

## **PE2098/A: Provide essential investment in the Gaelic language to secure its future**

### **Scottish Government submission, 11 June 2024**

Thank you for your committee's correspondence seeking the Scottish Government's views on the action called for in this petition relating to investment in the Gaelic language.

Scottish Government recognise the opportunities that exist in Gaelic across communities and the mutual benefits that further inclusion and support can bring.

Scottish Government agree wholeheartedly that investment in Gaelic development creates jobs, many of which are in rural and island communities and in areas of low population. Gaelic investment is cross cutting in nature and impacts positively across a number of policy priorities.

The Scottish Government budget for Gaelic and Scots is £29 million for financial year 2024/25 and all of this investment goes to support the language and speaker communities through a variety of routes. Investment through the Gaelic and Scots budget to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig for example supports the National Centre for Gaelic language and culture, a major source of employment on the Isle of Skye; similarly investment in MG Alba supports 350 jobs indirectly and returns £1.34 for each £1 of money invested.

The petition states that budgets have been static – however there are a number of examples that demonstrate that the funding of Gaelic should not be described as static. It should be noted that at the start of 2007, MG ALBA had a budget of £8.7 million and its budget is now £13 million at that point there was also no Gaelic schools capital fund which currently stands at £4 million.

Scottish Government also administers Gaelic Specific Grants a ring-fenced funding scheme (£4.48 million for 24/25) made available by Scottish Ministers to Scottish Local Authorities for up to 75% of the cost towards delivery of Gaelic education.

Investment in Gaelic does not just come from Scottish Government and through Bòrd na Gàidhlig but important contributions are made by local authorities and entities such as Highland and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, Creative Scotland, Nature Scot and many others across the public sector in a range of subject areas. Following the introduction of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 contributions towards Gaelic from local authorities and public bodies have been increasing.

There are notable Gaelic capital developments in Glasgow, Fort William, Inverness and in Islay. The context referred to above indicates the progress that is being made with both capital and resource developments to support Gaelic.

Gaelic community activity is also a priority for Scottish Government. Recognising this, Bòrd na Gàidhlig received additional funding for Gaelic officer scheme for three financial years from 2021 to 2023. The 2024-25 budget settlement did not originally

allow the continuation of this funding. However following feedback the Scottish Government has provided additional funding of £175,000 for the first six months of the 24/25 financial year to secure the Gaelic officer scheme and Bòrd na Gàidhlig has been asked to report to Scottish Government on the scheme by the end of June 2024.

Scottish Government is aware that Gaelic officers across a number of organisations play an important role in supporting local development across a range of bodies for example the Gaelic Development Officers working with young people through Comunn na Gàidhlig who play an important role in supporting use of Gaelic out of the classroom and in community settings, supporting and enhancing fluency.

Scottish Government fully understands the request for additional funding for the Gaelic and Scots sectors. Scottish Government wishes to see Gaelic and Scots thrive and is committed to continuing support for the languages through continued investment, support and leadership. The Scottish Languages Bill is an important part of that work to strengthen the structures in place and make them more efficient and to increase protections around the language. Through the proposed Bill Scottish Ministers would prepare the Gaelic language strategy in place of Bòrd na Gàidhlig preparing the National Gaelic Language Plan, Scottish Ministers would also take on the responsibility of issuing the statutory guidance on education and language plans. The Bill also proposes to enhance the reporting powers of Bòrd na Gàidhlig by allowing direct reporting to the Scottish Parliament.

## **Gaelic and Scots Division**