the monitoring section appear to be unrealistic. It suggests that a monitoring report on the implementation of a plan must be supplied 12 months after a body receives notification of a requirement for a statutory Gaelic Plan. Given that during this 12 month period a plan needs to be prepared, consulted upon and finalised it is unlikely that any significant progress will have been made with the implementation of the plan. It would seem more appropriate if each body is expected to provide a monitoring report on an annual basis from the date a plan is finalised and approved by Bord na Gaidhlig.

I hope the above response is helpful and if you need any points clarified please do feel free to contact me. If you are interested in a copy of our National Park Plan a final version will be available on our website from 1st December when it is submitted to our Board for their approval.

I will be in touch in the new year to arrange a meeting when we might be able to discuss the development of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Gaelic Language Plan and how our cultural heritage audit can best be utilised to inform the develop of our plan.

Kind Regards

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