

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Gaelic Language Plan 2019-2022



**In terms of Sections 3 and 7 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland)
Act 2005**

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Foreword

I am pleased to endorse the third iteration of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan. I am privileged to have overseen the implementation of the first two plans and this third clearly builds and develops on the achievements of the previous ones. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has a well-earned reputation for its continued support of the Gaelic language, often exceeding the requirements of the National Plan for Gaelic.

In this plan, the Comhairle outlines its vision for the next four years, detailing the aims across the entire spectrum of services, including encouragement and support for elected Members. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is in the fortunate position of having Councillors who are supportive of Gàidhlig and will make themselves available for Gaelic radio and television interviews on matters relating to their particular areas of interest.

We have seen a growth in the percentage of children entering Gaelic Medium Education in Na h-Eileanan an Iar, with increasing opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities. It is particularly gratifying to see the progress being achieved through the innovation of e-Sgoil which has placed education delivery in the Western Isles very firmly on the Scottish map, and has helped to support subject teaching in areas where it was not possible to attract teachers. It is not just an innovation that responds to the challenges faced by the Comhairle, it has also provides support to other local authorities, our colleagues in the Northern Alliance amongst them, by providing Gaelic medium education in a wide variety of subjects. The Comhairle's Apprenticeship scheme allows us to plan for the future and by growing the young workforce, encouraging them to achieve academic qualifications through employment while continuing to live in the islands, we are safeguarding future needs and that includes the Gaelic language.

Similar to all other local authorities, the Comhairle is continuing to manage the financial challenges that it faces, and in working with our partners is taking steps to ensure that we mitigate as far as possible against negative impacts on the welfare of our communities, including maintaining and developing their language and culture.

Malcolm Burr
Chief Executive
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Summary

Gaelic as a National Language of Scotland

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar¹ not only recognises that Gaelic is an inalienable part of the lives, identity and cultural heritage of the people of the Western Isles, but that, as an official language of Scotland, it is also an integral and continuing part of the country's heritage, national identity and cultural life as a whole.

The Comhairle is therefore committed to the objectives set out in Bòrd na Gàidhlig's *National Gaelic Language Plan*, which aims to arrest the decline, and to plan for the growth, in the number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland. The Comhairle has accordingly put in place the necessary structures and initiatives in this Gaelic Plan which aim to ensure that Gaelic has a sustainable future in the Western Isles.

The Comhairle recognises that Gaelic is a marginalised language in Scotland. This is because the 2011 National Census revealed that only 1.7% of the Scottish population had skills in Gaelic². Therefore, if Gaelic is to be revitalised as a living language in this country, a concerted and co-ordinated effort on the part of the Government, the public and private sectors, partner and community organisations, and individual speakers is required, in order to:

- **Enhance the status of Gaelic;**
- **Promote the acquisition and learning of Gaelic, and;**
- **Encourage the increased use of Gaelic.**

The 2011 Census nevertheless revealed that the Western Isles/Na h-Eileanan Siar had by far the greatest concentration of people aged 3 and over with Gaelic skills in Scotland, at 61.2% of the population. Highland, and Argyll and Bute, came second and third with 7.4% and 5.9% respectively, and Glasgow was fourth, equalling the Scottish national percentage of 1.7%. This can be seen in **Figure 1** below:

¹ Various referred to as, "The Comhairle", in this Plan.

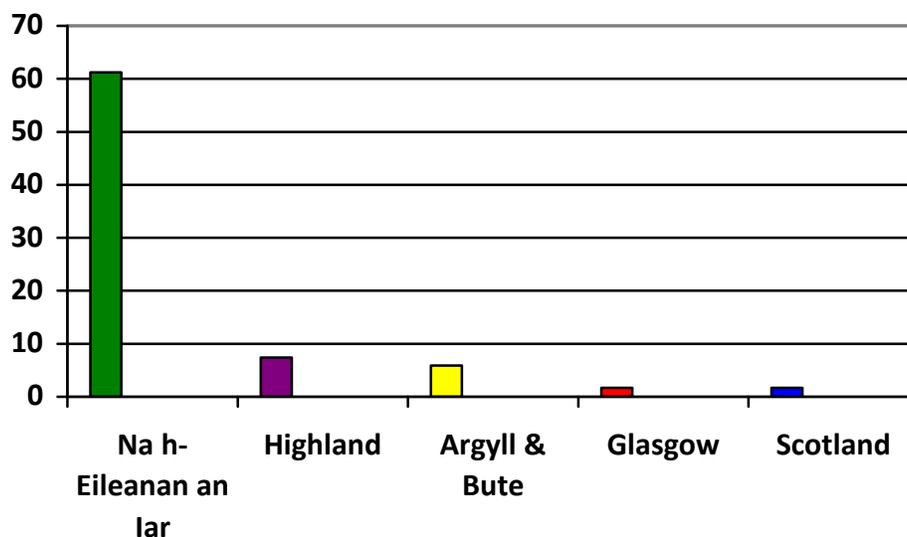
² This represents 87,100 people. See "Scotland's Census: Analytical Report (Part 1)";

<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/news/gaelic-analytical-report-part-1>

and "Cunntas-sluaigh na h-Alba 2011: Aithisg na Gàidhlig (Earrann 1)";

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/news/2015/cunntas-sluaigh-na-h-alba-2011-aithisg-na-gaidhlig-earrann-1>

Figure 1: Percentage of people aged 3 and over with Gaelic skills by area:



These much higher concentrations of speakers allow Gaelic to exist as a community language in districts of the Western Isles. Therefore, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar recognises that it is extremely important that this Gaelic Language Plan helps to create the conditions whereby this Gaelic usage can not only be sustained, but also be revitalised, in these communities.

The Plan

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan 2019-2022 has been prepared within the framework of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. It has also been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the 2005 Act, and having regard to the *National Gaelic Language Plan* and *Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans*. In addition, it has been prepared against a background of scrutinising the latest language planning research.

This Plan is the third iteration of the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan, the Comhairle having undertaken detailed reviews of the targets, outcomes and progress of the 2013-2017 Plan.

This Plan has been endorsed by Comhairle Members, having been scrutinised by the Comhairle's Policy and Resources Committee, and Comataidh Buileachaidh Plana

Cànain, the Comhairle's Gaelic committee. The measures contained in this Plan therefore carry the full authority, support and approval of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

The Draft Plan also went through an extensive public consultation process between 9 October 2017 and 20 November 2017, and the resulting responses and views expressed by the communities of the Western Isles, and local and national Gaelic organisations, were considered fully before the final Plan was produced.

Amongst other targets, this Plan sets out how the Comhairle will:

- **Use Gaelic in the operation of its daily functions and services;**
- **Promote and further develop the use of Gaelic within the organisation;**
- **Support and encourage the use of Gaelic in the homes of the Western Isles;**
- **Develop Gaelic medium education (GME) in the Western Isles;**
- **Create more opportunities for young people to use Gaelic in social contexts;**
- **Promote the use of Gaelic in the communities of the Western Isles, and link it to economic activity wherever possible, and;**
- **Support and encourage Gaelic usage in the arts, sport, and heritage activities.**

In addition to building on the success of the first two iterations of the Plan, this third iteration of the Plan has taken account of new development areas and ways in which Gaelic can be promoted. This includes:

- **The ever-increasing use of Gaelic in online digital technologies and social media;**
- **The Comhairle's islands-wide, online school, "e-Sgoil nan Eilean Siar", initiative;**
- **The scientifically-proven cognitive benefits of bilingualism to children and adults alike³, and;**
- **The huge economic benefits to businesses in Scotland of the use of Gaelic in products, services and marketing.⁴**

³ See, for example: Lauchlan, F. et al. (2012) "Bilingualism in Sardinia and Scotland: Exploring the Cognitive Benefits of Speaking a Minority Language", *International Journal of Bilingualism*, April, 2012.

⁴ See, for example: Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) report, "Ar Stòras Gàidhlig", May, 2014.

Background to the Plan

Language Planning Principles

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan 2019-2022 is based on language planning development and research that has been conducted locally and nationally over a number of years, and is the third iteration of the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan. This includes, in particular, the identification of three interlinking and internationally recognised principles of language development and planning, with corresponding action points. These must be addressed in the preparation of any language plan. In terms of Gaelic, these are as follows:

1) Language Acquisition

Increasing the number of Gaelic speakers by ensuring that the language is transferred within families that speak Gaelic at home, and by securing effective opportunities for learning Gaelic, through:

- Increasing the use and inter-generational transmission of Gaelic in the home;
- Increasing the numbers of children entering Gaelic medium education;
- Increasing the number of adult learners progressing to fluency.

2) Language Status

Increasing the visibility and audibility of Gaelic, and creating a positive image for Gaelic in Scottish public life, through:

- Increasing the profile and prestige of Gaelic;
- Increasing the visibility and recognition of Gaelic.

3) Language Corpus

Strengthening the relevance and consistency of Gaelic, and promoting research into the language, through:

- Increasing the relevance and consistency of the Gaelic language;
- Increasing the quality and accessibility of Gaelic translations.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is committed to ensuring that its Gaelic Language Plan is implemented in terms of the three language planning areas above: language acquisition; language status; and language corpus. This is reflected in the content and structure of the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan.

Key Foundation Documents of the Plan

With regard to Sections 3 and 7 of the *Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005*, this Plan been formulated from the consideration and scrutiny of the following seven documents:

1. Bòrd na Gàidhlig's National Gaelic Language Plan 2017-22

The National Plan for Gaelic is under the stewardship of the national Gaelic development agency, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, established by the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. It contains the following major Aims for Gaelic development in Scotland, upon which strategies for the revitalisation of Gaelic are based:

- **Promoting Gaelic** – ensuring that a positive image of Gaelic is promoted, and that it is clear that Gaelic makes a very important contribution to the social, cultural and economic life of the country. This will strengthen the appeal and status of Gaelic;
- **Learning Gaelic** – ensuring that the number of people learning Gaelic increases, including the expansion of Gaelic learning opportunities at all levels and in all sectors. This will ensure that there are more people who can speak, read, write and understand Gaelic in Scotland;
- **Using Gaelic** – ensuring that the number of people using Gaelic increases, including the creation of more situations where Gaelic can be used in communications. This will lead to the increased use of Gaelic in public life in Scotland.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar supports the vision, aims and identified priority areas of the National Gaelic Language Plan in terms of the revitalisation of Gaelic in Scotland, by giving effect to the fundamental principles that: Gaelic and English should be accorded equal respect; that the use of Gaelic in all aspects of public life in the Western Isles should be normalised; and that the use and learning of Gaelic will be encouraged and supported where possible in the communities of the Western Isles.

2. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Gaelic Language Plan 2013-2017

The second iteration of the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan for 2013-2017 was written after extensive consultation with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and with the communities of the Western Isles. It laid out the aims of the Comhairle in terms of regenerating Gaelic across the Western Isles, and was in line with the Gaelic Language Act's key principle of equal respect for Gaelic and English. This third iteration of the Plan for 2019-2022 builds

upon the Plan for 2013-2017, the Comhairle having reviewed this Plan's targets, outcomes and progress.

3. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Gaelic Policy

The Comhairle's longstanding Gaelic Policy objectives are, to:

- Ñ Enable everyone who receives or uses Comhairle services, or contributes to the democratic services, to do so through the medium of Gaelic or English, according to choice;
- Ñ Promote the use of Gaelic in the Western Isles;
- Ñ Exploit the potential of Gaelic as a means of creating employment opportunities in the Western Isles;
- Ñ Encourage the use of Gaelic by other public bodies which have dealings with the Comhairle, and to support and encourage the use of Gaelic by organisations and businesses which provide services to the public in the Western Isles;
- Ñ Develop the ability of pupils and students to be confidently bilingual, in order that they can fully participate in the bilingual community of which they are part;
- Ñ Establish Gaelic as the administrative language for the Comhairle, by providing facilities for in-post training and to enable staff to develop their linguistic skills;
- Ñ Ensure that service through Gaelic is available as a right without having to seek it out expressly;
- Ñ Ensure that technological advances are used to attract new Gaelic-related businesses to the Western Isles.

4. Western Isles Gaelic Language Plan (2006)

The *Western Isles Gaelic Language Plan Project* was established in 2003 following an initiative taken by a group representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Lews Castle College and Comunn na Gàidhlig. The resulting Plan is based on comprehensive research carried out between 2003 and 2006 on the use of Gaelic in all the communities of the Western Isles, including extensive consultation with members of these communities in the form of public meetings, to identify what the communities' views and aspirations were in terms of the use of Gaelic.

The *Western Isles Gaelic Language Plan* is made up of 12 strategic strands, covering all aspects of Gaelic and Gaelic usage in the Western Isles, which have been identified in the revitalisation process of Gaelic in the communities of the Western Isles. They are:

- Ñ Image and Confidence;
- Ñ Language Learning;

- Ñ Support for Education and Childcare;
- Ñ Economy;
- Ñ Heritage and Local History;
- Ñ Culture and the Arts;
- Ñ Awareness;
- Ñ Young People;
- Ñ Sport;
- Ñ The Media;
- Ñ Island Organisations;
- Ñ Research and Language Development.

The *Western Isles Gaelic Language Plan* mirrors the vision and targets set out in the *National Gaelic Language Plan*. Both Plans are mutually compatible, and are underpinned by similar cross-cutting strategies, intended to revitalise Gaelic at local and national level.

5. Education and Children’s Services Department’s Gaelic Action Plan, 2016-18

The Comhairle’s Education and Children’s Services Department has written a three-year action plan for Gaelic, 2016-18. This Gaelic Specific Grants-funded plan aims to develop Gaelic medium education in all schools and pre-school units across the Isles, and it is intended that this action plan should dovetail with the content of the Gaelic in Education and Learning section of this Plan (pp.34-39). It contains the following headline action points:

- 1. Increase in the number of pre-school children enrolling in GME and nurseries across the Isles;**
- 2. Improvement of provision of GME at primary level;**
- 3. Improvement of provision of GME at secondary level;**
- 4. Development of Gaelic language, culture and history, and**
- 5. Digital multi-media development.**

6. Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans

This guidance document, which has been prepared following extensive research and consultation, has been implemented by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, and sets out Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s framework for preparing, structuring and developing organisational Gaelic Plans, with emphasis placed on its adherence to language planning principles.

7. Scottish Government Manifesto 2016

The current Scottish Government's Manifesto identifies the areas of Gaelic education and the Gaelic arts as being key to the revitalisation of Gaelic in Scotland:

- *"We will implement new legal duties and rights to support Gaelic medium education as part of our ongoing commitment to stabilize and increase the number of Gaelic speakers",* and;
- *"We support the central role of Gaelic arts in engaging people with the language, and enhancing the relevance of the language to Scottish society".*

These seven documents, therefore, have provided the guiding principles by which Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan 2019-2022 has been put together, from which the following three fundamental strategic objectives, underpinning the Comhairle's Plan, with the associated ten priority areas, have been distilled:

1. To strengthen Gaelic as a language in the family

Priority Areas:

- a) Gaelic in early learning and childcare;
- b) Initiatives supporting and promoting the use and learning of Gaelic in homes;
- c) Support for parents of children in Gaelic medium education.

2. To strengthen Gaelic as a language in the community

Priority Areas:

- a) Promoting a positive image of Gaelic in communities;
- b) Gaelic in the arts, in sport, and heritage activities;
- c) Gaelic and economic development.

3. To increase the number of Gaelic speakers in the Islands

Priority Areas:

- a) Gaelic medium education in primary and secondary schools;
- b) Gaelic in digital learning and usage;
- c) Post-school and adult Gaelic learning;
- d) Gaelic promotion in the workplace.

Structure of the Plan

The key components of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Gaelic Language Plan 2019-2022 are:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter provides background information about the Western Isles, the Comhairle and its areas of operation, and information relating to the use of Gaelic, Gaelic census data, and Gaelic medium education provision, in the Western Isles. It also sets out the legal background and context relating to the preparation of Gaelic language plans in terms of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

Chapter 2 – Core Commitments to Gaelic

This chapter sets out, in tabular form, how Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will use and enable the use of Gaelic in relation to its main business functions, and in the delivery of its public services. It covers key areas of operation, such as corporate identity, signage, communication with the public, the use of Gaelic on its website, and so on. It also includes Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s commitments to the use of Gaelic in democratic services, and sets out the minimum level of Gaelic provision to which the Comhairle is committed to providing in the lifetime of the Plan.

Chapter 3 – Gaelic Development Areas

This chapter sets out, in tabular form, how the Gaelic Plan will also be implemented with respect to six further key Development Areas which have been identified as crucial in terms of supporting and regenerating the use of Gaelic, both within the Comhairle itself, and across the communities of the Western Isles. This includes instances where co-operation with other Gaelic development and public organisations is necessary or appropriate, and encompasses a very wide range of areas of potential Gaelic development across the communities of the Western Isles.

Chapter 4 – Implementing and Monitoring

This chapter details the ways in which the implementation of the Comhairle’s Gaelic Language Plan 2019-2022 will be taken forward, and how implementation and outcomes will be monitored.

Appendix A – Gaelic Usage in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

In June 2017, an online survey of the Gaelic skills of all staff employed by the Comhairle across the Islands, and the level of usage of Gaelic in the Comhairle workplace, was conducted. This appendix provides detailed information relating to the results of this survey.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the Western Isles: Background Information

Population and Demography:

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar was established in 1975, as one of 32 all-purpose councils in Scotland. According to the 2011 National Census, it serves 27,684 people living in the Western Isles⁵, a 4.5% population increase since the 2001 Census. The Western Isles are an island chain of 14 inhabited islands, covering an area of 3,000 square km in total. This includes the main islands of Lewis, Harris, North and South Uist, Benbecula, and Barra. The population figures for these islands are as follows:

Population of the Western Isles (2011 Census):

| | |
|-------------------|--------|
| Lewis: | 19,658 |
| Harris: | 1,916 |
| South Uist: | 1,897 |
| North Uist: | 1,619 |
| Benbecula: | 1,330 |
| Barra & Vatersay: | 1,264 |

The average household size in the Western Isles has decreased from 2.32 in 2001, to 2.17 in 2011, and the Isles have experienced a decrease (– 11.8%) in the population aged 5 to 14 since 2001. However, there has been an *increase* in population aged 5 and under (+ 4.7%) since 2001.

Electoral Wards:

The Comhairle has 31 elected Members, elected every five years, representing the following, nine electoral wards:

- Ward 1 – Barraigh, Bhatarsaigh, Eirisgeigh agus Uibhist a Deas / Barra, Vatersay, Eriskay and South Uist;
- Ward 2 – Beinn na Faoghla agus Uibhist a Tuath / Benbecula and North Uist;
- Ward 3 – Na Hearadh agus Ceann a Deas nan Loch / Harris and South Lochs;
- Ward 4 – Sgìre Uige agus Ceann a Tuath nan Loch / Uig and North Lochs;
- Ward 5 – Sgìre an Rubha / Point;
- Ward 6 – Steòrnabhagh a Deas / South Stornoway;
- Ward 7 – Steòrnabhagh a Tuath / North Stornoway;
- Ward 8 – Loch a Tuath / Broadbay;

⁵ This corresponds to the Westminster and Holyrood Parliamentary Constituencies, “Na h-Eileanan an Iar”.

- Ward 9 – An Taobh Siar agus Nis / The Westside and Ness.

Economy and Employment:

According to the 2011 Census, of the 20,234 people aged 16 to 74 in the Isles, 39% are economically active full-time employees, (the Scottish average is 40%), 10% are self-employed, (the Scottish average is 7%), while 4% of the economically active are unemployed, (the Scottish average is 5%). Some 20% of the 13,363 people in the Western Isles aged 16 to 74 in employment are employed in the skilled trades occupations. This is the second highest percentage in Scotland.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that the Western Isles has a Gross Disposal Household Income (GDHI) of £15,392 per head of population. The Scottish average is £17,039.

Tourism remains a key driver to the economy of the Western Isles. In 2014, the Islands Visitor Survey found that more than 218,000 people visited the Western Isles and spent in excess of £53.5 million between October 2012 and September 2013.

According to 2016 Comhairle figures, the Western Isles has the highest percentage of positive school leaver destinations in Scotland at 96.8%. The largest percentage of school leavers, 39%, went on to higher education, 22% went into further education, and 33% found employment.

The Comhairle:

The Comhairle is the largest employer in the Islands, and has its main office in the largest population settlement in the islands, the town of Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis. The Comhairle employs some 1,750 people throughout the islands, and has an annual expenditure of over £147 million. In terms of its structure, it has four Departments, which provide all the services of the Comhairle. These are detailed below, including information about some of the services for which each Department is responsible:

- **Chief Executive’s Department**
 - communications; corporate policy; democratic services; Gaelic development; human resources; legal services; Members’ services.
- **Education, Skills and Children’s Services Department**
 - early years services; Gaelic medium education; schools; sport and health.
- **Communities Department**
 - business and regeneration support; sectoral and project support; libraries and heritage services; development services; consumer and environmental services.
- **Assets, Finance and Resources Department**

- accountancy; exchequer services; internal audit; IT and customer services.

There are five Committee series every year, in which the business of the Comhairle is discussed. The Committees which meet every series are as follows:

- Policy and Resources Committee;
- Audit and Scrutiny Committee;
- Communities and Housing Committee;
- Education, Sport and Children’s Services Committee;
- Full Council
- Health and Social Care Committee
- Sustainable Development Committee, and;
- Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

In addition, **Comataidh Buileachaidh Plana Cànan** meets every Committee series, a sub-Committee, reporting to the Policy and Resources Committee, which deals with Gaelic development issues within the Comhairle and in the communities of the Western Isles.

2. Gaelic in the Western Isles

The most recent results from the Census, in 2011, showed that:

61.2% of people aged three and over in the Western Isles had some sort of Gaelic language ability, representing 16,489 out of 26,929 people. This is a considerably larger percentage than the Scottish national average figure of 1.7% (87,056 people).

In addition:

- The number of those aged three and over who could speak Gaelic in the Western Isles: 14,066, representing 52.3% of the population, compared to the figure of 1.1% nationally (57,375 people);
- The number of those aged three and over who could speak, read and write Gaelic in the Western Isles: 8,171, (representing 30.3% of the population, compared to the figure of 0.6% nationally);
- The Western Isles also has a significantly higher percentage of residents aged three and over with some sort of Gaelic language ability than any other traditionally Gaelic speaking area in Scotland, where the figure of 61.2%

compares to 7.4% for the Highlands, and 5.9% for Argyll and Bute, for example;

- In the Western Isles, 73.7% of Gaelic speakers use the language at home, compared to 41.5% in the Highlands and 33.4% in Argyll and Bute;
- Although the Isles as a whole have lost 1,631 speakers since 2001, the *rate* of decline has decreased from 19.6 % in 2001, to 10.4 % in 2011.

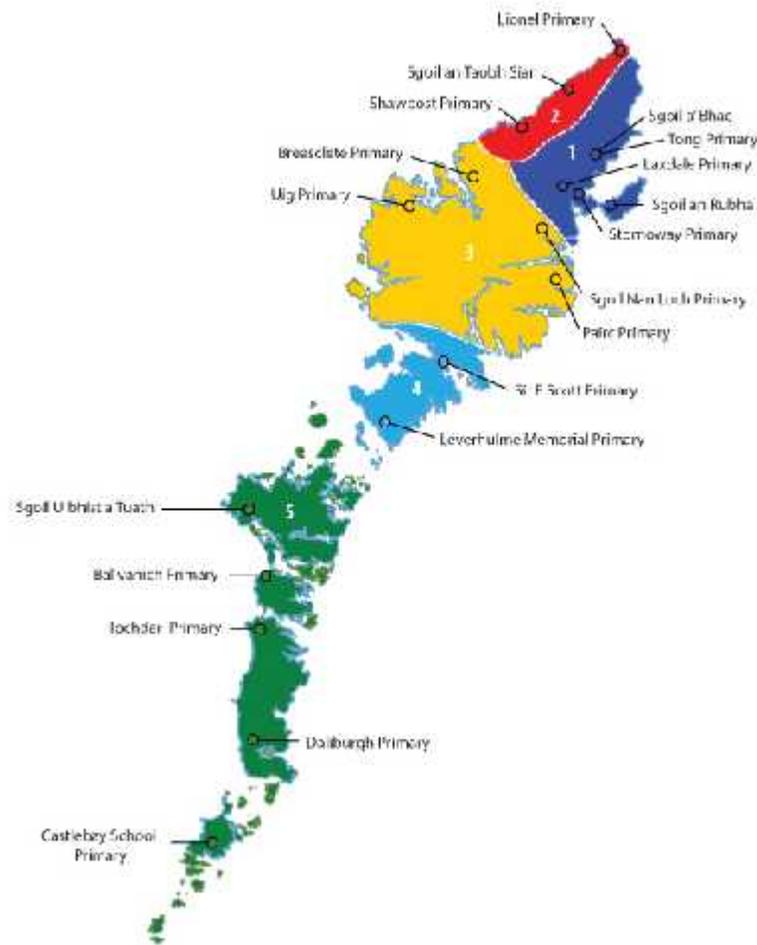
Gaelic Medium Education:

The Scottish Government approved the application for “Gaelic School” status for the following primary schools across the Isles: Bernera School, Breasclete School, Castlebay School, Iochdar School, Leverhulme School, and Sgoil an Taobh Siar.

Currently, there are 21 pre-school nurseries offering GME, along with 15 Cròileagan / playgroup partner providers, and 20 out of 22 primary schools across the Western Isles offering GME. This Plan aims to ensure that 70% of *all* Primary 1 enrolments in the Western Isles will be in Gaelic medium education during the lifetime of this Plan, and that Gaelic will therefore be the principal language of instruction for the majority of primary school children in the Western Isles. The coverage of Gaelic medium education in primary schools across the Isles, in terms of the Comhairle’s five Learning Community Areas, is shown in **Figure 2**:

Figure 2: GME available in primary schools across the Isles⁶

⁶ From the Comhairle’s *Foghlam tro Mheadhan na Gàidhlig* website:
<http://www.gaelicmediumeducation.com/primary.aspx>



In terms of secondary education, a range of subjects are taught through the medium of Gaelic in the four secondary schools across the Isles. In 2017/18, eight subjects are available through the medium of Gaelic, in comparison to 4-6 subjects in 2012/13. This Plan makes the commitment that Gaelic medium education will be available in all S1-6 secondary schools in the Isles at Broad General Education and National 5 level, and at Higher level by 2019.

Gaelic in Further Education:

Lewis Castle College (UHI), with campuses in Stornoway and Benbecula, offers the BA degrees in *Gaelic Language and Culture*, and *Gaelic and Development*, which are both taught through the medium of Gaelic. In addition, the College offers: a Gaelic medium BAH in *Gaelic with Education*; a PGDE in *Primary Teaching with Gaelic*; SQA accredited courses in Gaelic language, ranging from Access 3 to Higher Gaelic/Gàidhlig level; and a full-time Gaelic immersion course. There are also opportunities to access Gaelic courses through CPD (Continuing Professional Development), and Gaelic Ùlpan courses are

available throughout the Isles, at various levels, taught by Lews Castle College Gaelic staff.

3. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and Gaelic

Because of the Gaelic language's continuing strength as a community language in the Western Isles, the Comhairle has always attempted to create a strong Gaelic ethos within the organisation itself. The Comhairle's Gaelic Policy reflects this aspiration, and has been in operation from the Comhairle's inception in 1975. This Policy includes the overall aim to maintain the Western Isles as, *"a fundamentally bilingual community in which Gaelic and English have equal validity as languages of communication"*. In meeting this aim, the Policy seeks to ensure that the use of Gaelic is, *"an integral part of the work of the Comhairle, permeating all services"*.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar recognises that Gaelic has a very special place in the life of the residents of the Western Isles, and is an inalienable aspect of Islanders' identity. Gaelic remains a strong community language across the Islands, as attested by the 2011 Census figures, and it permeates every facet of community life, whether in the fields of: employment; education; business; health services; housing; agriculture and farming; religion; the arts; the voluntary sector; sports; or the media.

This commitment to Gaelic by the Comhairle was given ultimate expression in January 1998, when the formerly-named "Western Isles Islands Council" changed its name legally to "Comhairle nan Eilean Siar". This sent out the strongest possible signal of its intention to promote the language.

Sgioba na Gàidhlig:

In 2001, the Comhairle established "Sgioba na Gàidhlig", a team of Comhairle officers who were responsible initially for facilitating the delivery of the Comhairle's Gaelic Policy across the organisation. From 2007 onwards, SnG has also ensured the delivery of the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan across the organisation, and in the communities of the Western Isles. SnG will therefore bear primary responsibility for steering the day-to-day progress of this Plan for 2019-2022.

The Comhairle's strong and long-standing commitment to the Gaelic language, as enshrined in this Plan, ensures that it continues to work towards the goal of establishing Gaelic as the main language used for the delivery of public services in the Western Isles.

4. Setting the Context for Developing Gaelic Language Plans

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and the issuing of a notice:

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 that which already exists for the English language. One of the key features of the 2005 Act is the provision enabling Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require public bodies, such as Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, to prepare Gaelic language plans, and to renew them every five years. This was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic, by raising its status and profile, and creating practical opportunities for its use. Accordingly, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has prepared its Gaelic Language Plan for 2019-2022, which has built upon the first iteration of the Plan for 2007-2012, and the second iteration for 2013-2017, in close consultation with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Consultation on a draft Gaelic Plan:

The 2005 Act also requires public bodies to bring the preparation of their Gaelic Language Plans to the attention of the public, other public bodies and all other interested parties. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar therefore consulted publicly on the draft of this Gaelic Language Plan for a period of six weeks, from 9 October to 20 November, 2017, and took into account representations made to it during this consultation process. In addition, the Draft Plan was scrutinised by Members at *Comataidh Buileachadh Plan Cànain*, the committee in the Comhairle which steers the implementation of the Comhairle's Gaelic Plan.

Approval of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan 2019-2022:

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gaelic Language Plan final draft was submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 23/5/19, and received approval on 5/6/19.

Chapter 2 – Core Commitments to Gaelic

In Bòrd na Gàidhlig's statutory *Guidance on the Development of Language Plans* document, it states that the creation of the correct environment for the use of the Gaelic language in public life is one of the key aspects of language regeneration. The Bòrd has therefore identified four areas that are viewed as key in terms of stimulating the increased use of Gaelic within the operations of public bodies and public service delivery, and that public bodies, such as Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, ought to consider these areas when preparing their Gaelic Language Plans. These four areas are as follows:

1. Identity

This concerns the increased visibility of Gaelic, in or outside the public body, which raises the profile of the language. This includes the following key action areas:

- **Gaelic Name**
- **Bilingual Signage**
- **Staff Identity Cards**
- **Core Values**
- **Bilingual Strapline**
- **Comhairle Products**

2. Communications

This concerns all the means by which members of the public can access the public body's services through the medium of Gaelic, thus encouraging the use of the language. This includes the following key action areas:

- **Reception Areas**
- **Telephone**
- **Letters and e-mails**
- **Complaints Procedure**
- **Translation Enquiries**
- **Elections**
- **Civic Events**
- **Gaelic Badges**

3. Publications

This concerns the production of various written materials in Gaelic by the public body, and its dealings with media outlets through the medium of Gaelic. This raises the profile of the language, and encourages its use. This includes the following key action areas:

- **Forms and Stationery**
- **Leaflets, Booklets and Posters**
- **Media Communications**
- **Website**
- **Facebook and Twitter**
- **Exhibitions and Displays**

4. Staffing

This concerns the development of the Gaelic language skills amongst the staff of the public body, in order that services can be better delivered through the medium of Gaelic. This includes the following key action areas:

- **Gaelic-Desirable Posts**
- **Recruitment Advertising**

These four areas are described as the “Core Commitments” of the organisation to Gaelic, in that it shows the steps that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar intends to take in enabling and encouraging the use of Gaelic, and to raise its profile, in relation to its daily business functions, and in the delivery of its public services.

Accordingly, the tables on pages 22-29 show Comhairle nan Eilean Siar’s Core Commitments to Gaelic, as they pertain to the four areas identified by Bòrd na Gàidhlig in the statutory Guidance on the Development of Language Plans document.

The Comhairle's Core Commitments to Gaelic

Current Situation

Since “Comhairle nan Eilean Siar” came into being as a legal entity in January 1998, it has achieved much in terms of placing the use of Gaelic at the heart of its identity, daily functions and the public services that it offers. A Gaelic Policy has been in operation in the Comhairle since its inception, detailing a very strong commitment to the equality of treatment of Gaelic and English in its daily functions and services. This Policy, in turn, feeds into the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan, whose progress is steered by the Gaelic team in the Comhairle, Sgioba na Gàidhlig, who report to the Comhairle's Gaelic Committee, Comataidh Buileachaidh Plana Cànan.

This Plan therefore ensures that: extensive use of Gaelic and English bilingual signage is made outside of, and inside, Comhairle buildings; reception areas are staffed by at least one Gaelic speaker at all times; telephone calls from the public in Gaelic will be dealt with by Gaelic speakers; letters and e-mails to the Comhairle in Gaelic will receive replies in Gaelic, with the same response time as English letters or e-mails; Gaelic is used in Comhairle forms, publications, and stationery; there is Gaelic content on the Comhairle website; important press releases are written in bilingual format; Gaelic translation enquiries from the public are serviced by Sgioba na Gàidhlig; a Gaelic e-mail or letter of complaint has the same response time as one written in English; Gaelic is used in social media communications; Comhairle exhibitions and displays are in bilingual format; and Gaelic-essential Comhairle posts are advertised in Gaelic only.

Identity

| Aim | Action Areas | Responsible Officer(s) | Timescale | |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------------|--|
| A strong Gaelic corporate identity for the Comhairle | <p>Gaelic Name:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the name, “Comhairle nan Eilean Siar”, in all instances. | Chief Executive and Directors | Ongoing | |
| | <p>Bilingual Signage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase and update bilingual English/Gaelic signage in Comhairle buildings. English and Gaelic lettering will be of equal size. | Chief Executive and Directors / Sgioba na Gàidhlig | 2019 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase bilingual door signage for temporary usage, such as, “Out of Order”, “Meeting in Progress”, “Election Office”, etc. | Chief Executive and Directors / Sgioba na Gàidhlig | 2019 | |
| | <p>Staff Identity Cards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display “Comhairle nan Eilean Siar” on Comhairle staff ID cards and lanyards. | Chief Executive and Directors | Ongoing | |
| | <p>Core Values:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the Comhairle’s Core Values are available in bilingual format. | Sgioba na Gàidhlig | 2019 | |
| | <p>Bilingual Strapline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase use of the bilingual strapline, “<i>Ag obair airson nan Eilean/Working for the Isles</i>”, in e-mails, letters and the website. | Chief Executive and Directors | 2019 | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comhairle Products: Display “Comhairle nan Eilean Siar” on any Comhairle products, such as mouse mats, pen-drives, key-rings, etc. | Chief Executive and Directors | Throughout the course of the Plan | |

