



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

## Gaelic Language Plan

2023-2028

This plan has been prepared under Section 3 of the  
Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and was  
approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 07 November 2023





## Foreword

Welcome – Fàilte

Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's national identity, our cultural heritage and history.

This plan sets out for the next five years how the Scottish Parliament plans to build on, develop and promote the use of the language throughout its work.

The Parliament passed the legislation which underpins this plan 18 years ago. The purpose was to ensure that Gaelic continues to be a part of everyday life in Scotland, not just for Gaelic speakers and learners but for others too.

I believe this plan gives Gaelic the prominence and respect that it deserves and shows the Scottish Parliament's commitment to its development.

Building on the work we have already done; this plan recognises views from people across Scotland about how they would like us to communicate and use Gaelic.

I'm proud as Presiding Officer to reaffirm our commitment to Gaelic and look forward to seeing the work outlined in this plan will helping promote and continue the use of the language in communities all over Scotland.

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP, Presiding Officer



## Introduction

### Description of the function of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and location of its offices

The Scottish Parliament is made up of 129 Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). One of the 129 MSPs is elected by the others to serve as the Presiding Officer; another two MSPs are elected as Deputy Presiding Officers.

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) is a statutory body provided for by the Scotland Act 1998 and consists of five members – the Presiding Officer, who chairs the Body, and four Members elected by the Parliament.

The Scottish Parliament elects the members of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, who are then accountable to the Scottish Parliament for providing the staff, accommodation and services required by the Parliament to carry out its work.

The SPCB employed 536 members of staff and had a net operating cost of £120.4M in 2021-22.<sup>1</sup> It is based in the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh. For more information, see the [SPCB pages on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

The legislative and other functions of the Scottish Parliament are distinct from the administrative functions of the SPCB. This Plan relates to the SPCB and not to the Scottish Parliament. Provision for the use of languages in the business of the Parliament is set out in the Standing Orders (See 7.1), which are [available online](#). More detail of how services will be provided is set out in the [SPCB's Language Policy](#).

### The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and the issuing of 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 the English language.

One of the key features of the 2005 Act is the provision enabling Bòrd na Gàidhlig to require a public authority to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan. This provision was designed to ensure that the public sector in Scotland plays its part in creating a sustainable future for Gaelic by raising the status and profile of the language and creating practical opportunities for its use.

This document is the SPCB's Gaelic Language Plan, prepared within the framework of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. It sets out how we will use Gaelic in the

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<sup>1</sup> [Spcb-annual-report-and-accounts-2021-22.pdf \(parliament.scot\)](#)

operation of our functions, how we will enable the use of Gaelic when communicating with the public and key partners, and how we will promote and develop Gaelic.

The SPCB's Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared in accordance with statutory criteria set out in the 2005 Act, and having regard to the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans.

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### Approval of the SPCB's Gaelic Language Plan

The SPCB's Gaelic Language Plan was approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 07 November 2023.

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### Consultation on the SPCB'S draft Gaelic Language Plan

The 2005 Act requires public authorities to bring the preparation of their Gaelic Language Plans to the attention of all interested parties.

The public consultation was open from 20 February 2023 until 3 April 2023 and was carried out by means of an online questionnaire on [CitizenSpace](#).

Promotional methods included:

- Posters and leaflets
- A News Release
- The Scottish Parliament website
- Social media posts on the corporate Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts and on the Scottish Parliament Gaelic twitter, the Presiding Officer's Twitter account and other Scottish Parliament satellite accounts.
- A podcast
- The Scottish Parliament e-newsletter and BSL newsletters
- Internal communications via Corporate Bulletin
- An email to national and local Gaelic groups.

Altogether 124 responses we received, which represents a high level of response for a statutory Gaelic Language Plan. A full report on the consultation and changes made as a result of this can be found as Appendix A.

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## Summary of Gaelic in Scotland

The SPCB recognises that Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's heritage, national identity and cultural life. The SPCB is committed to the objectives set out in the National Gaelic Language Plan and has put in place the necessary structures and initiatives to ensure that Gaelic has a sustainable future in Scotland.

The SPCB recognises that the position of Gaelic is extremely fragile and if Gaelic is to be sustainable and vibrant, increasingly used and respected in Scotland, a concerted effort on the part of government, the public and private sectors, community organisations and individual speakers is required to:

- enhance the status of Gaelic
- promote the acquisition and learning of Gaelic
- encourage the increased use of Gaelic.

## Gaelic within the SPCB's area of operation

The SPCB's area of operation is all of Scotland. It therefore follows that all Scotland's Gaelic speakers and Gaelic communities, both geographical communities and communities of interest, are within the area in which the SPCB operates.

In this section, we use data from the 2011 census as the most current available and will review once 2021 census data becomes available.

The total number of people recorded as being able to speak and/or read and/or write and/or understand Gaelic in the 2011 Census was 87,056 (1.7% of the Scottish population). Of these, the total number of people who could speak Gaelic was 57,602 (1.1% of the Scottish population). While the number of Gaelic speakers declined overall in the last Census, the number of people able to speak and also read and write Gaelic increased between 2001 and 2011, reflecting a growth in Gaelic literacy and growing numbers of Gaelic learners. The number of people under the age of 25 able to speak Gaelic also increased between 2001 and 2011.<sup>2</sup>

<b>Census 2011</b>				<b>Scotland</b>
<b>With any Gaelic skill (age 3+)</b>	<b>87,056</b>		<b>1.7%</b>	<b>of Scotland's population</b>
people who can speak Gaelic	57,602		1.1%	of Scotland's population
			66.2%	of those with a Gaelic skill
speakers who can read Gaelic	38,636		67.1%	of those who can speak Gaelic
Gaelic-literate speakers	32,418		56.3%	of those who can speak Gaelic

Source: NRS table 234 2011

Gaelic speakers are spread throughout Scotland. Of the Gaelic speakers identified in the 2011 Census, just over half lived in the Highland counties (the Highland Council, Argyll and Bute Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar areas) and just under half in the Lowland counties. In addition to the Gaelic speakers living in traditional Gaelic communities, there is a high degree of urbanisation within the Gaelic speech community, with large concentrations of Gaelic speakers living in Greater Glasgow, Edinburgh, Inverness and Aberdeen. The distribution of Gaelic speakers nationally

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/analytical\\_reports/Report\\_part\\_1.pdf](http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/documents/analytical_reports/Report_part_1.pdf)



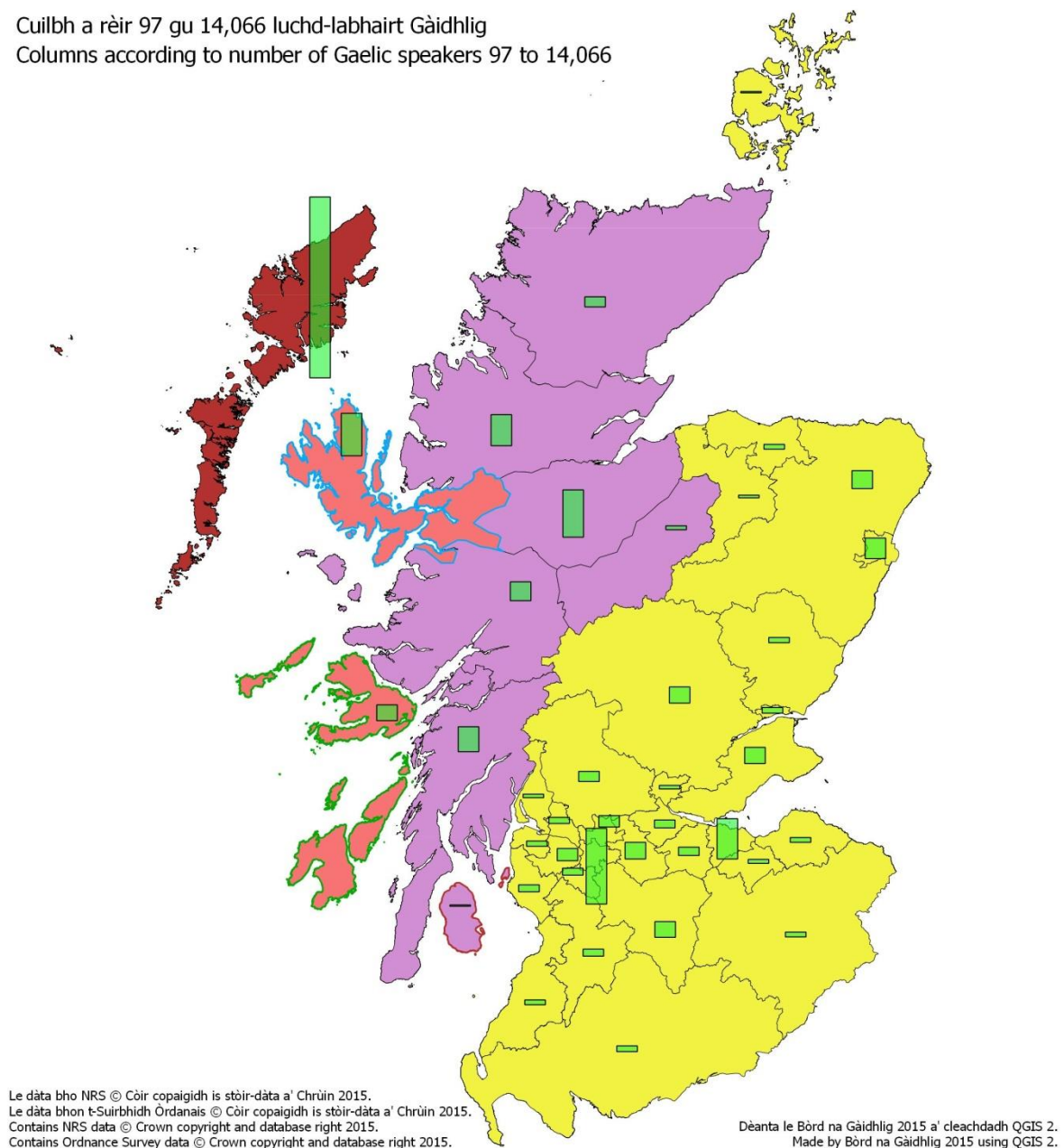
can be seen in the following map, provided by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which shows both the percentages and the overall numbers of speakers in different areas.

## Luchd-labhairt Gàidhlig 2011 Gaelic speakers

- ≤1.125% (cuibheas nàiseanta : national average)
- <15%
- <50%
- 50%+ le labhairt Ghàidhlig : with Gaelic speaking ability

a rèir Aonadan Rianachd Ionadail, Ìre 1  
by Local Administrative Units, Level 1

Cuilibh a rèir 97 gu 14,066 luchd-labhairt Gàidhlig  
Columns according to number of Gaelic speakers 97 to 14,066



There is no authoritative figure as to the number of non-fluent adult learners, however, there is currently a great deal of interest in Gaelic learning as demonstrated by levels of interest in the multimedia SpeakGaelic course and the Duolingo Scottish Gaelic. To date, some 1.5m people have downloaded Scottish Gaelic Duolingo with 451k active learners being reported.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, the 2021 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey has shown an increase in the number of people knowing any Gaelic at all. Between 2012 and 2021, the proportion of those able to speak at least the odd word of Gaelic in this large, representative survey has increased twofold from 15% to 30%.<sup>4</sup>

There are substantial numbers of children in Gaelic education, both Gaelic-medium education (GME) and Gaelic learner education (GLE) throughout Scotland. The full figures for GME and GLE are shown below.

The following map overleaf, provided by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, shows the distribution of GME nurseries, units and schools throughout Scotland. As can be seen, GME provision is not confined to the Highlands but is available at various levels in cities and towns in central and eastern Scotland. GME is currently delivered by 15 local authorities.

Given this backdrop, it can be expected that the trends of increased literacy, increase in numbers of fluent learners and increase in GME will continue, leading to greater demand for services.

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<sup>3</sup> [The world's best way to learn Scottish Gaelic - Duolingo](#), accessed 12/12/2022

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gaidhlig.scot/en/news/SSAS/>

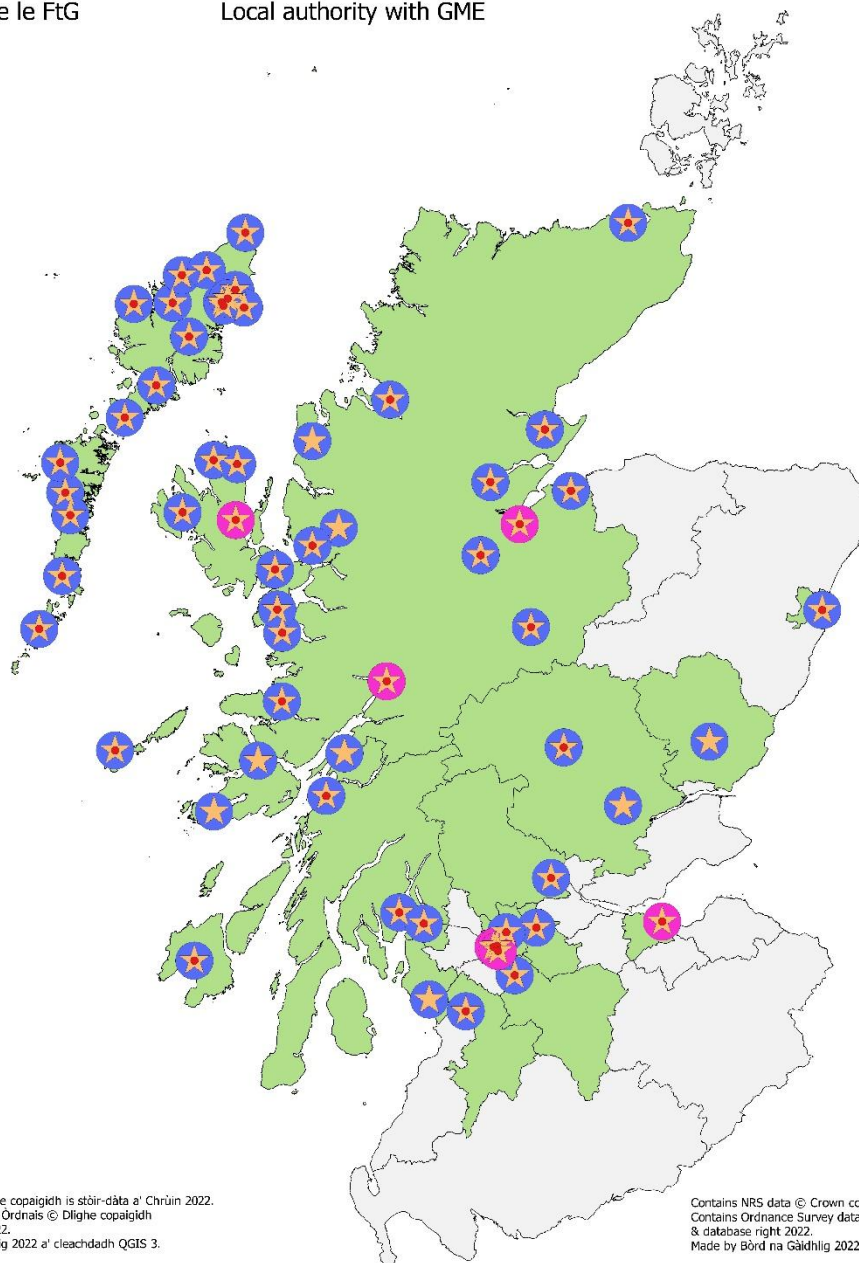
<b>Gaelic-medium Education</b>		<b>Scotland</b>
Early Years		Early Learning Centres
2021-22	55	Early Learning Centres
Primary	60	primaries
2021-22	3,856	pupils
	284	Teachers FTE
Secondary	32	secondaries
2021-22	1,616	pupils
	173	teachers

Source: Bòrd na Gàidhlig, [Dàta Foghlaim Ghàidhlig 2021-22](#)

## Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig 2021-22 Gaelic Medium Education

às aonais bhun-sgoiltean leis <5 sgoilearean Gàidhlig  
excluding primary schools with <5 Gaelic pupils

- Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig GME primary school
- Bun-sgoil le sruth FtG Primary school with GME stream
- Le ionad àraich FtG na cois With associated GME early learning centre
- ★ Le FtG àrd-sgoile na cois With associated GME secondary
- Comhairle le FtG Local authority with GME



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Le dàta bhon t-Suirbhidh Òrdaids © Dlighe copaidh is stòir-dàta a' Chrùin 2022.  
Dèanta le Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2022 a' cleachdadh QGIS 3.

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Made by Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2022 using QGIS 3.




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<b>Gaelic Learner Education</b>		<b>Scotland</b>
Primary	6	council areas
2021-22	84	primaries
	3,949	pupils
Secondary	6	council areas
2021-22	22	secondaries
	2,766	pupils

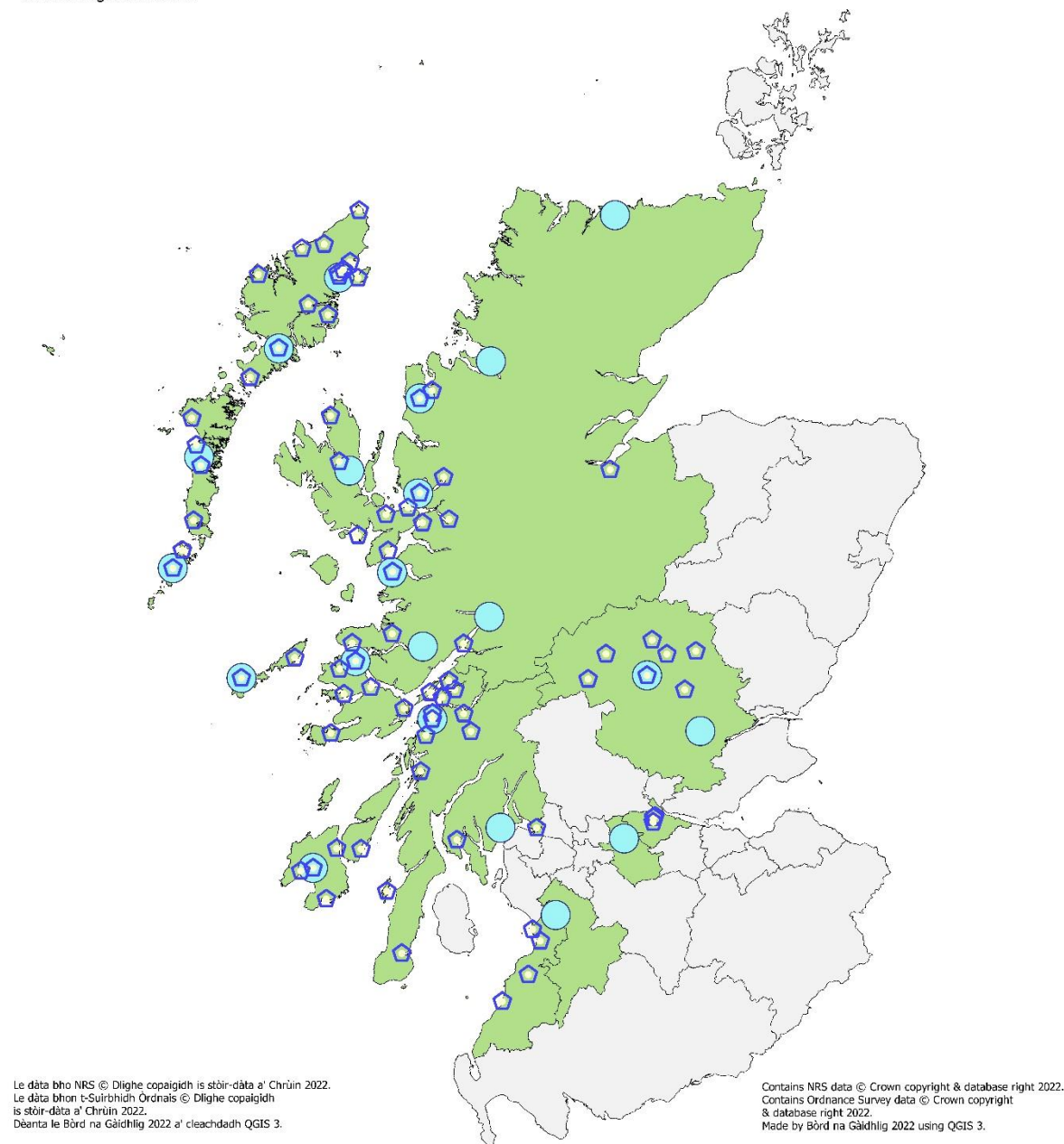
Source: [Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Dàta Foghlaim Ghàidhlig 2021-22](#)

## Foghlam Luchd-ionnsachaidh 2021–2022 Gaelic Learner Education

às aonais sgoiltean leis <5 sgoilearean Gàidhlig  
excluding schools with <5 Gaelic pupils

-  Bun-sgoil le Gàidhlig mar L2\* Primary with Gaelic as L2\*
-  Àrd-sgoil le FLi Secondary with GLE
-  Comhairle le FLi Local authority with GLE

\* "Gaelic taught as learner"



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## Gaelic organisations, Gaelic community groups and Gaelic for Adults opportunities

As the SPCB's area of operation is all of Scotland, all of Scotland's Gaelic organisations, community groups and Gaelic for Adults opportunities are within the area in which we operate. These include the Gaelic development agencies [Bòrd na Gàidhlig](#) and [Comunn na Gàidhlig](#) and broadcasters [MG Alba](#). Groups with a focus on Gaelic culture include [an Comunn Gàidhealach](#), organisers of the [Royal National Mòd](#), [Fèisean nan Gàidheal](#) which supports the development of community-based Gaelic arts tuition festivals and [Ceòlas](#) which promotes Gaelic language and culture in Uist.

Gaelic community groups include [Comann nam Pàrant](#), which represents the interests of parents whose children are educated through the medium of Gaelic, local branches of an Comunn Gàidhealach and local Gaelic groups such as Gaelic in the Borders.

A variety of Gaelic for Adults opportunities are available and details of these are available in the [LearnGaelic.Scot](#) website. Learning opportunities are offered by various providers such as [Sabhal Mòr Ostaig](#) in Skye, and [UHI Outer Hebrides](#), the universities of [Aberdeen](#), [Edinburgh](#) and [Glasgow](#) and various local authorities and community groups. Learning app [Duolingo](#) is available in Scottish Gaelic and [SpeakGaelic](#) is a new multimedia course produced in partnership between the BBC, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, MG ALBA and the Scottish Government.

The SPCB works with a range of Gaelic agencies, community groups and Gaelic for Adults providers.

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## Attitudes to Gaelic

There is an interest in Gaelic among many non-Gaelic speakers. The Scottish Social Attitudes recently explored explores public attitudes towards Gaelic in Scotland.<sup>5</sup> The study carried out in 2021 found for example that of the representative sample of 1,365 people aged 18 and over across Scotland, 79% of respondents agreed that Gaelic is important to Scotland's cultural heritage and 88% believed it is important to the cultural heritage of the Highlands and Islands.

It also reports that there has been a shift towards more positive attitudes regarding the language in a range of areas, including views on Gaelic education, the importance of Gaelic to one's own cultural heritage, public spending on Gaelic, and the future of Gaelic.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gaidhlig.scot/en/news/SSAS/>



The study also found that being younger (those aged 18-29), having greater knowledge of and greater exposure to Gaelic are all associated with more supportive attitudes towards Gaelic across the range of topic areas presented above.

This follows an earlier study in 2011 by TNS-BMRB for the Scottish Government's Culture, External Affairs and Tourism Analytical Unit, in conjunction with Bòrd na Gàidhlig.<sup>6</sup> The study found that, although 87% of those interviewed (1,009 in total) had no knowledge of Gaelic, 81% agreed that "it is important that Scotland does not lose its Gaelic traditions", 62% that "Gaelic should be supported and encouraged throughout Scotland" and 65% that "more should be done to encourage and promote Gaelic in Scotland".

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## History of Gaelic

Although we often think of Gaelic as a language associated with the Highlands and Islands, it was once widely spoken as an indigenous language throughout virtually all of what is now Scotland, other than Orkney and Shetland, and was the majority language of Scotland into the late medieval period. This is evidenced in place names, for example, as can be seen in the following map. In the late medieval period, a Highland/Lowland split came about, with Gaelic then being consolidated as the language of the Highlands, and retreating in the Lowlands. In the Lowlands, Gaelic survived longest in the south west.

Gaelic retained its status as the principal language of the Highlands until the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1500 about half Scotland's population were Gaelic speakers, and in 1650 around one third. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to migration from the Highlands, Gaelic became widely heard in the towns and cities of the Scottish Lowlands.

Efforts to sustain and develop Gaelic have been taking place since the late 1870s but gained momentum particularly from the 1980s onwards with the foundation of Gaelic-medium education, the establishment of Gaelic television and the passing of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act in 2005.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/West-Graham-2011-Beachd-a-phobail-CR11-01-Public-attitudes.pdf>



# Alba

Taghadh de dh'ainmean-àite bhon Ghàidhlig

Airson tuilleadh air na h-ainmean seo, feuch an stòr-dàta air [www.ainmean-aite.org](http://www.ainmean-aite.org).

# Scotland

A selection of Gaelic-derived place-names

For more on these names, consult the database on [www.gaelicplacenames.org](http://www.gaelicplacenames.org).



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Rannsachadh le Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba & Bòrd na Gàidhlig.  
Mapa le Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2017 a' cleachdadh QGIS 2.  
Research by Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba & Bòrd na Gàidhlig.  
Map by Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2017 using QGIS 2.

## Internal Gaelic Capacity Audit

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### Linguistic capacity of the authority

This survey will be conducted within the first year of this plan, and a further one before the end.

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### Inventory of existing Gaelic materials and signage

Existing Gaelic provision is contained in the [previous edition](#) of our Gaelic Language Plan and also within the commitments section of this edition of the Plan.

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### Assessment of the translation and interpretation capacity

The SPCB has a dedicated contract for Gaelic translation and also has an internal translation and proofreading capacity through our post of Gaelic Development Officer. The SPCB also has access to Gaelic interpreting through our main contract for Translation, Interpreting and Transcription. The Scottish Parliament has hard-wired simultaneous translation equipment in the Chamber and in some of the committee rooms and also owns a set of simultaneous translation equipment which was purchased during the period of the first edition of our Gaelic Language Plan, with financial support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

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### Maintaining data on Gaelic capacity

We will maintain data on our Gaelic capacity through surveys of our linguistic profile twice a session and through the statistics we produce for our annual reports to Bòrd na Gàidhlig on the implementation of our Gaelic Language Plan.

*The rest of this document is available on request by emailing [gaidhlig@parliament.scot](mailto:gaidhlig@parliament.scot). Please note that it may not be fully accessible to people using a screen reader.*