

Gaelic Activity in Argyll and Bute

This report will detail Gaelic activity in Argyll and Bute and will provide information by discussing particular areas of activity. These are:

- Activities for families with children aged 0-3 years old
- Pre-school education
- Primary School Education
- Secondary School Education
- Adult Learning Opportunities
- Mods
- Gaelic Partnerships
- National Partner organizations operating in Argyll and Bute
- Gaelic Signage
- Gaelic Awareness Courses
- Ulpan Language Learning Classes
- Bilingual Documents
- Libraries
- Visibility
- Registration Services
- Stramash

0-3 – This is an area of recent increased activity. The highly popular and successful Scottish Booktrust initiative, Bookbug, has been versioned into Gaelic by A & B. Sessions for parents and toddlers are operating in Oban, Dunoon and Appin with Oban attracting up to 20 families to its weekly sessions. Leaders for the sessions to be identified for Islay, Mull and Tiree with the communities very keen to participate. Existing parent and toddler groups already operating on Mull and Islay and are fairly popular. This is a priority area of growth that and is also an excellent opportunity for parents to start learning Gaelic with their children from a very early age.

Pre-school Education

Gaelic Medium Pre-school Education is available for 3-5 year olds to access in Bowmore, Islay, Sandbank, Dunoon, Rockfield, Oban, Salen, Mull, Tiree and Appin. Tiree operates a bilingual provision that is historically what the community has wished for. Interest is now being shown in the community for dedicated Gaelic Medium provision and this is presently being explored for viability. The pre-school experience is crucial where 3 and 4 year olds get to grips with Gaelic sounds, songs, rhymes and start to speak a small amount on their own and develop an understanding of the language. Present areas of growth are Dunoon and Mull with Appin and Oban a priority to increase numbers accessing.

A & B are currently writing a course that will give non-Gaelic speaking pre-school practitioners the skills and language to deliver second language provision in the pre-school stages.

Primary School Education

Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is available in the same 6 areas as above. At present approx numbers in P1-7 are:

Sandbank – 44

Tiree – 23

Oban – 35

Islay – 15

Appin – 6

Salen - 32

Oban and Appin are again priority areas of growth and dedicated awareness raising work is being undertaken at present as well and the 0-3 developments mentioned above.

Maintaining good-sized peer groups at school stages is crucial in all other areas with decreasing school rolls across the wider catchment areas. Schools' catchment areas for GME are not defined and children can access from anywhere within a school cluster, from across Cowal or Islay for example, and transport will be provided for school aged children. Examples of transport arrangements vary and are based on need and can take the form of a dedicated bus or taxi, individual mileage arrangements for parents or an escort or buddy on a High school or Public bus. The Gaelic Medium experience in Argyll's primary schools is of good quality and the children achieve good levels of fluency in Gaelic and are equally competent in English skills. It is essential that additional exposure to Gaelic outwith the class setting continues that enables young people to experience Gaelic in a range of settings and contexts that make it more natural to them. Children can access film making sessions, drama festivals, sporting events, outdoor education activities, ICT based activities, opportunities to meet with other young people accessing GME from across Scotland through residential experiences and Mod participation.

Parents are also encouraged and supported to learn Gaelic and many are now taking that opportunity and realizing how important it is for them to support their children in their learning. There are also national resources such as Gaelic4parents that can be accessed.

Over 50 of Argyll's primary schools offer Gaelic Language in the Primary School (GLPS) and Argyll and Bute has been training teachers in the delivery method as well as providing teachers with the language skills for over 10 years now and has led the movement nationally. Thousands of children in Argyll access some Gaelic on a weekly basis and it is very popular.

Secondary School Education

5 of Argyll and Bute's 10 Secondary schools offer Gaelic (Learners) or Gaidhlig, for children from a GME background. All pupils coming in to Islay, Tobermory, Tiree, and Oban High Schools access Gaelic (Learners) or Gaidhlig and have the option to continue their studies to throughout their school career to Advanced Higher level. Numbers accessing qualifications in Gaelic/Gaidhlig are healthy and many continue to further study in the discipline. Dunoon Grammar School provide continuity for children with a GME background from Sandbank and there is opportunity to pick up Gaelic (Learners) in the S3 stage to qualification levels. The priority for Secondary schools is to ensure that

pupils who have come from GME have enough exposure to Gaelic in their curriculum. This is a national issue with a severe shortage of teachers delivering other curricular areas through Gaelic in secondary schools. A & B utilize the expertise available in each locality to try and ensure maximum possible exposure. On Mull, for example, each of the 3 GME primary teachers deliver a curricular area through Gaelic in Tobermory High, presently Maths, Geography and Art. Islay High School offer skills for work opportunities through Gaelic and are supported by Ionad Chaluim Chille Ile in the John Muir Award, for example. Other opportunities include a national film making competition, interdisciplinary studies, visiting specialists and learning through ICT. Priorities are to build on additional exposure to Gaelic in the Secondary school setting. A & B offer Gaelic courses to teachers working in High schools and hopefully over time a number of these will become fluent enough to deliver their own discrete curricular areas through Gaelic. Up to 500 children accessing a form of Gaelic education in secondary schools.

Mods

Argyll and Bute hosts the Royal National Mod once every four years and hugely successful Mods have recently been held in Dunoon and Oban. The Royal National Mod is a major economic boost to any community and Argyll and Bute has committed to continue to support and host the event in Dunoon 2012 and Oban 2015. Mods held in Argyll and Bute are highly respected with very good levels of participation and attendance. It is important, however, that there is the appropriate legacy from the Royal National Mod on a community. Local Mods are held on Mull, Islay and in Oban and Lochgilphead and attract many competitors providing good opportunities for practice and adjudication comments in preparation for the national event.

Local Gaelic Partnerships

Gaelic Partnerships are active on Mull and Iona, Tiree and Coll, Islay and Jura, Lismore and in Cowal and Oban and Lorn. The local partnerships vary in their activities that range from offering language classes to adults, assisting with Mod and Feis events, correlating the range of activities offered in a locality and promotion and awareness raising of the language and culture. Islay and Jura have been awarded one of five national "Iomairt" (Initiative) areas that is supported by the development agency Comunn na Gaidhlig through a dedicated staff member. The Iomairtean are high profile areas of growth and sustainability. Partnerships are supported by the Specific Grant for Gaelic administered by A & B on a needs analysis and application basis.

National Partnership Organisations operating in the Argyll and Bute

Feisean nan Gaidheal – hold weekly classes in Music, Dance, Song and Gaelic and have larger week long events on Islay, Tiree, Gigha, Dunoon, Oban and Lochgoilhead. The weekly sessions are primarily for younger people with the week long summer events attracting many adults and youths alike. Tiree, Islay, Oban and Gigha are particularly well attended. A service level agreement is in place with Feisean nan Gaidheal and is reviewed on an annual basis.

An Comunn Gaidhealach – Local branches of An Comunn that arrange Mod events.

BBC Alba – BBC Alba news reporter based in Oban and mainly focuses on Argyll news.

Comunn na Gàidhlig through the Iomairt mentioned above.

Comunn nam Parant – National parental support organisation for families of children in GME. Local branches in all areas where GME is offered and can be very useful support mechanisms for schools also, through fundraising and arranging events

Canan Ltd – Providing invaluable input into Film making projects

Comann an Luchd-ionnsachaidh (CLI) – The Gaelic Learners' Society offer a range of language learning opportunities for adults

Deiseal Ltd – Each Ulpan (detailed below) is a licensed franchisee of the parent company

Ionad Chaluim Chille Ile (ICCI) – Islay's Gaelic Language and Culture centre

Lismore Gaelic and Heritage Centre

An Iodhlann, Tìree – Gaelic Culture and History Centre.

Gaelic Signage

In 2007 the Council put up bilingual signage at school entrances. This included 78 large main signs at school entrances and 75 other signs.

In 2008, works was undertaken to erect internal signage in schools. Primary Schools with Gaelic units were targeted with this project and included 616 door/information signs.

28 Gaelic signs were erected within Council offices and a further 22 within depots.

All School establishments now have bilingual signage throughout.

Gaelic Awareness Courses

Gaelic Awareness sessions were available to Council employees and elected members in 2008 in Campbeltown, Dunoon, Helensburgh, Lochgilphead and Oban. There were over 70 expressions of interest in attending these sessions.

Staff in Education attended awareness sessions in late 2008.

In 2011, further awareness sessions were offered to elected members and Chief and Senior Officers. Over 20 individuals attended the awareness sessions delivered by Roddy MacLean.

Ulpan Language Learning Classes

Argyll and Bute Council have been working with Ionad Chaluim Chille Ilè (the Columba Centre, Islay) to increase the number of people learning Gaelic. A funded project from Bòrd na Gàidhlig has enabled a process of developing a pool of Ùlpan tutors. This will allow tutors to be identified to deliver Ùlpan classes across Argyll and Bute. There are a number of tutors in Argyll and Bute and Ionad Chaluim Chille Ile are continuing to identify interested tutors.

Ùlpan classes have been held in Dunoon, Helensburgh, Islay, Mid Argyll and Oban.

Students include employees from Argyll and Bute Council and some partner organisations (SNH and Forestry Commission) as well as the wider public.

Currently classes are running in the following areas:

- 2 classes in Helensburgh with 29 students
- 5 classes on Islay with 26 students
- 3 classes in Mid Argyll with 17 students
- 2 classes in Oban
- 1 class in Dunoon

To date, there have been 72 students who are employees of Argyll and Bute Council who have registered with the Ùlpan model.

There are currently 2 other classes being run in Oban through Argyll College.

Bilingual documents

The Social Work service produced and updated a number of bilingual leaflets on care homes in Argyll and Bute and distributed to area offices.

Increase in Gaelic stock in libraries

The Library service has purchased additional materials to increase their Gaelic resources – audio books, DVDs and CDs – from specialist suppliers.

Increased visibility

There has been increased use of the use of Gaelic through a range of methods – a Gaelic article featured regularly in the employee newsletter, Work4ce, bilingual banners have been purchased for use at exhibitions and events.

Promotional items were purchased to raise awareness amongst staff and our partners of our Gaelic Language Plan. Items were distributed to all primary and secondary schools and are used at training courses, conferences etc.

Registration services

The Council's Civil Marriage Guide has some Gaelic content. In addition, through consultation with local Registrars it may be possible for fluent Gaelic speakers to have their ceremony conducted in Gaelic.

Stramash

Currently delivering the following Gaelic work in Argyll and Bute:

1. Outdoor learning through Gaelic to pre-school nursery children in Oban (through Rockfield Primary).
2. Outdoor activities through Gaelic to secondary school children in Oban (through Oban High School).
3. A Gaelic residential activity camp in Oban this summer for up to 30 secondary school age young people (the young people can come from anywhere in Scotland).
4. An outdoor activity programme in Gaelic as part of the Feis in Oban at Easter time this year.

In the second half of 2011 Stramash also delivered a regular programme of outdoor activities in Gaelic to the Dunoon based Feis and the Oban based Feis. We ran a one day programme for the Feis on Mull and one day of activity for the Appin Gaelic nursery and primary unit.

Robin Currie

Spokesperson for Rural and Island Affairs, Housing and Gaelic.