



Consultation on The Scottish Government Commitments to Gaelic and Scots and a Scottish Languages Bill

Respondent Information Form

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
 Publish response only (without name)
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Information for organisations:

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No

Consultation Questions

Consultation responses are invited on the question of a new strategic approach to Gaelic medium education.

Thinking of barriers, obstacles and solutions - What are the key aspects you feel should be included in a new strategic approach to Gaelic medium education?

Local Authorities, schools, and head teachers engaging with their school community and taking account of the availability of resources and demand, should continue to be empowered to determine GME provision locally. There is no evidence provided in the recent consultation document that the legislation is not working and no evidence provided that parental demand is not being met. However, it is clear that in order to meet the expectation of parents, children and young people there is a need to ensure that Local Authorities are adequately resourced, both in terms of funding and availability of suitable practitioners.

Due to the current financial landscape, councils will have limited scope to invest in services and therefore, any additional commitments will need to be fully funded by Scottish Government (both capital and revenue funding). The shortage of GM teaching staff is particularly prevalent within Argyll and Bute. We have found it increasingly challenging to recruit staff to GME posts and currently have a number of vacant posts which we have been unable to fill. If the intention is to further expand provision, there will need to be significant and fast paced work undertaken in order to increase training and recruitment of GME teachers.

Whilst we appreciate the intent to ensure that GME experiences are immersive and the aspiration to increase the variety of subjects taught through GM in both the BGE and Senior Phase, this would be impossible to achieve given the current level of funding and lack of a suitable workforce.

At our Gaelic Gathering issues were raised by participants about encouraging older children to 'stick' with Gaelic or come back to it – GME is only part of the solution.

National promotion of potential occupations and career routes for young people if they develop their language skills would be an incentive for them.

More national support for parents of GME young people regarding the benefits of Gaelic and potential economic opportunities that it creates.

What steps do you think should be taken to support and promote Gaelic education and to ensure that any new strategic approach to GME is implemented?

Whilst schools play a role in the promotion of Gaelic education, further support and investment would need to be provided to organisations such as Argyll College and UHI to enable them to incentivise in order to attract and increase the number of students wishing to qualify as a GM teacher. The availability of GME teachers is out with local authority control and without action from the Scottish Government and partners to increase the number of GME teachers, any expansion would not be deliverable. As an authority, we continue to support and promote GME and work hard to ensure that GM learners are receiving high quality experiences.

Are there any other points you would like to make about the provision of Gaelic medium education and Gaelic learner education in Scottish education?

The same staffing challenges as outlined above impact on the delivery of a Gaelic learner pathway within our schools. We are conscious of the fact that the national discussion is taking place and that reform is very much on the horizon. The timing of the Gaelic and Scots Language Consultation could have been more carefully considered in order to give it the high profile that it deserves. There is a concern that the responses to the consultation will not be representative of the wider population.

Consultation responses are invited on the question of exploring the creation of a Gàidhealtachd.

Do you have views on what measures should be in place to support Gaelic speakers in areas with significant numbers of speakers?

There is a core question in this section about what a Gàidhealtachd is the solution to. What would this proposal mean for communities, businesses and councils in a designated area?

We recognise that it is important to support Gaelic speakers in areas where there are significant numbers of speakers and the Council tries to ensure that there are opportunities available, but we are limited in our capacity. It can be challenging to ensure that all Gaelic speakers are able to access these opportunities. The increased use of technology could help to support this but that depends on connectivity which we know can be problematic for some of our rural and island communities.

There is a wider role for communities in this question and understanding what they would see as the benefit of it. There is interest in Gaelic Community Hubs within Argyll and Bute. This was demonstrated via a survey with 1300 respondents and the Argyll Gaelic Gathering. Exploration of the concept has shown that reasons for

wanting hubs are mainly for people to have opportunities to speak, hear and practice Gaelic and meet others within the Gaelic community. There is a network of events and linked groups rather than specific buildings. These would be measures that would be helpful to have in place in areas with significant numbers of speakers. But it is not clear that designating a Gàidhealtachd would enable this to happen,

There is a need for building confidence within the speaker and learner populations to use their Gaelic. The Argyll Gaelic Gathering identified this as an issue with fluent speakers feeling unconfident about using their Gaelic in intergenerational contexts and with learners.

A training needs analysis of third sector groups within Argyll and Bute identified that 6% of respondents had confidence in engaging in Gaelic. 3% had confidence around Gaelic language policies and plans. Gaelic speakers will interact with these groups and so awareness training would be useful around Gaelic, the Gaelic community and a brief history of some of the challenges they face and why Gaelic is important. Again, it is not clear that the designation of a Gàidhealtachd area would address this.

As a Council, we have a Gaelic Language Plan that supports the development and use of the language. We would expect full engagement on the development of a Gàidhealtachd area that included Argyll and Bute and in particular any duties that this were to place on the Council, which we would expect to be fully funded.

Do you have views on how such areas should be defined?

Designating an area creates both inclusion and exclusion. The area defined should be informed by the ultimate intent of what the Gàidhealtachd aims to achieve and deliver.

How would you balance the commitment to put measures in place in areas where there are significant Gaelic speakers with the principle that Gaelic should be a national language for all of Scotland?

We think it would be challenging to create a Gàidhealtachd without leading to inequity of access and provision. For example, due to the geography and demographic of Argyll and Bute, it would be challenging to identify one specific area with the highest population of Gaelic speakers and this also runs the risk of moving away from the principle that Gaelic should be a national language for all.

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Are there any further points you would like to make about the commitment to explore the creation of a Gàidhealtachd and the associated commitments relating to Gaelic use in family and community?

Further funding could be made available in order to enable Councils to support Gaelic use in communities without the creation of a Gàidhealtachd. Councils should be given full autonomy (within a framework) on how any additional funding should be spent. In addition to this, local authorities who are not deemed to be part of a Gàidhealtachd may feel less supported in their mission to deliver the targets within their Gaelic Language Plan.

The Gaelic Tourism Group led by Visit Scotland are evolving to incorporate culture and heritage in relation to Gaelic into their remit in a sensitive way. Part of the discussion around this evolution recognises the need for sensitivity when exploring culture, heritage and tourism to avoid the commodification of Gaelic culture and heritage. Community consultation and clear communication will be key and we see this as also being crucial to creation of a Gàidhealtachd.

There would be an implication for all partners in the development of a Gàidhealtachd and we would expect full engagement on the detailed proposals. Who would have oversight of the Gàidhealtachd? How could they work together and ensure the aims of the Gàidhealtachd are achieved?

How would the Gaelic speaking population be enabled to continue living in the Gàidhealtachd in relation to housing prices; health and social care; transport etc.?

Consultation responses are invited on the question of a review of the structure and functions of Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Do you have any views on the current duties of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and any suggestions of how these could operate more effectively or efficiently?

The current duties/role/areas of responsibility of Bòrd na Gàidhlig are unclear. There requires to be a very clear definition of the role of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and its areas of responsibility. For example, it would not be appropriate for Bòrd na Gàidhlig to play a role in quality assurance processes or in scrutinising provision at authority level. Neither is it appropriate for the Bòrd to step into a directing role in terms of a Council's Gaelic Language Plan or any agreed policy positions.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig should operate in an advisory and supportive capacity for organisations charged with developing and delivering Gaelic Language Plans and respect the governance and democratic accountability of those independent bodies.

Our concern is that if Bòrd na Gàidhlig gain further powers and more legislation is passed putting pressure on LAs and schools to deliver full immersion. Until such times as we have enough Gaelic speakers; who are interested enough to become teachers, then full immersion will not be possible.

Do you have any views on structural changes at Bòrd na Gàidhlig which could strengthen the promotion of and support for Gaelic in Scotland?

The profile of the Gaelic Development Officer (Teachers) role could be raised, giving LAs additional support with the recruitment of teaching and non-teaching Gaelic staff. This would be particularly useful to local authorities who have several Gaelic Medium provisions across many rural areas.

We would like to see greater visibility and transparency of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and to see them make a greater contribution to promotion of the benefits of the language, rather than the current 'policing' role that it takes. We would like to see it as an enabler of Gaelic rather than an enforcer of plans.

Are there any further points you would like to make about the review of the functions and structure of Bòrd na Gàidhlig which seeks to ensure Scotland has the most effective leadership body and network of organisations for the promotion of Gaelic?

Consultation responses are invited on the question of support for the Scots language.

Thinking of the work of the key Scots bodies as referred to in the paper - What are your views on the work of the Scots bodies? How would you strengthen and add to the work of these bodies?

What are your views on the next steps that should be taken to support the Scots language?

Are there any further points you would like to make about the commitment to support the Scots language?

There will be Scots speakers within Argyll and Bute. The Council would be happy to collaborate with those working in and for the Scots language communities and share learning and ideas from the Gaelic world.