



For decision

Title: Consultation on Gaelic Language Plan 2024-28

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Purpose

This paper outlines the Park Authority's proposed approach to a six-week consultation on our new Gaelic Language Plan 2024-28.

Recommendations

The board is asked to:

- a) Review our proposed stakeholder engagement approach and agree that the consultation can start w/c 15 January 2024 for a period of six weeks.

Background

1. The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was passed by the Scottish Parliament with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect to the English language.
2. One of the key features of the 2005 Act is the provision enabling Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising the status and profile of the language and creating practical opportunities for its use.
3. The Park Authority is required to produce a new Gaelic Language Plan every five years within the framework of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and in line with the National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28. It should set out how we will use Gaelic in the operation of our functions, how we will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how we will promote and develop Gaelic.



4. The Park Authority's draft Gaelic Language Plan is being prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the Act and has regard to the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans.

About our Gaelic Language Plan

5. The Park Authority recognises that Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland and the National Park's heritage, identity and cultural life. We are committed to the objectives set out in the National Plan for Gaelic – which is recognised in our National Park Partnership Plan under objective B8 – and have put in place the necessary structures and initiatives to ensure that Gaelic has a sustainable future in Scotland and the Cairngorms National Park.
6. We recognise that the position of Gaelic is extremely fragile and, if Gaelic is to be revitalised as a living language in Scotland, a concerted effort on the part of government, the public and private sectors, community organisations and individual speakers is required to:
 - Enhance the status of Gaelic.
 - Promote the acquisition and learning of Gaelic.
 - Encourage the increased use of Gaelic.
7. A draft National Gaelic Language Plan was published by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 27 April 2022 and consulted on for a three-month period. Over 250 responses were received to help shape the final draft ([see this page for a summary](#)) but, at the time of writing, no firm date has been set for publishing the completed plan.
8. Nonetheless, through ongoing conversations with the Bòrd, we will make every effort to align our new Gaelic Language Plan with the substantive aims of the new national strategy and, following detailed discussions with their Chief Executive, have agreed the following three strategic aims:
 - **Increasing the use of Gaelic** within our organisation and encouraging more people to use Gaelic, more often when they interact with us.
 - **Increasing the opportunity for people to learn Gaelic** as part of our day-to-day operations.



- **Promoting a positive image of Gaelic** whenever we can as part of our day-to-day operations as an organisation.
9. The Bòrd also set a series of corporate service aims around 'status' (covering logo, brand and signage), 'communicating with the public', 'information' (news releases, social media, publications, websites etc), 'staff' (recruitment, inductions, training etc) and 'Gaelic language corpus' (including using Gaelic place names). Taken together with the above strategic priorities, these will form the core structure of our new Gaelic Language Plan 2024-28.
10. Alongside the national strategy, a new Gaelic Language and Culture Strategy is also currently being developed, led by VisitScotland. The Park Authority is one of over 40 organisations that has been involved in the early consultation stages of this plan and we will ensure that both this strategy and our own Gaelic Language Plan align as they develop.

Consultation on the new Gaelic Language Plan

11. Section 3(6) of the 2005 Act requires public authorities to consult persons appearing to them to have an interest in the development of their Gaelic Language Plan. To comply with these statutory requirements, Bòrd na Gàidhlig recommends that a public consultation exercise be undertaken, with the following considered best practice:
- A consultation period of between six and 12 weeks to ensure that members of the public have sufficient time and opportunity to make their views known.
The Park Authority is proposing a six-week consultation, beginning w/c 15 January 2024.
 - A draft of the plan published bilingually in Gaelic and English with hard copies available. An electronic copy should be made accessible in a prominent place on the authority's website.
The Park Authority will publish both English and Gaelic versions of the draft plan and make them available as a hard copy, online via our website and in accessible Word document format.
 - A bilingual press release announcing the beginning of the consultation process, brought to the attention of all relevant media outlets. The public authority should



endeavour to make available a Gaelic-speaker to conduct media interviews with Gaelic media.

We will issue a media release in both English and Gaelic announcing the start of the consultation. Unfortunately, we are not aware of any fluent Gaelic speaker on staff or on the board so will not be able to provide a spokesperson in Gaelic on this occasion.

- Other channels for consulting the public may include local radio stations, placing copies of the draft plan in their local offices, in libraries and health centres, issuing leaflets, using noticeboards, and using electronic means of communications. A particularly effective way of raising the profile of the consultation is to include a bilingual strapline in e-mails sent by employees and officers of the public body notifying recipients of the existence of the draft plan.

As with any formal engagement process, we will promote the consultation via a range of on- and offline channels, including our website, social media, press, publications and newsletters.

- A programme of public meetings, widely advertised with the outcomes recorded. **Given the relatively low number of Gaelic speakers in the National Park (less than 2% of the population) we do not believe that face-to-face public meetings will be the most efficient way of gathering stakeholder views on the plan. We will, however, explore the possibility of online sessions to reach a wider audience and make staff members available for phone / in-person chats upon request.**

Proposed consultation questions

12. Building upon our conversations with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the set of questions we asked five years ago, we have prepared the following draft questions for the consultation period. These will be accompanied with our standard demographic questions and made available in a variety of on- and offline formats:

- Would you like to respond in English or Gaelic?
- Are you responding as a: resident / business – tourism / business – non tourism / visitor / member of a Gaelic organisation / community representative / pupil at a Gaelic medium education school / teacher at a Gaelic medium education school /



student or adult learning Gaelic / other public sector organisation / staff or board member / other (please specify)?

- How would you describe your Gaelic knowledge / fluency?
- We have identified three high-level aims for our new Gaelic Language Plan. To what extent do you agree or disagree that these aims are the right priorities for the Cairngorms National Park Authority?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree that our draft Gaelic Language Plan helps safeguard and promote Gaelic language and culture?
- To what extent do you agree or disagree that our draft Gaelic Language Plan is clear and easy to understand?
- Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve our Gaelic Language Plan?
- Would you be interested in helping take forward any aspects of the Gaelic Language Plan (please specify)?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about our draft Gaelic Language Plan?

Budget implications

13. In order to ensure that the consultation reaches as broad and representative an audience as possible, we set aside a maximum budget of £5,000 in the 2023/24 budget to support our communications efforts. However, as many of the channels we intend to use (websites, publications, PR etc) are already firmly established, it is unlikely that the full amount will be required.