

Item	Gaelic Officer Update
Committee	Learning Teaching and Research Committee
Date paper prepared	20/02/2026
Date of committee meeting	10/06/2026
Subject	Gaelic Officer Update
Author	Jayne Macleod
Action requested	☒ For Information ☐ For Discussion ☐ For recommendation ☐ For Endorsement ☐ For Approval
Purpose of the paper	To outline the work to date and next steps for our UHI NWH Gaelic Officer.
Brief summary of the paper	The wide range of stakeholders both internal and external that have been communicated with during the first 3 months of this important role. Meeting held, visits undertaken, impact and next steps.
Consultation How has consultation with partners been conducted?	With relevant teams and managers, engagement, marketing, curriculum, external stakeholders.
Resource implications What are the risks with this proposal?	If applicable, outlined within paper.
Risk implications	If applicable, outlined within paper.
Link with strategy	Gaelic Strategy, Gaelic Language Plan, Curriculum Strategy,
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Not required but key performance indicators analysed by protected characteristics where required.

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Island Community Impact	UHI are the relevant authority.
Paper status	Highlight the paper status in the list below: ☒ Open – the paper may be circulated to non-members of the committee and published online without restriction. ☐ Restricted – the paper must not be circulated to non-members or published online until after the committee meeting. ☐ Confidential - the paper must not be circulated beyond the committee members and should not be published online. [Please note papers may still be subject to Freedom of Information requests, as specified in the next section].
Freedom of information (FOI)	Highlight the FOI status in the list below. Refer to NWH Freedom of Information Site for more information: ☒ Open ☐ Closed – disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research. ☐ Closed – disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs. ☐ Closed - Disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation. ☐ Closed - Disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court. ☐ Closed - Disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act. ☐ Closed - Other, please specify.
Freedom of information (FOI) disclosure date	If closed/ withheld is selected above, enter the date when this will become 'open': Click or tap to enter a date.

Gaelic Officer Update

I have been in my appointment as Gaelic Officer since the 9th of March 2026 and hit the ground running.

My first couple of months have been about meeting people and establishing connections and relationships.

I spent my first week at UHI NWH in South Uist at Cnoc Soilleir, where I attended a meeting of Gaelic Officers from all over Scotland, brought together by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. This was an excellent opportunity to network with others but also allowed me to listen to a representative from HIE talking about her work as Head of Gaelic and about where funding for projects can be sourced. All Gaelic Officers also participated in launching the Bòrd na Gàidhlig #GachLatha campaign encouraging people to use Gaelic every day.

Whilst in Uist, I took the opportunity to meet with a representative working with Ceòlas at Cnoc Soilleir on the Uist Community Language Plan. We were identifying areas and aims where we could take a more collaborative approach moving forward. I am no stranger to Ceòlas and I have a deep respect for what they are doing in terms of language regeneration in South Uist.

I met with a representative based at Comunn Eachdraidh Nis (Ness Historical Society), who has written the Gaelic plan for North Lewis. This plan consists of some aims which will see cross collaboration between UHI NWH and community organisations.

I took the opportunity to meet with members of the Gaelic Team at Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. Their Gaelic Language Plan hasn't been published yet, but we agreed it would be good to keep communications open going forward. At that point, due to Purdah, further detail on implementation of the Areas of Linguistic Significance was not available, but there is a Gaelic Committee meeting at CnES on June 15th which might inform us.

I met with the Chair of "Pride in Place", a new government funded scheme. It's a £20-million project which will cover Stornoway and rural areas of Lewis. I was later invited to become a member of the Neighbourhood Board, which is made up of local residents, business leaders, and community representatives. Gaelic will be integral to this initiative going forward and I see this as a great opportunity for UHI NWH to have some involvement. The first board meeting took place on Thursday 14th of May.

UHI NWH hosted a group of Gaelic students from all over Scotland in April – Comann Nàiseanta nan Oileanach – for a recruitment/careers fair, organised by An Lanntair, CnES and CNNO. A colleague and I took the opportunity to set up a table where they could pick up our Gaelic plan, information about courses and some UHI NWH merchandise. Students were all Gaelic speaking but not necessarily studying Gaelic. Some were also doing Law, Linguistics and Archaeology. It was an excellent networking opportunity.

I have been working closely with the short course co-ordinator, creating flyers alongside our graphic designer and spreading the word about the Gaelic classes that began at the end of April/beginning of May. The marketing of these courses has been hugely successful, with some being fully subscribed.

The Gaelic Curriculum Team play a crucial role in implementation alongside other departments within UHI NWH. I have been through the Gaelic Plan with key members of the team and this has been extremely beneficial. As the co-creators of the plan they have a good understanding of the aims and objectives. The next step is to establish a steering group, who would comprise of key people/supporters from all campuses and act as a sounding board for any projects and plans. This group would allow us to identify any issues arising going forward so that solutions can be put in place. This group would ensure that all departments are meeting to enable us to achieve the aims laid out in the plan.

Funding applications have been sent to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for the continuation of the short courses and the Autumn Gaelic Residency course which, if successful, will take place again at Grinneabhat in Bragar in October.

I met with a representative from HIE to learn about funding that might be available to us. They can recommend funding sources and support with the application process. Contacts at Highland Council and Wester Ross Biosphere were also shared.

I met with the UHI NWH Marketing Team, and we discussed having more of a Gaelic presence on social media and in press releases. We also discussed the need for all Gaelic-related posts to be published bilingually. A recurring meeting has been set up so that Gaelic activities can be shared for internal and external promotion. We are also planning to meet with Cnoc Soilleir to familiarise ourselves with the partnership and how we can support them going forward.

On Tuesday 5th of May, I set off on a journey around some of the campuses, starting in Ullapool, meeting with the local Engagement Lead and a Business Lecturer. There is an appetite for Gaelic in Ullapool, and community groups were suggested for possible engagement. The next steps are to contact all Engagement Leads to create a comprehensive list of what is happening in each of our key areas to allow collaboration.

I then headed north to the Thurso Campus and held an information session about the Gaelic Language Plan in the library. This was a hugely positive experience with a good turnout of supported learning students, their carers and their lecturer, all showing a great interest in the language. The group had been learning Gaelic recently during Seachdain na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Week), and there is interest in maintaining links and organising taster sessions in the next academic year.

I spoke with members of staff such as the librarian who was very enthusiastic about improving the Gaelic collection, particularly if more staff and students undertake learning the language. I met with senior leadership who have been very supportive and are considering Gaelic classes. I also met with HR and marketing colleagues, who were supportive of developing a bilingual presence in recruitment, marketing and communications.

Continuing my tour to Dornoch, which was quieter due to student placements, it was excellent to see the high-quality facilities and future potential for community use. A discussion with the golfing curriculum manager was very positive, including openness to exposing international students to Gaelic.

My next stop was the Alness campus where I held an information session in the library. A film making programme leader expressed interest in incorporating Gaelic into courses and highlighted previous engagement with MG ALBA students, with potential for future collaboration.

I was pleased to see Gaelic signage in Thurso, Dornoch and Alness. These small but important details reinforce the need for a place-based approach to implementation.

These visits have helped establish relationships with mainland colleagues. As this is a statutory requirement, I would like to see more staff engaging with the plan. We will deliver online information sessions and contribute to essential updates in August. An Engagement Manager has supported this approach and is keen for staff to learn key Gaelic phrases for use in calls.

I finished my trip in Inverness and met UHI's Gaelic Officer. We discussed the UHI Gaelic Plan 2023–26 and ongoing work to develop a new plan, ensuring a collaborative approach across partners. Funding support available to staff for Gaelic learning at all levels was highlighted, and this will be promoted through internal channels.

My final meeting was with representatives from the Gaelic Team at Highland Council. They had not realised the extent of our campuses within their electoral divisions. They run Speak Gaelic classes in locations such as Thurso and Fort William, with Ullapool also under consideration. We discussed collaboration and information sharing moving forward.

Support is being provided to develop the operational plan for the Gaelic Language Plan, including a Gantt chart mapping out the next academic year. Working with Engagement Leads, current Gaelic provision will be mapped to identify opportunities for collaboration and enhancement.

My next tour will include Portree, Broadford, Auchtertyre, Mallaig and Fort William. There will be staff sessions and community engagement sessions at campuses, alongside online MS Teams awareness sessions. I will also arrange a visit to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to meet key colleagues.