

PE1795/A

Scottish Government submission of 2 June 2020

The Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig have had regular discussions regarding Spòrs Gàidhlig and will continue to do so.

The Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig have been pleased to have been involved with the Spòrs Gàidhlig project since its inception in 2014. We recognise the importance of creating opportunities for young people to use their Gaelic Language skills beyond the traditional school environment and the project have been successful in providing this service..

During the early applications by the project to LEADER it was clear that support from Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig would be necessary to ensure that Spòrs Gàidhlig was viable in the development stage. This intervention would allow the team the opportunity to train and to work with Local Authorities to build up a business base. During the initial 2 years (2017/18 and 2018/19) the Scottish Government and the Bòrd provided £30k and £60k respectively to the project. In addition, the Bòrd have also funded groups of young people to take part in Spòrs Gàidhlig activities.

It is important to note that following this initial stage of development that despite great efforts the Spòrs Gàidhlig team did not realise the interest from Local Authorities that it had hoped in this period placing the continuation of the project in jeopardy. In 2019 and following discussions with the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig agreed to an additional funding package of £45,000 for the period from 1st November 2019 through to 31st March 2021, once the Bòrd had received income projections from Spòrs Gàidhlig demonstrating viability, in particular from growing revenue through paid for activity – which has been a key aim of the project from the outset. Since then, the Bòrd have also agreed additional funding to help groups of young people from across the Gaelic community, to take part in Spòrs Gàidhlig activities.

From March 2020 and in line with many other outdoor activity providers, Spòrs Gàidhlig activities came to a halt due to COVID-19 restrictions and the staff have been furloughed. The Scottish Government recognises the potential that the project team have in supporting young people with their Gaelic language development at this time and see them as part of the ongoing Education Recovery Plan. It is hoped that some activity will resume from August 2020 onwards, at which point the potential for securing earned income over the coming months will become clearer.

We most recently discussed the project with Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 11 June and it believes in the benefits that the project affords young people in using Gaelic in outdoor activities. The Bòrd are also of the view that it would be helpful in terms of the long term sustainability of the project, that other funders come on board in recognition of the health and well-being benefits of the project for young Gaelic speakers and its contribution to delivering aspects of Curriculum for Excellence. They plan on supporting the Spòrs team in discussions with sportscotland.

In addition sportsotland, through Glenmore Lodge, the national outdoor training centre, continues to work closely with Spòrs Gàidhlig to boost the delivery of outdoor activity training and provide activities for young people, both through Gaelic and bilingually. This has, for example, included Glenmore Lodge providing a base for the Spòrs Gàidhlig instructor development trainees and the development coordinator during 2018 and 2019. Glenmore Lodge also continues to assist with expert advice and support on all aspects of the instructor development programme. This includes providing opportunities to attend skills and qualification courses and training sessions offered at Glenmore Lodge.

More recently, sportsotland met with Spòrs Gàidhlig on 24 January 2020. Spòrs Gàidhlig discussed a number of issues and sought further support from Glenmore Lodge. Glenmore Lodge's Principal was very accommodating and agreed to work with Spòrs Gàidhlig and support them. The support requested and agreed included ongoing professional development for instructors and support with equipment, storage and facilities.

As part of the discussions it was noted that the main challenge is the need to persuade local authorities/schools to work with Spòrs Gàidhlig to deliver their outdoor education programmes. It was understood that Spòrs Gàidhlig had to develop interest and ultimately persuade schools to attend their courses if they were to be financially and operationally viable.