

Policy and Sustainability

10am, Tuesday, 30 August 2022

Bord Na Gaidhlig – response to consultation on the draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28

Executive
Wards - all
Council Commitment

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the response to Bord Na Gaidhlig's consultation on a draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28, approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader under urgency provisions set out in A4.1 of the Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions so as to meet the consultation deadline.

Andrew Kerr

Chief Executive

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2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report summarises the Council’s response to Bord Na Gaidhlig’s consultation on the draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28.
- 2.2 In broad terms the response specified a range of areas where further consideration is required. This includes funding implications and the need to allow for local democratic accountability in the development of actions to respond to national level aims.

3. Background

- 3.1 Bord Na Gaidhlig have drafted the fourth [National Gaelic Language Plan](#) which will cover the period 2023-28, in response to requirements of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.
- 3.2 The plan underpins the Scottish Government’s ambition to see an increase in the numbers of people speaking, learning, and using Gaelic in Scotland. It sets out the priority areas for development and their contexts, and states that, for the Plan to be effective, it requires stakeholders, including local authorities, to take steps to develop and promote the language.
- 3.3 The Council is developing its own third plan which will be presented to committee for consideration later in the year.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Bord Na Gaidhlig’s draft plan proposes the ambition, aims and targets for the continued development and embedding of Gaelic during 2023-28, seeking feedback.
- 4.2 The draft plan is ambitious, seeking, for example, a substantial increase the range of services provided by public authorities through the medium of Gaelic and an increase the number of local and digital hubs across Scotland which are supported so that Gaelic is used regularly.
- 4.3 The key themes of the feedback provided by the Council relate to:
 1. The resource implications for local Government of the ambitions, aims and targets outlined in the plan

2. The need for local actions to be determined through the democratic process, shaped by local circumstances, and
3. The potential for the expertise available across Scotland to be reconfigured to maximise impact and progress.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Council will continue to seek opportunities to engage with the Scottish Government and Bord Na Gaidhlig to develop effective ways to meet the requirements of the Gaelic Language Act.
- 5.2 The Council will continue to develop its draft Gaelic Language Plan 2023-27, which will be subject to public consultation.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There is no financial impact or implications for the Council at this stage.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The Gaelic Implementation Group, continued under the last administration, considered draft high level aims for the Council's next Gaelic Language Plan.

8. Background reading/external references

[The City of Edinburgh Council Gaelic Language Plan 2018-22 - Monitoring Report](#)

9. Appendices

- 9.1 The City of Edinburgh Council response to Bord Na Gaidhlig's consultation on the draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28.

National Gaelic Plan (Bord Na Gaidhlig)

Public Consultation (closes 26 July)

Response from the City of Edinburgh Council

Question 1: Do you think the draft Plan contains the optimum mix of ambitions, targets, aims, areas of activity and actions for Gaelic at this time or what would improve this?

While there is an explicit link between the aims and the actions (the actions being structured under the aims), the link between these and the ambitions is not clear. It would be helpful to include an explanation of why these ambitions were chosen, and how they will shape action over the period of the plan.

It would be helpful to describe what the ambition that “Gaelic is normalised as a language in the home, socially and in the workplace across the country” would mean – what would success look like in practical terms?

We welcome the ambitions set out in the plan, but there are significant resource implications associated with their delivery. The range of services provided by local authorities through the medium of Gaelic has increased substantially in recent years. To sustain and further expand this provision, local authorities will need additional and sustainable resource support. As a capital city, these pressures and this demand on resources is particularly prevalent in Edinburgh.

The consideration of other languages (e.g. Scots) is welcome but the implications for delivery need to be considered e.g. how activities for different languages would be resourced, prioritised and aligned.

Question 2: There are a range of ambitions and targets which set the direction of the Plan. Do you think these are the appropriate ambitions and targets or do you have suggestions for others?

The proposed ambitions, actions and targets do not allow for local democratic accountability. Ambitions, actions and targets are the responsibility of local government and the democratic process, responding to the needs, priorities and context of local area.

Further, ambitions and targets need to be appropriate to the local context, which varies considerably across Scotland.

The island context is dominant in the document. It is essential that thriving mainland communities are supported to the same extent as traditional island communities.

It would be helpful to have further details to support the statement that “this will entail using existing funding more effectively” to clarify what may be considered to be ineffective spending.

Specific challenges include:

1. Apprenticeships: these need a place-based approach to make sure that they are relevant to the local population/context.

2. There is an implied hierarchy of languages which does not align with the 1+2 policy and how it is implemented. Again, this depends on local context and local decision making.
3. Expanding the curriculum offer requires significant commitment from schools, including investment of time to recruit and retain suitably qualified staff. Workforce planning at a national level is needed to ensure an adequate supply of suitably qualified staff across subject areas.
4. Similarly, an annual expansion of online activity has resource implications which need to be recognised.

Question 3: There are a range of actions relating to each area of activity. Do you think that specific goals should be attached to the actions and if so, your suggestions on what these should be would be welcome?

Specific goals would be unhelpful because they will not reflect local circumstances and priorities, which can only be done through context-specific, locally agreed plans.

Instead, each public body should consider their own goals and targets within the broad framework of priorities set for Scotland as a whole.

Question 4: The Plan takes a broad and inclusive approach to the promotion and support for Gaelic. Do you think a broad approach is the right approach for Gaelic at this time?

It is not clear how the intention to take an inclusive approach has been incorporated into the report through the proposed aims and actions.

One of the proposals is increased support for the network of Gaelic Officers to develop local programmes for all ages. A concern is that this would not ensure the same level of support on the mainland as in the islands, where there is currently a greater number of officers per head of the population.

Question 5: The Plan wants to see Gaelic having a stronger appeal to individuals and families and to see an increased confidence in the use of Gaelic. What more do you think could help with this?

In the context of a clear direction at national level, a place-based approach, recognising local circumstances would be helpful. Public bodies such as local authorities have a key role in supporting this.

One way of supporting public bodies to deliver the national ambitions, including appealing to individuals and families would be to simplify the process for applying for funding: the current process is cumbersome and time-consuming and funding criteria are not clear.

Another important support would be a workforce plan, encompassing Education and the wider context, including the development of effective cultural content to appeal beyond the classroom. There is a potential role for the Gaelic Development Officers here.

Question 6: What else do you think would ensure a promising future for Gaelic in Scotland?

More explicit recognition of the distinct communities in Scotland with their own opportunities, needs and challenges. For example, the International Book Festival offers

unique opportunities in Edinburgh such as hosting Gaelic Book Bug sessions August 2022. Again, this is where the alignment of the public bodies Gaelic Language Plans with the national plan is needed, along with the flexibility to plan and deliver in response to local circumstances.

The proposed action to increase the co-ordination with all the projects which enrich and retain the vitality of the Gaelic language is welcome. Encouraging a partnership approach at regional level would support a more streamlined approach to the implementation of plans, embedding Gaelic in their specific communities and more effective use of regional resources.