
Gaelic Development across Argyll and Bute

Summary

This report looks at the role of the Gaelic language in Argyll and Bute and considers what value this asset can bring to the improvement outcomes. The partners are asked to continue to support the promotion and usage of this language.

1. Purpose

- The role of ABC's Gaelic development worker is outlined.
- A survey on Gaelic prevalence and priorities is being conducted.
- Some information on the value of Gaelic to Argyll and Bute's outcomes is offered.
- Some information on the context of the Gaelic language is offered also, including the priorities of Argyll & Bute Council's Gaelic Language Plan.
- Finally some suggestions are made as to how partners can continue to support the development and interest in the language.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Area CPG members are requested to:

- Support the promotion of Gaelic where possible
- Consider Gaelic as an option when looking at new and existing initiatives
- Connect interested parties with Gaelic Development Worker
- Have an awareness of the Argyll and Bute Gaelic Language Plan and where possible support the objectives
- Be aware of Colmcille 1500 celebration in 2021 which relates to initiatives linking Scotland and Ireland
- Assist where appropriate with taking forward actions identified by the Gaelic survey

3. Background

Since around the 5th Century the Gaelic language has been spoken in Argyll.

Today there are still communities in Argyll and Bute where Gaelic is part of everyday life. Including schools and community groups, from Gaelic Choirs to Fèisean to language classes and cafes. These provisions cover all ages.

Gaelic has been on the decline in Argyll and Bute and the 2011 Census showed a decrease of 15% in the number of Gaelic speakers.

The Gaelic Language Plan directly links with the six joint outcomes of the Council's Corporate Plan.

In November 2020 a part-time 18 month Gaelic Development Worker role commenced. This post is part funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

4. Detail

4.1 The remit of the Gaelic Development Worker is to:

- Increase awareness
- Link and coordinate Gaelic activity
- Develop capacity of community groups
- Deliver a Gaelic Gathering in spring 2022
- Other actions relating to Business/economics/tourism; language learning and heritage and history

4.2 Gaelic Survey

Part of the role is to deliver on the Gaelic Gathering actions collected in 2019. These are wide and varied and more information was needed from the community to decide which to take forward. A survey ran for a month between 14 January and 14 February. Over 1000 people responded demonstrating the relevance and interest of Gaelic to people in Argyll and Bute. The survey was aimed at everyone in the area whether they were a Gaelic speaker or not. The findings from the survey are almost collated and will be fed back to the Gaelic Policy Lead and will help the council make the best use of its resource and identify which actions from the Argyll Gaelic Gathering are a priority for local communities.

4.3 Diverse value of Gaelic

Gaelic is woven into the fabric of Scotland and has great value in many areas including education, economy, tourism and communities. It has a link to each of the six SOAs. A 2014 study by HIE estimated the potential economic value of Gaelic to be between £82M and £149M.

In Argyll and Bute there are currently 11 schools offering Gaelic Medium Education (GME) ranging from early years to Primary and High School provisions. Plus many schools offering Gaelic Language in the Primary School (GLPS).

There are also many community groups and provisions in Argyll and Bute. They range from Bookbug sessions for parents and toddlers to choirs, Fèisean, language classes and conversation groups.

Bilingualism is shown to have health benefits and increases a persons ability to pick up other languages.

4.4 Relevance of Gaelic today

570,000 Scottish Gaelic learners signed upto Duolingo in the first year of the course. This is one demonstration of the level of interest and relevance of Scottish Gaelic to people across Scotland and beyond.

The Gaelic Tourism Strategy highlights Gaelic language and culture as a unique selling point. It also shows the interest from those abroad who have Scottish heritage.

4.5 Heritage of Argyll and Bute

Gaelic has been spoken in Argyll and Bute since the 5th Century. It is present in many place names and can often be used to help interpret the landscape.

In the 2011 Census Argyll and Bute had the third highest number of people aged over three with some Gaelic language skills (6%). It had the fourth largest number of people for a council area.

4.6 Argyll and Bute Gaelic Language Plan

Argyll and Bute Council have a commitment to produce and deliver on a [Gaelic Language Plan](#) as part of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act, 2005 and the National Gaelic Language Plan. The plans use three main sections which cover a wide range of engagements and initiatives:

- Using Gaelic
- Learning Gaelic
- Promoting Gaelic

5. Conclusions

Gaelic is a great asset for Argyll and Bute, one that offers a great deal across many domains.

There is opportunity to link to Gaelic development by looking for ways to promote and support Gaelic more widely and by helping to implement actions from the Gaelic Gathering.

The Gaelic development worker can be contacted on cristie.moore@argyll-bute.gov.uk.

6.0 SOA Outcomes

This report relates to all of the SOA outcomes.

For further information please contact:

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