

Policy challenges for supporting and promoting Gaelic in the home and in the community

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Acknowledging achievements to date

- Enhanced civic status of Gàidhlig
- Symbolic appeal of Gàidhlig in Scotland
- Educational provision in various contexts
- Media and aesthetic outputs

Identifying challenges

- Endangered social context of Gàidhlig
 - Social fragility of living Gàidhlig communities, networks
- Strategic misalignment with challenges
 - Promoting minority language rights independent of troubling social reality: Gàidhlig as symbol
- Confused Diagnostics
 - Measuring provision rather than output
 - Conflating learners' and speakers' needs: one size fits all
- Constraints in Leadership
 - Civic status in contradiction with disempowered reality
 - Lacking focus at a time of crisis

Optimal approach in challenging circumstances?

- **Build on achievements of 2005 Language Act but also question its limitations:**
 - Has it succeeded in encouraging social engagement in key target areas – existing networks of speakers?
 - Has focus on institutional provision and symbolic promotion been at the expense of social supports?
 - Rooted in a diagnosis of the problem – social context?
 - Has the learner-focussed heritage model facilitated evasive attitude on erosion of existing communities, networks?
 - Risk averse but underproductive – optional extra, secondary identity?

Using the power of the Councils to give strategic focus – agreeing a new approach

- Need for a new approach which focusses on social engagement and network empowerment
 - credible strategic base
- Reset the debate between Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and key council areas:
 - Highlands
 - Western Isles
 - Argyll and Bute
- Geographic focus for enhanced social engagement and minority language social supports
 - Local focus in networked strategy

Possible strategic initiatives: Inter-council cooperation in support of Gàidhlig

- Dedicated decentralised unit for community supports backed by public agencies (strategic and analytic backup)
- Support mechanisms and incentives for Gàidhlig-speaking families
 - Family networks to coordinate initiatives and build critical mass
 - Dynamic activities to support youth socialisation – engaging pursuits, sports
- Gàidhlig community trusts – socio-economic base for supports
- Mechanisms for assembly to encourage communal leadership and group participation
- Refocus language aims on the communal practice of Gàidhlig and encourage outreach initiatives with learner networks
 - Minority language interdependency
 - Focus on target networks and language group