



For decision

Title: Adoption of the Gaelic Language Plan 2024-28
Prepared by: Oliver Davies, Head of Communications and Engagement

Strategic Context

1. The National Park Partnership Plan has a specific section on Gaelic language and culture.
 - a) Objective B8 - Encourage greater use of Gaelic in the National Park
 - b) Target – Increased opportunities for individuals and communities to engage with the Gaelic language and culture.
2. The Park Authority Corporate Plan sets out
 - a) Direct Delivery - Develop the Gaelic Language Plan for the Park Authority.
 - b) Indirect Delivery - Promote Gaelic, especially through work on sustainable tourism, community development and relevant heritage projects

Purpose

3. This paper summarises the results of a six week consultation on our new Gaelic Language Plan 2024 - 28 and outlines changes made as a result of public feedback.

Recommendations

4. The board is asked to:
 - a) Review the results of the public consultation and approve the draft Gaelic Language Plan 2024 - 28, ahead of it being submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for final comments / approval.

Strategic policy consideration

5. 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.



6. 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.
7. 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.
8. The Park Authority's draft Gaelic Language Plan was 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

9. 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.
10. 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:
 - a) Enhance the status of Gaelic.
 - b) Promote the acquisition and learning of Gaelic.
 - c) Encourage the increased use of Gaelic.
11. Following a three month consultation period involving over 250 responses, Bòrd na Gàidhlig published the [National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28](#) in December 2023. Unfortunately, this publication came too late to directly impact the drafting of our new Gaelic Language Plan.



12. Nonetheless, through ongoing conversations with the Bòrd, we have made a concerted effort to align our plan with the substantive aims of the new national strategy and, following detailed discussions with their Chief Executive, 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.
13. 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 form the core structure of our new Gaelic Language Plan 2024 - 28.
14. If approved by the Park Authority board, the Gaelic Language Plan (see Annex 1) will be submitted to the Bòrd for final comments and approval on 5 July 2024.

Stakeholder engagement

15. 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. The Park Authority conducted a six week public consultation between 25 January and 7 March 2024 via an online survey (available in both Gaelic and English). Phone, paper and email submission options were also provided.

The consultation was promoted extensively both on and offline across a range of channels. This included a bilingual media release and consultation landing page on our website, plus working with social media influencer Somhairle to produce tailored Instagram and TikTok content to engage a younger audience. We estimate that over 150 responses overlapped with this activity, and over 32,000 people watched the videos Somhairle created. The consultation was also shared with over 100 contacts within the new Gaelic Officers Network, which has led to multiple organisational responses and lots of direct email correspondence around potential partnerships.



16. A total of 427 responses were received, out of which 31 (7.3%) were in Gaelic. This compares to 36 total responses submitted to the public consultation for the 2018 – 2022 Gaelic Language Plan, and the around 250 people who contributed to the National Gaelic Language Plan consultation.
17. A detailed summary of the consultation can be found in Annex 2, but key demographic information was as follows:
- On respondents' connections to the National Park, 31% said 'Local resident', 68% said 'Visitor', 6% said 'Business owner or employee', 2% said 'Land manager or worker', 2% said 'Community group member', 2% said 'Staff / board member or Park Authority volunteer', 0.4% said 'Partner organisation', 2% said 'Prefer not to say', and 7% said 'Other'. (Please note, as people could select multiple options, the total does not add up to 100%).
 - There was a fairly even spread across the age ranges. 32% were aged 16 - 24, 23% aged 25 - 34, 11% aged 35 - 44, 13% aged 45 - 54, 12% aged 55 - 64, 8% aged 65 or over, and 1% 'Prefer not to say'. This suggests that a younger demographic than usual engaged with the consultation.
 - In terms of underrepresented communities, 22% of respondents said they were living with a physical or mental health condition or illness; 26% considered themselves to be on a low income; 18% had caring responsibilities; 1% identified as being from mixed or multiple ethnic groups (with 13% answering 'other' to the ethnicity question); 10% identified as bi / bisexual and 11% as gay / lesbian; and 3% identified as a trans person. All these figures are equal or higher than the equivalent percentages within the resident population of the Cairngorms.
18. 82% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the three strategic priorities outlined within the plan; 78% agreed or strongly agreed that the draft plan was easy to understand; and 76% agreed or strongly agreed that the plan 'helps safeguard and promote Gaelic language and culture'. The majority who did not agree did so because they do not believe organisations such as the Park Authority should prioritise Gaelic in their day-to-day work.
19. The consultation report – produced by an independent third party, Ryan Dziadowiec – includes a summary of key findings (see Appendix 2, page 4), with the following key headlines:
- Exponential growth in engagement** – a 1,086% increase in the number of participants in the consultation exercise from five years ago.



- b) **Overwhelming support** – barring those who do not support the development of Gaelic Language Plans in general, the plan received overwhelming support from all audience categories.
- c) **Interest in Gaelic among residents and visitors alike** – both demographic groups showed majority support for the Gaelic language and there was a large increase in respondents who had at least a basic understanding of Gaelic versus five years ago.
- d) **Critical timing and challenges** – there is an urgent need for action given the critical state of the Gaelic language across Scotland and the Park Authority needs to play an active role in tackling this.

Changes proposed as a result of the consultation

20. The consultation report makes a series of recommendations based on feedback from participants. These are set out in table 1 below, alongside actions that we have taken to address them.

#	Recommendation	Action taken
1.	The majority of respondents agree with the strategic priorities outlined... It is recommended that these priorities remain unchanged.	Priorities have been retained from the draft Gaelic Language Plan.
2.	It is recommended that the wording of some of the responses to the plan's objectives – the 'actions / timing' – are modified to be more measurable.	All objectives reviewed to ensure they are as SMART as practicable. Some will inevitably less trackable given the nature of this work, however.
3.	Going beyond Gaelic as a language to consider its wider cultural impact and resonance... It is recommended that the actions proposed for the objective of 'Promoting a positive image of Gaelic' are strengthened.	Greater emphasis placed on Gaelic culture / heritage within multiple objectives, including delivery of key materials, e.g. Gaelic place names trails, interpretation materials etc.
4.	It is recommended that the Park Authority sets up a framework through which interested community groups and individuals could coordinate their efforts	We will include Gaelic in the development of a new cultural heritage network for the National Park to support and engage with interested parties.



	and revitalise community Gaelic classes and events.	
5.	It is recommended that the Park Authority formally or informally supports the setup of community Gaelic classes for adults in the National Park area.	We have added Gaelic language and culture training (already earmarked for partners and staff) for key community representatives as part of the cultural heritage network and / or community council gatherings.
6.	It is recommended that the Park Authority reviews the job requirements for at least one of its positions to being a Gaelic-essential job and encourages more existing staff to achieve a conversational level of Gaelic ability.	An annual Gaelic language intern will be a Gaelic essential job and more existing staff will be encouraged to take part in our annual Gaelic language training.

Strategic risk management

This plan relates to our strategic risk register as follows:

- a) Number 11 – it is a statutory requirement to produce a Gaelic Language Plan every five years, so the publication of this plan reduces the risk of reputational damage as a result of not fulfilling our obligations in this area.
- b) Number 5 – a small aspect of delivery relies on the recruitment of Gaelic interns and, with only around 2% of National Park residents being fluent in the language, there is a risk that this role may be difficult to fill. However, we have managed to fill this role in the past, have a strong network to draw upon to help promote opportunities, and have a fallback option of hiring a consultant to deliver this work for us if required.

Implications

The delivery of this plan will have the following resource / comms implications:

- a) An annual budget of £5,000 has been allocated to deliver the plan over a five-year period (i.e. £25,000 in total). This will largely be spent on training and development, materials creation (leaflets, signage etc) and staff resource.
- b) The implementation of this plan will not require additional staff – barring the agreed recruitment of a Gaelic language intern for a four to six month period – however, it will require the equivalent of c. 0.1 FTE per annum across the communications and engagement team.



- c) The delivery of our Gaelic Language Plan is a statutory commitment and crucial in delivering on our Partnership Plan aspirations around language and culture (specifically objective B8 – Gaelic language and culture).

Success measures

In the Partnership Plan (objective B8) we stated that the targets for this piece of work were that 'an increased number of individuals and communities engage with Gaelic language and culture'. Actions included every public body with an interest in the National Park implementing their Gaelic Language Plans in full, and developing a suite of support tools for Gaelic, in collaboration with local businesses and community / cultural groups.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig require all public bodies to produce an annual progress report, outlining steps taken in delivering the five-year Gaelic Language Plan. These reports are published on our website and will be circulated to board members on an annual basis.

Supporting information

- a) Annex 1 – updated Cairngorms National Park Gaelic Language Plan 2024 - 28.
- b) Annex 2 – consultation report covering the six week engagement process.