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Dear Peadar

## **CONSULTATION ON DRAFT GUIDANCE ON GAELIC LANGUAGE PLANS**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation.

The Crofters Commission is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) of the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department that regulates and develops crofting, advises Ministers on crofting issues and promotes the interests of crofters. Its authority and powers are set out in the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993.

The Commission enthusiastically welcomes the Gaelic Act and the work of the Bord to promote the Gaelic language and culture. The bulk of the crofting counties are traditional Gaelic speaking areas where heritage and culture are very much valued by young and old alike. Gaelic was, and still is in many cases, the community language. In saying this, the Commission also recognise the Nordic dialects and traditions of Shetland and Orkney.

Before I respond to the specific questions posed in the consultation paper I will set out the background to Commission's previous and ongoing work on the Gaelic language front.

The Commission has a current policy on Gaelic Language, a copy of which I enclose. This policy was last reviewed in 2002. Our information leaflets on regulatory functions include a Gaelic summary, the forward & introductory elements of our Annual Report are produced in Gaelic and a general information leaflet advising of the Commission's functions is produced wholly in Gaelic. Examples of these documents are enclosed.

Our stationery and building signage is bilingual. Our website is bilingual and a mirror image of the English version, although I do accept that the bulk of the documentation remains in English with Gaelic descriptors. We recognise that we must do more here.

By statute the Commission must have at least one Gaelic speaker on its Board. The present Board comprises two fluent Gaelic speakers and one who has conversational Gaelic. One of the reasons behind this is that applicants to an application to the Commission can request that a Hearing into their application be held in Gaelic. These Board members are in a position to chair such a hearing. In addition, the Commission is increasingly holding its Board meetings in public and have open information seminars where crofters wishing to discuss their crofting business in Gaelic with a Board Member are able to do so. We also have a number of native Gaelic speakers on our staff.

Where appropriate, Gaelic speaking staff and Board members communicate Commission policies by interview and presentation through the media of television, radio and text.

### Questions posed by the consultation

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

The Commission consider the vision contained in the draft Plan is one which it can share.

*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 sectoral projects proposed in the consultation all seem to contribute towards the overall action aims set out for each of the action areas.

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

We agree the outcomes and their prioritisation as set out in the Plan.

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

We leave it to those with a more direct involvement to consider the specific projects. However, under either the themes headed "education" or "culture" you may wish to know that the Commission, in partnership with Highlands & islands Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage, Highland Council and Comunn na Gaidhlig, produced a Gaelic Education Pack for schools in 2000-01. Whilst this pack would need to be revised it would be a good start to a similar initiative.

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

We are content with those organisations you have identified as being key players to implement the priorities. Whilst we would not see the Commission as being a key player alongside those you list we are more than willing to work with the Bord and other organisations to further the aspirations of the Plan.

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

The Commission is in the process of developing its own Gaelic Plan based on the guidance provided by the Board. The objectives and work outlined in the Commission's Plan will complement the work of the wider Gaelic Plan and build on the work the Commission has been undertaking over the last several years to promote the Gaelic language and culture.

In conclusion, I would again say that the Commission is very supportive of the initiative to promote the Gaelic language and culture, and will pursue its own Gaelic Plan with enthusiasm subject of course to resource constraints. I would welcome the Bord's view on our work to date.

Yours sincerely

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Head of Policy

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