



Gart na traghad, Bogh Mòr, Eilean Ìle,
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Draft National Plan for Gaelic response

❖ Is the vision of the plan one which you can share?

Yes. The Gaelic language is a fundamental part of national identity and its survival has been threatened by successive government policies. Some redress is essential if Gaelic is to achieve its place in public life.

❖ 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?

The sectoral projects are well thought out and address various areas where Gaelic must be promoted, but they will require both specialist personnel at all levels and adequate resourcing. If quality is not to be diluted then the number of fluent speakers must be raised in a very short time or it will be impossible maintain Gaelic even at its present low level.

In respect of Vitality, particular attention must be paid to areas where there is a strong and distinctive Gaelic heritage which is now under threat, such as Islay. The dialect of south Argyll is being maintained by a dwindling number of Gaelic speakers and its lack of recognition is hastening the decline of the language in Islay and Colonsay.

In respect of education, national initiatives are required to raise the numbers and maintain quality of Gaelic teachers coming into the system at all levels, and to provide structured and cost-effective opportunities for those wishing to learn Gaelic in order to become teachers or adult education tutors. (page 47)

Structured and funded workplace Gaelic learning schemes must be made available.

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

The outcomes are desirable but the list of priorities for tackling them is extremely wide-ranging.

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

All projects listed are relevant. The most essential in the short term are those involving education at all levels and home support. Successive policies have served to eradicate virtually all mention of Gaelic or Highland history from mainstream Scottish life. If Gaelic is to be re-established in Lowland areas it must be seen to have relevance to the history and culture of these areas, and to have a support network within them. However, ad hoc schemes promoting short-term goals will not result in acceptable command of language and are likely to be detrimental to Gaelic's long-term survival. Therefore if adequate government support and Bòrd na Gàidhlig supervision of projects is not available on a continuing basis the Plan is likely to be severely limited in its effect.

Assistance must also be given to the many bodies who have never considered Gaelic to have any place in public life, or indeed, never considered Gaelic at all.

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

The list of organisations gives some indication of the need for careful control of projects. There is great potential for failure when a number of groups with ill-defined remits work in isolation. Control of projects must be clearly defined and reasonable timescales must be put in place to ensure delivery.

Examples of best practice must be sought from countries with proven track records in securing a reverse of language decline, particularly those within Europe whose experience is likely be most relevant.

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

Ionad Chaluim Chille Ìle is the principal provider of Gaelic support within the Argyll and Bute area. We can offer a range of services including higher and further education classes, community classes, workplace training and translation. We provide a language support course to Aberdeen University for Gaelic students nearing the completion of their degrees. We also work in conjunction with local schools and offer dedicated courses to local authorities requiring these for groups of learners. In conjunction with local volunteers Fèis Òigridh Ìle will expand in 2007 to become Fèis Òigridh Ìle agus Dhiùra.

- ❖ Do you have any other comments on the draft National Plan which you would like to submit?

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