

# **Pròiseact Rannsachadh Gàidhlig nan Eilean**

## **Islands' Gaelic Research Project**

### **2 Fieldworker Positions**

#### **1. The Project**

This project aims to ascertain the current vitality of Gàidhlig as a communal language and identity in na h-Eileanan Siar, Tiriodh and parts of Skye. An accurate definition of the current sociolinguistic strength of Gàidhlig and its demographic and geographic distribution will facilitate the drafting and devising of suitable language planning initiatives in order to assist the communities of the Isles to engage with their socio-cultural reality rather than with an assumed vitality which is often ascribed to areas perceived as minority native-speaking heartlands. The project therefore will seek to define the sociolinguistic prevalence of Gàidhlig in the increasingly bilingualised or unbalanced bilingual context of life in the Islands. The unifying theme of the various research modules will be to determine the prospects for Gàidhlig as a living identity, based on its current socio-cultural condition and to determine what language planning initiatives would be most appropriate to intervene in support of Gàidhlig's social vitality. The project will focus on the following research questions:

- How prevalent is the mother-tongue transmission of Gàidhlig in the various islands of na h-Eileanan Siar, Tiriodh and parts of Skye?
- What does existing language data tell us about the current vitality of Gàidhlig in the islands?
- Do current language data, and the inferences drawn from them, give an accurate indication of Gàidhlig's current condition as a living language?
- How rooted are the teenagers of the various districts in their Gàidhealtachd heritage and community?
- How important is Gàidhlig to the productive identity of the teenagers?
- How does the English/Gàidhlig dynamic manifest itself from a socio-cultural perspective in a traditional Gàidhlig-speaking community?
- What are the communal and institutional perceptions of Gàidhlig's current vitality?
- What are the most salient perceptions of current communal and official initiatives in support of Gàidhlig?
- What potential exists in the Isles for more progressive and productive language planning initiatives?
- What are the productive aspects of L1 and L2 interdependencies in relation to Gàidhlig?
- What language planning initiatives are most effective in supporting both the L1 and L2 context of Gàidhlig and encouraging productive co-operation between them?

While this survey's general aim focusses on the distribution of L1 speaker networks in the

Islands, the project leaders are cognisant of the fact that L1 speakers of Gàidhlig participate in Gàidhlig networks in other parts of Scotland. This survey, however, seeks to engage in an analysis of Gàidhlig as a socio-cultural entity in those communities where it is mostly densely constituted as network-based and communally rooted practice. The project leaders also recognise that Gàidhlig is increasingly spoken as an L2 endeavour, which is a very promising outcome of language planning efforts in Scotland to date, but the various modules of this project are primarily concerned with gathering evidence which will inform ambitious language planning initiatives in support of L1 Gàidhlig communities and networks. Much of feasible minority L2 language planning is predicated on a sound understanding of its relationship with its L1 reality. This project will therefore generate and elaborate data and analysis which will be both instructive and advantageous to these two contexts.

## **2. The scope**

This is a major research project with ambitious goals and reach. The various tasks have been divided up between seven research modules:

1. Preparatory module
2. Questionnaire-based survey administered in pre-schools to assess family language practice of infant age cohort
3. Detailed account of a particular Gaelic area in the Western Isles or Tiree
4. Teenager survey
5. Community consultation
6. Integration of L1 and L2 language planning practices as a model for language initiatives in the Isles
7. Integration of Modules 1-6 and Final Reporting Phase

The fieldworkers will have key roles in Modules 2-5.

## **3. The employer**

The fieldworkers will be employed by SMO as part of this institution's contribution to the Soillse National Research Network for the Maintenance and Revitalisation of Gaelic Language and Culture – [www.soillse.ac.uk](http://www.soillse.ac.uk). Soillse is a multi-institutional and interdisciplinary research collaboration between Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Lews Castle College, constituent colleges of the University of the Highlands and Islands; Aberdeen University; Edinburgh University and Glasgow University. Soillse was established in 2009 to provide research opportunities and post-graduate training in various academic disciplines relevant to the maintenance and revitalisation of Gaelic language and culture. By enhancing the research capacity in relation to the sociology, sociolinguistics, and language policy and planning aspects of Gaelic as a living language and

culture, the participating universities seek to develop the Soillse collaboration as a world-class minority language research initiative, and to participate in scholarly and public debate concerning minority language issues in general, with a view to informing public policy in Scotland and beyond. The Islands Gaelic Research Project represents a major investment by the network in establishing a baseline account of the current state of the language in a key geographical area of its traditional use.

#### **4. Key fieldworker activities**

- Participation in the planning, carrying out, processing and reporting of the various research modules of the project
- Piloting, developing, and carrying out a family language practice survey, and inputting data
- Carrying out a study of the age profile of local indicative Gaelic communities
- Carrying out a study of language abilities and language use data
- Piloting, developing, and carrying out a teenager survey, and inputting data
- Preparing the scope and schedule for community consultation meetings and carrying them out
- Assisting the Director of Soillse in the preparation of academic research outputs for publication in the project's reporting phase

#### **5. Key competencies, qualifications, and experience**

##### Essential

- Ability to understand, read, write and converse in Gaelic. Applicants will be required to demonstrate their level of language competency during the interview process
- Ability to undertake fieldwork activities in support of minority language research
- Excellent communication skills, particularly in relation to community liaison
- Ability to work both independently but also under the guidance of academic colleagues and as part of a team of researchers
- Ability and willingness to conduct public engagement activities to communicate to different audiences the implications of results arising from contemporary Gaelic research
- Ability and willingness to work closely with management structures
- Excellent research planning and administrative skills
- Driving licence, and ability to travel freely around the islands (probably using own car)
- Functional competence in English.

##### Desirable

- Knowledge of the situation of the Gaelic language in Scotland and of policy relevant to its maintenance and revitalisation

- A good understanding of matters relevant to minority language maintenance and revitalisation, more generally
- Proven ability to present research outputs in Gaelic, both orally and in writing, including the ability to make presentations

A PhD completed or a PhD nearing completion, in a relevant aspect of the language sciences, will be taken into consideration, but is not a pre-requisite.

## **6. Duration**

This post is funded for a 2-year period.

## **7. Application Procedure**

Applicants are required to complete an application form and to submit it along with the following:

- A detailed CV
- A letter of application setting out:
  - a) why this position is being applied for and explaining how the fieldworker position will enhance the applicant's career-pathway
  - b) how the applicant's experience to date relates to the research aims of Soillse and how their fieldwork skills will enhance the Islands Gaelic Research Project.

Soillse is happy to consider job-share applications. These posts may also be suitable for those who wish to seek a two-year secondment from their current positions. Applicants should make it clear in their applications if they wish to be considered under these schemes.

For further specific information regarding the post, prospective candidates may contact Prof. Conchúr Ó Giollagáin, the Director of Soillse, if they wish to have an informal discussion regarding the position prior to the formal interview: Tel: 01471 888558; E-mail: sm00cog@uhi.ac.uk.

Deadline for applications: 15/07/15

Expected date for the interviews: 20/07/15