

## **PE1796/A**

Scottish Government submission of 14 July 2020

As the Committee is aware, the Scottish Government is committed to supporting all our indigenous languages, including Gaelic. We recognise the cultural, economic, educational and health benefits that they bring to the whole of Scotland and want to create opportunities for those who wish to learn and use them in everyday situations.

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 was a landmark piece of legislation for Gaelic. Not only did this Act establish a Gaelic public body, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and gave it important functions in relation to the promotion of Gaelic in Scotland but the Act also ensured that Gaelic was to be given equal respect to that of English.

The Act put the Bòrd at the centre of a Gaelic language planning framework, and it gave BnG important functions of advising on Gaelic matters, providing Guidance on Gaelic planning and on Gaelic education. Under Section 6(2) of the Act states that Bòrd na Gàidhlig may require a public authority to submit a Gaelic Language Plan monitoring report and section 6(3) states that this may happen annually. Over the past 14 years, Bòrd na Gàidhlig has put a team and a system in place which allows Public Authorities to be supported while they are creating and delivering their Gaelic Language Plans. I am pleased that this has helped create a network of around 60 Public Authorities with Plans which offer an array of commitments that support the Gaelic language and those who wish to use it.

I can confirm that the Bòrd has a regime for monitoring delivery and effectiveness of Gaelic Language Plans and that this process is kept under review. As part of the ongoing process the Bòrd have created a system that requires all public authorities with approved Gaelic Language Plans older than 12 months, to submit an annual monitoring report. This is a useful process which gives the Public Authority and the Bòrd an opportunity to reflect on good practice, assess progress and highlight any challenges that may have arisen.

In addition, the Bòrd has commissioned independent research on some of the Gaelic Language Plans that were in the system at that time. I am told that this research carried out over 3 years did not highlight any problems and commended the efforts of the organisations involved. In May 2020, and for the first time, Bòrd na Gàidhlig published a summary of key data from monitoring reports received during financial year 2019-20. This report will be updated annually, with the aim of showing progress within each Public Authority and also allowing to build a more complete national picture.

One of the key challenges which both Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Public Authorities share, is ensuring that adequate resource is made available to ensure that approved Gaelic Language Plans are taken forward in support of the aim in the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 - that Gaelic is used more often, by more people and in a wider range of situations.

In recognition of the challenges and that Public Authorities have abilities to support the development of Gaelic across Scotland, I brought 24 organisations together for the first time in 2018 under the initiative Faster Rate of Progress for Gaelic. This has helped focus the work of these bodies under a number of headings where I feel we can make good progress but have cross cutting relevance to all our aims for the language. These areas include Communities, Digital and Media, Economy and Labour Market, Participation and Teacher Recruitment and Retention. All these areas help ensure Gaelic is at the heart of policy developments within organisations and therefore helping with the linguistic diversity and promotion across Scotland.