

[comments in English below]

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Plana Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig agus Stiùireadh air Planaichean Gàidhlig

Deagh thapadh leibh dha-rìreabh agus gu bheil sinn air cuireadh fhaighinn gus beachdan Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd a thabhainn mar phàirt dhen a cho-chomhairle air a' Phlana Nàiseanta agus an dreachd Stiùireadh do bhuidhnean poblach.

Chan eil teagamh sam bith againn gur e àm cianail fhèin cudromach tha seo dor cànan còir. Tha Bòrd na Gàidhlig fhèin air a chantainn cheana, is sibh a-mach air '2020 Air Fàire', gum bidh 'an ùine eadar seo agus a' bhliadhna 2020 cudromach airson stèidh sheasmhach a thoirt dha cànan is cultar na Gàidhlig'. Tha Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd a gabhail ris a seo gu mòr.

Mar a tha nìthean ag èirigh bho Achd na Gàidhlig; le Bòrd na Gàidhlig a-nis air cois gu foirmeil, is romhainn Plana Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig, sann a tha adhbharan dòchas mòra ann agus sinn faicinn cothroman a-nis nochdadh as ùra chan eil air a bhi againn a-riamh roimhe. Tha a èiginn air a' Phlana Nàiseanta, air Bòrd na Gàidhlig agus gach buidheann is gach duine a bhuineas don a chuis, buaidh brìgheil, èifeachdach, feumail a thoirt air a cor na Gàidhlig.

Chithear, anns na leanas, ar beachdan air Plana Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig agus an dreachd Stiùireadh do bhuidhnean poblach, ach seo dhuibh giorrachadh air na prìomh phuingeann:

- Tha Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd toirt fàilte is taic do Phlana Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig agus an dreachd Stiùireadh do bhuidhnean poblach
- Dh'fhaodadh a Phlana a bhi nas treasa ann beagan dòighean:
 - le sealladh fad-ùine nas dàna is nas soilleir
 - dh'fhaodadh e bhi nas simplidh le giorrachadh de Phlana
 - nas lugha de phrìomhachasan
 - tuilleadh air mar a dh'fhaodas a Ghàidhlig a chuir ri leasachadh eaconamach agus barrachd air cothroman is buannachdan tha ag èirigh bhuaipe
 - barrachd cuideam air obair rannsachaidh air suidheachadh na Gàidhlig is leasachaidhean
- Dh'fhaodadh an dreachd Stiùireadh a bhi nas soilleir agus nas simplidh airson an dà chuid: na buidhnean poblach a dh'fheumas Plana a dhealbhadh agus na Gàidheil a bhitheas a lorg seirbheisean is eile tron a' Ghàidhlig.

Sann a tha sinn a coimhead air adhart gu mòr gu bhith ag obair gu dlùth còmhla ri Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Tha mi làn dòchas gum bith am Plana Nàiseanta agus na Planaichean nan buidhnean poblach soirbheachail agus èifeachdach fhèin, is sinn coimhead air adhart gu suidheachadh ùr son a Ghàidhlig, agus i na pàirt àbhaisteach is luachmhor de bheatha làitheil air feadh Alba le bunait de choimhearsnachdan làidir air a' Ghàidhealtachd sna h-Eileanan.

National Gaelic Language Plan and Guidance for Public Bodies on Language Planning

Thank you for your recent letter in which you ask HIE to respond to the consultation draft papers on the National Plan for Gaelic and the Guidance for Public Bodies in language planning.

HIE warmly welcomes the draft publication of both documents and appreciates this opportunity to comment as part of the public consultation exercise.

We congratulate the members and staff of Bòrd na Gàidhlig on producing such a comprehensive and detailed Plan. The task of drawing together and augmenting the various strands of Gaelic development within a single, wide-ranging strategic framework, aimed at achieving a sustainable long-term future for Gaelic in Scotland is indeed ambitious. HIE appreciates the detailed guidance laid out in the Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans, which provides a useful tool in guiding and implementing Gaelic plans in customer-facing organisations such as the HIE network. The production of both documents is a considerable achievement and a milestone in the history of Gaelic development.

HIE and Gaelic

Without the Gaelic language and its associated culture, Scotland and the wider world would be deprived of a major and unique part of its cultural heritage. The last remaining Gaelic-speaking communities are located in the Highlands and Islands and HIE is mindful of the need to nurture and consolidate these communities, ensuring they sustain the language's vitality and authenticity contributing to the unique cultural and linguistic fabric of our region.

HIE (and HIDB) has a history of involvement and investment in Gaelic development which stretches back over 25 years. HIDB commissioned the seminal Cor na Gàidhlig report, published in 1982, recommending the creation of the first dedicated Gaelic development agency, Comunn na Gàidhlig which has long campaigned for legislation protecting the language.

HIE recognises the key role that Gaelic plays in the economic and community development of the HIE region. The Network invests in the development of the language and culture through bodies such as Comunn na Gàidhlig, Pròiseact nan Ealan and Fèisean nan Gàidheal. We continue to make significant investment in the Sabhal Mòr Ostaig campus on Skye, and we have supported the development of the language locally through local enterprise companies and local area language plans for the Western Isles and the Inverness and East Highland areas. HIE's current strategy, *A Smart, Successful Highlands & Islands* outlines a clear commitment to investing in and supporting Gaelic development, with a recognition of the economic, social and demographic benefits associated therein.

AM PLANA NÀISEANTA/THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR GAELIC

Unlike minority language legislation in Catalonia, the Basque Country or Canada, which have applied an individual rights-based approach to language legislation, rights for Gaelic speakers (as with Welsh speakers in Wales) will be vested within institutions charged with delivering services as part of their Gaelic Language Plans. This places added importance on the development of effective Gaelic Plans for public bodies, and it is essential that these Plans link into and complement the National Plan for Gaelic and contribute towards achieving its aims.

The significance of both the National Plan for Gaelic and Gaelic Language Plans for public bodies, in guiding the development of the language, securing the rights of Gaels and securing the future of Gaelic as a spoken language in Scotland, therefore make it more important than ever that they are given very careful consideration at this stage.

We would like to convey some general thoughts on the document as a means of achieving a secure future for Gaelic, and we shall then go on to address the questions posed in the

introduction to the public consultation document, with cognisance of the economic and community development aims of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Network.

The publication of the draft National Plan for Gaelic has largely been received positively by the Gaelic community, and we would wish to echo those sentiments. The comprehensive scope of the Plan reflects the broad range of activity the National Plan must encompass and impact on. We recognise the importance of the five proposed ‘action areas’ of vitality, status, education, culture and communications, and the various themes associated with each.

We believe that the Plan’s exposition on the current condition of Gaelic and the challenges facing the language; identifying key issues such as the weakness of intergenerational transmission; the importance of creating an expanding core of mother-tongue Gaelic speakers; and the pressing need for further in-depth and comprehensive research on the use of the language and attitudes towards it, demonstrate the Bòrd’s acute awareness of the key issues and difficulties currently facing Gaelic. We are confident of the Bòrd’s commitment to tackling these challenges.

While there is obvious emphasis placed on the importance of further developing Gaelic Medium Education, broadcasting service and Gaelic arts and culture, it is encouraging to note that Bòrd na Gàidhlig nevertheless appreciates the crucial importance of the ‘vitality’ of Gaelic as a spoken language; focussing on strengthening the place of the language in the home, the community and the workplace in sustaining Gaelic and Gaelic communities.

Strengthening the National Plan

HIE would like to highlight the following as recommendations for areas where the National Plan might be strengthened:

- **A clearer long-term vision for Gaelic**

Bòrd na Gàidhlig has spoken previously of ‘2020 vision’, in that ‘the period to the year 2020 will be crucial in securing the future sustainability of the Gaelic language and culture’. The National Plan makes no mention of any goals later than those set out for 2012 (based on 2011 census results) and we feel that this is an aspect of the National Plan which should be revisited. Although this Plan will only have a lifespan of five years, it is vital that a longer-term vision for the language is communicated at this crucial point for Gaelic speakers and supporters to buy into.

As part of the recently updated *Smart, Successful Highlands and Islands: an enterprise strategy for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland*, HIE outlined a five-year rolling strategic framework for the economic and community development of the HIE area. The various strategic objectives of the organisation were outlined with priorities for action, as well as a number of targets for the longer term. Those longer term aspirations include the following aims:

- to become a region of half a million residents in twenty years time;
- to create a further 20,000 or so full-time equivalent jobs over that period, and
- to raise income by 10-15 per cent in real terms’

However bold and challenging these aspirations may seem, they nonetheless provide staff and the wider population with a clear idea of the aims and purpose of the Network. We believe that the National Plan for Gaelic and Bòrd na Gàidhlig would benefit from the inclusion of similar long-term ambitions. Such a vision would also provide a contextual backdrop against which public bodies might formulate meaningful Gaelic plans.

Given the importance of increasing numbers of mother tongue speakers and Gaelic learners, and of significantly increasing awareness of the Gaelic heritage across Scotland, we would

propose the following be adopted as suggested targets as part of a 2020 vision for the National Plan as a means of achieving the above:

- **20%** of Scottish population with knowledge of the Gaelic cultural and linguistic heritage of Scotland
- **200,000** with some ability in spoken Gaelic or understanding spoken or written Gaelic (93,000 at time of 2001 census)
- **20,000** speakers of Gaelic within the 3-19 year old age group, with at least **20%** of those as speakers of Gaelic as a mother tongue (focussing on communities where Gaelic remains spoken by more than 20% of the population at the time of the 2001 census)

The current Vision (page 8) in targeting key areas such as Gaelic as the ‘language of choice’ with increasing numbers of ‘mother tongue speakers’ and with a ‘dynamic culture’ are laudable, but the impact of these aims, and particularly their visual impact is compromised by the section included immediately below this. The qualifications that the Plana ‘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’ are both valid and are ones which we would endorse, but the manner in which they are presented on the page, detracts somewhat from the vision statement.

- **The Plan needs to be easier to digest**

This relates to our earlier note on the size, scope and nature of this document. The significant effort involved in reading, digesting and then commenting on the document, is in itself telling of an inherent difficulty in that, at 57 pages (not including the four appendices), the document may be too long and too complex to be one which can be ‘owned’ in any meaningful sense. If it is not practicable to significantly shorten the National Plan, and this may be the case, then a shortened and simpler version should be made available with a clearer and more concise message and possibly some suggestions for how individuals might support its aims.

It may well be that the style and conciseness of the National Gaelic Education Strategy (included as part of the National Plan for Gaelic) actually provides a better template for the National Plan as a whole.

- **Some further emphasis on economic opportunities**

Gaelic has an unfortunate image amongst some as making disproportionate and excessive demands on the public purse. Although it is important to raise awareness of Gaelic heritage as a means of countering such views, it is also important that Gaelic should be seen as a contributor to the economic advancement of Scotland.

HIE invests in Gaelic mainly through its community development remit, but there is growing awareness within the Network of the potential of the Gaelic language and culture as a unique and valuable asset to the Highlands and Hebrides, making a more significant impact on the wider economic development of the region and of Scotland.

The National Plan does take some cognisance of some economic opportunities which might be offered through the further development of the language and culture; particularly within the ‘action area’ of communications, but this is an area where the National Plan needs to be more ambitious in order that Gaelic makes a more significant impact over the longer-term.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig should consider an action area or theme linking with economic development opportunities associated with the language and what commercial activity might realistically grow from this. The Plan should also take further cognisance of the international market, particularly amongst the Scottish diaspora and indeed amongst the Gaelic speakers across the globe. There is, for example, potential for the further development of Gaelic learning products and courses, or for the creation of Gaelic further heritage or genealogical products or services

as part of the growing cultural tourism industry. There is also undoubted potential for the further development of Gaelic broadcasting, while specialist wrap-around childcare services could also be delivered through Gaelic. Bòrd na Gàidhlig might seek to develop dynamic partnerships with the Enterprise Network(s) and groups such as local economic fora, and bodies representing private industry in taking forward such aims.

- **Further research required**

Although national census figures are useful in providing data on the overall levels of ability in the language, it is vitally important that Bòrd na Gàidhlig carries out research in establishing the detailed baseline position of Gaelic as a spoken language of the community and the home. The Bòrd should look at prioritising research on Gaelic as a first language (and the factors which affect the acquisition of Gaelic as a mother tongue), and the strength of the intergenerational transmission of the language. We would emphasise the urgent need for attitudinal research in all domains and situations where the language is used.

Substantive research also needs to be carried out into the contribution of Gaelic towards the wider economic and social development of the Highlands and Islands and of Scotland.

Responses to questions set out in the consultation document

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

See above. While we would support the vision set out in the draft Plan, we feel this vision should undergo significant strengthening.

2. 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?

The proposed sectoral projects set out in the Plan, particularly those targeted at the 'research, dissemination and implementation of strategies for acquisition and use of Gaelic in the home, community and workplace' and the 'promotion of community and institutional support for Gaelic as a first language through community language plans and other initiatives' are projects we endorse and would strongly urge Bòrd na Gàidhlig to prioritise.

The HIE network itself has recently supported projects such as the Family Language Plan project managed by CNSA which has looked to support the acquisition of Gaelic as the first language through support to parents of young children. HIE local enterprise companies have also supported and in some cases driven the development of local Gaelic plans. The development and implementation of further local area Gaelic Plans was outlined as a key recommendation in the recent HIE Corporate Policy on Gaelic approved in March 2006.

We feel the manner in which these proposals for sectoral projects are presented within the National Plan might be a little confusing inasmuch as they sit independently of the various themes, outcomes and priorities, as well as the further list of possible projects listed in Appendix 1. It might be of some benefit if the various sectoral projects were drawn together under one single section towards the beginning of the document.

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

The outcomes listed against each of the various themes are ones which we would support. However, they are occasionally somewhat vague, and in some cases might be difficult to quantify. An example of this might be the outcome associated with the theme of 'support', under the action area of 'status', which is the 'increased presence of Gaelic in the social environment'.

In terms of the priorities themselves, again we would struggle to find fault with any of those listed, but there are simply too many. There are 120 priorities listed in the Plan, not including the 85 key tasks listed within the National Gaelic Education Strategy.

We appreciate the fact that some effort has been made to prioritise (at three levels) within this list of priorities, but it would be to the benefit of the Plan if some effort were nevertheless made to reduce the number of priorities. It would also be to the Plan's advantage if these priorities were regrouped in order of short, medium and longer-term priorities.

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

We believe priority should be given to those projects which aim to ensure that Gaelic regenerates itself as a spoken community language, projects which might raise awareness of the Gaelic language and heritage and with some prioritisation given to projects which might support the development of the Gaelic economy and the contribution of Gaelic to the regional and national economy.

5. Are the right organisations identified as being the primary players in implementing these priorities?

Although we can understand the notion of identifying Primary Players, inasmuch as the organisations listed under each theme are ones which certainly operate within these areas, we feel that the identification and inclusion of these Primary Players in this manner may cause confusion in the sense of restricting ambition or activity in bodies not nominated within particular action areas. It might be a more useful exercise to list the public bodies which will have the most significant role in achieving delivery under each Action Area, and rather than listing Primary Players, to list priority projects under each theme.

6. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, how do you see yourselves contributing to the success of the National Plan?

Through underlining to the public that we have a Gaelic as well as an English language identity. Through stitching Gaelic development more thoroughly into the operation of the HIE business units, particularly the Local Enterprise Companies.

To achieve the aims of the Plan, we believe it is essential that Bòrd na Gàidhlig seeks to build a strong partnership between key communities, individuals and organisations. The HIE network, through its direct links with government, business and, communities is in a strong position to create a mechanism of support structures by which Gaelic can thrive as a language. We would wish to do this in partnership with Bòrd.

As part of HIE's remit for Strengthening Communities in the Highlands & Islands, HIE has identified the following as a priority for action in 'enhancing natural and cultural heritage':

- Strengthening the Gaelic language through focuses on young people, broadcasting, cultural tourism and the arts.

Given HIE's activity and strategic commitment to advancing Gaelic, it is inevitable that the HIE network will engage with the National Plan and contribute to its realisation. We should make clear that HIE activity in terms of Gaelic development will be guided by the positive instrumental role we believe Gaelic plays as a net contributor to the community and economic development of the Highlands and Islands.

The role of Careers Scotland, as part of the HIE network within the Highlands and Islands, adds various dimensions to the work of the Network which impact upon the development of the language through the education sector. Careers Scotland recognise the potential of the organisation in promoting the value of Gaelic as a career choice or as a key part of an individual's skillset. Careers Scotland is identified under the action area of 'teacher

recruitment and supply' towards the impact of 'increased focus on Gaelic teaching careers by Careers Scotland'. Careers Scotland has recently begun discussions with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other partners in engaging further with the Gaelic medium teaching sector.

Careers Scotland are also currently enhancing their service to the Gaelic education sector, making various resources available through Gaelic.

GUIDANCE ON GAELIC LANGUAGE PLANS

HIE recently approved a Corporate Policy on Gaelic for the HIE network. This Policy seeks to raise the profile of Gaelic' and 'ensure a sustainable future for Gaelic' with a number of recommendations for action.

In this respect, HIE has in place a template which is likely to guide the implementation of a Gaelic Plan for the HIE network, though this will obviously be informed by further guidance and advice from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The Guidance document makes some useful recommendations and we particularly appreciate the distinction Bòrd na Gàidhlig has made in terming the primary areas to be covered by Gaelic Plans as the Highlands and Hebrides rather than the Highlands and Islands. We also appreciate the clarification in terms of what is required of bilingual signage and branding for public bodies.

There are some elements of the Guidance which might be revisited in ensuring it better functions as a guidance document and indeed a reference document for those drafting and implementing Gaelic Plans for public bodies.

The document takes some time to detail its purpose and it is not altogether clear until well into the document what a Gaelic Language Plan is and what the implementation of such Plans will mean in practical terms. It is also difficult to determine the timetable for submitting a Plan for approval by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

It might be useful for the Guidance to be clearer in laying down specific recommendations for those public bodies covering certain geographical areas, allowing for the activity of the organisations. The requirements for a local authority and the responsibility therefore for delivering various services (including education) in the Highlands and/or Hebrides cannot easily be compared with the requirements of bodies such as the Scottish Executive or Scottish Parliament, for example.

HIE is grateful for this opportunity to comment on the draft National Plan for Gaelic and draft Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans. We hope that our observations will be helpful towards achieving the aims of securing a long-term and sustainable future for the language.