



COMATAIDH NA GÀIDHLIG

17 JUNE 2025

LIBRARY SERVICE – GAELIC UPDATE

Report by Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to update the Comataidh on the progress made on Gaelic priorities for the Library Service following the presentation to the Committee on 24 September 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 Positive progress has been made by the Service in enhancing its Gaelic offer. A Senior Librarian (Gaelic and Outreach) joined the library team in January 2025 with responsibility for overseeing all library programmes, and our Gaelic collections and services. In addition, a Gaelic Arts Officer (GAO) was appointed in March 2025. This post has been established in partnership with An Lanntair and the Comhairle, funded for 12 months by Scottish Government/Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) - Public Library Innovation Fund.
- 2.2 Work has re-commenced on the Ar n Aite digital archive website with a launch targeted for June 2025. Western Isles Libraries featured in a national case study for Languages Week Scotland, with a guest blog post by our new Senior Librarian (Gaelic & Outreach): A' comharrachadh Seachdain Cànanan na h-Alba tron seirbheis Leabharlann as Na h-Eileanan an Iar. The "Reading Schools" project was officially launched in March during our "Islands Literacy Symposium". The Symposium was opened by Scotland's Makar, Peter Mackay, and concluded with Agnes Rennie chairing a panel on 'Strengthening Gaelic Reading Culture'.
- 2.3 The Service is introducing a weekly Gaelic Day to encourage users and staff to speak Gaelic and two Gaelic summer placement students will support a range of Gaelic events during the summer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the Report.

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Appendix: 1

Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar Strategy 2025-2027

Background Papers:



IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	Non
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities/Child Rights	None
Corporate Strategy	None
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The Library Service is ideally placed to deliver on local and national Gaelic Strategies. In a presentation to the Comataidh on 24 September 2024 the Library Service outlined their existing Gaelic provision and new initiatives since June 2024. The presentation also highlighted the opportunities for the Library Service to further support, promote and develop Gaelic language and culture through its Collections, Services and Programmes.

PROGRESS

- 6.1 A Senior Librarian (Gaelic and Outreach) joined the library team in January 2025 with responsibility for overseeing all library programmes, and our Gaelic collections and services. This is a trainee post and the postholder will be studying for a Masters in Librarianship. Supporting this role, a Gaelic Arts Officer (GAO) was appointed in March 2025. The GAO post has been established in partnership with An Lanntair and the Comhairle. The Post is funded for 12 months by Scottish Government/Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) Public Library Innovation Fund. The GAO is supervising five Foundation Apprentices (two Gaelic speaking) undertaking a placement in the Stornoway Library as part of their Creative and Digital Media apprenticeship.
- 6.2 During Book Week Scotland events took place across all libraries including a fully immersive Gaelic children's book launch of 'Uncaill Dod agus na dineasairean' by local author Mary Gillies with over 40 in attendance. The Western Isles Steering Group was started in November and Library/EDC staff met with CnAG to identify resource needs for Gaelic Bookbug. The Library Service supported An Lanntair once again with Faclan, the Hebridean Book Festival, with the Libraries Manager chairing an author event at An Lanntair and Stornoway Library hosting a bilingual Gaelic/English poetry evening with Irish poet Emma McKervey, as well as an author event for children at Tarbert Library.
- 6.3 Work has re-commenced on the Ar n Aite digital archive website which was lost in the cyberattack. The aim is to launch it as a Gaelic resource database in June 2025. The Service is engaging with partners to identify further ways that Gaelic resources can be digitised. The BookEye scanner attached to this project was loaned to the Tasglann team who are preparing for their Emigration conference. A Gaelic Bible and Observations on the present state of the Highlands of Scotland with a view to the causes and probable consequences of emigration by the Earl of Selkirk (2nd Ed 1806) was loaned to Tasglann for the conference.



- 6.4 Western Isles Libraries featured in a national case study for Languages Week Scotland, with a guest blog post by our new Gaelic Librarian: A' comharrachadh Seachdain Cànanan na h-Alba tron seirbheis Leabharlann as Na h-Eileanan an Iar. Seachdain na Gaidhlig was an opportunity to showcase the vital role libraries play in supporting Gaelic, including:
- Providing access to fiction, non-fiction and children's books in Gaelic
 - Increasing visibility of Gaelic
 - Creating a safe space for minority language speakers, fostering empowerment
 - Providing language learning groups, storytelling sessions and cultural events that celebrate the language and culture
 - Encouraging intergenerational transmission of Gaelic language
 - Helping our community connect with their cultural heritage and build a sense of belonging through language and a strong identity
- 6.5 The "Reading Schools" project was officially launched in March with our "Islands Literacy Symposium" in the Stornoway Town Hall. Scotland's Makar, Peter Mackay, opened the symposium and it concluded with Agnes Rennie chairing a panel on 'Strengthening Gaelic Reading Culture'. The Service is working with Early Years support staff to improve Gaelic Bookbug provision and training has been organised for Early Years and Library staff across the Islands.

NEXT STEPS

- 7.1 A concurrent report to Education, Sports and Children's Services Committee is seeking approval for the draft Leabharlainn nan Eilean Siar Strategic Plan 2025-27 (Appendix 1) to go out for consultation. Included in the draft are priorities aimed at supporting the Comhairle's Gaelic First strategy through the Libraries Collections, Services and Programmes. The service will seek out resources to enhance the Gaelic offer and will develop a Gaelic Language Plan for Libraries.
- 7.2 The Stornoway Branch is introducing a Gaelic Day where staff on duty will be Gaelic speakers and all visitors wishing to converse in Gaelic will be supported to do so.
- 7.3 The Libraries in Stornoway, Tarbert, Lionacleit and Castlebay provide ready made community hubs and would offer an ideal location for posts with a role in developing Gaelic in the community.
- 7.4 The Service has recruited two Gaelic summer placement students who will cover Lewis/Harris and Uist. The posts have been supported by the Scottish Library Information Council – Public Library Innovation Fund and Sgeama Greis Gniomhachais nan Oileanach. These posts will support a range of Gaelic events over the summer months.

