

NATIONAL MUSEUMS SCOTLAND

RESPONSE TO PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON NATIONAL PLAN FOR GAELIC AND GUIDANCE ON GAELIC LANGUAGE PLANS

National Museums Scotland (NMS) has had a Policy for Gaelic and Scots in place since 1995 (attached).

In summary **NMS's policy is to use languages other than English in support of its strategic objectives, and in particular where to do so would better meet the needs of existing or new audiences, or to encourage wider understanding of the significance of the collections.**

Examples of the use of Gaelic include:

- In 1998 NMS launched a Sound Guide for the Museum of Scotland which included a Gaelic soundtrack.
- In 1998 NMS published a Guide Book to the Museum of Scotland. This was produced in several languages – English, Gaelic, French, German, Italian, Spanish and Japanese.
- In 1998 NMS produced in association with the National Museum of Ireland and the National Museum of Denmark a CD ROM, 'Looking for Vikings'. This included a version in Scottish Gaelic.
- In 2000 the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network (SCRAN) produced for NMS a CD-ROM 'Gaidheil Alba' on the material culture and history of Gaelic Scotland.
- In 2001 NMS was a partner in Europe of Tales, an EU funded educational programme across several European countries which involved storytelling in Gaelic.
- In 2005 and 2006 an NMS curator facilitated Gaelic language sessions on history and culture, based upon NMS collections, as part of Gaelic Schools week. Students from Gaelic medium schools in Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Western Isles participated.
- In 2006 NMS staff developed and taught an MA in Material Culture and Environment, based at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.
- In 2007 NMS, National Galleries of Scotland and the National Library of Scotland will open a major touring exhibition *Fonn 's Dùthchas*, as part of 2007 Year of Highland Culture. The displays will carry theme labels in Gaelic.

NATIONAL PLAN FOR GAELIC

Please note that we have not responded to every question.

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

Publication of a National Plan for Gaelic will provide a useful framework within which bodies such as NMS can focus their activity with Gaelic speaking users and learners. However we cannot say that we entirely share the vision of the draft National Plan for Gaelic.

In saying this it should be understood that NMS is working to strategic objectives agreed with Ministers. These include a commitment to make the national collections accessible across Scotland and to increase engagement by target audiences, only a very small proportion of which are Gaelic speakers. NMS has a responsibility to use its resources to discharge these responsibilities in respect of *all* of its audiences.

Our understanding is that under the Act, NMS has a responsibility to produce a Gaelic language Plan setting out how we will provide for the use of the language in dealing with the Gaelic speaking public and in internal operations. It is difficult to see how NMS can deploy its resources in a proportionate way to address the needs of all its audiences and at the same time support the *aspirations* of the National Plan for Gaelic, which appear to go significantly beyond the *requirements* of the Act.

NMS believes that the National Plan for Gaelic should set out clearly and differentiate clearly between:

- The requirements of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, on public bodies.
- The vision of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and proposals and recommendations based upon this, which public bodies might *choose* to implement.

Q6 If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, how do you see yourselves contributing to the success of the National Plan?

In relation to the proposed specific heritage commitment:

Increased participation nationally in Gaelic language heritage activity.

NMS would take account of this commitment, where it aligns to its own objectives, both through direct provision where beneficial and affordable, but also through working in partnership with other providers, such as Learning Teaching Scotland, contributing NMS's own knowledge and expertise.

It should be clearly understood that any formal expectation laid upon a cultural NDPB through the National Plan for Gaelic, to significantly extend its provision of services in Gaelic, would almost certainly require additional resources. NMS would look to Scottish Executive for provision of these.

GUIDANCE ON GAELIC LANGUAGE PLANS

Please note that we have not responded to every question.

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

NMS is satisfied with this definition.

NMS also wishes to comment on both the basis and form of the guidance and its possible application.

Q3 Is the advice in each section clear and helpful?

NMS believes there is a significant difficulty with the Guidance as drafted. It does not make clear what is *required* to be provided in a statutory Gaelic Language Plan, and what are suggestions or recommendations. We believe that the sections on Structure and Content should focus on requirements and recommendations respectively, and should make this absolutely clear in their section headings and introduction to each.

The section on Content is particularly confusing in this respect. Although the introduction to the section states that the points under each section (Communication, Publications etc.) are *examples* of what to include in a Gaelic Language Plan, this is the only such statement of qualification in the whole section. The specific statements in each section e.g. *Printed Material – Gaelic versions or bilingual production of all leaflets*, could easily be read as proscriptive or mandatory in a Plan. In this respect the Guidance is ambiguous, where clarity should be a priority.

We believe that the introduction should be strengthened in its clarification of the specific points as being examples, for instance by a separate opening statement in bold, and that similar clarification should be included at the top of each Content section.

Q4 Are the percentages proposed on pages 18-19 and page 22 for the triggering of various policy provision and employment requirements, realistic and appropriate?

In relation to the comments above under Q3 there is a particular ambiguity about the statements on development of services for a specified percentage of the population. According to the introduction these are *examples* of criteria which public authorities may choose to apply. However the consultation question above refers to them as proposals.

There is real confusion here about whether Bòrd na Gàidhlig intends, in the final guidance, that these (and other) provisions should remain as examples, or whether, following consultation, they will be proscriptive. NMS takes the view that no provisions of this kind should be made proscriptive unless Ministers have been supplied with information on the financial impact on statutory authorities and other bodies concerned, and have endorsed provision of additional resources or re-allocation of existing resources.

Culture Functions

NMS endorses the first 3 bullet point examples, which align closely with activity which NMS has delivered or plans to deliver under its own Gaelic Policy. On the last bullet point:

Gaelic-medium interpretation of and access to presentation of heritage, culture and art on offer, where 5% of the local population by civil parish or a significant numerical concentration are shown by the latest census to have a Gaelic language skill.

Please see our comment above on the confusion over the status of this provision, as an example or a proposal.

NMS believes that the percentage is set unrealistically low given the competing and legitimate demands on the resources of most public authorities. We believe that 15% would be more appropriate.

NMS has always worked on the basis that Gaelic is used where to do so would enhance users' experience of the national and other collections. In this sense, a demographic percentage trigger is not particularly helpful to us. We would normally choose to provide Gaelic language interpretation of our collections, at our museums and through community based services where a group of whatever size has a significant interest in the material in question.

In a wider context, NMS has a national partnerships strategy, which commits us to working nationally across Scotland, to widen access to our own collections and to provide advice and support to the museums and cultural community. Many of our services in communities (i.e. outside our museum buildings) such as loans, touring exhibitions and learning programmes, are delivered in partnership with local authorities and other organisations. In future we intend to position our partnerships within the local community and cultural planning framework. In these circumstances, where our partner also has a Statutory Plan for Gaelic in place, we would seek to find partnership opportunities to support both Statutory Plans for Gaelic and our partner's local Cultural Plan.