

# **Council Response to the Draft National Plan for Gaelic and Draft Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans**

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## **Executive of the Council**

**10 October 2006**

### **Purpose of report**

- 1 This report seeks agreement on the Council's response to the recently issued draft National Plan for Gaelic and draft Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans by Bord Na Gàidhlig.

### **Main report**

- 2 In 2001, the UK government ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in respect of Gaelic in Scotland. In June 2002 a report by the Ministerial Advisory Group on Gaelic, entitled "A Fresh Start for Gaelic", recommended that current service provision for Gaelic speakers be reviewed and that the Scottish Parliament develop a Gaelic Language Act. In October 2002 the Executive received a report on the extent of service provision for Gaelic speakers by the Council, in response to the advisory group report. The corporate assessment at that time was that provision was satisfactory and in line with the demand for Gaelic services and development initiatives. The Executive also agreed to a public consultation with various Edinburgh based Gaelic groups on the extent of assessed service provision.
- 3 In 2005 the Gaelic Language Act (Scotland) was passed by the Scottish Parliament and Bord Na Gàidhlig was established to oversee the development of the Gaelic language across Scotland. The Bord also has statutory powers to develop a National Plan for Gaelic and name public authorities which must produce a local Gaelic Language Plan by a specified date.
- 4 In August 2006 a Draft National Plan for Gaelic and Draft Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans was issued to all public authorities in Scotland for consultation and comment. The vision for the National Plan is extensive and includes references to Gaelic as a national asset with an ever expanding core of mother tongues speakers and a language of choice for an increasing number of Scots. The plan also describes a number of action areas and related outcomes the Bord wishes to see achieved.
- 5 Local authorities will have a significant role to play in the delivery of national objectives and projects. However, of more relevance is the requirement for the Council to develop a Gaelic Language Plan, in line with the draft guidance and

statutory requirements. Council is well placed to deliver such a plan based on existing work, including the Gaelic Cultural Strategy and Gaelic Education Policy

- 6 Whilst the draft guidance is not prescriptive, a general structure is proposed based on the themes of improving vitality, status, education, culture and communication. In developing the Council's plan, the national plan, actual or potential demand for Gaelic provision, potential for development in different locations, representations made to the Council and any further guidance issued by Scottish Ministers must be taken into account. Draft guidance on consulting, publicising, monitoring and reviewing the Gaelic Language Plan is also offered.
- 7 The Council's response to both the draft National Plan and draft Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans is described within Appendix 1. This is based on departmental contributions. Key features of the response include:
  - i) an acceptance of principles on which the National Plan is based and the Council's role in assisting with the implementation of intended outcomes, especially in light of the capital city status;
  - ii) an acceptance of the requirement to develop a Gaelic Language Plan for the Council, which will primarily involve the bringing together of existing strands of work in this arena;
  - iii) concern that some of the suggested policy changes and service development issues are overly aspirational and require additional resources; and
  - iv) concern that the guidance on local plans does not contain robust references to the need for a complementary, proportionate and relevant approach given other strategy, policy and service pressures in the field of language development, interpretation and translation.

### **Financial Implications**

- 8 The Council has previously assessed service provision for Gaelic language service delivery and development to be in line with current and predicted levels of demand and therefore there are no immediate financial implications. However, the draft guidance does describe a challenging development agenda, which has financial implications in the future. Bord Na Gàidhlig does have some financial resources to award for innovative development projects, however, it is unlikely this will meet increased service or development demands which would have to be found from mainstream budgets.

### **Recommendations**

- 9 It is recommended that the Executive:
  - (i) agrees the Council's response to the consultation on both the draft National Plan and draft Guidance for Gaelic Language Plans; and
  - (ii) agrees to a corporate approach to the development of a Gaelic Language Plan for the Council by 2008 / 2009 involving further internal and external consultation on this matter.

**Jim Inch**  
Director of Corporate Services

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<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix 1 – Council’s Response to the draft National Plan for Gaelic and the draft Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans
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<b>Wards affected</b>	All.
<b>Background Papers</b>	The draft Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans The draft National Plan for Gaelic

**Draft National Plan for Gaelic and Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans for Public Authorities**

**City of Edinburgh Council Response**

**National Plan**

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

- The Council agrees with the aspirations described within the National Plan vision and the vision for Gaelic as a national asset and that as the capital city of Scotland the Council would have a key role to play.
- However, in light of increasing financial restraint and competing pressures on local authority resources local authorities must adopt a proportionate, relevant and complementary approach when implementing aspects of the national plan.
- Whilst Bord Na Gàidhlig might aspire for the implementation of the national plan to “entail no diminution in status or support for other languages in Scotland”, the operational reality of meeting existing service demands from speakers of other languages, especially with vulnerable EU migrants, will imply a necessary reduction in available translation and interpretation resources for users of Gaelic.
- The comparisons with the Welsh language development model are interesting. The Council is concerned that the Welsh model may be seen as a benchmark for Gaelic language development in Scotland. The Council sees the Scottish context as quite different and the Welsh experience as a vastly different linguistic heritage. The Council would prefer to see the Welsh model as providing examples of good practice, which Scotland could learn from.
- The Council would see some of the changes proposed as overly aspirational, however, it accepts the National Plan is fundamentally about a societal change in attitudes to Gaelic and that in language planning implementation is not directly followed by results.

**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?**

- CEC welcomes the breadth of sectoral projects described within the National Plan and is keen to build upon the work it has already undertaken on a Gaelic Education Policy, Gaelic Sports Development and a Gaelic Cultural Strategy which will assist the Bord in meeting its national outcomes.
- The prominent role given to local authorities in assisting the Bord to meet national outcomes is welcomed, but the commitment to national priorities must be proportionate to other local language demands the Council must serve as a result of race and disability legislation and the respective equality duties to ensure access to services and information.

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

- Many of the outcomes relate to increased participation and the Council welcomes this approach.
- The breadth of outcomes provides a good outcome based platform for local authorities to develop localised Gaelic Language Plans.

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

- Particularly essential projects for the Council would include:
  - research and dissemination of findings and strategy responses;
  - promotion of community and institutional support for Gaelic as a first language through community language plans and other initiatives;
  - increased Gaelic medium education;
  - marketing and promotional strategy for Gaelic cultural projects; and
  - increased provision for Gaelic for Learners.

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

- The right organisations are identified, however, the partnerships and strategies, which bind these organisations together are not. This is a serious failing of the draft National Plan.
- More emphasis should be placed on a complementary approach that looks to integrate the intended outcomes of the National Plan into existing community planning strategies e.g. lifelong learning / community learning strategies.

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

- As the capital city the Council envisages playing an active role, proportionate to other language development interests and service demands.
- The Council is committed to developing a Gaelic Language Plan, which will encompass existing strategy, policy and service development in this arena and will link to an existing community planning partnership e.g. Cultural Partnership, Lifelong Learning Partnership. The Council has an intention to base its Gaelic Language Plan around all the national themes and relevant intended sectoral projects and outcomes.
- The Council does not see the development of the Gaelic Language in Edinburgh as an equalities issue. Rather, it is a lifelong learning and cultural development issue and as such, the Council's plan will reflect these core themes.

## **Gaelic Language Plans**

**1. Are you satisfied with the interpretation of equal respect?**

- The Council is satisfied with the definition of equal respect, especially the notion that equal respect does not mean equal treatment as this would clearly pose operational and budgetary demands the Council could not meet.
- The core principles of respect and support are welcomed and this enables the Council to develop a proportionate response within existing budgets and service demand pressures.

## **2. Are the issues concerning the level of provision adequately tackled?**

- The Council welcomes the acknowledgement that different public authorities will be at different positions and starting points in relation to the development of Gaelic language and the general principle of promoting increased use of the language benchmarked against existing use.
- The geographical targeting of information in Gaelic is an interesting approach and one that the Council will explore in relation to specific centres where Gaelic language services are provided.
- Edinburgh does not have local concentrations of Gaelic speakers, however the 2001 census does give an indication of around 6,191 (1.37% of the total population) active users. The Council acknowledges there is therefore a critical mass of people to whom it should provide more opportunities to engage in language development, within available resources.
- However, adopting policy positions that promote communication on any Council matter in Gaelic where there is clearly bi-lingualism in English as well would not be possible given existing language development and service demands. In the spirit of the National Plan it is more appropriate to adopt policy positions that state communication in Gaelic must be adopted when there is a specific Gaelic language development issue at stake e.g. development of Gaelic Education Medium Education Services or the development of the Local Gaelic Language Plan.

## **3. Is the advice in each section clear and helpful?**

- The Council finds the guidance helpful in describing the key themes and principles, however, a more outcome related structure (similar to the national plan) may be of more assistance to local authorities. This would be in line with the public service reform agenda.
- The examples given for communication are helpful, although very aspirational. Perhaps more good practice examples could be offered from other public institutions.
- The funding advice provides clarity on the mainstreaming approach, but again the Bord would have to recognise the current context of local authority mainstream funding shortfalls as having an impact on the extent to which local Gaelic Language Plans will achieve intended impacts and outcomes. Funding opportunities through the Bord are also welcomed and the Council would be keen to explore a range of potential youth and culture / arts / music related projects.
- Clarity around the expectations of consultation, publication and monitoring of plans is also welcomed.
- Perhaps more detail could be provided on the extent of local demand and local Gaelic networks to assist local authorities in their task. Definitions within the

guidance use generalist terms like Gaelic Culture and Language, however, a local authority response needs to be based on actual need and the true extent of use and demand by the local Gaelic speaking community. There is no indication within the guidance on how such a needs survey may be carried out or of any national profiling work that has taken place which could inform public policy. The Council therefore does have concerns that the consultation stage of development will be open to a “lobbying” approach as opposed to a “needs-based “ approach, the later being more in line with modern public authority practice.

**4. Are the suggestions for the content of a Gaelic Language Plan comprehensive enough and appropriate to the requirements of Gaelic development?**

- Yes, the content structure is clear and concise, however, more focus on specific local outcomes would be helpful.

**5. Are the percentages proposed for the triggering of various policy provision and employment requirements, realistic and appropriate?**

- Yes, 5% would seem to be a sensible figure for triggering specific service responses and inclusion within mainstream community planning documents.

**6. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, would the draft guidance adequately assist in drawing up a Gaelic Language Plan?**

- Yes.

**7. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation not covered by the Gaelic Act, do you feel that this guidance would be of assistance in drawing up a non – statutory Gaelic Language Plan?**

N/A.