

Short Life Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic

Report to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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'Is ged a dh'fheuch iad ri cur às dhuinn
Chì mo theaghlach cnoc nan linn
Is ged tha ar cànan leòint' le strì
'S an tìr seo bidh i beò'

'Tìr a' Mhurain' © Calum & Rory Macdonald

'Although they tried to destroy us
My children will see the landscape of generations
Although the language has been wounded in its struggle
In this land, she will live on'

'Tìr a' Mhurain' © Calum & Rory Macdonald

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1 Executive Summary

In March 2022, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy convened a Short Life Working Group (the group) with an aim to strengthen Gaelic by means of a focus on economic opportunities and to strengthen the economy by making the most of Gaelic opportunities.

This report outlines the context in which the group has operated, some of the challenges facing Gaelic as well as the considerable opportunities for social, economic, cultural, education and wellbeing outcomes.

The group's recommendations, and the areas to where these should be directed, fall under the following categories:

- Population and Infrastructure
- Public Sector and Gaelic Plans
- Communities
- Education
- Key Sectors

Key messages in relation to those recommendations are as follows:

- Support for Gaelic has already delivered a range of outcomes, but there is significant potential for greater prosperity from further investment in a range of initiatives which support the acquisition and use of Gaelic.
- Communities across Scotland should benefit from investment in the skills and industries of the future.
- The demographic trends facing the communities in which Gaelic is spoken must be acknowledged and there must be greater urgency in empowering people to ensure the viability of their communities, with the Gaelic language much more to the fore in considerations as to how this may be achieved.
- While Gaelic development in places across Scotland should be supported, special attention must be paid to the needs of a range of Key Gaelic Communities.
- The needs of the Gaelic language must be considered more fully across all areas of public policy and all levers, current and future, should be utilised to better support the language.
- Access to Gaelic education should be enshrined in legislation alongside an expansion at all levels which, with improvements, will help provide confident Gaelic speakers and deliver economic outcomes.
- There should be increased activity in Key Sectors – early years & social care, the creative industries, culture, heritage, tourism, sport, food & drink and the natural environment as the main drivers of social Gaelic use and economic outputs.
- Increased funding will be required to stimulate more activity but investment will deliver social, economic and wellbeing outcomes.
- Gaelic is not only for the Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to support and a range of public bodies and local authorities must have a greater role in ensuring its future as well as the potential it presents for economic wellbeing.
- More ambitious Gaelic Language Plans must be in place, aiming to make an appreciable difference to Gaelic and there must be a means to better ensure their delivery.

Finally, the group seeks a mechanism to monitor, on an annual basis, the extent to which its recommendations are being delivered.

The following is a summary of the group's recommendations. Please see section 3 for context and details of the bodies recommended to lead and be involved in delivering each one. Colours reflect the expected timescale for implementation explained in section 3.

In relation to Population and Infrastructure the group recommends that:

- 3.1.1 As a matter of urgency, infrastructure challenges – housing, transport and digital connectivity - which undermine the 'parity of starting point' for NSET ambitions are addressed.
- 3.1.2 The Convention of the Highlands and Islands consider the potentially disproportionate impact a lack of affordable housing has on Gaelic-speaking communities, with a view to ensuring more flexible policy and faster provision of housing.
- 3.1.3 NSET Entrepreneurship focus should extend to Key Gaelic Communities and support Gaelic entrepreneurs with enhanced incentives and support for business start-ups.
- 3.1.4 A voluntary 'fair chance scheme' be explored in relation to selling homes inviting relevant bodies to work with estate agents to enable prioritisation of housing allocation.
- 3.1.5 A scheme be developed to help sustain Key Gaelic Communities with the provision of grants to enable individuals on low or modest incomes to own their own home, either through the acquisition of a site for a self-build, or the purchase and improvement of an existing property for use as their sole residence. This could perhaps be achieved through reorientation of existing Rural and Islands Housing Funds programmes.
- 3.1.6 In Key Gaelic Communities, landowners should articulate and demonstrate how they support the language in their Land Rights and Responsibilities statement, in particular evidencing initiatives and support for projects delivering social and economic outcomes for the Gaelic language.
- 3.1.7 Adequate affordable homes should be available with a clear strategy to ensure population retention and criteria for allocation aiming to enable and encourage the use of Gaelic in communities which have a significant cohort of speakers, primarily Key Gaelic Communities.
- 3.1.8 In recognising the significant cultural strengths of the area, including the Gaelic language, the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (REP) should progress the development of a unique socio-economic plan based on supporting and growing the number of Gaelic speakers.
- 3.1.9 'Gaelic economic zones' be explored, offering tax breaks including (but not limited to) VAT and rates relief for businesses undertaking Gaelic-related activities or whose business demonstrates significant Gaelic impact. These could be aligned to the proposed Gàidhealtachd or any area in Scotland with a qualifying business.
- 3.1.10 Initially, the Western Isles and Skye should be considered for an entrepreneurial campus approach incorporating Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, UHI North, West & Hebrides, and the creative industries cluster among others. Such a campus could lead on minority language solutions that could be exported across the world and extended to other areas to foster greater collaboration.
- 3.1.11 Issues relating to housing and community-owned assets in Key Gaelic Communities caused by intestacy should be highlighted and campaigns such as the Crofting Commission's succession advice amplified.
- 3.1.12 There should be consideration of whether a task force is needed to further assess all aspects of public policy and their effect on Key Gaelic Communities along the lines of the recently established Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities.

In relation to **Public Sector and Gaelic Plans** the group recommends that:

- 3.2.1 Where a body has a duty to produce a Gaelic Language Plan and a remit which includes sectors with potential for economic growth, in addition to any corporate outcomes they must consider and articulate a strategy for Gaelic *as an asset* within their operations.
- 3.2.2 The system of Gaelic Language Plans (GLP) is reviewed to ensure stronger, deliverable commitments and inclusion of support for GLPs produced voluntarily, without a notice from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which may have a positive impact in communities and aid delivery of statutory plan recommendations.
- 3.2.3 The *Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans* is reviewed with an aim to secure more ambitious GLPs while strengthening measurement and delivery.
- 3.2.4 Legislation should be strengthened to ensure delivery of GLPs and consideration given to the need for a Gaelic Language Commissioner with a remit to monitor the compliance of public bodies with its provisions.
- 3.2.5 Initiatives in key sectors, in receipt of public money, should be required to manifest cognisance of Gaelic in product/services, and/or marketing, or justify its exclusion.
- 3.2.6 *Ar Stòras Gàidhlig* should be updated to give an up-to-date picture of economic growth related to Gaelic since the original study was published in 2014.

In relation to **Communities** the group recommends that:

- 3.3.1 A network of properly resourced Gaelic Officers should be maintained over a sustained period to act as stimulators of a range of Gaelic social initiatives within Key Gaelic Communities as well as other areas. There could be a range of management arrangements in place, but there should be learning opportunities attached to the roles.
- 3.3.2 Adequate childcare services should be available in Key Gaelic Communities, with appropriate Gaelic medium training for playleaders, through foundation apprenticeships and other means, in immersion methods to ensure as many parents as wish to are available to work, as well as acting as a feeder to Gaelic medium education.
- 3.3.3 Public sector roles in Key Gaelic Communities should be designated, as far as possible, as Gaelic essential, particularly those which align with key sectors offering maximum economic and social potential for Gaelic. This Gaelic essential designation should extend to recruitment for any island-based public sector role undertaken remotely.
- 3.3.4 Entrepreneurial training and awareness of relevant elements of language planning should be offered to Gaelic organisations and third sector bodies such as community and heritage trusts, as well as the network of Gaelic Development Officers, to ensure they are better supported and adequately equipped to realise economic and social opportunities at community level.
- 3.3.5 Opportunities should be developed for the provision of Gaelic medium training and service delivery in the Health and Social Care Sector which has the potential for significant economic impact, particularly in island and rural communities, in addition to linguistic and wellbeing benefits. This could start in schools through an expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships delivered in Gaelic, already available in childcare and media in a small number of schools.
- 3.3.6 Support should be available for communities to create or acquire assets which offer spaces which would generate economic activity and enable greater social use of Gaelic, or to access existing spaces such as community schools.
- 3.3.7 As far as possible within the public appointments process, there should be a mechanism for the positive recruitment of local, Gaelic-speaking residents to the boards of public bodies and other committees whose activities affect Key Gaelic Communities.

- 3.3.8 Consideration should be given to the further potential of Settlement Officers - who facilitate people moving to, and living in, island communities - to promote the importance of the language in Key Gaelic Communities, as well as resettling people at various transition points.
- 3.3.9 Guidance from the Scottish Government on proposals for the introduction of Local Place Plans should consider a designation of *Areas of Linguistic Sensitivity* where policy intervention may be required to support and strengthen Gaelic with the development and strengthening of community agency and participation a primary aim.
- 3.3.10 The legal requirement for Island Community Impact Assessments should ensure linguistic impacts are properly considered and a good practice guide should be available on undertaking community consultation in a way sensitive to the needs of Gaelic in the context of Local Place Plans.

In relation to **Education** the group recommends that:

- 3.4.1 In order to fully realise economic, as well as educational, benefits a strategy is developed urgently to begin overcoming the disparity in provision in Gaelic secondary education, which inhibits fuller language acquisition and confidence in language use, with the aim of ensuring a broad range of subjects is available through the medium of Gaelic to certificated level.
- 3.4.2 A new initiative is introduced urgently to attract new teachers while pro-actively persuading teachers qualified to teach in Gaelic, who do not currently, to work in Gaelic education. Both strands may require the establishment of a range of financial incentives, support and confidence-building initiatives to enhance the appeal of teaching in Gaelic.
- 3.4.3 As far as possible teacher education should be delivered through the medium of Gaelic with new concerted efforts to ensure GME teacher education is (i) incentivised centrally and (ii) made as accessible as possible, including through the employment of distance learning, as long as that does not compromise the Gaelic language skills acquisition required to produce successful teachers.
- 3.4.4 Adequate, regular support for early years practitioners and Gaelic teachers be put in place to improve conditions and retention, including immersion techniques, ongoing CPL in language skills and the provision of a wider range of quality resources to negate the need for teachers to produce so much of their own materials.
- 3.4.5 A range of initiatives continue to be supported to facilitate Gaelic learning among adults in communities, the media, online and in further and higher education establishments.
- 3.4.6 Gaelic education should be developed at all levels, with access improved through transport and use of technology, where appropriate, and acknowledgement of the economic, as well as educational, benefits from improved and expanded provision. In particular, consideration should be given as to how a legal right to Gaelic education may be implemented to ensure expansion in provision and improved access.
- 3.4.7 To begin improving the secondary Gaelic medium offering, relevant local authorities should consult on the potential to designate certain secondary schools as Gaelic medium schools which, through annual reporting, would demonstrate clear ambitions to develop Gaelic secondary provision, even if there are challenges in the short-term.
- 3.4.8 A range of Gaelic medium Foundation Apprenticeships should be available in S5-6 for pupils wishing to pursue careers in early years & social care, the creative industries, culture, heritage, tourism, sport, food & drink and the natural environment where the use of Gaelic would be an advantage or its promotion encouraged.
- 3.4.9 Gaelic language teaching for learners be compulsory for all S1-S3 pupils in secondary schools in Na h-Eileanan Siar, Skye & Lochalsh, Lochaber, Tiree and Islay along with access

for those wishing to gain a qualification in S4-S6. This could apply in other places where GM pupils feed into secondary schools, for example Inverness, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

3.4.10 *Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education* should be reviewed and refreshed and its status promoted widely within Scottish education with a range of mechanisms put in place, through policy, annual reporting and school inspections, to ensure adherence to its principles by local authorities and education policymakers.

3.4.11 A Gaelic medium curriculum is developed which is not a translation of the English curriculum but includes ongoing language acquisition, learning about Scottish history, the richness of Gaelic culture and concepts unique to Gaelic, such as the environmental stewardship inherent in *dùthchas* with a potential tie to 3.5.5.

In relation to **Key Sectors** the group recommends that:

3.5.1 While acknowledging the potential of Creative Scotland's Place Partnership Programme, a national Gaelic Arts Strategy be developed outlining ways to support and enhance the economic opportunities for those working in the arts and screen industries where Gaelic is the medium of delivery or is related to the work being undertaken in the artform.

3.5.2 In recognition of the economic, social and educational importance of the broadcast and digital media, increased funding should be made available to MG ALBA, and others, to enable the development of a range of new programmes, a larger proportion to be made in Key Gaelic Communities, for broadcast on television, radio and on digital platforms with a strong language policy which increases the use of Gaelic with optional subtitles.

3.5.3 The partnership established by VisitScotland to support Gaelic tourism should be continued with a wide range of bodies working towards improving the Gaelic experience for visitors.

3.5.4 A range of industry training opportunities should be developed to prepare people to work in the media, as far as possible through the medium of Gaelic, to increase employment opportunities, use of Gaelic and provide a range of transferable skills.

3.5.5 As called for in a 2021 scoping exercise for NatureScot, *Ecosystem Services and Gaelic*, further research be undertaken exploring the role Gaelic language and culture, and its relationship with the Highland landscape, has in promoting self-esteem, health and wellbeing with a view to improving knowledge, access and creating social and economic opportunities relating to the natural environment.

3.5.6 In addition to specific recommendations in 3.5.1-3.5.5, economic opportunities should be strengthened by increasing support for Gaelic organisations, companies and individuals working across the range of key sectors to expand provision, employ more people and strengthen communities further.

2 Introduction

2.1 The Short Life Working Group

In March 2022, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy convened a Short Life Working Group (the group) with an aim to strengthen Gaelic by means of a focus on economic opportunities and to strengthen the economy by making the most of Gaelic opportunities. The group was asked to approach the task with a primary objective of strengthening Gaelic-speaking communities. It was asked to consider recommendations and where they should be directed. The full remit is included in Annex 1.

The group comprised Agnes Rennie, Arthur Cormack, Councillor Calum Munro, Faye MacLeod, Iain MacRury, Iseabail Mactaggart and Joanna Peteranna. Iain MacRury was unable to attend meetings of the group. Iseabail Mactaggart chaired the group until 30 August 2022 after which she stood down on taking up a new executive role. Arthur Cormack chaired the group after that date.

The group would like to thank Iseabail for her considerable input and drive at the beginning of the process. Thanks, too, to all the contributors as well as Scottish Government colleagues who provided support to the group.

Although it was expected the group would meet 6 times, the scale of the task necessitated further inquiry and a longer timescale. The group met 18 times.

In addition to the individual experiences and knowledge among members, the group considered written and verbal points from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE), Welsh Government officials as well as other individuals and groups. The group was also alert to a range of views in the debate around the need for improved support for Gaelic, as well as current levers in place to support that. We are grateful to all those who contributed and to Scottish Government colleagues for advice throughout the process.

2.2 Vision and Definitions

The group assumes that the cultural contribution of Gaelic is well understood. Scotland benefits from the presence of increasingly diverse cultures but the group takes the view that, as a unique aspect of the country's heritage, every effort to ensure Gaelic's continued acquisition and use should be supported.

The *National Strategy for Economic Transformation* seeks to empower rural communities across Scotland and sets out the Scottish Government's ambition to have one of the most successful and thriving economies in the world, ensuring all of Scotland benefits from investment in the skills and industries of the future.

The group welcomes the strategy's focus on community wealth building to tackle long-standing economic challenges and transform Scotland's local and regional economies. It is expected this would see the public sector, working with the private, third and community sectors, to ensure more wealth is generated and retained in communities and localities.

The wishes of the people should be paramount in building successful communities in which Gaelic can be used. Influence over the local economy, and more benefit from the wealth they help generate, could prove to be a significant motivation for community action.

Economic and cultural activity cannot be viewed separately. Cultural events contribute significantly to Scotland's economy as well as offering social cohesion in communities and opportunities to use Gaelic. The language is of considerable interest to visitors coming to Scotland who also contribute to the economy. In language planning terms, the desire to use Gaelic is influenced by the language's status. Economic opportunities and social activities can often inspire people to acquire, or make more use of, Gaelic skills.

In preparing this report, with its focus on economic opportunities and strengthening the economy, the group's agreed vision is to see:

- Gaelic used increasingly to create economic benefit
- An increase in the number of Gaelic speakers
- An increase in the opportunities for Gaelic to be used in social settings.

2.3 Challenges Facing Gaelic

The group was convened against a backdrop of a range of challenges for the Gaelic language, rural communities and the economy. These are interlinked and, while not new, there has been much discussion in recent years about the need to strengthen Gaelic communities. The group was mindful of those issues in framing its recommendations.

Demographics show that even in places where the general population has increased, the number of young people has decreased. The problem is even greater in places where populations continue to decline, with a negative impact on school rolls. This, in turn, has an impact on numbers of pupils in Gaelic education, for example, on which there will be some reliance to fill Gaelic-related jobs in the future. Therefore, the task of maintaining numbers of Gaelic speakers is demanding enough before considering ways to increase them.

Support for the Gaelic language has increased over the past few years, demonstrated through the numbers of families enrolling their children in Gaelic education, numbers attending Gaelic arts events, numbers watching BBC ALBA, listening to BBC Radio nan Gàidheal and engaging with Gaelic in digital media and, not least, the huge numbers signed up to adult learning through Duolingo and SpeakGaelic.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot of negative comment on Gaelic, usually when funding is awarded to specific initiatives. There is a risk that the potential backlash could have a negative impact on politicians' attitudes towards further supporting Gaelic. At present this does not appear to be the case, but negativity towards Gaelic should be countered at every opportunity.

While it might appear *Gàidheil* - Gaelic speakers – are not specifically protected under the Equality Act 2010, in his *Independent Review of Hate Crime Legislation in Scotland*, Lord Bracadale stated “there is a fairly strong argument that Gaelic speaking Gaels belong to an ‘ethnic group’ within the meaning of the current race aggravation.” He concluded that, in a case in which hostility towards Gaelic speakers did amount to a criminal offence, prosecution could be considered under current legislation. The group believes that, as a minority group, it is an issue of equity to focus on the needs of Gaelic speakers, which are different from the needs of people who do not speak the language.

The requirement to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan places a statutory duty on public bodies to support the Gaelic language. The work of many organisations involved in supporting Gaelic provides, in part, the inclusion and diversity public bodies seek.

Given the foregoing, the group assumes there is no question that the needs of Gaelic users can be seen in the context of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The group was formed as the consultation on the 2023-28 National Gaelic Language Plan was underway and the proposed measures in that were considered in reaching recommendations. The Scottish Government itself has since completed a consultation on its proposals for future support of Gaelic and Scots in line with commitments made in the SNP manifesto prior to the 2021 Scottish parliamentary elections.

The group believes there is unrealised potential to support Gaelic communities through public sector Gaelic Language Plans, as well as the National Islands Plan and recently-published Islands Growth Deal. Reflected in its recommendations is the group's view that a move towards more meaningful Gaelic Language Plans is required which offer clearer, more ambitious commitments along with a means of ensuring their delivery, including additional financial resources.

The group is in no doubt that Gaelic remains in a fragile position and there must be a demonstration of urgency, across the range of bodies which can bring about positive change, to ensure the language's future.

2.4 Key Gaelic Communities

A primary objective of the group was to recommend actions which would strengthen Gaelic-speaking communities. The group has defined Key Gaelic Communities as all those in Na h-Eileanan Siar, Skye & some districts of Lochalsh, Tiree, Islay and Jura – places where, in the 2011 census, 20% or more of the population had Gaelic abilities.

Several of the recommendations do not relate specifically to Gaelic, but to strengthening the circumstances which would enable Gaelic speakers to live and work in those communities. Retaining people in those places and encouraging people to return to them, while growing the number of Gaelic speakers, would support the creation of social opportunities for use of the language and economic benefits for the communities.

It is accepted that implementing the group's recommendations may have particular impact in communities with higher concentrations of Gaelic speakers, but some will be equally applicable to Gaelic-speaking communities of all kinds across Scotland. The group believes efforts to encourage Gaelic use by all communities should continue to be supported, but that additional support is needed in those identified as Key Gaelic Communities.

2.5 Opportunities

While there are undoubtedly challenges facing the Gaelic language, these should be turned into opportunities for communities of all kinds, in particular those where its everyday use could be strengthened.

The group welcomes the good progress made in many aspects of Gaelic development over the past 40 years. This is reflected in the establishment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, better support for communities,

a burgeoning of Gaelic arts, developments in the media, a range of plans and levers which exist to support Gaelic as well as the creation of a Gaelic & Scots Division within the Scottish Government.

While acknowledging the Scottish Government's support since devolution, and its *Faster Rate of Progress* initiative, the group feels even more urgency must now be introduced to ensure opportunities are fully realised.

Investment in Gaelic contributes to the delivery of the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, touching on all the national outcomes, that people:

- grow up loved, safe and respected so that they realise their full potential
- live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- are creative and their vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely
- have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- value, enjoy, protect and enhance their environment
- have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- are healthy and active
- respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination
- are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally.

Ar Stòras Gàidhlig was commissioned by HIE in partnership with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Creative Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot), The Highland Council, Argyll and Bute Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

An initial, baseline study was published in May 2014 which sought to assess the role of Gaelic as an economic and social asset. It found the potential economic value of Gaelic as an asset to the Scottish economy to be in the region of £81.6m to £148.5m.

This report is not an attempt to update *Ar Stòras Gàidhlig* although the group believes that work should be undertaken at some point in the future, once some of its recommendations have been implemented. The group believes there are opportunities across a range of businesses and social enterprises for more use of Gaelic, but businesses must be persuaded of the benefits for them and their workers. If the right circumstances are put in place to strengthen communities, in terms of infrastructure and technology, fostering more use of Gaelic in the provision of public services and in private businesses should be possible.

However, in the short to medium term, the group believes there is a range of Key Sectors which offer opportunities for Gaelic to be used in business, and socially, from which economic benefits will flow. While not usually considered in the context of economic activity, the group has taken the view that Gaelic education also creates economic and social opportunities.

In making recommendations, the group has considered possible developments in terms of language policy as well as interventions which respond to wider matters which affect the sustainability of Gaelic as a community language.

There is a good range of levers in place to support Gaelic and those need to be fully understood and utilised to the fullest extent possible. They include:

- The Education (Scotland) Act 1980

- Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000
- The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005
- Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans
- The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- The Equality Act 2010
- Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education
- The Education (Scotland) Act 2016
- The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016
- The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018
- The National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23
- The draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28
- The National Islands Plan
- A Culture Strategy for Scotland (2022)
- The Islands Growth Deal (2023)
- Existing Scottish Government Gaelic commitments
- The Scottish Government National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET)
- Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (REP)
- The Scottish Land Commission's Advice to Scottish Ministers on land taxation
- Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement 2022
- Commitments relating to Gaelic made by the SNP, and other parties, in advance of the 2021 Scottish parliamentary elections
- The cross-party goodwill which exists towards Gaelic in the Scottish Parliament

Consideration may be needed of further levers which may be necessary to deliver some of the group's recommendations, including amendments to legislation which may also be an outcome of the recent Scottish Government consultation on Gaelic and Scots.

2.6 Increased Funding

The funding streams provided directly by the Scottish Government, and indirectly through Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the impact of the spend on Gaelic by other bodies such as the BBC, MG ALBA, HIE, Creative Scotland, NatureScot and a range of local authorities and other public bodies is fully acknowledged by the group.

However, it is the clear view of the group that direct spend by the Scottish Government and an enhanced budget for Bòrd na Gàidhlig will be needed to stimulate economic growth and realise fully the social and wellbeing potential of Gaelic.

The group is also acutely aware of the challenging financial circumstances in which the Scottish Government is operating. However, government financial support for Gaelic was not keeping pace with inflation prior to the high rates currently being experienced and it cannot be assumed that the base figures, more or less established in 2005-06, were at an adequate level in the first place.

Over the period since then there have been modest, welcome increases and additional one-off sums provided for individual initiatives. However, a recent assessment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Scottish Government grant-in-aid showed that had inflationary increases been implemented since 2007-08, the sum available to it now would be closer to £10m rather than the £5.2m received. Similarly, there has been no significant increase in the essential *Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education* on which many local authorities rely for their Gaelic education provision. While more mainstreaming of Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic: Report to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy

spend should be taking place, it is anticipated there will be a need to fund new educational provision for some time to come.

The group believes that the ability to make more meaningful progress with Gaelic will require additional, sustained spend on all aspects of its revitalisation. The group believes that, in common with other interventions to stimulate growth, economic and social benefits will accrue from further investment.

Given the economic climate, collaborative, creative solutions should be sought to ensure additional spend across the public sector, not simply directly from government. The third sector, too, has access to a large number of trust funders and National Lottery funding should also be explored in line with the aspirations of the *National Strategy for Economic Transformation*.

While we must await the outcome of the recent Scottish Government consultation on future support for Gaelic and Scots it is the group's expectation that, if Gaelic's future is to be secured and its economic and social potential realised, there will be additional finance and a range of new levers to support the development of Gaelic. This should include increased budgets for the Gaelic & Scots Division in the Scottish Government to enable it to support more work on a sustained basis. It should also include adequate resourcing for Bòrd na Gàidhlig to enable it to fulfil what has grown into a significant role as the principal public body responsible for promoting Gaelic development.

2.7 Factors impacting Gaelic Economic and Social Opportunities

The group's work was guided by a PESTLE (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) analysis, looking at wider factors which influence, or have the potential to affect, Gaelic economic and social opportunities. Given time constraints, this was necessarily high level but the work was a valuable guide in shaping the group's recommendations.

2.8 Monitoring Progress

The group is keen to ensure its recommendations are progressed within reasonable timescales. The group would welcome a mechanism being put in place to ensure progress can be monitored.

While it may be outwith its agreed remit, the group is willing to be involved in regular reviews of progress, along similar lines adopted in relation to various other reports which have been commissioned to provide recommendations for change or improvement in the public sector.

3 Recommendations

Recommendations are categorised and the group indicates, as per its remit, which body - or bodies - should be tasked with work to take forward specific recommendations, as well as prioritising implementation as follows:

Immediate	Urgent action required in the short term
Medium	Action required in the medium term
Long	Action required in the longer term

The group has not defined 'immediate', 'medium' and 'long' but, as indicated in 2.5, expects that a new sense of urgency is introduced to Gaelic development.

3.1 Population and Infrastructure

The *National Strategy for Economic Transformation* seeks to build a wellbeing economy based on the principles of prosperity, equality, sustainability and resilience. Gaelic has survived due to resilience and tenacity but sustainability is key, as is equality.

A Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (REP) has been established to support collaboration on strategic issues in growing the region's economy. The REP recognises the Gaelic language as one of the significant cultural strengths of the area.

Many of the challenges facing language use in Key Gaelic Communities are related to population attraction and retention. Without infrastructure such as adequate housing and reliable transport links, as well as digital connectivity, populations cannot be grown or retained. The viability of those communities is threatened and, with that, Gaelic as a community language.

Research carried out for HIE found that there is an increasing desire among young people to stay in or relocate to the region – but they require the factors in place to facilitate this, including good pay levels, high quality jobs and housing, a low cost of living (at the time of the research) and opportunities for career progression.

The group is mindful of a focus in the Faroe Islands on improving connectivity - both digital and physical through a tunnel-building programme - and tackling migration. For example, they have stepped back from promoting themselves as a tourism destination re-positioning the islands as a great place to live and work, where tourists love to visit.

The group consulted with representatives of the Welsh Government which has a number of initiatives in place including a new Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities, bringing together experts to make policy recommendations to protect and strengthen Cymraeg as a community language.

Of particular interest to the group is the voluntary 'fair chance scheme', which helps sellers make decisions about how they dispose of property, by allowing marketing at a local level only, for a fixed period. The group welcomed this type of initiative, alongside the desirability of working with estate agents to discourage them from using language such as 'second home potential' in their marketing materials.

The group also noted initiatives that were showing some success, e.g. The Highland Council's Home Purchase Scheme, which aimed to deliver around 100 homes by the end of 2022, although it was noted this scheme has not been so successful in rural areas. To have real impact in a rural area, such as Skye, the scheme would have to be reworked to account for higher home prices.

The group considered the Scottish Land Commission's *Advice to Scottish Ministers* on taxation which notes that, while many of the primary levers remain reserved to Westminster, the Scottish Parliament nevertheless has devolved taxation powers which could be utilised to solve some of the population and infrastructure difficulties experienced in Key Gaelic Communities.

Some relate to Land and Buildings Transaction Taxes. Some relate to reforms of Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) to incentivise the re-use of vacant and derelict sites. It is also suggested additional reliefs on NDR and council tax for newly-built properties on long-standing vacant sites could incentivise reuse. Another relates to consideration of a new power to enable local authorities to continue to apply NDR to newly derelict properties to discourage them from being allowed to fall into disrepair.

Such reforms may support diversification of ownership which could, potentially, be advantageous in levering support for Key Gaelic Communities. With concerted collaboration to solve the issues in an attempt to provide a 'level playing field' starting point, the circumstances may be created where Gaelic use is increased again, socially and in business, within those communities.

Therefore, the group believes a range of activities is needed to tackle the lack of affordable housing, including how and to whom social housing is allocated in Key Gaelic Communities. Use should be made of devolved taxation powers and land reform to enable the retention and return of people to Key Gaelic Communities. Jobs should be created in, or moved to, those communities to make them more viable. There should be financial support, and the availability of premises, for Gaelic-related businesses, particularly related to their language use.

Those elements should be central to any consideration of a 'Gàidhealtachd' area, which the group supports in principle, although the definition still needs to be developed. See also 3.3.

In relation to **Population and Infrastructure** the group recommends that:

- 3.1.1 As a matter of urgency, infrastructure challenges – housing, transport and digital connectivity - which undermine the 'parity of starting point' for NSET ambitions are addressed.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

HITRANS

Transport Scotland

HIAL

HIE

Scottish Land Commission

Crofting Commission

Relevant Local Authorities

Community Trusts

Housing Associations

Timescale

Immediate

3.1.2 The Convention of the Highlands and Islands consider the potentially disproportionate impact a lack of affordable housing has on Gaelic-speaking communities, with a view to ensuring more flexible policy and faster provision of housing.

Lead Body

Convention of the Highlands and Islands

Others to be involved

Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Relevant Local Authorities
Relevant Public Bodies

Timescale

Immediate

3.1.3 NSET Entrepreneurship focus should extend to Key Gaelic Communities and support Gaelic entrepreneurs with enhanced incentives and support for business start-ups.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

HIE
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale

Immediate

3.1.4 A voluntary 'fair chance scheme' be explored in relation to selling homes inviting relevant bodies to work with estate agents to enable prioritisation of housing allocation.

Lead Body

Convention of the Highlands and Islands

Others to be involved

Relevant Local Authorities
Relevant Public Bodies
Communities Housing Trust
Estate Agents

Timescale

Immediate

3.1.5 A scheme be developed to help sustain Key Gaelic Communities with the provision of grants to enable individuals on low or modest incomes to own their own home, either through the acquisition of a site for a self-build, or the purchase and improvement of an existing property for use as their sole residence. This could perhaps be achieved through reorientation of existing Rural and Islands Housing Funds programmes.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

Relevant Local Authorities
Community Trusts
Housing Associations

Timescale

Immediate

3.1.6 In Key Gaelic Communities, landowners should articulate and demonstrate how they support the language in their Land Rights and Responsibilities statement, in particular evidencing initiatives and support for projects delivering social and economic outcomes for the Gaelic language.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Scottish Land Commission
HIE
Landowners including public agencies

Timescale **Immediate**

3.1.7 Adequate affordable homes should be available with a clear strategy to ensure population retention and criteria for allocation aiming to enable and encourage the use of Gaelic in communities which have a significant cohort of speakers, primarily Key Gaelic Communities.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Local Authorities
HIE
Housing Associations
Rural Housing Scotland

Timescale **Medium**

3.1.8 In recognising the significant cultural strengths of the area, including the Gaelic language, the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (REP) should progress the development of a unique socio-economic plan based on supporting and growing the number of Gaelic speakers.

Lead Body
Regional Economic Partnership (REP)

Others to be involved
REP Members

Timescale **Medium**

3.1.9 'Gaelic economic zones' be explored, offering tax breaks including (but not limited to) VAT and rates relief for businesses undertaking Gaelic-related activities or whose business demonstrates significant Gaelic impact. These could be aligned to the proposed Gàidhealtachd or any area in Scotland with a qualifying business.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
UK Government
Revenue Scotland
HMRC

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.1.10 Initially, the Western Isles and Skye should be considered for an entrepreneurial campus approach incorporating Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, UHI North, West & Hebrides, and the creative industries cluster among others. Such a campus could lead on minority language solutions that could be exported across the world and extended to other areas to foster greater collaboration.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
UHI
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
MG ALBA
BBC ALBA
BBC Radio nan Gàidheal
Creative Scotland
Screen Scotland
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
HIE
Cnoc Soilleir

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.1.11 Issues relating to housing and community-owned assets in Key Gaelic Communities caused by intestacy should be highlighted and campaigns such as the Crofting Commission's succession advice amplified.

Lead Body
Crofting Commission

Others to be involved
HIE
Relevant Local Authorities
Communities Housing Trust
Solicitors and Estate Agencies
Cooperative Development Scotland

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.1.12 There should be consideration of whether a task force is needed to further assess all aspects of public policy and their effect on Key Gaelic Communities along the lines of the recently established Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities.

Lead Body

Others to be involved

3.2 Public Sector and Gaelic Plans

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on Bòrd na Gàidhlig to develop a National Gaelic Language Plan. The Bòrd also has the power to require public bodies to prepare Gaelic Language Plans.

Arguably, many services and several infrastructure developments have resulted from delivery of Gaelic Language Plans over the past 15-plus years and that progress is welcome. Equally, there is frustration at the missed opportunities through the lack of delivery on the part of some bodies. In such cases, there is very little redress other than a referral to Scottish Ministers who may decide whether or not to direct a public body to deliver outcomes in its plan.

We have observed a move in public sector Gaelic Language Plans towards delivering modest, easier targets. More substantial commitments are required if they are to make an appreciable difference to the future of the language. They would also create further employment opportunities leading to greater prosperity which would have most impact if located in Key Gaelic Communities.

The *Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans* should be revised, strengthened and its statutory status promoted so that it is more widely understood by public bodies. Bòrd na Gàidhlig should be more forthright in agreeing measures to ensure the best outcomes from Gaelic Language Plans.

Very importantly, once more ambitious plans are in place with clearer, significant targets, there must be an adequate mechanism in place to ensure they are delivered.

In relation to **Public Sector and Gaelic Plans** the group recommends that:

- 3.2.1 Where a body has a duty to produce a Gaelic Language Plan and a remit which includes sectors with potential for economic growth, in addition to any corporate outcomes they must consider and articulate a strategy for Gaelic *as an asset* within their operations.

Lead Body
 Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Others to be involved
 Scottish Government
 HIE
 Scottish Enterprise
 South of Scotland Enterprise
 Relevant Public Bodies
 Relevant Local Authorities

3.2.2 The system of Gaelic Language Plans (GLP) is reviewed to ensure stronger, deliverable commitments and inclusion of support for GLPs produced voluntarily, without a notice from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which may have a positive impact in communities and aid delivery of statutory plan recommendations.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Timescale

Medium

3.2.3 The *Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans* is reviewed with an aim to secure more ambitious GLPs while strengthening measurement and delivery.

Lead Body

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Others to be involved

Scottish Government

Timescale

Medium

3.2.4 Legislation should be strengthened to ensure delivery of GLPs and consideration given to the need for a Gaelic Language Commissioner with a remit to monitor the compliance of public bodies with its provisions.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

Scottish Parliament

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Relevant Public Bodies

Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale

Medium

3.2.5 Initiatives in key sectors, in receipt of public money, should be required to manifest cognisance of Gaelic in product/services, and/or marketing, or justify its exclusion.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

HIE

Creative Scotland

Screen Scotland

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

NatureScot

Historic Environment Scotland

SportScotland

Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale

Medium

3.2.6 *Ar Stòras Gàidhlig* should be updated to give an up-to-date picture of economic growth related to Gaelic since the original study was published in 2014.

Lead Body
HIE

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Creative Scotland
NatureScot
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale **Long**

3.3 Communities

Many of the group's recommendations in previous sections relate to strengthening the viability of Key Gaelic Communities and other communities where the language is spoken. Lively, healthy communities could lead to increased opportunity and desire to use Gaelic which, in turn, could lead to additional social, wellbeing and economic benefits.

However, it cannot be assumed this will automatically be the case, so a range of interventions will continue to be needed to support the use of Gaelic in a social context as well as equipping people to be more entrepreneurial in their community activism.

The group is broadly in favour of the designation of Gàidhealtachd areas, although the precise definition is still to be confirmed. The group takes the view that, in a Gàidhealtachd, there should be a presumption that education, social activities and a wide range of services through public bodies and businesses, should be available in Gaelic. There should also be a presumption that public policy, in particularly initiatives such as Local Place Planning and Island Impact Assessments will be sensitive to the linguistic needs of areas which should have a designation which reflects those needs.

In the first place, people living in those communities must have the ability and opportunity to work. Jobs need to be created, or retained, in Key Gaelic Communities and should be designated as Gaelic essential. Businesses in those communities could be incentivised, through tax breaks, support to acquire assets or the making available of affordable premises, to create more jobs, promote the use of Gaelic in the workplace and include elements of Gaelic culture in advertising their products.

Community animateurs have been a feature of strengthening communities for decades. To attract those who could work specifically in Gaelic roles requires some degree of certainty that their employment will be secure. Longer-term commitments to those roles are needed, while support and the availability of suitable training could be another factor in retention.

There is evidence that the lack of childcare in some island communities is an impediment to living and working there. There is also anecdotal evidence that some playleaders and Pupil Support Assistants move into teaching because of their positive experiences of working with children in early-years and school settings. It follows that, perhaps, some of the challenges relating to workforce and education (see 3.4) could be overcome with better childcare provision and additional employment opportunities in schools.

The Health and Social Care sector is also important in Key Gaelic Communities where care should be available in the preferred language of many, while jobs are provided where Gaelic is used.

A greater understanding is needed of the potential of social capital - the way in which people in communities interact with each other to bring about change, or the glue which keeps communities together and helps them thrive. Decisions on linguistic development in Key Gaelic Communities should, as far as possible, be taken by the people living there and benefit should accrue to the community. As far as possible, there should be community representation on all bodies which will have an impact on the places in which they live.

Investment in new spaces is needed to provide focal points for Gaelic, and other, social activities which contribute to community confidence, increased economic activity and population retention. At the same time, there should be affordable access to existing facilities, such as schools, to enable a wider range of Gaelic activities and adult learning to take place.

There should be a mechanism to welcome people coming to live in Key Gaelic Communities which includes the provision of information on the importance of the Gaelic language, the benefits of Gaelic education and encouragement to respect the language and participate in Gaelic social activities.

In relation to **Communities** the group recommends that:

- 3.3.1 A network of properly resourced Gaelic Officers should be maintained over a sustained period to act as stimulators of a range of Gaelic social initiatives within Key Gaelic Communities as well as other areas. There could be a range of management arrangements in place, but there should be learning opportunities attached to the roles.

Lead Body
Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Others to be involved
Scottish Government
HIE
Relevant Local Authorities
Gaelic Organisations
Community Trusts

Timescale **Immediate**

- 3.3.2 Adequate childcare services should be available in Key Gaelic Communities, with appropriate Gaelic medium training for playleaders, through Foundation Apprenticeships and other means, in immersion methods to ensure as many parents as wish to are available to work, as well as acting as a feeder to Gaelic medium education.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Skills Development Scotland
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
UHI North, West & Hebrides
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale

Immediate

- 3.3.3 Public sector roles in Key Gaelic Communities should be designated, as far as possible, as Gaelic essential, particularly those which align with key sectors offering maximum economic and social potential for Gaelic. This Gaelic essential designation should extend to recruitment for any island-based public sector role undertaken remotely.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Relevant Local Authorities

Relevant Public Bodies

Timescale

Immediate

- 3.3.4 Entrepreneurial training and awareness of relevant elements of language planning should be offered to Gaelic organisations and third sector bodies such as community and heritage trusts, as well as the network of Gaelic Development Officers, to ensure they are better supported and adequately equipped to realise economic and social opportunities at community level.

Lead Body

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Others to be involved

Scottish Government

HIE

Gaelic Organisations

Community Trusts

Heritage Trusts

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

Social Enterprise Academy

Community Land Scotland

Timescale

Medium

- 3.3.5 Opportunities should be developed for the provision of Gaelic medium training and service delivery in the Health and Social Care Sector which has the potential for significant economic impact, particularly in island and rural communities, in addition to linguistic and wellbeing benefits. This could start in schools through an expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships delivered in Gaelic, already available in childcare and media in a small number of schools.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

Skills Development Scotland

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

UHI North, West & Hebrides

Relevant Health Boards

Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.3.6 Support should be available for communities to create or acquire assets which offer spaces which would generate economic activity and enable greater social use of Gaelic, or to access existing spaces such as community schools.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
HIE
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Relevant Local Authorities
Crown Estate Scotland

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.3.7 As far as possible within the public appointments process, there should be a mechanism for the positive recruitment of local, Gaelic-speaking residents to the boards of public bodies and other committees whose activities affect Key Gaelic Communities.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Commission of Ethical Standards in Public Life
Relevant Public Bodies

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.3.8 Consideration should be given to the further potential of Settlement Officers - who facilitate people moving to, and living in, island communities - to promote the importance of the language in Key Gaelic Communities, as well as resettling people at various transition points.

Lead Body
Convention of the Highlands & Islands

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Relevant Local Authorities
HIE

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.3.9 Guidance from the Scottish Government on proposals for the introduction of Local Place Plans should consider a designation of *Areas of Linguistic Sensitivity* where policy intervention may be required to support and strengthen Gaelic with the development and strengthening of community agency and participation a primary aim.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Relevant Community Bodies
Community Trusts
Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale

Medium

- 3.3.10 The legal requirement for Island Community Impact Assessments should ensure linguistic impacts are properly considered and a good practice guide should be available on undertaking community consultation in a way sensitive to the needs of Gaelic in the context of Local Place Plans.

Lead Body

Scottish Government

Others to be involved

Relevant Community Bodies

Community Trusts

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale

Medium

3.4 Education

Education is often considered a right, or a universal service, but it is also a generator of economic prosperity. The people employed to develop and provide education contribute to the economy where they live and work. In a developed economy, the education and training of Scotland's workforce is a major factor in determining how well the country's economy will perform.

Significant economic and social opportunities will arise from improving and extending Gaelic education provision at all levels and the group believes access should be enshrined in law. We recognise the practical challenges there may be in providing sufficient staffing, but a legal right – even if a qualified right initially – sends a clear signal about intent.

The Sleat peninsula in Skye has been revitalised due to the presence of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. Ionad Chalum Chille Ìle and Cnoc Soilleir offer learning opportunities while providing a focal point for Gaelic activities in Islay and South Uist respectively. Development of those building-based organisations, as well as the establishment of new schools, have brought construction and maintenance jobs which provide short-term economic benefits but lead to longer-term benefits through the jobs those capital projects enable.

Expansion of Gaelic education is needed, first and foremost, to grow confident, well-educated, Gaelic speakers. Some may use the language socially and make a valuable contribution to Gaelic community life. Others may participate in generating economic activity using the language in business, or in providing public services by filling an increasing range of Gaelic-related jobs, including teaching. There will be a reliance on a proportion of Gaelic learners as well as pupils in Gaelic medium education.

The presence of a school which employs a number of Gaelic teachers in any community, rural or urban, creates economic benefits as well as providing a resource for social interaction in the language. More education jobs in communities of all kinds will have a positive economic effect. In rural and island areas such as those the group consider Key Gaelic Communities, the contribution from comparatively well-paid jobs is felt more significantly. Expansion of Gaelic education will add Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic: Report to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy

value over the long term while further new provision which requires building works will offer short-term economic activity and benefits.

The group fully recognises the workforce challenges which exist, but teacher shortages are not unique to Gaelic education. Creative solutions will be required such as financial incentives, already employed in relation to other shortages including those offered to teachers of STEM subjects. Gaelic Foundation Apprenticeships could lead to some young people 'getting the bug' to work with young people who may progress into teaching, as could some opportunities available in the arts and sport. Above all, teaching in Gaelic must be an attractive prospect. Key to that is fully supporting Gaelic teachers in all aspects of their work and providing adequate resources.

Parents should have reasonable expectations of a continuum in Gaelic education between all points of transition. Expansion is needed at all levels, but particularly at secondary school level.

While there is a high level of awareness of recruitment problems, more support is needed to ensure local authorities can provide better secondary Gaelic medium provision. Designating certain schools as Gaelic medium schools would signal a clear intent to enhance provision, albeit time would be needed to develop the offering in all centres. There are some, however, such as Portree High School, which could quickly be developed into a national centre of excellence in Gaelic medium education, with appropriate additional resource from the local authority.

The group believes schools in Key Gaelic Communities or in urban settings where a Gaelic medium school feeds into a local secondary school, should be designated as Gaelic medium schools. On that basis, the list would include the Nicolson Institute, Sir E Scott Secondary School, Sgoil Lionacleit, Castlebay Secondary School, Portree High School, Lochaber High School, Tiree High School, Islay High School and Oban High School. In a city context, Glasgow already has a designated secondary school, one is promised in Edinburgh and Inverness Royal Academy should be included.

Content-based language learning puts an additional onus on Gaelic teachers. Better support is needed in the classroom to enable teachers to deliver the purpose, outlined in the *Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education*, of ensuring that "children achieve equal fluency and literacy in both Gaelic and English, whilst reaching expected attainment levels in all other areas of the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic." Additional classroom help at all stages, but particularly during the immersion phase, should be a feature of improvement.

While the *Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education* provides a good outline of what parents should expect from Gaelic education, awareness of it appears to be low among local authority officers and elected representatives. There are gaps, too, and the Guidance would benefit from review and renewal, alongside awareness-raising of its provisions among parents, policymakers and education providers.

Above all, if Gaelic education is to achieve its main purpose as well as providing economic and social opportunities, it must be properly resourced. This applies as much to human resources as it does to financial resources, with the latter reliant on the former. Funding for Gaelic education must be more mainstreamed and viewed alongside general costs of providing education while its needs are considered in all Scottish Government education policies.

In relation to **Education** the group recommends that:

- 3.4.1 In order to fully realise economic, as well as educational, benefits a strategy is developed urgently to begin overcoming the disparity in provision in Gaelic secondary education, which inhibits fuller language acquisition and confidence in language use, with the aim of ensuring a broad range of subjects is available through the medium of Gaelic to certificated level.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
SQA (or successor)
Education Scotland (or successors)
Local Authorities

Timescale **Immediate**

- 3.4.2 A new initiative is introduced urgently to attract new teachers while pro-actively persuading teachers qualified to teach in Gaelic, who do not currently, to work in Gaelic education. Both strands may require the establishment of a range of financial incentives, support and confidence-building initiatives to enhance the appeal of teaching in Gaelic.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
GTCS
Education Scotland (or successors)
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale **Immediate**

- 3.4.3 As far as possible teacher education should be delivered through the medium of Gaelic with new concerted efforts to ensure GME teacher education is (i) incentivised centrally and (ii) made as accessible as possible, including through the employment of distance learning, as long as that does not compromise the Gaelic language skills acquisition required to produce successful teachers.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Scottish Funding Council
Teacher Education Institutions
GTCS
SQA (or successor)
Education Scotland (or successors)
Local Authorities

Timescale **Immediate**

- 3.4.4 Adequate, regular support for early years practitioners and Gaelic teachers be put in place to improve conditions and retention, including immersion techniques, ongoing CPL in

language skills and the provision of a wider range of quality resources to negate the need for teachers to produce so much of their own materials.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
UHI North, West & Hebrides
Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig
Education Scotland (or successors)
Other resources providers
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale **Immediate**

3.4.5 A range of initiatives continue to be supported to facilitate Gaelic learning among adults in communities, the media, online and in further and higher education establishments.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
MG ALBA
BBC ALBA
BBC Radio nan Gàidheal
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Relevant Local Authorities
UHI North, West & Hebrides

Timescale **Immediate**

3.4.6 Gaelic education should be developed at all levels, with access improved through transport and use of technology, where appropriate, and acknowledgement of the economic, as well as educational, benefits from improved and expanded provision. In particular, consideration should be given as to how a legal right to Gaelic education may be implemented to ensure expansion in provision and improved access.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Scottish Parliament
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
SQA (or successor)
Education Scotland (or successors)
Scottish Funding Council
Local Authorities
COSLA

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.4.7 To begin improving the secondary Gaelic medium offering, relevant local authorities should consult on the potential to designate certain secondary schools as Gaelic medium schools which, through annual reporting, would demonstrate clear ambitions to develop Gaelic secondary provision, even if there are challenges in the short-term.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
The Highland Council
Argyll & Bute Council
City of Edinburgh Council
Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.4.8 A range of Gaelic medium Foundation Apprenticeships should be available in S5-6 for pupils wishing to pursue careers in early years & social care, the creative industries, culture, heritage, tourism, sport, food & drink and the natural environment where the use of Gaelic would be an advantage or its promotion encouraged.

Lead Body
Skills Development Scotland

Others to be involved
Scottish Government
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
UHI North, West & Hebrides
SQA (or successors)
Education Scotland (or successors)
Local Authorities

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.4.9 Gaelic language teaching for learners be compulsory for all S1-S3 pupils in secondary schools in Na h-Eileanan Siar, Skye & Lochalsh, Lochaber, Tiree and Islay along with access for those wishing to gain a qualification in S4-S6. This could apply in other places where GM pupils feed into secondary schools, for example Inverness, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Lead Body
Scottish Government

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
SQA (or successors)
Education Scotland (or successors)
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.4.10 *Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education* should be reviewed and refreshed and its status promoted widely within Scottish education with a range of mechanisms put in place,

through policy, annual reporting and school inspections, to ensure adherence to its principles by local authorities and education policymakers.

Lead Body
Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Others to be involved
Scottish Government
Scottish Funding Council
GTCS
SQA (or successors)
Education Scotland (or successors)
Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale **Medium**

- 3.4.11 A Gaelic medium curriculum is developed which is not a translation of the English curriculum but includes ongoing language acquisition, learning about Scottish history, the richness of Gaelic culture and concepts unique to Gaelic, such as the environmental stewardship inherent in *dùthchas* with a potential tie to 3.5.5.

Lead Body
Education Scotland (or successors)

Others to be involved
Scottish Government
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig
SQA (or successors)
GTCS
Relevant Local Authorities
Teacher Education Institutions
NatureScot

Timescale **Long**

3.5 Key Sectors

The group considers that the key areas which offer the best prospects for social use of the language and economic benefit from Gaelic include education, provision of public services, early years & social care, the creative industries, culture, heritage, tourism, sport, food & drink and the natural environment.

Section 3.3 outlines how more ambitious Gaelic Language Plans could lead to further jobs in the public sector while 3.4 deals with the social and economic opportunities which could arise from an expansion in Gaelic education.

The creative industries, including broadcasting and the arts, are major contributors to the Scottish economy. In terms of Gaelic, they are significant employers and generators of economic outputs.

MG ALBA's most recent Economic Impact Assessment, for example, shows 310 FTEs are supported by the organisation's work providing GVA of £17.2m - £1.34 for every £1 invested and clear potential

for further growth. The Fèis movement supports 116.5 FTEs across Scotland - including 75 FTEs in the Highlands and Islands - generating an annual income from employment in Scotland of around £3m. An Comunn Gàidhealach reported that the 2022 Royal National Mòd provided a £2.5 million boost to Perth's economy over the course of the nine-day event. Along with the creative industries, but including education and other public sector jobs, a 2022 report for Glasgow City Council estimated that more than 700 FTEs in Glasgow could be attributed to Gaelic with an estimated GVA to the Glasgow economy in the region of £21.6m per annum.

These are just a few elements of the creative industries which offer potential for greater economic and social outcomes through the further development of a range of media productions, music, literature, theatre performances and festivals. This would apply to organisations and individuals who operate or express themselves in Gaelic as well as those for whom Gaelic is an enhancement or a feature of a particular work.

The creative industries and other key sectors, including sport and outdoor activities, contribute greatly to wellbeing as has been evident during the Covid pandemic years. They are also the means by which many people engage with the language for the first time or, as has been seen recently, begin learning the language, particularly as adults.

There has been a surge in heritage activities, and tourism related to that and Gaelic culture more widely, with 1 in 3 visitors stating they have an interest in learning more about Gaelic when they come to Scotland. While there is great demand for outdoor experiences, the relationship between Gaelic language and culture and the natural environment seems to be an area of potential growth.

There is a need to develop and improve the offering to meet demand, which would encourage wider use of Gaelic, increase economic activity and contribute to self-esteem and wellbeing.

As outlined in *Ar Stòras Gàidhlig*, tourism opportunities can relate to an internal Gaelic speaking/learning market or a national and international market where the role of Gaelic enhances the distinctiveness and appeal to tourists of specific locations.

There has been recent growth in sporting activities delivered in Gaelic and this has led to greater diversity in social use of Gaelic with the economic, social and wellbeing benefits this sector brings. Likewise, wider outdoor activities which have the potential to offer a direct connection to Gaelic language and culture.

In relation to **Key Sectors** the group recommends that:

- 3.5.1 While acknowledging the potential of Creative Scotland's Place Partnership Programme, a national Gaelic Arts Strategy be developed outlining ways to support and enhance the economic opportunities for those working in the arts and screen industries where Gaelic is the medium of delivery or is related to the work being undertaken in the artform.

Lead Body
Creative Scotland

Others to be involved
Scottish Government
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
MG ALBA
Screen Scotland
EventScotland

**National Companies
Gaelic Arts Organisations**

Timescale **Immediate**

- 3.5.2 In recognition of the economic, social and educational importance of the broadcast and digital media, increased funding should be made available to MG ALBA, and others, to enable the development of a range of new programmes, a larger proportion to be made in Key Gaelic Communities, for broadcast on television, radio and on digital platforms with a strong language policy which increases the use of Gaelic with optional subtitles.

Lead Bodies

**Scottish Government
MG ALBA**

Others to be involved

**BBC
Department of Culture, Media & Sport
Creative Scotland
Screen Scotland
Other digital broadcasters**

Timescale **Immediate**

- 3.5.3 The partnership established by VisitScotland to support Gaelic tourism should be continued with a wide range of bodies working towards improving the Gaelic experience for visitors.

Lead Body

VisitScotland

Others to be involved

**Scottish Government
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Creative Scotland
EventScotland
HES
HIE
MG ALBA
Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
Gaelic Organisations
Heritage Trusts
Relevant Local authorities
Destination Management Organisations**

Timescale **Immediate**

- 3.5.4 A range of industry training opportunities should be developed to prepare people to work in the media, as far as possible through the medium of Gaelic, to increase employment opportunities, use of Gaelic and provide a range of transferable skills.

Lead Body

MG ALBA

Others to be involved

Independent Production Companies

Timescale

Medium

3.5.5 As called for in a 2021 scoping exercise for NatureScot, *Ecosystem Services and Gaelic*, further research be undertaken exploring the role Gaelic language and culture, and its relationship with the Highland landscape, has in promoting self-esteem, health and wellbeing with a view to improving knowledge, access and creating social and economic opportunities relating to the natural environment.

Lead Body
NatureScot

Others to be involved
Scottish Government
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Relevant Local Authorities

Timescale

Medium

3.5.6 In addition to specific recommendations in 3.5.1-3.5.5, economic opportunities should be strengthened by increasing support for Gaelic organisations, companies and individuals working across the range of key sectors to expand provision, employ more people and strengthen communities further.

Lead Body
HIE

Others to be involved
Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Creative Scotland
VisitScotland
Screen Scotland
HES
Heritage Trusts
Education Scotland (or successors)
MG ALBA
SportScotland
Local authorities and arms-length bodies

Timescale

Medium

4 Implementing the group's recommendations

The group was tasked with considering recommendations and where these recommendations should be directed. It was not tasked with producing a plan to implement its recommendations. This report is not an alternative to the National Gaelic Language Plan.

The question arises, then, how will the group's recommendations be delivered?

Most of the recommendations involve a lead body working with others, so a suite of mini-plans between the lead and other organisations may be a possibility. Some of the group's recommendations may already align with the 2023-28 National Gaelic Language Plan. If not, they could be incorporated if the timeframe allows for such in advance of its approval by Ministers.

Yet another possibility, and perhaps the most likely, is that the Gaelic and Scots Division in the Scottish Government, along with colleagues in the Economic Development Directorate, will create an action plan around the group's recommendations, maintain an overview of input from other bodies and ensure delivery.

The group very much wants to see its recommendations delivered, with transparency over progress, and it is hoped an approach can be found which causes the minimum of disruption to Gaelic organisations and public bodies already involved in delivering a range of plans and initiatives. Adding to their workload cannot be avoided, however, and it is important to acknowledge that fact in submitting the group's recommendations.

The group would welcome further discussion on implementation if that would be useful.

Annex 1 Group's Remit from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy

The presumption for this group is that the relationship between Gaelic and social and economic initiatives should be mutually beneficial.

The focus of this group will be to strengthen Gaelic by means of a focus on economic opportunities and to strengthen the economy by making the most of Gaelic opportunities.

In order to do this the group will want to discuss and have a sense of what Gaelic initiatives have been put in place that produce positive social and economic benefits and what wider initiatives have been put in place that have the potential to have a positive impact on Gaelic.

In doing this, the group will want to ask what is the potential to expand on these opportunities, to introduce improvements and build on what is currently in place.

The group will also want to consider what levers and budgets are in place to make progress with these things.

The group will also want to focus on new opportunities, gaps, opportunities that are being missed.

The group will also need to consider recommendations and where these recommendations should be directed. The recommendations will be published.

The timeline for the group's work will be six meetings, one meeting every month, with recommendations submitted to ministers in Autumn 2022.

Annex 2 References

The following is a selection of publications considered by the Group during the writing of its report.

- BBC News: [Warning of crisis in Gaelic teacher recruitment](#) (News Item, 4 October 2022)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: [Guidance on Gaelic Language Plans](#)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: [Reports on the 2021 Scottish Social Attitudes](#)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: [Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education](#)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: [National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23](#)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: [Draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28](#)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Place-based approaches to growing the economy (paper provided to the Group)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Bòrd na Gàidhlig actual funding from 2007 compared to maintaining the 2007-08 real-terms level (information provided to the Group)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Initial Evidence Paper (paper provided to the Group)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Wellbeing and Gaelic (paper provided to the Group)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Aithris – Luchd-teagaisg (paper provided to the Group)
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Additional Information for Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic (paper provided to the Group)
- Brooks, Dr S: [Second homes: Developing new policies in Wales](#)
- Camanachd Association: [New Shinty Gaelic Language Development Officer for Skye](#) (News Release, 8 December 2022)
- <https://shinty.com/new-shinty-gaelic-language-development-officer-for-skye/>
- Campbell, A, Lord Bracadale and others for the Scottish Government: [Independent review of hate crime legislation in Scotland: Final Report](#)
- Comann nam Pàrant Port Rìgh: [Gaelic Medium Education Development at Portree High School - Proposal for discussion](#)
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar: [New Settlement Officer Appointed in Outer Hebrides](#)
- Creative Scotland: [Place Programme](#)
- Crofting Commission: [Succession to croft tenancies](#)
- DC Research Ltd for Glasgow City Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig: [Gaelic Economy in Glasgow](#)
- DC Research for HIE and others: [Ar Stòras Gàidhlig](#)
- EKOS for MG ALBA: [Economic and social value of MG ALBA](#)
- Ekosgen and others for HIE: [Young People and the Highlands and Islands: Maximising Opportunities FC Sonas](#)
- Foxley, Dr M & Roberston, Prof B: Gaelic Medium Education, Immediate Action Required (paper provided to the Group)
- Fraser of Allander Institute, University of Strathclyde: [Long-term Economic Implications of Brexit Iomain Cholmcille](#)
- Macleay, R for NatureScot: [Ecosystem Services and Gaelic: a Scoping Exercise](#)
- Macleod, F – Paper on demographics (paper provided to the Group)
- Misneachd Alba: [Manifesto Misneachd 2021](#)
- Munro, D: Kilbeg Housing Development (paper provided to the Group)

National Records of Scotland: Scotland's Census 2011: [Gaelic Report parts 1 & 2](#) (via University of Edinburgh website)

Official Gateway to the Faroe Islands: [People and Society in the Fares Islands](#)

Ó Giollagáin, Conchúr (Ed) [The Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community](#)

Perth Gazette: [£2.5m boost to Perth thanks to The Royal National Mòd 2022](#) (News Item, 2 February 2023)

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig [1.5 million Scottish Gaelic Duolingo learners, new data reveals](#) (News Release, 29 November 2022)

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig: [SpeakGaelic, a new multiplatform Gaelic learning resource hailed as a game-changer for Gaelic learning](#) (News Release, 15 October 2021)

Scottish Government: [Scotland National Strategy for Economic Transformation: Evidence from Regional Economic Partnerships](#) (includes Highlands and Islands REP)

Scottish Government: [Island Communities Impact Assessments: Guidance and Toolkit](#)

Scottish Government: [A Culture Strategy for Scotland](#)

Scottish Government: [Consultation on Commitments to Gaelic & Scots and a Scottish Languages Bill](#)

Scottish Government: [Supporting Gaelic Communities](#) (News Release, 3 March 2022)

Scottish Government: [Scottish Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement 2022](#)

Scottish Government: Circular 1/2022 - [Local Place Plans](#)

Scottish Government: [The National Islands Plan](#)

Scottish Government: [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#)

Scottish Government: [Improving Broadband Access](#) (News Release, 3 June 2022)

Scottish Government & UK Government: [The Islands Growth Deal](#)

Scottish Land Commission: [Land Reform and Taxation: Advice to Scottish Ministers](#)

Scottish National Party: [Scotland's Future - 2021 Manifesto](#)

[Spòrs Gàidhlig](#)

Scottish Rural Action: [Report of the Rural and Islands Strategic Stakeholder Workshop](#)

Skills Development Scotland: (STEM) [Bursary scheme to continue](#) (News Item, 26 February 2021)

The Highland Council: [Council to purchase houses from owners who would like to help make a difference in their community](#) (News Release, 12 January 2022)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000](#)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Education \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Equality Act 2010](#)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Gaelic Language \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Islands \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#)

The National Archives (legislation.gov.uk): [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#)

Tighe and Oireachtais/House of the Oireachtas: [Gaeiltacht Act 2012](#)

UK Government: [Island communities across the UK to come together in Orkney for first Islands Forum](#) (News Release, 28 June 2022)

Wavehill Research: [Evaluation, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Arfor Programme](#)

Welsh Government: [Commission for Welsh-speaking Communities](#)

Welsh Government: [£11 million Arfor 2 programme to boost economic prosperity in Welsh speaking communities](#) (News Release, 10 October 2022)

Westbrook, S & Anderson, S: [The cultural, social, economic, linguistic and wellbeing impacts of Fèisean nan Gàidheal](#)



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