



Draft for Consultation



ARGYLL AND BUTE GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN 2027-32

This plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and was approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on (tbc)

Argyll and Bute Council

Gaelic Language Plan

2027-32

Foreword (tbc)

- Joint statement from Chief Executive and Council Leader
- Commitment to equal respect, national duties, and local heritage
- Commitment to partnership and community engagement across our area

Executive Summary

This Plan sets out Argyll and Bute Council's aims and commitments to consolidate and grow the Gaelic Language in Argyll and Bute, building on previous Plan successes and aligning with the National Gaelic Language Plan, our Council Corporate Plan and to comply with our statutory duties as set out in the Scottish Languages Act 2025.

Introduction

As a relevant public authority, Argyll and Bute Council is required to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan in accordance with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, the Scottish Languages Act 2025, and the Statutory Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans (2024).

This Plan covers the period 2027-2032 and sets out the councils aims and commitments to the Gaelic Language across Argyll and Bute.

Gaelic in Argyll and Bute

Gaelic is fundamental to the history, identity and distinctiveness of Argyll and Bute, and continues to shape the area's communities, economy and sense of place.

Argyll is widely recognised as the historical heartland of Scots Gaelic. The language has been spoken here since around the 5th century and was the common language of the Kingdom of Dál Riata, from which Gaelic culture and governance spread across Scotland.

Sites such as Dùn Add (Dunadd), where early Scottish kings were inaugurated, and Iona, founded by Columba in 563 AD, underline Argyll's central role in the linguistic, cultural and spiritual foundations of Scotland.

Gaelic remains a living cultural heritage. It continues to inform music, song, storytelling and community life, with renewed interest in learning and cultural activity, particularly among younger people. The number of our children and young people learning in Gaelic Medium Education continues to grow and distinct local dialects, shaped by geography and island life, are still evident in areas such as Tiree and Islay, contributing to Scotland's wider linguistic diversity and reinforcing strong local identities.

The language is also embedded in the landscape itself. A large proportion of Argyll and Bute's place-names are Gaelic in origin, describing physical features, land use and historical events. These names provide a linguistic record of how communities have understood and interacted with the environment over centuries, creating a deep connection between language, place and community.

Gaelic is also a positive economic asset. It strengthens tourism, supports the creative industries and enhances place-branding, helping to differentiate Argyll and Bute within the Highlands and Islands economy. Evidence from regional Gaelic planning shows that businesses using Gaelic frequently identify it as adding value to their products and services, contributing to local employment, cultural enterprises and visitor experience.

Taken together, Gaelic matters because it connects past, present and future — supporting community wellbeing, economic resilience and Argyll and Bute's nationally significant role in Scotland's Gaelic landscape.

Argyll and Bute has a strong Gaelic presence in our communities. There are many groups and organisations who lead Gaelic activities, learning, culture and developments in our communities. The Council recognises the importance of partnership working with all our Gaelic partners and continues to strengthen those ties, relationships and collaboration through meetings, events, projects, initiatives and plans – both in person and online. Our

online Argyll Gaelic Forum continues to grow with over 950 members and is a focal point for all those interested in Gaelic to share their news and activities with each other.

Developing the Plan

Building on previous council Gaelic Language Plans, this Plan presents a forward looking, proportionate and achievable set of actions to support the Gaelic Language to thrive across our area and contribute to our Corporate vision and aims.

The Plan has been developed by bringing together representatives from the council, through engagement with our communities and stakeholders and most important of all, from listening to our children and young people who are the future of Gaelic in our area.

Numbers of Gaelic Speakers

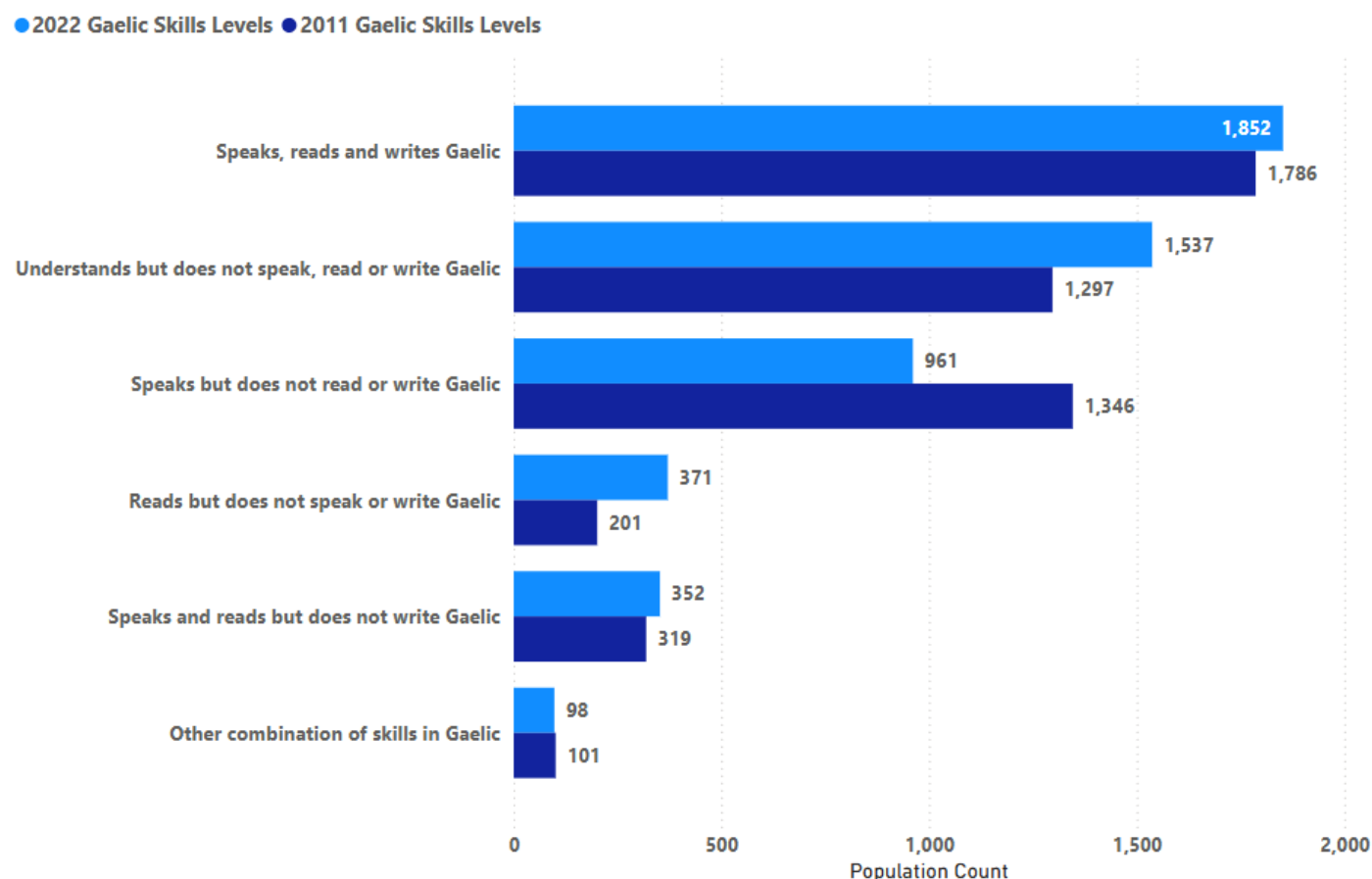
The 2022 census provided us with helpful information in assessing how we are progressing in terms of the levels of Gaelic Language knowledge in Argyll and Bute.

In overall terms, whilst our population has fallen since 2011, the number of people with at least some Gaelic has risen.



When we break this down further, we can see that the only category that has fallen during this period is those people who speak but do not read or write Gaelic. This is likely to reflect

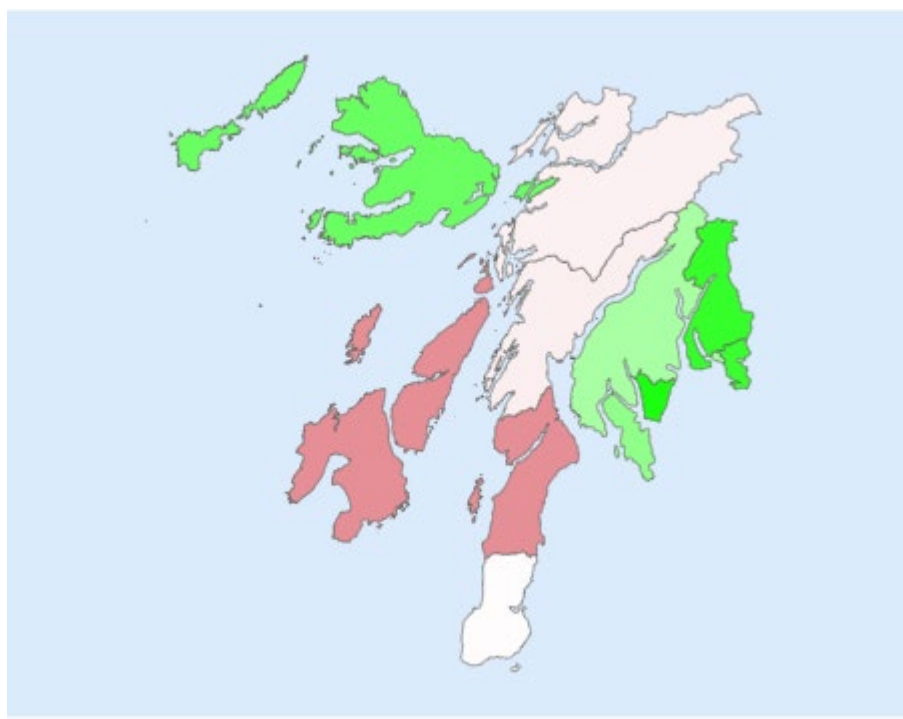
an older demographic who would have spoken Gaelic at home and in the community, but whose education would have been entirely in English.



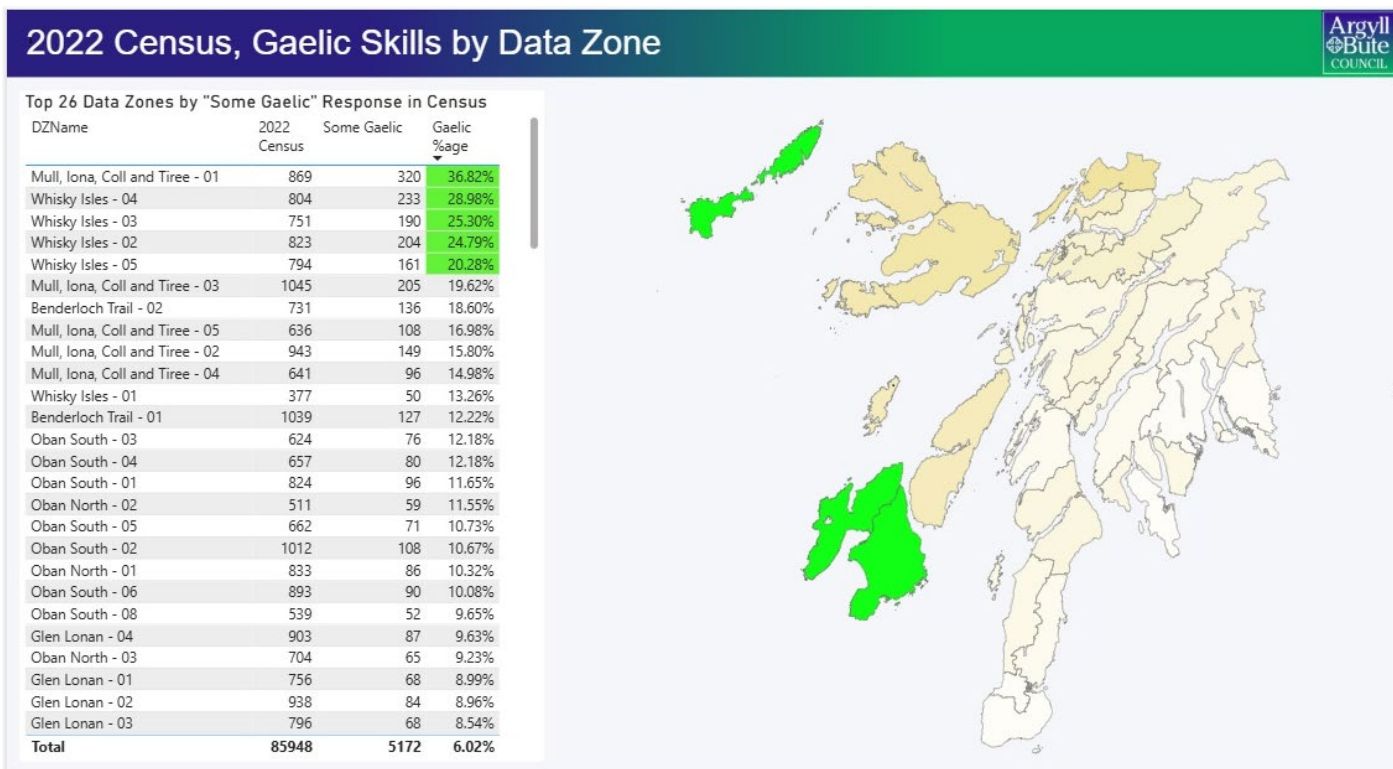
When we look at Gaelic spoken by electoral ward comparing the two census results, we see that there is quite a variation in the change over time and variations in total numbers vs % total population.

Electoral Ward	2011 Census Total	2022 Census Total	Totals Change	2011 Some Gaelic	2011 Gaelic %age	2022 Some Gaelic	2022 Gaelic %age	Gaelic %age Change
Cowal	7,261	7,150	-111	261	3.59%	273	3.82%	0.224%
Dunoon	7,747	7,217	-530	210	2.71%	238	3.30%	0.587%
Helensburgh and Lomond South	7,412	7,324	-88	116	1.57%	152	2.08%	0.510%
Helensburgh Central	9,643	9,508	-135	174	1.80%	194	2.04%	0.236%
Isle of Bute	6,498	6,070	-428	110	1.69%	120	1.98%	0.284%
Kintyre and the Islands	6,325	6,359	34	1,040	16.44%	983	15.46%	-0.984%
Lomond North	8,662	7,546	-1,116	165	1.90%	183	2.43%	0.520%
Mid Argyll	7,718	7,775	57	381	4.94%	373	4.80%	-0.139%
Oban North and Lorn	9,744	10,305	561	933	9.58%	974	9.45%	-0.123%
Oban South and the Isles	10,248	10,204	-44	1,489	14.53%	1,522	14.92%	0.386%
South Kintyre	6,908	6,495	-413	171	2.48%	159	2.45%	-0.027%
Total	88,166	85,953	-2,213	5,050		5,171		

Gaelic by electoral ward – change 2011-2022



When we look at Gaelic skills by Data Zone, we see a clearer picture of the community level distribution and concentration of Gaelic Language Skills.



Gaelic Medium Education:

There are currently five Gaelic Early Learning and Childcare settings, known as Sgoiltean Àraich, in Argyll and Bute. They are in Sandbank Primary in Dunoon, Salen Primary in Mull, Tiree Primary, Bowmore Primary in Islay and Rockfield Primary in Oban. Currently there are 70 children registered across our Sgoiltean Àraich with 42 registered for 2026/27.

There are seven Gaelic Medium Primary settings. They are located in Sandbank Primary, Salen Primary, Tiree Primary, Bowmore Primary, Rockfield Primary, Bunessan Primary in Mull and Starth of Appin Primary. There are currently 205 pupils registered across our Gaelic primary settings with 45 new P1 pupils due to start Primary 1 in 2026/27.

There are five secondary schools providing a fluent Gaelic pathway for Gaelic Medium pupils. They are located in Dunoon Grammar School, Tobermory High School, Tiree High School, Islay High School and Oban High School. Currently there are 128 secondary students registered as Gaelic Medium pupils across these five schools. All settings, except Dunoon Grammar School,

also offer a Gaelic Learner pathway and 449 students are studying Gaelic in addition to the fluent pathway pupils.

Gaelic Medium teaching staff engage with school improvement activity annually. Practitioners and Senior Leadership Teams work closely with the Education Officer for Gaelic to ensure that learning and teaching is quality assured. Each setting has a Gaelic-specific school improvement priority with measures to assess impact, in line with the authority's Gaelic Language Plan and pupil attainment in Gaelic Literacy. Practitioners work collegiately across settings to moderate pupil attainment to strengthen a shared understanding of standards and support teacher judgement.

Practitioners have audited the quality of provision, including the learning environment, using the [Advice on Gaelic Education 2022](#) document published by Education Scotland. The Gaelic version can be accessed here: [Comhairle mu Fhoghlam Gaidhlig](#)

[Statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education](#) informs the authority's response to requests for Gaelic Medium Primary Education. The document details the provisions for Gaelic Medium Education following The Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

The Argyll and Bute Council website publicises how to make a request via: [Requesting Gaelic Medium Education](#)

Bunessan in the Ross of Mull was the first request received nationally and came very quickly after the 2016 Act became legislation. An assessment was undertaken by the local authority and it was agreed that the local school would offer Gaelic Medium Education. This setting has been very successful with over 50% of pupils now learning through the medium of Gaelic and 6 new P1 pupils due to start in August 2026.

Gaelic Learner Education:

There are currently 70% of primary schools in Argyll & Bute providing Gaelic as L2 or an L3 experience. Three clusters provide Gaelic as an L2 (taught progressively from P1 to the end of the BGE)- Islay & Jura, Mull, Tiree. Oban, Lorn & the Isles has a mixture of primary schools providing

Gaelic and French as L2 or L3. In other areas of Argyll & Bute primary schools are providing Gaelic as an L3 experience. There are four secondary schools which provide a Gaelic learner pathway- Tobermory High School, Islay High School, Tiree High school and Oban High School. There are currently 2079 Gaelic learners in schools across Argyll & Bute - 1,630 in primary and 449 in secondary. Primary practitioners are encouraged to provide learners with a Gaelic L3 experience with the support of [online team teaching](#). This model provides on the job professional learning for teachers while also providing active Gaelic learning for pupils.

Legal Duties under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and the [Scottish Languages Act 2025](#)

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was passed by the Scottish Parliament with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic Language as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect to English. It is under the provisions of this Act that the Council has prepared all previous Gaelic Language Plans.

The Scottish Languages Act 2025 significantly updates the statutory framework around Gaelic Language Plans. Under the Act, Plans must set out how the public authority will:

- Use and promote Gaelic in the exercise of its functions
- Increase the visibility, use and accessibility of Gaelic where appropriate
- Contribute to the aims of the **National Gaelic Language Strategy** and comply with **Gaelic Language Standards**

Plans are intended to drive practical, measurable action, which this Plan aims to do.

While the **Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005** introduced Gaelic Language Plans, the **2025 Act strengthens and modernises** them by:

- Embedding them within a national strategy and statutory standards
- Tightening reporting and enforcement

- Linking them explicitly to areas of linguistic significance and wider public-authority duties

Areas of Linguistic Significance is another new provision in the 2025 Act and Argyll and Bute Council has duty placed on it to consult for a 12-month period on the designation of areas that meet the 20% or above of the population who speak Gaelic. The Council's commencement period is 1st September 2026, so this process will feature as one of the key actions in our 2027-32 Gaelic Language Plan.

Strategic Commitments

This Plan aligns with the [National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028](#), which sets out the overarching priorities for Gaelic Development across Scotland:

- Increasing the number of Gaelic speakers and Learners
- Enhancing the Use of Gaelic in urban, rural and online communities
- Creating Supportive Environments for Gaelic in education, media and public services

The Council's strategic aim is to consolidate and grow Gaelic across Argyll and Bute, building on the work carried out as part of our previous plan and using the data available to shape our approach. We welcome the opportunity to adjust our plan priorities over the period of the Plan, in consultation with Bòrd na Gàidhlig particularly in light of the timescales for Areas of Linguistic Significance and also the 2028 national Gaelic Language Strategy. We intend to ensure that our Plan remains relevant and aligns with the wider changing environment.

Our actions will be developed as part of the consultation process for this plan, ensuring that there is appropriate community and stakeholder input to our actions.

Corporate Commitments

Our corporate commitments to Gaelic will also build on previous successes and will ensure equal respect is given to Gaelic in our corporate identity, signage, communications, media, correspondence, online presence and service delivery.

In order to support our staff to develop and enhance their Gaelic skills we intend, as part of the consultation on this plan, to carry out a staff language audit in accordance with the statutory guidance. As part of our approach to workforce planning, appropriate posts will continue to

have Gaelic identified as essential or desirable criteria to ensure that Gaelic speakers are recognised in the recruitment process.

Resourcing the Plan

The Plan will be resourced through the core members of the Gaelic Policy Lead Group (see below) and those officers responsible day to day for delivery of actions in the Gaelic Language Plan. Funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Scottish Government and other grant funding sources will be sought where appropriate and available to support delivery of the actions in the plan. We will apply appropriate match funding principles to all external grant funding that we seek.

Gaelic Language Plan Within the Authority

Responsibility for the Plan sits with the Head of Customer Support Services, who will continue to manage a corporate approach to its implementation. This ensures alignment with the Corporate Plan and associated priorities, which also falls within this Chief Officer's remit.

The vision set out in the Corporate Plan is for a successful, vibrant Argyll and Bute with a growing population and a thriving economy; a place where people want to come to live, to work and to do business.

We believe that Gaelic has an important role to play in contributing to that vision and the actions and aims of this Plan will support the council to achieve its vision.

Day to day responsibility for the Plan will be part of the roles and responsibilities of those officers named in the delivery plan and who are members of the Gaelic language plan implementation and monitoring group, known as the Gaelic Policy Lead Group.

This group comprises members of key services and meets on a 6-weekly basis, reporting on activities and monitoring progress against the Plan, as well as developing initiatives for

approval, supporting corporate Gaelic events and providing briefings for the Gaelic Policy Lead.

The Plan progress will be reported as per current arrangements to the Community Services Committee on an annual basis. Any changes to the Plan will also be reported to the Policy and Resources Committee, with final approval any material change being referred to the Full Council.

Reporting and Monitoring the Plan

In accordance with the statutory guidance, progress on Plan activities and commitments will be reported to Bòrd na Gàidhlig and to the Community Services Committee on an annual basis. All progress reports will be available to the public.

Appendix 1

Outline of delivery plan measures for consultation

1.1 Customer Services & Digital

- Active offer online and in telephony
- Bilingual digital content
- Gaelic branding/identity rollout

1.2 Workforce Development

- Staff Gaelic Skills audit
- Learning pathways (Beginner → Intermediate → Role-specific)
- Recruitment criteria for priority posts
- Internal translation protocols

1.3 Education

- GME/GLE expansion plan
- Early years and family learning focus
- Addressing geographic and staffing challenges – contact and strengthen Initial Teaching Education
- Link with DYW on Gaelic careers events
- Collaboration with national bodies and e-learning providers
- Strengthen partnership working to promote Gaelic culture and heritage
- Quality of GME / GLE

1.4 Community and Culture

- Support and enhance partnership working between Gaelic groups and organisations across the area.
- Community grants model
- Place based projects in ALS areas (tbc)

1.5 Economic Development

- Gaelic place-branding
- Film/TV support
- Support for festivals, Mòd 2028 legacy, cultural programming
- Gaelic in tourism and creative industries
- Business engagement (Gaelic welcome, signage, training offers)

Appendix 2

Consultation process

The council will comply with the statutory guidance set out for consultation on the draft Plan, ensuring that a report on the consultation exercise is provided to Bòrd na Gaidhlig which will include a summary of the main themes that emerge from the consultation. This report will be published to ensure transparency and to highlight changes made because of the consultation process.

The council will follow its own consultation guidance, which meets with the Gunning Principles on consultation.

The consultation process will begin during the week of the Fifth Argyll Gaelic Gathering, which will be held on 15th May 2026 and will run until the end of June 2026. Beginning the consultation at the Gathering is commensurate with the council's recognition that our communities and stakeholders are essential to effective collaboration on the strengthening of Gaelic in Argyll and Bute.

Our Children and Young People will be supported to share their views to help shape the Plan and we will make the bilingual draft available both online and in print.