



# **Identifying the links between Gaelic and Wellbeing**

## **Final Report**

**May 2024**

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### Introduction and Aims of Study

1.1 Bòrd na Gàidhlig commissioned DC Research – in partnership with Dr Douglas Chalmers, Prof Mike Danson and Eilidh Danson – to carry out a research study that looked at "*Identifying the links between Gaelic and wellbeing*". The primary objective of the work was "*to identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing, and to identify its place in assessing changes in wellbeing*". More specifically, Bòrd na Gàidhlig sought the following from the research:

- Knowledge of which wellbeing indicators involve or could involve Gaelic.
- Knowledge of how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing of individuals and of language networks.
- Knowledge of how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing of local communities and Scotland's national wellbeing.
- Knowledge of how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing economy.
- Knowledge of how the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing, and of wellbeing to Gaelic, might be measured, with evidence from other minority languages where available.
- Recommendations as to how Bòrd na Gàidhlig and others can utilise the opportunities identified by this research, in cooperation with other bodies or through the sharing of evidence with regional or national bodies already involved with wellbeing development.

1.2 The outcome that Bòrd na Gàidhlig sought from the project was:

- A familiarity and understanding, supported by evidence, of wellbeing issues amongst policy developers.
- Further evidence of the contribution of Gaelic to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, particularly around wellbeing.
- An understanding of how facets of wellbeing can be used to assist and encourage Gaelic users, as speakers and learners and as a language community.

#### Overview of Approach

1.3 To fulfil the aims of the project, a six-stage method was adopted, and the key stages are summarised below:

- **Stage 1: Inception and Progress.** An inception meeting took place at the outset of the research, and progress updates were provided to Bòrd na Gàidhlig at regular intervals during the study.
- **Stage 2: Literature Review.** This stage involved a range of complementary aspects – a literature review of national and international literature on wellbeing issues in today's Gaelic world; a review of literature amongst comparable populations; the inclusion of non-academic community level literature and recordings about Gaelic; and a broader review of current wellbeing literature.

- **Stage 3: Conversations.** One-to-one 'conversations' were carried out with a range of relevant individuals involved in Gaelic and/or wellbeing. This included: those involved in the current (and developing) wellbeing policy landscape – focusing on Scotland, but also reflecting international policy developments; those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world at the current time; and representatives from comparable populations that are giving consideration to the issues around wellbeing and language development. A total of 23 consultations were completed, and a list of consultees is included in Annex 1 to this report.
- **Stage 4: Breadth of Inquiry.** This stage drew on the findings of the Stage 2 Literature Review and the Stage 3 Conversations to provide an overview of each of the aspects of wellbeing in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, highlighting the links between Gaelic and each outcome and providing examples the ways in which Gaelic makes a positive contribution to each NPF outcome. The examples of the various contributions are considered in the case studies in Annex 4 and summarised in Section 3 of the report.
- **Stage 5: Case Studies.** This stage involved the development of a range of case studies which illustrate the various aspects of the research findings in terms of the contribution of Gaelic (and other minority languages) to wellbeing. A total of 15 case studies were developed – 12 Gaelic case studies and 3 from comparable minority languages. The case studies are included in Annex 4 to this report.
- **Stage 6: Analysis, Reporting and Presenting.** This stage involved bringing together and synthesising the results and findings from the various stages above to produce this report which fulfils the three outcomes for the research set out above.

### Structure of Report

- 1.4 This is the Final Report for the "Identifying the links between Gaelic and wellbeing" research, finalised in May 2024, and is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** considers the key themes that have emerged from the literature review and the 'conversations' carried out for this research and provides a summary of the overarching findings.
  - **Section 3** presents a high-level summary of the findings from the 15 case studies, focusing on the ways in which the case studies provide examples of the ways in which Gaelic links to, and contributes towards, wellbeing – and reflecting this through the outcomes from the Scottish Government's current National Performance Framework<sup>1</sup> as well as the four pillars of capital<sup>2</sup>.
  - **Section 4** reflects on the findings from the research and sets out a range of issues to consider, and recommendations around both how the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing, and of wellbeing to Gaelic, might be measured, as well as how facets of wellbeing can be used to assist and encourage Gaelic users, as speakers and learners and as a language community.
  - **Annex 1** provides a list of the **individuals that were consulted** as part of the conversations stage of the study.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/pages/4/>

## Identifying the links between Gaelic and Wellbeing

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- **Annex 2** presents the full version of the literature review that has been carried out for this research.
- **Annex 3** summarises the findings from the conversations stage of the research, highlighting the opportunities and issues for Gaelic around wellbeing as well as the key themes about Gaelic's contribution to wellbeing identified by consultees. It also includes a copy of a letter received from the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy in relation to this research.
- **Annex 4** presents the 15 case studies that have been developed as part of this research study.

## 2. KEY FINDINGS SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONVERSATIONS

### Introduction to Section 2

- 2.1 This section of the report considers the key themes that have emerged from the literature review and the 'conversations' carried out for this research and provides a summary of the overarching findings.

### Literature Review

#### Background

- 2.2 The aim of this study was to **identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing, and to identify its place in assessing changes in wellbeing**. This approach is consistent with moves across the OECD and beyond to recognise the limitations of traditional measures of the performance of an economy, and:

*"that macro-economic statistics, such as GDP, don't provide a sufficiently detailed picture of the living conditions that ordinary people experience. While these concerns were already evident during the years of strong growth and good economic performance that characterised the early part of the decade, the financial and economic crisis has further amplified them. Addressing these perceptions is of crucial importance for the credibility and accountability of public policies but also for the very functioning of democracy"*<sup>3</sup>.

- 2.3 The concept of wellbeing is being applied in different policy and social contexts and specifically here Bòrd na Gàidhlig is seeking to identify the links between Gaelic and wellbeing along the lines of:

- which wellbeing indicators involve or could involve Gaelic,
- how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing of individuals and of language networks,
- how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing of local communities and Scotland's national wellbeing,
- how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing economy,
- how the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing, and of wellbeing to Gaelic, might be measured, with evidence from other minority languages where available,

to generate:

- recommendations as to how Bòrd na Gàidhlig and others can utilise the opportunities identified by this research, in cooperation with other bodies or through the sharing of evidence with regional or national bodies already involved with wellbeing development.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/wise/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>

### Scotland's place in the global concept of wellbeing

- 2.4 *Annex 2: Literature Review – Gaelic And Wellbeing* introduces 'Wellbeing' as a concept and policy focus, informed by a search of the national and international literature, academic and other. Wellbeing is embedded into Scottish strategies, policymaking, delivery and into practices at all levels: community, local, sectoral and national<sup>4</sup>. Scotland is a pioneer in also adopting 'wellbeing' as an objective, a framing tool and priority across portfolios and departments, and in the Scottish Government's 10-year National Strategy for Economic Transformation [NSET] an overriding vision is set out to deliver a wellbeing economy for Scotland<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.5 Scotland is a founding member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) group, and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework is addressed through pursuing 'Scotland's Wellbeing' in terms of 'Delivering the National Outcomes', and progress in meeting these eleven outcomes is measured through a number of indicators. The National Outcomes, and so indicators, are explicitly related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), again confirming a structured and transparent approach to policy formation, delivery and progress. This structured approach therefore follows best practice guidelines from the UN and OECD<sup>6</sup>, and so offers an appropriate and internationally approved basis for this study.
- 2.6 The Scottish Government approach to wellbeing should help with the aims of this research 'to identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing', and 'to identify its place in assessing changes in wellbeing'. Critically, it emphasises environmental sustainability and resilience, which have each featured in recent programmes and activities of Bòrd na Gàidhlig in partnership with other bodies such as Community Land Scotland, with the collective wellbeing of people at the centre. Similarly, statements by Neil Gray MSP as Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy reflect the agenda on community empowerment, the circular economy, Fair Work and community wealth building across the NSET<sup>7</sup>.

### Operationalising wellbeing concepts in language and cultural contexts

- 2.7 Applying the theory to practice, some members of WEGo have embraced the philosophy of wellbeing by delegating the process of determining the appropriate themes, outcomes, and indicators to constituent first nations, communities and cultural groups<sup>8</sup>.
- 2.8 Considering wellbeing themes around language and culture specifically, there is a growing literature complementing and reinforcing the work of the OECD (2022) cited above and discussed in Annex 2 in greater detail. This literature confirms the emerging consensus on how to apply the concept and dimensions of wellbeing to specific contexts. As argued in a recent study by McCartney et al.<sup>9</sup>: "*advocates for a Wellbeing Economy, and similar economic models... should prioritise and embed support for cultural development as a ... social asset if we are to adequately respond to current*

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/20230209-Wellbeing-Economy-Scotland-Event-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-strategy-economic-transformation/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/wise/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/wellbeing-economy-monitor/>; <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-debate-managing-scotlands-finances-working-business-drive-wellbeing-economy-ministerial-statement/>

<sup>8</sup> As discussed at length in the section 'Wellbeing in the context of language and culture' In Annex 2.

<sup>9</sup> McCartney, G., O'Connor, J., Olma, S. *et al.* (2023) 'Culture as an objective for and a means of achieving a Wellbeing Economy', *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* **10**, 718. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02240-6>



*crises and navigate to a flourishing and habitable future for ourselves and our descendants"* (p1). Gaelic, as a vibrant part of Scotland's culture, allows such an exercise to be undertaken.

- 2.9 With particular regard to research on wellbeing amongst comparable populations of minority languages and cultures, there have been studies in the Oceania context, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, and in the Faroe Islands and Nordic Europe (full details in Annex 2). These have been involved variously in examining and analysing aspects of happiness, mental and physical health and wellbeing of communities where marginality and minority status characterise the lives of a group based on their language and culture being within dominant mainstreams. A number have pursued the positive benefits of bi- and multi-lingualism and education, of having the capacity to live in different spaces within a place, and of having greater capabilities and assets than the majority.
- 2.10 Annex 2 explores the evolution and the principles and philosophies underpinning the concepts of 'wellbeing' and 'wellbeing economics', and then the development of dedicated themes, indicators and outcomes as some peoples have been assuming greater ownership of the concept and application of wellbeing to their environment and lives. This movement to capture and apply wellbeing on their own terms has been especially pronounced in New Zealand (see in depth case study of *He Ara Waiora* in this report), with further examples developed across Oceania: in Yawuru Country, in indigenous communities during Covid, and in the Mayi Kuwayu Study created by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- 2.11 The importance of self-determination in improving and maintaining wellbeing at individual and community level is recognised in the development and application of these dedicated frameworks and toolkits, and in turn these generate and are based on emerging understandings of their specific economic, social, cultural and environmental milieux. In the case of First Nations in Canada<sup>10</sup>, for example, the benefits of a positive cultural identity and continuity amongst minorities contrasts with cultural annihilation – of aboriginal lands, peoples and families – creating trauma which impacts adversely on wellbeing. In an age of rising populism, generated by a lack of *ontological security*<sup>11</sup>, wellbeing constructs and indicators can be applied to expose the benefits of identity and belonging.

### **Applying wellbeing concepts in Scotland**

- 2.12 Within Scotland, wellbeing toolkits and frameworks have been developed and applied at local authority level<sup>12</sup> based on a pilot in Clackmannanshire for those involved in developing economic strategy and place-based economic development policy. Diagrammatically (see Figure 2.1 overleaf), the relationship between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (outer ring), through the NPF National Outcomes (middle ring) to the key wellbeing outcomes identified for a local area is used to guide and illustrate how the wellbeing economy vision, represented in the NPF by the Economy national outcome, is located at the centre of the wheel:

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<sup>10</sup> Chandler, M. and Lalonde, C. (1998) 'Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations', *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 35, 2, 191-219. doi:10.1177/136346159803500202.

<sup>11</sup> Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: CUP.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/wellbeing-economy-toolkit-supporting-place-based-economic-strategy-policy-development/>

**Figure 2.1: Example of key wellbeing outcomes identified in Clackmannanshire and their contribution to National Outcomes and UN Sustainable Development Goals**



**Source:** Figure 4 from Annex B - Illustrative example of local wellbeing outcomes' contribution to National Outcomes from 'Wellbeing economy toolkit: supporting place-based economic strategy and policy development'.

- 2.13 An equivalent exercise has been undertaken recently to reveal the links between these different layers of the wellbeing economy for the Gaelic in Glasgow research study<sup>13</sup>, confirming the appropriateness of this approach to situating the language and culture in national and global contexts. Further, that report and underlying methodology highlighted the ways in which Gaelic in Glasgow contributes to all the outcomes of the NPF, and so demonstrating how to identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing and the place of Gaelic in assessing changes in wellbeing locally and nationally.
- 2.14 Summarising the potential in generating wellbeing frameworks, themes, domains and indicators, it is fruitful to consider the findings of a meta-analysis of 278 full-text

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/29502>

articles by Butler et al.<sup>14</sup> which aimed to explore the generic issues facing people of minority language and cultures. That research team identified nine broad interconnected dimensions pertinent to the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians: **autonomy, empowerment and recognition; family and community; culture, spirituality and identity; country; basic needs; work, roles and responsibilities; education; physical health; and mental health.** They concluded that these domains and influences may not be reflected in the mainstream, core Quality of Life and wellbeing instruments, and that such findings may be shared with Indigenous populations globally. Butler et al. therefore identified the need for 'a tailored wellbeing instrument' that includes factors relevant to minority indigenous cultures and that "*developing such an instrument will ensure meaningful, culturally-relevant measurement of [the wellbeing of] such communities*".

- 2.15 It follows that the rationale for constructing a set of indicators of wellbeing that are customised to the Gaelic communities of Scotland means extending the literature review to include non-academic community level literature and recordings about Gaelic.

### Community Level Literature and Examples about Gaelic and Wellbeing

- 2.16 Wellbeing has already entered the lexicon of Gaels when speaking about the language and culture. Shona MacLennan, Ceannard, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, at the start of the **Royal National Mòd** in Perth in 2022 said: "*The Mòd is always a huge celebration of Gaelic language and culture, providing opportunities to use the language in a wide range of events. It also contributes to a sense of wellbeing, particularly through bringing old and new friends together after some very challenging years*"<sup>15</sup>. At the conclusion, Allan Campbell, president of An Comunn Gaidhealach, confirmed that the Mòd had indeed been a "*success for many reasons; particularly in terms of helping attendees feel better*" and that it would have had "*a hugely significant wellbeing benefit as well as a cultural one*"<sup>16</sup>. Noting how this appreciation has continued to grow, The Herald wrote on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 that Gaelic "*already enriches the daily lives of the people of Scotland and beyond. It creates benefits, both social and economic, and increases wellbeing for Gaelic users, learners and supporters, across Scotland and internationally*".
- 2.17 Although recognising that economic and social wellbeing are being compromised by the interconnected problems in housing, jobs and incomes, land ownership, ferry and connectivity barriers, and other characteristics of life in the Gàidhealtachd, many in Gaelic arts, culture and communities stress the benefits of speaking and using the language.
- 2.18 For instance, the essays "Speaking our Language: Past, Present and Future" (Cass Ezeji), "On 'Cultural Darning and Mending': Creative Responses to Ceist an Fhearainn/The Land Question in the Gàidhealtachd" (Mairi McFadyen and Raghnaid Sandilands) and "Connected Histories: ethical storytelling in the global archipelago" (James Oliver (Seumas Chatriona Dhomhnuill Aonghais Bhig) and Shiraz Bayjoo)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Butler et al., (2019) 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's domains of wellbeing: A comprehensive literature review', *Social Science & Medicine*, 233, 138-157;

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ancomunn.co.uk/nationalmod/moddetail/www.moddhunomhain.com>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/highlands-islands/4947496/perth-mod-helps-gaels-to-feel-better-despite-a-decline-in-entrants/>

<sup>17</sup> "Speaking our Language: Past, Present and Future" (Cass Ezeji), "On 'Cultural Darning and Mending': Creative Responses to Ceist an Fhearainn/The Land Question in the Gàidhealtachd" (Mairi McFadyen and Raghnaid

demonstrate more **optimism around the contribution of the language and culture to wellbeing** in the Gaelic heartlands.

- 2.19 In the report to Glasgow City Council specifically on **economic and wellbeing impacts of Gaelic** on the city<sup>18</sup>, surveys revealed very strong aspects of wellbeing - where Gaelic has a pronounced positive impact - were around **national and local pride, sense of identity, pride in local community, individual mental health and wellbeing**, and **happiness**; more than three-quarters of survey respondents reported moderate or major impacts of Gaelic on each of these aspects of wellbeing. Conversely, the aspects of wellbeing with the lowest proportion reporting a moderate or major impact of Gaelic were around job opportunities, increased income and increased physical activity. Although there were some variations by age and gender, the summary was that *"for the majority of respondents, it is clear that there is a strong impact from Gaelic across a wide range of aspects of wellbeing"*.
- 2.20 The **Gaelic Community Fund** which was created, with support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, to encourage geographically-based, asset-locked community organisations to find and test effective and innovative ways to boost the use of Gaelic in their area, delivered a series of wellbeing outcomes<sup>19</sup>. Analyses and recommendations by the **Short Life Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic**<sup>20</sup> echoed these sentiments and findings, and more evidence is offered in Annex 2 from across the Gàidhealtachd and the nation as a whole.

### Summary

- 2.21 Informed by the academic and community literature, from Scotland and internationally, adapting wellbeing as a *"new approach to measuring prosperity in Scotland...moving beyond economic growth and increased consumption and looking instead at a broader range of factors that matter to people and communities"*<sup>21</sup> is both possible and appropriate to exploring the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing and vice versa. This is consistent with approaches in Wales where language use is incorporated into the 'Wellbeing of Wales: National Indicators'<sup>22</sup> and, in particular, the National Wellbeing Indicators around Goal 6: 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'. By showing how Cymraeg is incorporated into the overall assessment of wellbeing in a similar context to what could be done for Gaelic and Wellbeing in Scotland it offers further justification for this study.

### Summary of Findings from the 'Conversations'

- 2.22 Annex 3 presents the key themes on the links between Gaelic and wellbeing that emerged from the Conversations stage of the research, highlighting the key issues and opportunities around Gaelic and wellbeing from the perspective of both those involved

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Sandilands) and "Connected Histories: ethical storytelling in the global archipelago" (James Oliver (Seumas Chatriona Dhomhnuill Aonghais Bhig) and Shiraz Bayjoo) are all in *Gàidhealtachd Futures*, issue #1, Making Publics Press, Isle of Skye, [https://beta.atlasarts.org.uk/assets/images/GF\\_08\\_doublepage\\_final.pdf](https://beta.atlasarts.org.uk/assets/images/GF_08_doublepage_final.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Chalmers, D., Connolly, S., Danson, E. and Danson, M. (2022) *Gaelic Economy in Glasgow. Final Report*, Glasgow City Council: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/29502>

<sup>19</sup> DC Research (2023) 'Review of Gaelic Development Officer Network pilot and Community Land Scotland pilot for Bòrd na Gàidhlig'.

<sup>20</sup> Report to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, (2023) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/short-life-working-group-economic-social-opportunities-gaelic-report-cabinet-secretary-finance-economy/documents/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/293743/rr-humankind-index-second-results-100613-en.pdf;jsessionid=8FA9079998DE41F2A9914A82479BD06C?sequence=1>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/wellbeing-wales-national-indicators>

in the wellbeing policy landscape as well as those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world. It also reflects on the key areas where consultees feel that Gaelic links to, and contributes towards, wellbeing – something that is explored in more detail in other sections and annexes of this report.

- 2.23 The key themes that emerged from these discussions are summarised below, with more detail provided in the Annex.

### **Issues and Opportunities around Gaelic's Links to Wellbeing**

- 2.24 Appreciating the context for the study, consultees – especially those working in Gaelic roles – clearly recognised the importance of showing the relevance of Gaelic to wellbeing to evidence the contribution of Gaelic to the Scottish Government's current focus on wellbeing.
- 2.25 It is clear to many of those consulted who are directly involved in Gaelic that Gaelic plays a role in supporting and contributing to wellbeing – and various examples were offered highlighting the contribution. However, some of those working in Gaelic roles do concede to not having given too much consideration to the wellbeing aspects of Gaelic.
- 2.26 Some of those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world feel that there is a misunderstanding and lack of recognition about Gaelic and wellbeing – not helped by a lack of clarity around the concept of wellbeing.
- 2.27 There is notable concern from some consultees about the wider impacts on wellbeing due to the challenges facing the traditional Gaelic communities. A key concern is that if the traditional Gaelic communities are facing economic and social challenges, the wellbeing of those in these areas and communities will be negatively affected by this. As such, the impact of the wider economic and social context on the wellbeing of individuals in these areas is a key issue in relation to the links between Gaelic and wellbeing.
- 2.28 There was very little, or no, awareness of examples of the use of wellbeing and Gaelic together for many of the consultees involved in the current and developing wellbeing policy landscape. As such, there is clearly work to do here to address this lack of awareness and appreciation.
- 2.29 For those involved in wellbeing policy, there is recognition that there are a wide range of policies and activities that contribute to wellbeing (including Gaelic), but the focus of wellbeing policy is primarily through the lens of the economy and how the economy and economic activity contributes to wellbeing. As such, some see the impact of improving wellbeing – especially for rural/remote areas – as a way of the wellbeing economy helping to support more resilient communities, and resultantly helping to sustain the population in these areas, and therefore support Gaelic communities in this way. It is seen to be more about the contribution of developing a wellbeing economy to support Gaelic as much as/more than Gaelic's contribution to wellbeing.
- 2.30 Some of those involved in the wellbeing policy landscape do reflect on some of the areas where Gaelic contributes to, or has links with, wellbeing. One common area is around the 'cultural capital' aspects of Gaelic – e.g., via tourism, festivals, arts, etc. – as well as around Gaelic Medium Education (GME). This is typically where Gaelic's role is considered for those outside of the Gaelic world rather than in other areas of the wellbeing economy. This position is confirmed in recent correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy in relation to this



research (see Annex 3 for a copy of a letter received in February 2024) which stated that: *"Languages, including Gaelic, are fundamental to Scotland's identity, heritage and culture – and thus our collective wellbeing"* and also that: *"The daily use of Gaelic and Scots remains important to many of our communities and education is key to their continued success"*.

- 2.31 In addition, some of the consultees not involved in Gaelic, do reflect on the broader role of language generally (rather than Gaelic specifically) around wellbeing – and the links that language development can provide in terms of self-determination, helping with a sense of connectedness, and relationship control.
- 2.32 However, in general, whilst there is an acceptance that there is a link between Gaelic and wellbeing, there is typically little done about it, or very much consideration given to it, by those working in wellbeing policy.
- 2.33 There are also issues around wellbeing in relation to the lack of a commonly accepted definition of wellbeing, and the different conceptions of wellbeing that there are for individuals and for communities.
- 2.34 As such, there is recognition from those working in wellbeing that wellbeing economics and wellbeing lacks clear definition, or suffers from a multiplicity of definitions, which can be problematic. Therefore, some of these wider issues around wellbeing policy are important aspects to consider in exploring and identifying Gaelic's role and links to wellbeing.
- 2.35 As noted above, the appreciation of Gaelic's role and contribution to wellbeing is not strongly evident from consultees working in the wellbeing policy landscape. However, the consultations highlight that this is not a Gaelic-specific issue, but more of a broader issue around culture more generally and the appreciation of its role around wellbeing.
- 2.36 For some, Gaelic's role in wellbeing is as a contributor, i.e. Gaelic can contribute to wellbeing in various ways. For others, Gaelic can benefit from a wellbeing economy – in that if society, culture and the wellbeing economy are flourishing, then people will be more active in heritage and culture, and also socially and in a community role – spending more time with family and friends, neighbours, in greater social interactions – all of which is very good for mental health and wellbeing.
- 2.37 A very strong theme that emerged from the consultations for those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world at the current time, is about the negative wellbeing aspects surrounding the criticism and treatment of Gaelic.
- 2.38 This can manifest itself in various ways, and consultees highlighted a number of examples where negativity, criticism and a lack of support surrounding Gaelic can have an impact on people in Gaelic communities and those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world – negatively affecting their (mental) wellbeing if Gaelic is being opposed and attacked.
- 2.39 These negative wellbeing issues for Gaelic can include:
  - The impact of general criticism and negativity surrounding Gaelic through societal attitudes, and the way in which Gaelic can be used as a "political football".
  - The negative wellbeing impacts that result from the decline in the language and in the traditional Gaelic communities.

- The negative impact of a “hostile public policy environment” for Gaelic. Some say this has improved in recent times compared to previously, but others remain concerned, and describe an “institutional disregard” for Gaelic.
  - The “tokenistic approach” that can be taken to Gaelic – in terms of support for it within public policy and the scale and level of funding provided to support Gaelic as well as the challenges that Gaelic faces when it is affected by a “silo approach” or “silo mentality” within public policy.
- 2.40 Reflecting on these key challenges, it is important to recognise that despite these issues, all of those consulted who are involved within Gaelic roles do highlight many examples of achievements around the links between Gaelic and wellbeing.
- 2.41 On wellbeing measures for Gaelic, consultees recognised that developing approaches to measuring the connection between Gaelic and wellbeing would be very difficult. This is in part linked to the issues around wellbeing measurement itself. Others reflect that there are a broad set of indicators which could be measured and would indicate higher or improved wellbeing. There is an acceptance that it is achievable – developing a set of wellbeing measures to reflect and measure Gaelic’s links and contributions to wellbeing – but that this has not yet been done.
- 2.42 Finally, on other aspects of wellbeing, it is worth noting that some consultees reflected on issues around community wealth-building and how this is different in rural Scotland compared to urban Scotland, with a greater emphasis on culture, language, heritage and history. They feel this resonates for Gaelic, with there being a different contrast and different perspective on the role of Gaelic in rural areas compared to urban areas in terms of Gaelic’s links to, and contributions towards, wellbeing.

### **Contribution of Gaelic to Wellbeing – Key Themes**

- 2.43 This sub-section reflects on the key areas where consultees feel Gaelic does have links to, and contributes towards, wellbeing. This specifically reflects themes from the conversations, and is complementary to the wider contributions outlined in the rest of this report – i.e., in the rest of this section of the report and Section 3 as well as Annexes 1 and 3.
- 2.44 Whilst a list of separate aspects is set out below, it is important to recognise that many consultees who are sufficiently aware of Gaelic’s contribution to wellbeing to have offered the examples emphasised the multifaceted nature of the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing, highlighting the wide range of links and the array of inter-relationships between Gaelic and wellbeing. As such, many of the aspects below inter-relate to each other in terms of the role of Gaelic on various wellbeing benefits and impacts.
- 2.45 The key areas where consultees highlighted links between Gaelic and wellbeing and where Gaelic contributes to wellbeing were:
- **General wellbeing** - generally Gaelic is well recognised as contributing to general wellbeing, as one consultee highlighted: *“But to me, if there wasn’t that Gaelic dimension to life here, it would be the poorer for it.”*
  - **Individual wellbeing**, with consultees suggesting that for native speakers Gaelic is *“core to who you are – how you think, how you imagine life”*.
  - The **sense of belonging, sense of connection and feeling part of the community** was a key aspect around Gaelic’s links to wellbeing. *“It makes me*

*feel that I belong more to my community” and that “I feel a connection to where I come from” due to Gaelic.*

- Gaelic has a relationship to a **sense of identity**, and this has an important positive relationship to wellbeing. *“If you have a genuine sense of identity and realise it is somewhat special, different then this can affect their behaviour and interactions positively.”*
- The contribution of Gaelic to **mental health and wellbeing** is a commonly identified aspect, including the role of Gaelic in helping to support and improve the mental wellbeing of **young people** through increased pride, confidence, etc. Gaelic’s role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of **older people** is also recognised – helping to address and overcome loneliness.
- The **wellbeing links through Gaelic Medium Education** (GME) were clearly identified by consultees, with the increased interest from parents in sending children to GME in both the traditional Gaelic communities as well as other/newer communities being recognised.
- Beyond formal education, the **wellbeing benefits of learning Gaelic** as an adult were also noted – consultees recognising that the process of being involved in learning (i.e., the learning itself) can impact positively on wellbeing.
- Consultees pointed towards the link between how people feel about their heritage, culture and community, and their **confidence** or *misneachd*<sup>23</sup> in their community and the way in which this adds to strengthening the economy as well as individual and collective wellbeing. In addition, investment in local communities has increased the *misneachd* within the community. The examples of community buy-out and the positive economic benefits these can bring were highlighted as contributing to wellbeing, and part of this is about such activity helping to develop confidence and allowing the community to feel that they are *“no longer being supplicants”*.
- Another strand of Gaelic’s links and contribution to wellbeing relates to the **connections to nature, connections to the past, and better understanding of history** that Gaelic helps support and the increased wellbeing that this engenders.
- The **openness and inclusivity of the Gaelic community** is noted by consultees as a wellbeing benefit of Gaelic. Consultees reflect that the Gaelic community is more open, more inclusive, and more diverse.
- Another aspect where there are links between Gaelic and wellbeing is about the **profile of Gaelic** – in the media but more generally in society. This increased profile and recognition help to underpin the aspects around confidence and sense of identity. The increased profile of Gaelic is also supported through the increased numbers of those learning Gaelic alongside the profile of Gaelic bands and musicians, and wider arts and culture in Gaelic, which helps encourage younger people to see the increased/improved profile of Gaelic.

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<sup>23</sup> *misneachd* means ‘confidence’ but also has meanings beyond that with no direct comparison in English, including ‘encouragement’ and ‘fortitude’ both of which, of course, are positively related to wellbeing.



- For some there are **direct economic wellbeing benefits of Gaelic** if they are employed in Gaelic jobs/careers.
- The links of Gaelic to **intergenerational wellbeing** are recognised by some consultees. Whilst for some it can be a complicated issue (due, in part, to a lack of self-confidence in the Gaelic abilities of different generations), others clearly identify the intergenerational benefits of Gaelic activities and see "*huge community (and individual) wellbeing benefits of this*".
- On **national wellbeing** and Gaelic's role and contribution, whilst there is recognition of the link, some consultees feel that the 'Scotland versus local' situation is complicated. There are some concerns about Gaelic's role in national wellbeing due to the polarisation of views on Gaelic, as a result of which Gaelic's links to national wellbeing can be both positive and negative.
- The role of Gaelic around **cultural wellbeing** was well recognised. There is clear recognition that access to the arts and culture is important to wellbeing, and Gaelic plays a role in this through the provision of Gaelic arts and culture – through activities at the local, national and international level – with key highlighted examples including the fèisean and Celtic Connections.

### 3. CASE STUDY EXAMPLES – GAELIC’S LINKS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO WELLBEING

#### Introduction to Section 3

- 3.1 This section of the report presents a high-level summary of the findings from the 15 case studies, focusing on the ways in which the case studies provide examples of the ways in which Gaelic links to, and contributes towards, wellbeing – and reflecting this through the outcomes from the Scottish Government’s current National Performance Framework<sup>24</sup> (NPF) as well as the four pillars of capital<sup>25</sup>.
- 3.2 For the 12 Gaelic case studies, which are included in full in Annex 4 to this report, the links between Gaelic and wellbeing and the contribution of Gaelic to various aspects of wellbeing are considered via the Scottish Government’s current National Performance Framework as well as the four pillars of capital approach that was used in the ‘Towards a Robust, Resilient Wellbeing Economy for Scotland: Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery’.
- 3.3 Summaries of the non-Gaelic case studies are also included in this section – although the links to the NPF are omitted as they are not directly relevant. Once again, these cases are included in full in Annex 4 to the report.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/towards-robust-resilient-wellbeing-economy-scotland-report-advisory-group-economic-recovery/pages/4/>

### Links Between Gaelic and Wellbeing – Case Study Examples

#### Case Study 1: BBC ALBA

Alba (the Gaelic for Scotland) was specifically selected for the name to reference not only Gaelic but also the inclusive concept of the whole of Scotland, significant in terms of wellbeing impact outwith the Gàidhealtachd. To that end, all BBC ALBA adult programmes have English language subtitles, enabling access for the majority of deaf viewers as well as for those who do not speak or understand Gaelic.

Consciously, broadcasts are cross-media through BBC ALBA, Radio nan Gàidheal and online, with complementary content and resources on TV, radio, online and on social media, all contributing to social capital and wellbeing. A critical mass of Gaelic broadcasting resources has encouraged the development of businesses, artists and ancillary services in the language with *economic capital* benefits and advantages to the Gaelic community.

*Speak Gaelic* is a new 'digital first', multiplatform brand planned to 'create, deliver and streamline resources to attract and inspire people to Speak Gaelic', and aims to be accessible to Gaelic learners of varying abilities, so raising *human and social capital*.

Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, but more generally, BBC ALBA has contributed to individual and community wellbeing for all ages, building solidarity and awareness, particularly through sport and other accessible programmes.

Contributions to National Performance Framework: **BBC ALBA** contributes to *Children and Young People* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Productivity, International exporting, Economic growth, Carbon footprint, Natural Capital, Income inequalities, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation, Skill profile of the population, Skill shortage vacancies, Skills under-utilisation), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors, State of historic sites, Condition of protected nature sites), *Fair Work and Business* (Number of businesses, High growth businesses, Innovative businesses, Economic participation, Employees on the living wage, Pay gap, Contractually secure work, Employee voice, Gender balance in organisations), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity, Journeys by active travel, Premature mortality), *Human Rights* (Public services treat people with dignity and respect, Quality of public services, Influence over local decisions), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland's reputation, Scotland's population, International networks).

### Case Study 2: City of Glasgow Wellbeing

A recent study of the Gaelic economy in Glasgow revealed the range of ways in which Gaelic contributes to economic and social wellbeing. On *human capital*, Glasgow has been a pioneer in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and the city offers more GME provision and across more subjects than anywhere else in the world, confirming the significance of the city's Gaelic education provision for the nation and the language.

On *economic capital*, the study identified a wide range of jobs in the city reliant on Gaelic with the importance of the Creative Industries – most notably the media – highlighted alongside education.

On *social capital*, the importance of Gaelic for many of those in employment or volunteer roles was clear. For more than three-quarters of survey respondents Gaelic was shown to have very strong positive impacts around national and local pride, sense of identity, pride in local community, individual mental health and wellbeing, and happiness – showing the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing.

On *natural capital*, active citizens' interests and enjoyment of the natural environment were enhanced through learning Gaelic placenames, and related to this there was a greater connection and inclusivity felt with parts of Scotland's identity and with its history. For more than half of those surveyed, greater understanding of, and engagement with, nature and the outdoors enhanced their wellbeing through Gaelic.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework: City of Glasgow Wellbeing** contributes to *Children* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships, Healthy start), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Economic Growth, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Educational attainment, Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors), *Fair Work and Business* (Number of businesses, Innovative businesses, Economic participation, Employees on the living wage, Pay gap, Contractually secure work), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity, Journeys by active travel), *Human Rights* (Quality of public services, Influence over local decisions), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland's reputation, Scotland's population).

### Case Study 3: Comunn Eachdraidh Nis

Comunn Eachdraidh Nis (CEN: Ness Historical Society) is one of 20 Historical Societies in the Western Isles and aims to promote social health and wellbeing through a range of activities for all ages, with Gaelic at the heart of their activities.

It contributes to *social and human capital* through its museum, café and community activities, providing services that have the wellbeing of the community at the centre of everyday practice. These facilities host a multiplicity of functions for the community, and include many with a wellbeing focus.

Mobility, loneliness and social isolation are being addressed through the society's accessible transport initiative which is impacting significantly on individuals' physical and mental health, as well as their overall quality of life and longevity.

CEN also delivers a lunch service, with Gaelic/English quiz sheets from the archives to the over-60s population in the area and provides a Day Club every Thursday.

*Economic capital* is being enhanced locally through local supply chains in food production, arts and crafts, etc being supported through CEN activities and all staff, including the sustainability development officer (focused on *natural capital*), are employed under the Scottish Government's Fair Work First policy guidelines.

Contributions to National Performance Framework: **Comunn Eachdraidh Nis** contributes to *Children and Young People* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Carbon footprint, Natural Capital, Income inequalities, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation, Skill profile of the population), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors, State of historic sites, Condition of protected nature sites), *Fair Work and Business* (Number of businesses, Employees on the living wage, Pay gap, Contractually secure work, Employee voice, Gender balance in organisations), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity, Journeys by active travel, Premature mortality), *Human Rights* (Influence over local decisions).

### **Case Study 4: Cultúrlann, Northern Ireland**

The Cultúrlann initiative consists of a number of cultural centres being developed within Northern Ireland, based on the approach found to be successful within Ireland as a whole, of creating Irish language 'hubs' where Irish organisations can work together as social and cultural centres with learning spaces and cafés. The Cultúrlanna aim to help bridge divides of race, class and religion which are found in the different communities in the North.

It contributes to *Social Capital* by helping bond groups in different cultural communities on the basis that the Irish language belongs to everyone and can potentially be a mechanism of reconciliation. There is an emphasis within the Cultúrlanna on networking and lifelong learning, allowing the building of commonalities within identity – which has historically been complicated in Northern Ireland. Some of the inspiration for the Cultúrlann's work is based on the Scottish Government's description of wellbeing in terms of eight indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI). This has been referenced as being of relevance to local circumstances in several ways.

*Economic Capital* is being promoted through the creative environment fostered in the work of the Cultúrlanna which supports new enterprises and aids community development. This is also allowing Irish to be used and identified with the facilitation of entrepreneurship and learning, all of which contribute to wellbeing and wellbeing economics.

### **Case Study 5: Menter Y Felin Uchaf - Welsh Cultural Centre**

A Welsh language and cultural centre established in Rhoshirwaun, Pwllheli, North West Wales, this is a community skills hub and cultural centre, operating as a social enterprise and as a not-for-profit charity.

Within the vision of the trustees has been the aim to operate in a manner that will positively impact on *natural, social, economic* and *human capital* locally.

In terms of *economic capital*, they have established facilities to deliver apprenticeships and significant volunteering opportunities together with a community garden café, farm shop, workplace hub, and also accommodation provision in roundhouses, bunkhouse, cabin and camping.

Skills gained through apprenticeships and involvement in the accredited courses provided by the centre also markedly contribute to the human capital within the community.

*Social capital* is also seen in their contribution to the community and national wellbeing objectives of creating spaces that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe, and where events are hosted that contribute to creating vibrant and diverse cultures, especially in and through the medium of Welsh.

### Case Study 6: FilmG

Since its launch by MG ALBA in 2008, FilmG – the Gaelic short film competition – has established a distinctive role of finding, nurturing and developing new talent for Gaelic media, serving as a springboard for many successful media careers within BBC ALBA and beyond.

In terms of supporting *human capital*, the FilmG team offers workshops, training and guidance to support schools, school leavers and graduates from schools. Skills are delivered as part of the curriculum, confirming the prestige and value appreciated in these opportunities to acquire human capital, as skills, experience and knowledge.

On *economic capital*, as the awards event is broadcast live and available on catch-up, there are economic impacts for Glasgow and the nation's hospitality and accommodation sectors, suggesting FilmG contributes an annual direct and indirect spend of over £600,000.

On *social capital*, the event undoubtedly continues to improve attitudes to Gaelic: it gives opportunities for young people, parents and teachers to experience a glamorous occasion with celebrities, Scots language and Gaelic, who are there to recognise and appreciate their efforts and talents. FilmG has helped demonstrate to young people very positive images of Gaelic.

With many entrants living in rural Scotland within traditional crofting and land-based economies and concerns over biodiversity, climate change and conflict to their fore, *natural capital* features in many productions. These films, scripts and visuals complement the landscapes and environments of the participants' homes, encouraging viewers to recognise and appreciate the reality of living and recording Scotland through a Gaelic lens.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework: Film G** contributes to *Children* (Child social and physical development, Child wellbeing and happiness, Childrens' voices, Children have positive relationships), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation, Skill profile of the population), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors), *Fair Work and Business* (Innovative businesses, Economic participation), *Health* (Mental wellbeing, Physical activity), *Human Rights* (Influence over local decisions), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland's reputation, Scotland's population).



### Case Study 7: The Galson Estate

Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Galson Estate Trust), which runs the estate, considers Gaelic as a key component of ensuring sustainable development of the area, and its aims, objectives and activities are designed to contribute to each of *natural, human, social* and *economic capitals*. Consistent with these principles, the estate trust seeks to sustain a unique and cohesive community, remaining a Gaelic stronghold, with bilingual businesses and organisations, and a strong crofting base and a sustainable community sector.

The Community Renewable Energy Project coupled with income from commercial developments has provided the Urras with an income stream which is promoting a sustainable and resilient community.

New supply chains have been encouraged with businesses working together in crafts, heritage and retail outlets in shops and the museum. Similarly embryonic partnerships are facilitated to position both crofting and Gaelic in the provision of goods and services. These are beginning to flourish and include “sustainable” cultural place linkages between crofters, farmers and hospitality providers.

Gaelic is key in the local Sunnd Health and Wellbeing programme (including Cùirtean Slàinte – Health Walks), in improving wellbeing of the over 60s in particular in the community.

Contributions to National Performance Framework: **Galson Estate** contributes to *Children and Young People* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships), *Communities* (Community land ownership, Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Productivity, International exporting, Carbon footprint, Natural Capital, Greenhouse gas emissions, Access to superfast broadband, Spend on research, and development, Income inequalities, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people’s participation, Skill profile of the population, Skill shortage vacancies, Skills under-utilisation), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors, State of historic sites, Condition of protected nature sites, Energy from, renewable sources, Waste generated, Sustainability of fish stocks, Biodiversity, Marine environment), *Fair Work and Business* (Number of businesses, High growth businesses, Innovative businesses, Economic participation, Employees on the living wage, Pay gap, Contractually secure work, Employee voice, Gender balance in organisations), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity, Journeys by active travel, Premature mortality), *Human Rights* (Public services treat people with dignity and respect, Quality of public services Influence over local decisions), *Poverty* (Relative poverty after housing costs, Wealth inequalities, Cost of living, Persistent poverty, Satisfaction with housing, Food insecurity), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland’s reputation, Scotland’s population, International networks).



### Case Study 8: Guthan nan Eilean / Island Voices

This technology-based initiative privileges the use of Gaelic within the vernacular community and believes this may well pay dividends in raising language awareness and in building individual and community confidence.

Coverage of *social* and *economic capitals* and activities in both English and Gaelic deal with the everyday activities of, for example, a day care centre, Hebridean Cookery, a Music Festival (Ceòlas), different generations growing up in Gaelic communities. Occupations described range across both traditional and modern, including aspects of indoor and outdoor life, confirming that boatbuilders, crofters, peatcutters, razorfish catchers and cooks, for example, are Gaelic jobs.

Crofting and harvesting are explored through both historical and modern lenses, with their place in renewing *natural capital* described by a council biodiversity officer explaining the relationships between traditional crofting and conservation practices.

Sports such as surfing and windsurfing (both popular sports in the Uists) are also discussed in Gaelic and, along with the enterprising work of Tobar an Dualchais (the Well of Heritage) project in Lochboisdale, demonstrate that Gaelic is a living language. Appreciation and awareness of these outputs is raising wellbeing across the Hebrides.

Contributions to National Performance Framework: **Guthan nan Eilean** contributes to *Children and Young People* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Participation in a cultural activity, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Carbon footprint, Natural Capital, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation, Skill profile of the population), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors), *Fair Work and Business* (Number of businesses, Innovative businesses, Employee voice), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity, Journeys by active travel), *Human Rights* (Influence over local decisions), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland's reputation).

### Case Study 9: He Ara Waiora

He Ara Waiora is a framework to understand 'waiora', a concept that relates to Māori perspectives on wellbeing and living standards. It has been applied by the New Zealand Treasury with the aim of drawing on the culture and understanding of the Māori people in order to help lift living standards for all New Zealanders. The approach adopted within waiora is one that is based on a broad conception of wellbeing, aiming to be holistic and intergenerational. Its approach encapsulates effects that can best be seen as developing *human, social and natural capital*.

Amongst the principles that encompass *human and social capital* include:

working in an aligned, coordinated way; ensuring decisions are made in accordance with the right values and processes; fostering strong relationship through shared experience that provide a sense of wellbeing; showing proper care and respect; ensure in the work that is undertaken, there is guardianship, and stewardship of the environment and of other systems and processes.

In terms of *economic capital* the New Zealand Treasury acknowledges that its work is at an early stage. However, it is working with Māori business and thought leaders in evaluating how together they may be able to construct a more future-focused tax system. In addition, they are piloting the application of He Ara Waiora in a range of policy issues in a manner that suggests the Scottish Government might also gain if it were to encompass some of the aspirations of the vernacular community in the Gàidhealtachd.

### Case Study 10: Aire air Sunnd (Attention to Cheerfulness/Wellbeing)

This project is exploring how local wellbeing is being improved through heritage and discovering how recent research into the community use of the Gaelic language can enrich Gaelic activities. By drawing on North Uist's Gaelic heritage in an inclusive way it aims to facilitate a better understanding of the pivotal place of local speakers in the wider Gaelic world while encouraging enrichment of the lives of learners and newcomers to the island.

Discussions based on Island Voices/Guthan nan Eilean and Tobar an Dualchais resources are being used to enable any and all interested community members to gain increased knowledge and understanding of local stories, customs, practices and issues without first requiring them to be voiced in English.

'Intergenerational' walks exploring Gaelic heritage between the chambered cairn of Barpa Langais and Poball Fhinn stone circle during the "Fèis Shamhraidh" (Summer Festival), a drop in café at the local Primary Sgoil Chàrinis allows people to stop by for a chat, or simply sample some of the many local Gaelic voices that have been recorded over the years are all examples of how Aire air Sunnd is contributing to personal wellbeing and social capital.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework:** **Aire air Sunnd** contributes to *Children and Young People* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in, arts and culture), *Economy* (Natural Capital), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation, Skill profile of the population), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors, State of historic sites, Condition of protected nature sites), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity, Journeys by active travel, Premature mortality), *Human Rights* (Influence over local decisions).

### Case Study 11: People of Glasgow

Modern Glasgow is a contemporary, multicultural city. Many of those in the Gaelic community are not connected via traditional routes such as the Church, Highland associations, or family. Although these still exist, those participating in Gaelic learning and other groups are from much more diverse backgrounds.

On *human* and *economic capital*, Gaelic speakers can utilize their skills to generate a source of income. Tutoring has supplemented a main income for some, allowing them to develop their skills and interest in the language while maintaining a full-time job, often in a non-Gaelic related field. Gaelic speakers have also benefited from new career opportunities due to their skills with some exploring a career change. Others found having Gaelic has enhanced their existing career.

In terms of *social capital*, the Gaelic community has proven to be a lifeline for many. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gaelic classes were among the first online sessions offered by Glasgow Life with learners joining from across Scotland, mainland Europe and North and South America. Many learners stated the sessions had a positive effect on their wellbeing through connecting with others, learning new skills and developing their interests in the language and culture.

Members of other minority communities such as the LGBTQ+ and BAME communities describe feeling more accepted in Gaelic environments and, for those who have moved to Scotland, being a part of the Gaelic community has given them an increased feeling of “Scottishness” and “belonging”.

Free public sessions such as Bookbug held within libraries have attracted families from diverse backgrounds with different levels of knowledge and interest in Gaelic. These public sessions, along with playgroups, fèisean and other groups and events provide an early opportunity for families looking to send their children to GME to join this city-wide community of interest. Participants have also spoken about the positive effect Gaelic family sessions had on their mental health, particularly post-partum. In many cases, activities are also promoting inclusion of intergenerational and cross-generational families.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework: People of Glasgow** contributes to *Children and Young People* (Child social and physical development, Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Economic growth, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Educational attainment, Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people’s participation, Skill profile of the population, Skill shortage vacancies), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors), *Fair Work and Business* (Number of businesses, Innovative businesses, Employees on the living wage, Contractually secure work), *Health* (Mental wellbeing, Physical activity), *Human Rights* (Quality of public services, Influence over local decisions), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland’s reputation, Scotland’s population, Trust in public organisations).

### Case Study 12: Portree & Braes Community Trust

A development trust, PBCT works to further community identified priorities through stimulating and coordinating the regeneration of Portree and Braes. One of the joint initiatives has been the 'Speak up for Gaelic' project run by the PBCT and the community council. Despite modest sums being invested (£10k) significant outcomes have been delivered with almost 600 people using Gaelic over the different events organised. These events were varied involving locals, tourists and learners, as well as speakers with more fluency. Key to their success was the informal approach adopted, which succeeded in drawing in more individuals and keeping them regularly involved.

In terms of *economic capital*, one outcome has been an increase in the use Gaelic by enterprises – witnessed by the growing public use and visibility of the #Cleachdi sticker by businesses<sup>26</sup>. There has also been an overall commercial recognition that there is a unique selling point in Gaelic and Gaelic culture although tightness in resources means that the potential in this area is currently under realised. There is a recognition that if a larger facility – such as a Cultúrlann – could be developed in a permanent building this would allow a substantial step forward in cultural and economic impact.

*Social capital* can be clearly seen in the increasing opportunities afforded for informal refamiliarization with the language for some who had lost it in previous years. Overcoming the social barriers to using Gaelic has also clearly improved self-reported wellbeing.

*Natural capital* can also be seen to have increased through the greater use of Gaelic to discuss and describe the natural world, birds and fish during boat trips around Portree bay.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework: Portree & Braes Community Trust** contributes to *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, People working in arts and culture), *Children* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Child social and physical development), *Health* (Mental wellbeing), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation).

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.gaidhlig.scot/en/the-cleachdi-initiative/>

### **Case Study 13: An Taigh Cèilidh - Àite Dualchais agus Cafaidh Coimhearsnachd (Gaelic Cultural Centre and Community Café)**

Based in Stornoway, the centre includes a coffee shop, bookshop, and cultural workshop (with daily events) and is planned as 'a window into a world where Gaelic is not a minority language'. It aims to be a living "museum" of intangible cultural heritage which promotes, documents, and invites users to participate in traditional Lewis culture and heritage - to empower Gaelic speakers of all levels and showcase the value of Gaelic to the community, culture, economy, and reputation of Scotland. *Social and economic capitals* are being enhanced through the activities of An Taigh Cèilidh.

*Human and social capitals* are delivered through Gaelic cultural events, with weekly Gaelic singalong sessions older people helping with wellbeing and dementia, and there are activities for the youngest age groups. Adult learners' workshops, talks on STEM subjects and careers, and intergenerational meet-ups using skills and expertise in Gaelic are encouraged.

A Cèilidh na Gnàth-thide' (Climate Cèilidh), working with Bragar and Arnol community trust to explore the links between Gaelic and living nature, and other activities have confirmed the everyday relevance of the language and culture to *natural capital* and to individual and community wellbeing.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework:** **An Taigh Cèilidh** contributes to *Children and Young People* (Child wellbeing and happiness, Children have positive relationships, Healthy start), *Communities* (Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Carbon footprint, Natural Capital, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation, Skill profile of the population, Skill shortage vacancies, Skills under-utilisation), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors, State of historic sites, Biodiversity), *Fair Work and Business* (Number of businesses, Innovative businesses, Employees on the living wage, Pay gap, Contractually secure work, Employee voice, Gender balance in organisations), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity, Journeys by active travel, Premature mortality), *Human Rights* (Influence over local decisions), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland's reputation, Scotland's population).

### Case Study 14: Urras Thiriodh - Tiree Community Development Trust

Established with its main aim to work towards long-term community development goals within the unique culture, environment and heritage of the island, the Trust acknowledges the key role of Gaelic as one of the pillars making the island unique.

Working within a strategy to increasingly 'normalise' Gaelic has brought about impacts in social, economic and natural capital within the community.

In terms of *social capital*, there have been increased efforts to normalise Gaelic through a *Cafaidh Gàidhlig*, work within local care for older people, and much enhanced use of Gaelic through social media, together with redeployment of Gaelic speaking staff to deliver more services through the medium of the language. This has led to more bonding and bridging activities within the local community given the increased focus on community engagement.

The use of Gaelic as part of the tourist offering on the island, has also demonstrated the *economic* and *natural capital* developed through using this 'normalising' approach towards the language. Gaelic is recognised as a strong tourist attraction within Tiree's natural and cultural environment, with a new shift towards Gaelic use also evident within *Discover Tiree* – the official destination management organisation for the island.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework: Urras Thiriodh – Tiree Community Development Trust** contributes to *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors, State of historic sites, Biodiversity), *Communities* (Community land ownership, Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Health* (Healthy life expectancy, Mental wellbeing, Physical activity), *Human Rights* (Influence over local decisions), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland's reputation).

### Case Study 15: Urras Ceann a Tuath na Hearadh – North Harris Trust

One of the crofting community buy-outs enabled under the Scottish government's Community Right to Buy legislation, North Harris Trust has used its ownership to tackle long term negative economic and social trends endemic within the pre buy-out situation.

Amongst provisions made by the trust has been the employment of a Gaelic-speaking ranger who works extensively with tourists, visiting groups, children from Gaelic Medium schools, and locals interested in land affairs and associated topics.

This activity has helped contribute to changing behaviours and attitudes towards using Gaelic, with some evidence of improving self-esteem and confidence amongst the population's Gaelic speakers.

*Social capital* has been positively impacted through increased use of Gaelic within the local workforce, and the greater interaction with the Trust through the medium of Gaelic by locals, now confident to use or return to the use of the language. There are also clear indications of higher Gaelic use by younger people outwith their formal school setting and in post-education and work contexts.

Local and national identity has also been strengthened through the use of Gaelic to help understand the local and national environment and the complexities of local sustainability.

**Contributions to National Performance Framework: Urras Ceann a Tuath na Hearadh – North Harris Trust** contributes to *Communities* (Community land ownership, Perceptions of local area, Loneliness, Access to green and blue space, Places to interact, Social capital), *Environment* (Visits to the outdoors, State of historic sites, Condition of protected nature sites, Biodiversity), *Human Rights* (Influence over local decisions), *Culture* (Attendance at cultural events or places of culture, Participation in a cultural activity, Growth in cultural economy, People working in arts and culture), *Economy* (Carbon footprint, Natural Capital, Entrepreneurial activity), *Education* (Confidence of children and young people, Resilience of children and young people, Work place learning, Engagement in extra-curricular activities, Young people's participation, Skill profile of the population, Skill shortage vacancies, Skills under-utilisation), *Health* (Mental wellbeing, Physical activity), *International* (A positive experience for people coming to Scotland, Scotland's reputation).



### 4. ISSUES TO CONSIDER AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction to Section 4

- 4.1 This section of the report reflects on the findings from the research and sets out a range of issues to consider, and recommendations around both how the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing, and of wellbeing to Gaelic, might be measured. It also considers how facets of wellbeing can be used to assist and encourage Gaelic users, as speakers and learners and as a language community.

#### Issues To Consider/Recommendations

- 4.2 It is clear from the evidence and research presented in this report that there are links between Gaelic and Wellbeing, and that Gaelic makes a wide range of contributions towards wellbeing across a range of areas – as exemplified by the contributions to the Scottish Government’s National Performance Framework as set out in Section 3 of this report.
- 4.3 In seeking to further develop the links between Gaelic and wellbeing there are a range of issues and potential recommendations for action that Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and other relevant partners, can consider.
- 4.4 First, and linking to the current (January 2024) Consultation on the proposed Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, having **clarity on the definition of wellbeing would be helpful in setting out the links between Gaelic and wellbeing**. As noted in Section 2 and Annex 3, there is a lack of clarity around the concept of wellbeing, and addressing this (including potentially through the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill by providing a statutory definition of wellbeing) would help to provide such clarity, enabling the links between Gaelic and wellbeing and contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing to be better and more clearly articulated.
- 4.5 Second, **the development of an indicator, or a small number of indicators, within the National Performance Framework or as National Outcomes for Gaelic** (as well as for Scots and other languages) should be considered. This follows the example of Wales where there is National Well-Being Indicator about the number of people that can speak Welsh, as well as a National Milestone related to this (“*4 million Welsh speakers by 2050*”). Embedding such a measure(s) in the NPF will help increase the profile of Gaelic within the NPF and within wider wellbeing and other policy circles, addressing some of the key challenges set out in Section 2 (and Annex 3).
- 4.6 It will be important that any explicit mention of Gaelic in the National Outcomes and revised NPF recognises the wider role of Gaelic, and goes beyond simply focusing on the higher profile aspects such as Gaelic Medium Education.
- 4.7 The embedding of Gaelic within the National Outcomes and NPF can be progressed through responses to the Consultation on the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, as well as the ongoing review of the NPF<sup>27</sup>, and Bòrd na Gàidhlig should make sure they are actively advocating for the inclusion of such outcomes/indicators at the current time.
- 4.8 Third, consideration should also be given to the **development of a wider suite of Gaelic and Wellbeing Indicators for use by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and those**

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<sup>27</sup> <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/national-outcomes-review>

**working in Gaelic** generally. As Section 3 has shown, Gaelic contributes to NPF Outcomes and Indicators in a wide variety of ways. The development of specific Gaelic and Wellbeing Indicators by Bòrd na Gàidhlig – and the embedding of these within Bòrd na Gàidhlig corporate plans, strategies, grant programme etc. – will help raise the profile of Gaelic and wellbeing within Gaelic policy as well as in wider wellbeing and other policy landscapes.

- 4.9 Taking such steps will help to mainstream wellbeing within key Gaelic policy and strategic documents, as well as making the expected contribution of Bòrd na Gàidhlig grantees to wellbeing priorities clearer and this will be beneficial in helping to embed wellbeing into the day-to-day activities of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and its delivery partners. In addition, this will help to raise the profile of Gaelic in the wellbeing policy environment.
- 4.10 Furthermore, such actions should help to address the issues around Gaelic being siloed – by supporting an increased development and awareness about the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing, ensuring it is better appreciated and recognised by both wellbeing and other non-Gaelic policy areas.
- 4.11 Both the development and the use of these Gaelic and Wellbeing Indicators will help raise the profile and develop a clearer evidence base about Gaelic and wellbeing importantly showing the breadth of Gaelic’s contribution across a wide range of national outcomes (as shown in Section 3 of this report) – helping to move the conversation beyond just core areas (e.g., GME) and increase the recognition of the wider contributions of Gaelic to various aspects of wellbeing.
- 4.12 As noted in Section 2 and Annex 4 (see Case Study 9), New Zealand’s approach in developing a framework to understand *waiora* adopted a bottom-up approach. Whilst this approach is not essential for the development of the Gaelic and Wellbeing Indicators proposed here, these should be developed in such a way as to involve representatives from across all areas of Gaelic as well as those involved in wellbeing policy.
- 4.13 Some of the challenges for Gaelic around wellbeing are not specific to Gaelic (see earlier in this report and in the annexes), but relate to broader challenges around the recognition of the role of language and culture more broadly to wellbeing. As noted in Section 2, it is argued by McCartney et al (2023) that: *“...advocates for a Wellbeing Economy, and similar economic models... should prioritise and embed support for cultural development as a ... social asset if we are to adequately respond to current crises and navigate to a flourishing and habitable future for ourselves and our descendants”* (p1).
- 4.14 As part of this, **Bòrd na Gàidhlig should look to work with other partners** (e.g. Historic Environment Scotland, Museums Galleries Scotland, Creative Scotland, etc.) **around the benefits and impacts of intangible cultural heritage to the wellbeing of Scotland’s citizens and economy** and ensure that this is given clear recognition in future wellbeing policy and national outcomes.
- 4.15 In all of the above, it is also important to **recognise the intersectionality between economic and social challenges, issues and context, and the different Gaelic communities**. This includes an appreciation of the different wellbeing needs of different Gaelic communities (e.g., traditional Gaelic areas compared to urban areas) as well as the variety of ways in which different types of Gaelic communities can interact with, and contribute towards, different aspects of wellbeing.

- 4.16 As part of this, it is important to appreciate that for Gaelic to develop, the achievement of, or progress towards, a stronger wellbeing economy is required especially in traditional Gaelic communities. In some areas, Gaelic relies on as well as contributes to a wellbeing economy – and it is important to recognise this and support the wellbeing of these Gaelic communities. This will help to support and sustain the development of Gaelic.

**ANNEX 1: LIST OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN CONVERSATIONS**

Name		Role	Organisation
Douglas	Ansdell	Gaelic and Scots Division	Scottish Government
Lukas	Bunse	Policy researcher	WEAll Scotland
Claire	Cullen	Gaelic and Scots Division	Scottish Government
Camille	Dressler	Chair	European Small Islands Federation
Prof Gary	Gillespie	Director and Scottish Government Chief Economic Adviser	Scottish Government
Jenny	Hogan	Wellbeing Economy Policy Lead	Scottish Government
Elisabeth	Holm	Coordinator, Quality Unit	The University of the Faroe Islands
Ealasaid	MacDonald	Ceannard	Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Faye	MacLeod	member of Short Life Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic	Campbell, Stewart, MacLennan & Co, Accountants
Dr Calum	MacLeod	Freelance sustainable development consultant, policy advisor and academic	
Donald	MacPhee	Gaelic Development Officer	Glasgow City Council
Gerry	McCartney	Professor Wellbeing Economy	Glasgow University
John	McKendrick	Co-director	Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit
Louise	McMahon	Director of Primary Care	Belfast Health and Social Services Board
Phil	Meyer	General Manager	Tiree Community Development Trust
Cllr Calum	Munro	Councillor and member of Short Life Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic	Highland Council
Shona	Nicllinnein	(previously) Ceannard	(previously) Bòrd na Gàidhlig
Ann	Paterson	Capital Gaelic Development Officer	City of Edinburgh Council
Agnes	Rennie	Chair of Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn and member of Short Life Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic	Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn
Maolcholaim	Scott		Foras na Gaeilge
Dr. Katherine	Trebeck	Co-founder	WEAll
Jess	Wood	Research Assistant	University of Aberdeen

### ANNEX 2: LITERATURE REVIEW – GAELIC AND WELLBEING

#### Background

The aim of the study was to **identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing, and to identify its place in assessing changes in wellbeing.** This approach is consistent with moves across the OECD and beyond to recognise

*"that macro-economic statistics, such as GDP, don't provide a sufficiently detailed picture of the living conditions that ordinary people experience. While these concerns were already evident during the years of strong growth and good economic performance that characterised the early part of the decade, the financial and economic crisis has further amplified them. Addressing these perceptions is of crucial importance for the credibility and accountability of public policies but also for the very functioning of democracy"*<sup>28</sup>.

The concept of wellbeing is being applied in different policy and social contexts and specifically here Bòrd na Gàidhlig is seeking to identify the links between Gaelic and wellbeing along the lines of:

- which wellbeing indicators involve or could involve Gaelic,
- how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing of individuals and of language networks,
- how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing of local communities and Scotland's national wellbeing,
- how Gaelic enhances the wellbeing economy,
- how the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing, and of wellbeing to Gaelic, might be measured, with evidence from other minority languages where available,

to generate:

- recommendations as to how Bòrd na Gàidhlig and others can utilise the opportunities identified by this research, in cooperation with other bodies or through the sharing of evidence with regional or national bodies already involved with wellbeing development.

This Annex introduces 'Wellbeing' as a concept and policy focus, informed by a search of the national and international literature, academic and other.

Wellbeing has entered into Scottish policymaking and delivery over the last few years, with an ongoing embedding into strategies and practices at all levels: community, local, sectoral and national<sup>29</sup>. Indeed, Scotland is a pioneer in also adopting 'wellbeing' as an objective, a framing tool and priority across portfolios and departments, and in the Scottish Government's 10-year National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET) an overriding vision is set out to deliver a wellbeing economy for Scotland, defined as an *"economy where good, secure and well-paid jobs and growing businesses have driven a significant reduction in poverty"*<sup>30</sup>. This reorientation has been supported with the introduction of the new ministerial position of Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy.

Scotland is a founding member of the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) group, and the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework is addressed through pursuing

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/wise/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>

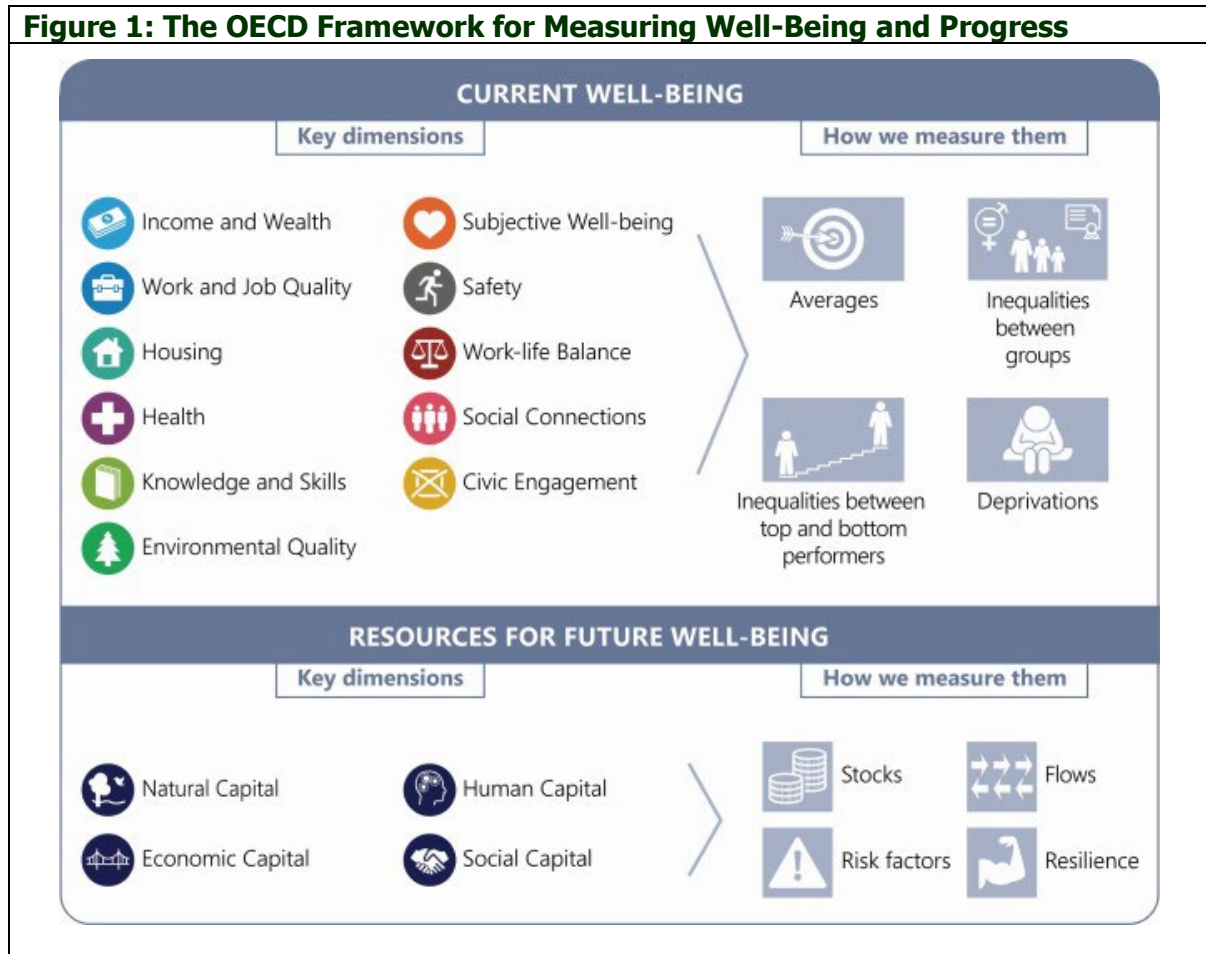
<sup>29</sup> <https://www.scotlandfutureforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/20230209-Wellbeing-Economy-Scotland-Event-Report.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-strategy-economic-transformation/>

'Scotland's Wellbeing' in terms of 'Delivering the National Outcomes', and progress in meeting these eleven outcomes is measured through a number of indicators. The National Outcomes, and so indicators, are explicitly related to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), again confirming a structured and transparent approach to policy formation, delivery, and progress.

**Introduction to the concept of wellbeing**

The OECD has led the way in many respects in adopting and adapting wellbeing concepts and measures to measuring progress in the society and economy but has argued for more consensus around definitions, measures and instruments<sup>31</sup>. To help address that, the OECD has developed 'The OECD Framework for Measuring Well-Being and Progress', shown below in Figure 1, which is based on the recommendations made in 2009 by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress.



This Framework is built around three distinct components: **current well-being**, **inequalities in well-being outcomes**, and **resources for future well-being**<sup>32</sup>. Most such frameworks therefore reflect the evolving consensus promoted in various international declarations from the Brundtland Report in 1987 which defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/wise/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/wise/measuring-well-being-and-progress.htm>



*ability of future generations to meet their own needs", to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992 which includes the following principles<sup>33</sup>:*

*"Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. (Principle 1)*

*The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. (Principle 3)*

*All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world. (Principle 5)"*

Wellbeing is therefore linked to the climate emergency, inequalities, future generations and sustainable development, and the final principle in the Rio Declaration invites national governments to the fulfilment of the other principles in a spirit of good faith. In recent times, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Global Goals have been established as a collection of seventeen interlinked objectives designed to serve as a *"shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future"*<sup>34</sup>.

To progress the wellbeing concept into actions, the OECD has constructed an extended dashboard of over 80 well-being indicators. These reflect the 12 headline indicators of current wellbeing averages, 12 indicators of current well-being inequalities and 12 indicators of resources for future wellbeing and the four capitals (economic, natural, human, social) for future wellbeing. Reducing the many dimensions of the human and natural world in this way allows comparisons to be made across regions and countries, and so wellbeing can be tracked over time and space. However, when applying these in specific contexts, modifications may be in order as definitions, data availability and priorities may vary. As VanderWeele et al., for instance, argue: *"Measures of well-being have proliferated, but there is little guidance on what to use"* and *"What well-being measures are most appropriate depends on context and space"*<sup>35,36</sup>. The OECD also suggest that: *"For well-being measures to start making a real difference to people's lives, they have to be explicitly brought into the policy-making process. Bridging the gap between well-being metrics and policy intervention is a challenge."*

### Wellbeing in the Scottish context

This need for relevance to the local is recognised in the Scottish Government's own Wellbeing Economy Monitor, which has been developed *"to look beyond GDP to measure how Scotland's economy contributes to improving things that people really value, such as health, equality,*

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<sup>33</sup> <https://culturalrights.net/en/documentos.php?c=18&p=195>

<sup>34</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<sup>35</sup> VanderWeele, T.J., et al. (2020) 'Current recommendations on the selection of measures for well-being', *Preventive Medicine* 133, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0091743520300281>.

<sup>36</sup> An example of where there continue to be omissions – perhaps through lack of guidance – may be found in the recent study of wellbeing in the context of landed estates in Scotland. In that publication, and despite stating *inter alia* that "rural estates .... enjoy symbiotic relationships with the communities of which they are a part" (p8), there is no mention whatsoever of local culture or indeed the Gaelic language in the report. <https://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk/news/new-research-finds-rural-estates-play-vital-role-scotlands-wellbeing-economy-1>

*fair work and environmental sustainability*"<sup>37</sup>. Neil Gray MSP was appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy in March 2023 and recorded that<sup>38</sup>:

*"A wellbeing economy is a strong, growing economy which is environmentally sustainable and resilient and which serves the collective wellbeing of people first and foremost.*

*"It empowers communities to take a greater stake in the economy, with more wealth generated, circulated and retained within local communities, protecting and investing in the natural environment. It provides opportunities for everyone to access fair, meaningful work, and values and supports responsible, purposeful businesses to thrive and innovate".*

This Scottish Government approach to wellbeing should help with the aims of this research 'to identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing', and 'to identify its place in assessing changes in wellbeing'. Critically, it emphasises environmental sustainability and resilience, which have each featured in recent programmes and activities of Bòrd na Gàidhlig in partnership with other bodies such as Community Land Scotland, with the collective wellbeing of people at the centre. Similarly, the Cabinet Secretary's statement reflects the agenda on community empowerment, the circular economy, Fair Work and community wealth building across the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET).

The wellbeing approach to the economy and society has also been promoted by other agencies in Scotland, not least by Wellbeing Alliance Scotland, a leading member of the transnational WEAll collaboration focused on the economy. WEAll has been involved in moving the agenda forward on such thinking and practicalities with reminders that *"there is no one-size-fits-all approach, as every society has unique structures, values, and objectives"*<sup>39</sup>.

Increasingly, wellbeing is being adopted, therefore, into the lexicon and operations of government, NGOs and other bodies as a guiding driver for their contributions to national, local, community and individual improvements in the economy, society, education, health and other aspects of life. The Scottish Government's publication of the *'Wellbeing economy toolkit: supporting place based economic strategy and policy development'*<sup>40</sup> is intended to provide a resource for those involved in developing economic strategy and place-based economic development policy. Learning from a pilot exercise in Clackmannanshire, a diagram was constructed to illustrate the relationship between the UN Sustainable Development Goals (outer ring), through the NPF National Outcomes (middle ring) to the key wellbeing outcomes identified for a local area. It places the wellbeing economy vision, represented in the NPF by the Economy national outcome, at the centre of the wheel<sup>41</sup>. The diagram (see Figure 2 overleaf) suggests how a similar exercise for Gaelic could be undertaken, revealing the links between these different layers as was previously constructed for the Gaelic in Glasgow research study<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/wellbeing-economy-monitor/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-debate-managing-scotlands-finances-working-business-drive-wellbeing-economy-ministerial-statement/>

<sup>39</sup> This literature review is partly underpinned by members of the study team's involvement in the launch of the first series of WEGo economic policy labs in Edinburgh in May 2019, in advising and contributing to the Wellbeing Economy Policy Design Guide and to the research and publication of the first report on the role of local production as a key pillar in a just transition to a wellbeing economy. These have all facilitated the study team's understanding of the wider context and policy landscape for wellbeing in Scotland.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/wellbeing-economy-toolkit-supporting-place-based-economic-strategy-policy-development/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/wellbeing-economy-toolkit-supporting-place-based-economic-strategy-policy-development/pages/15/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/29502>



**Figure 2: Example of key wellbeing outcomes identified in Clackmannanshire and their contribution to National Outcomes and UN Sustainable Development Goals**



**Source:** Figure 4 from Annex B - Illustrative example of local wellbeing outcomes' contribution to National Outcomes from 'Wellbeing economy toolkit: supporting place based economic strategy and policy development'.

### Wellbeing in the context of language and culture

Other specific examples of how the wellbeing concepts, priorities and targets have been applied in Scotland can be seen in 'Getting It Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC)<sup>43</sup>, the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people by 'offering the right help at the right time from the right people' which makes reference back to each of the key aspects of wellbeing. The role of Gaelic within these areas was included in the Curriculum for Excellence and Wellbeing, which has been explored recently<sup>44</sup> and can be seen in contrast to the assessment in former times when it was not

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

<sup>44</sup> The Gaelic Language in Education in Scotland, Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, 2018.

seen as 'welfare-enhancing'<sup>45</sup>. Resources, and therefore areas for analysis, in terms of wellbeing, young people's health<sup>46</sup>, GME<sup>47</sup> and Gaelic are offered on several sites: for example, particularly on GME relating to Health and Wellbeing<sup>48</sup>, and the 'We Love Stornoway'<sup>49</sup> website. Recent grassroots initiatives such as the establishment of the first Gaelic football service FC Sonas, with their strapline: "bruidhinn Gàidhlig, cluich ball-coise" or "speak Gaelic, play football", is also a sign of the times<sup>50</sup>.

This confirms that this project is timely in aiming to identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing, and to identify its place in assessing changes in wellbeing; it complements these national and thematic policy approaches and evaluations. Significantly, it can build upon the recent work on the economic and wellbeing impact of Gaelic on Glasgow<sup>51</sup>. That study concluded that the strongest aspects of wellbeing where Gaelic has a positive impact are around national and local pride, sense of identity, pride in local community, individual mental health and wellbeing, and happiness. Of particular importance, that research revealed how Gaelic clearly contributes to at least four of the seven themes of Glasgow City Council's Strategic Plan 2017-2022: A Thriving Economy; A Vibrant City; A Healthier City; Excellent and Inclusive Education – with the findings highlighting that these themes are where the contribution of Gaelic is strongest.

The report also highlighted the ways in which Gaelic in Glasgow contributes to the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework – with examples provided of Gaelic's contribution, to varying degrees, to all the outcomes of the NPF. These findings demonstrate how to identify the place of Gaelic in the recognised indicators of wellbeing and the place of Gaelic in assessing changes in wellbeing locally and nationally. The methods and contextual aspects of the research are transferable across the country, rural and urban, sector, policy area and activities.

Considering wellbeing themes around language and culture, the following have been considered as complementing and reinforcing the work of the OECD (2022) cited above: Selwyn & Wood (2015), Tyler et al. (2020), Butler et al. (2019), Atkinson et al. (2020), Wang et al. (2021) and Padilla-Rivera et al. (2020)<sup>52</sup>. As suggested in the review and application of the frameworks and reports of the OECD earlier, this literature confirms there has been an emerging consensus on how to apply the concept and dimensions of wellbeing to specific contexts.

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<sup>45</sup> There was a 'widespread fatalism' in the Gaelic community and 'an acceptance by substantial numbers of the population that Gaelic was irrelevant to the future welfare of their children' (Còr na Gàidhlig, GRG 1982: 14).

<sup>46</sup> <https://young.scot/get-informed/gaelic-mental-health-words>, <https://www.nhsinform.scot/media/7233/mind-to-mind-may22-gaelic.pdf>, <https://www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/haidh-is-mise-chatpal-a-new-gaelic-chatbot-for-mental-wellbeing/> and

<sup>47</sup> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/gaelic-medium-education-foghlam-meadhan-gaidhlig-1/health-and-wellbeing-slaime-agus-sunnd/>

<sup>48</sup> <https://gaelic.education/en/health-wellbeing>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.welovestornoway.com/index.php/articles-auto-3/21576-gaelic-and-mindfulness-resource>

<sup>50</sup> <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/first-scottish-gaelic-football-where-124116829.html?guccounter=1>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/29502>

<sup>52</sup> OECD (2022) The Short and Winding Road to 2030. Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets; Selwyn, J., & Wood, M. (2015) Measuring Well-Being: A Literature Review. University of Bristol; Atkinson, S., et al. (2020) 'Being well together: individual subjective and community wellbeing', *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 21.5, 1903-192; Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A. and Jun Zhang, L. (2021) 'Researching and practicing positive psychology in second/foreign language learning and teaching: the past, current status and future directions', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 731721, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.731721/full>; Padilla-Rivera, A., Russo-Garrido, S. and Merveille, N. (2020) 'Addressing the social aspects of a circular economy: A systematic literature review', *Sustainability*, 12, 19, 7912, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12197912>.

Just as VanderWeele et al., cited earlier, argued that although "*measures of well-being have proliferated, there is little guidance on what to use*", a recent study by McCartney et al.<sup>53</sup> posited that "*advocates for a Wellbeing Economy, and similar economic models... should prioritise and embed support for cultural development as a ... social asset if we are to adequately respond to current crises and navigate to a flourishing and habitable future for ourselves and our descendants*". (2023, p1). Gaelic, as a vibrant part of Scotland's culture, allows us to do this.

With particular regard to studies amongst comparable populations, we have looked at how minority languages and cultures have been exploring matters of wellbeing and analogous terms. For example, there have been studies in the Oceania context: Amery (2019), Biddle (2014), Dockery (2010) and Marmion et al (2014); in Wales, Prys and Matthews (2022); in Northern Ireland, McDermott (2008); in the Basque Country, Zabala et al (2020) and Urla (2018); and in the Faroe Islands and Nordic Europe, Holm et al. (2020)<sup>54</sup>. These have been involved variously in examining and analysing aspects of happiness, mental and physical health and wellbeing of communities where marginality and minority status characterise the lives of a group based on their language and culture being within dominant mainstreams. A number of them have pursued the positive benefits of bi- and multi-lingualism and education, of having the capacity to live in different spaces within a place, and of having greater capabilities and assets than the majority.

As such approaches evolve and the principles and philosophies underpinning the concepts of 'wellbeing' and 'wellbeing economics' come under deepening scrutiny, so some peoples have been assuming greater ownership of these. Complementing the in-depth case study of *He Ara Waiora* in this report, further examples have developed in Oceania: in Yawuru Country<sup>55</sup>, in Indigenous communities during Covid<sup>56</sup>, and in the Mayi Kuwayu Study created by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples<sup>57</sup>. The importance of bestowing in young people their cultural heritage, identity and future to guard against poor wellbeing has been explored

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<sup>53</sup> McCartney, G., O'Connor, J., Olma, S. et al. Culture as an objective for and a means of achieving a Wellbeing Economy. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* **10**, 718 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02240-6>

<sup>54</sup> Prys, C. & Matthews, D. (2022) 'Well-being and language: language as a well-being objective in Wales', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14664208.2022.2117962>; Holm, AE., O'Rourke, B. & Danson, M. (2020) 'Employers could use us, but they don't': voices from blue-collar workplaces in a northern periphery', *Lang Policy*, 19, 389–416, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-019-09513-4>; McDermott, P. (2008) 'Acquisition, loss or multilingualism? Educational planning for speakers of migrant community languages in Northern Ireland', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 9, 4, 483-500, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664200802354443>; Zabala J, et al. (2020) Basque Ethnic Identity and Collective Empowerment: Two Key Factors in Well-Being and Community Participation. *Front Psychol.* 2020;11:606316. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2020.606316; Urla, J. and Burdick, C. (2018) Counting matters: quantifying the vitality and value of Basque. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, Vol. 2018 (Issue 252), pp. 73-96. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-0015>; Amery, R. (2019) 'The homecoming of an Indigenous Australian diaspora as impetus for language revival: the Kaurua of the Adelaide plains, South Australia', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 20, 1, 81-99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2018.1503390>; Biddle, N. (2014). 'Measuring and analysing the wellbeing of Australia's indigenous population', *Social Indicators Research*, 116, 3, 713–729. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-013-0317-8>; Dockery, A. M. (2010). Culture and wellbeing: The case of indigenous Australians, *Social Indicators Research*, 99, 2, 315–332; Marmion, D., Obata, K., & Troy, J. (2014) 'Community, identity, wellbeing: The report of the second national indigenous languages survey', Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and various issues of *Language Planning*.

<sup>55</sup> Yap, M. and Yu, E. (2016) *Community Wellbeing from the Ground Up: A Yawuru Example*, BCEC Research Report No. 3/16, <https://www.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/bcec-community-wellbeing-from-the-ground-up-a-yawuru-example.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Watene, K. (2020) 'Caring for community to beat coronavirus echoes Indigenous ideas of a good life', *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/caring-for-community-to-beat-coronavirus-echoes-indigenous-ideas-of-a-good-life-136175>.

<sup>57</sup> National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing, <https://mkstudy.com.au/>.

in the case of First Nation Canadians<sup>58</sup>, highlighting the importance of self-determination in improving and maintaining wellbeing at individual and community level. In an age of rising populism, generated by a lack of *ontological security*<sup>59</sup>, this recognition of the benefits of a positive cultural identity and continuity amongst minorities contrasts with cultural annihilation – of aboriginal lands, peoples, families creating trauma which impacts adversely on wellbeing.

However, as revealed in these texts and in some of the OECD case studies, there are still tendencies to consider the wellbeing of minority groups in terms of the opening lines of *Anna Karenina*: "All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way"<sup>60</sup>. That is, they are subject to analyses using mainstream indicators of wellbeing and divergences from the norm are aberrations rather than characteristics of their own different cultures. An example within Scotland of such need for appropriate methodologies, indicators and analytical instruments can be seen in the current research on Glasgow's Roma community which is addressing challenges faced by their younger members, as they seek to overcome language, cultural, educational and social barriers to improving their own wellbeing. This is generating discussions on which paradigms, data sources and techniques are fit for purpose in this particular case, whilst endeavouring to ensure the study nests within the national SDG-NSET-NPF framework for policy analysis and prescription.

To explore these generic issues facing people of minority language and cultures further, in a meta-analysis of 278 full-text articles, Butler et al.<sup>61</sup> identified nine broad interconnected dimensions pertinent to the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians: **autonomy, empowerment and recognition; family and community; culture, spirituality and identity; country; basic needs; work, roles and responsibilities; education; physical health; and mental health**. They concluded that these domains and influences may not be reflected in the mainstream, core Quality of Life and wellbeing instruments, and that such findings may be shared with Indigenous populations globally. Butler et al. therefore identified the need for 'a tailored wellbeing instrument' that includes factors relevant to minority Indigenous cultures and that "*developing such an instrument will ensure meaningful, culturally-relevant measurement of such communities*" wellbeing.

Having established the rationale for constructing a set of indicators of wellbeing that are customised to the Gaelic communities of Scotland, the following section considers extending the existing academic research on similar minority language peoples to include non-academic community-level literature and recordings about Gaelic.

### Community Level Literature and Examples about Gaelic and Wellbeing

Wellbeing is often mentioned in interviews with Gaels when speaking about the language and culture. Shona MacLennan, Ceannard, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, at the start of the **Royal National Mòd** in Perth in 2022 said: "*The Mòd is always a huge celebration of Gaelic language and culture, providing opportunities to use the language in a wide range of events. It also contributes to a sense of wellbeing, particularly through bringing old and new friends together after some very challenging years*"<sup>62</sup>. At the conclusion, Allan Campbell, president of An Comunn Gàidhealach, confirmed that the Mòd had indeed been a "*success for many reasons; particularly in terms of helping attendees 'feel better' ... and that it would have had "a hugely*

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<sup>58</sup> Chandler, M. and Lalonde, C. (1998) 'Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations', *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 35, 2, 191-219. doi:10.1177/136346159803500202.

<sup>59</sup> Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Cambridge: CUP.

<sup>60</sup> Tolstoy, L. (1878) *Anna Karenina*, Moscow: The Russian Messenger.

<sup>61</sup> Butler et al., (2019) 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's domains of wellbeing: A comprehensive literature review', *Social Science & Medicine*, 233, 138-157;

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.ancomunn.co.uk/nationalmod/moddetail/www.moddhunomhain.com>



*significant wellbeing benefit as well as a cultural one*"<sup>63</sup>. Noting how this appreciation has continued to grow, The Herald wrote on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 that Gaelic "*already enriches the daily lives of the people of Scotland and beyond. It creates benefits, both social and economic, and increases wellbeing for Gaelic users, learners and supporters, across Scotland and internationally*".

Contrasting with much of the discussion in the debate around "The Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community"<sup>64</sup> which has generated much debate in the academic world, recent studies of Gaelic speakers and learners have recorded positive feedback from initiatives to promote the language. In particular, although recognising that economic and social wellbeing are being compromised by the interconnected problems in housing, jobs and incomes, land ownership, ferry and connectivity barriers, and other characteristics of life in the Gàidhealtachd, many in Gaelic arts, culture and communities stress the benefits of speaking and using the language.

For instance, the essays "Speaking our Language: Past, Present and Future" (Cass Ezeji), "On 'Cultural Darning and Mending': Creative Responses to Ceist an Fhearainn/The Land Question in the Gàidhealtachd" (Mairi McFadyen and Raghnaid Sandilands) and "Connected Histories: ethical storytelling in the global archipelago" (James Oliver (Seumas Chatriona Dhomhnuill Aonghais Bhig) and Shiraz Bayjoo)<sup>65</sup> demonstrate more **optimism around the contribution of the language and culture to wellbeing** in the Gaelic heartlands.

In the report to Glasgow City Council specifically on **economic and wellbeing impacts of Gaelic** on the city<sup>66</sup>, surveys revealed very strong aspects of wellbeing - where Gaelic has a pronounced positive impact – were around **national and local pride, sense of identity, pride in local community, individual mental health and wellbeing, and happiness**; more than three-quarters of survey respondents reported moderate or major impacts of Gaelic on each of these aspects of wellbeing. Conversely, the aspects of wellbeing with the lowest proportion reporting a moderate or major impact of Gaelic were around job opportunities, increased income and increased physical activity. Although there were some variations by age and gender, the summary was that "*for the majority of respondents, it is clear that there is a strong impact from Gaelic across a wide range of aspects of wellbeing*".

Example quotes from consultees, interviewees and survey respondents from that Gaelic Economy in Glasgow research study which exemplify the wellbeing impacts of Gaelic are represented at the end of this appendix and show some of the key dimensions of wellbeing that Gaelic contributes towards.

In a review of the **Gaelic Community Fund** which was created, with support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, to encourage geographically based, asset-locked community organisations to find and test effective and innovative ways to boost the use of Gaelic in their area, a series of

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<sup>63</sup> <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/highlands-islands/4947496/perth-mod-helps-gaels-to-feel-better-despite-a-decline-in-entrants/>

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Conchúr Ó Giollagáin, Gòrdan Camshron, Pàdruig Moireach, Brian Ó Curnáin, Iain Caimbeul, Brian MacDonald, Tamás Péterváry (2020) Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press; Wilson McLeod, Robert Dunbar, Michelle Macleod and Bernadette O'Rourke (2021) 'Against exclusionary Gaelic Language Policy: A response to Ó Giollagáin and Caimbeul'. Scottish Affairs, Volume 31 Issue 1, Page 84-103.

<sup>65</sup> "Speaking our Language: Past, Present and Future" (Cass Ezeji), "On 'Cultural Darning and Mending': Creative Responses to Ceist an Fhearainn/The Land Question in the Gàidhealtachd" (Mairi McFadyen and Raghnaid Sandilands) and "Connected Histories: ethical storytelling in the global archipelago" (James Oliver (Seumas Chatriona Dhomhnuill Aonghais Bhig) and Shiraz Bayjoo) are all in *Gàidhealtachd Futures*, issue #1, Making Publics Press, Isle of Skye, [https://beta.atlasarts.org.uk/assets/images/GF\\_08\\_doublepage\\_final.pdf](https://beta.atlasarts.org.uk/assets/images/GF_08_doublepage_final.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> Chalmers, D., Connolly, S., Danson, E. and Danson, M. (2022) *Gaelic Economy in Glasgow. Final Report*, Glasgow City Council: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/29502>

wellbeing outcomes were apparent<sup>67</sup>. The community development trusts funded under this programme through Community Land Scotland frequently referred to (re)engagement post Covid, arguing that “Trusts were important for culture and in north and west Scotland therefore for Gaelic” and had also been “very important during COVID” as the anchor organisations in their communities. Funding was applied to allow: “a wide range of activities to take place that have appealed to all ages, to locals and visitors, and to both Gaelic and non-Gaelic speaking people.” Many of these embraced a variety of cultural forms: “There has been Hebridean dancing, piping, historical talks and traditional music events”, with positive impacts in terms of language use and community wellbeing. Repeatedly interviews with representatives of these places exposed an underlying theme of confidence and natural use of Gaelic, with activities and practices “generating pride and confidence in self and place”. Some projects made “home visits to those who might have been isolated through Covid, building confidence within the community to re-engage”; significantly, Gaelic was seen as essential to delivering these improvements in people’s lives. Reflecting the sentiments displayed in the surveys in Glasgow, feedback suggested that there was recognition that ‘Gaelic has an increasing role in a diverse and open Scottish identity’ and confirming ‘Gaelic is important to Scotland’.

The academic literature on the significance and interdependences of the fundamentals of wellbeing, resilience, and confidence to community development and wealth-building has been explored earlier and, in the studies of Glasgow and the community development trusts of the Gàidhealtachd, these are important elements of the story of the communities and these pilots especially: “*The events really celebrated the heritage and culture of the islands and generated a strong sense of pride among the community*”. Innovation and celebration of their own culture and heritage were promoted as benefits of supporting Gaelic with associated improvements in health, happiness and wellbeing. Social and private enterprises in turn were helped by such developments in the city and rural communities, continuing to build in positive feedbacks. In an evaluation of the impacts of communities taking over the ownership of rural estates in the Gàidhealtachd<sup>68</sup>, it was demonstrated that meeting the need for affordable housing, addressing Covid and climate change, and repopulating the land was consistent with supporting Gaelic with significant and demonstrable benefits across these dimensions of the economy and society, and so of wellbeing.

The **Short Life Working Group on Economic and Social Opportunities for Gaelic**<sup>69</sup> recommended that investment in Gaelic training has “*the potential for significant economic impact, particularly in island and rural communities, in addition to linguistic and wellbeing benefits*”, and that further research should be “*undertaken exploring the role Gaelic language and culture, and its relationship with the Highland landscape, has in promoting self-esteem, health and wellbeing with a view to improving knowledge, access and creating social and economic opportunities relating to the natural environment*”. Noting the prospect for positive feedback between revitalising the language and broader indicators, they argued that “*Lively, healthy communities could lead to increased opportunity and desire to use Gaelic which, in turn, could lead to additional social, wellbeing and economic benefits*”. The creative industries, tourism and heritage were identified as vehicles to “*encourage wider use of Gaelic, increase economic activity and contribute to self-esteem and wellbeing*”.

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<sup>67</sup> DC Research (2023) ‘Review of Gaelic Development Officer Network pilot and Community Land Scotland pilot for Bòrd na Gàidhlig’.

<sup>68</sup> Danson, M. (2023) ‘Evaluating Post-Monopoly Rural Land Ownership: Four Community Case-Studies’, report to Community Land Scotland.

<sup>69</sup> Report to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy, (2023)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/short-life-working-group-economic-social-opportunities-gaelic-report-cabinet-secretary-finance-economy/documents/>

With regard to **sport**, the working group suggested that the recent growth in activities delivered in Gaelic *"has led to greater diversity in social use of Gaelic with the economic, social and wellbeing benefits this sector brings"*. The appreciation of the role of Gaelic across many sectors in already producing wellbeing impacts, and with the recommendations for these to be developed further, confirms that the role of the language and culture has moved increasingly into the mainstream of community and human development.

In a report for **Fèisean nan Gàidheal** on the "Cultural, Social, Economic, Linguistic and Wellbeing Impacts of Fèisean nan Gàidheal"<sup>70</sup>, Westbrook and Anderson have similarly promoted their findings of processes of positive feedback and so how *"wellbeing can be influenced by social, cultural and linguistic factors, just as an increase in wellbeing can generate social, cultural and/or linguistic impacts"*. They emphasise the interlinkages between community, music and culture, volunteering and that *"Especially in rural areas, the Fèis can bring the community together, build skills and contribute to a feeling of wellbeing which can help to retain people locally rather than move to more urban areas"*.

Based in the Uists, **Guthan nan Eilean**, the Island Voices Project started in 2005 as a contribution to a European Leonardo Project for language learners and teachers<sup>71</sup>. Seen by those involved as a *'language capture and curation project'*, its emphasis is on the production of short recordings placed online for open access. Although now multilingual, its main focus remains Gaelic and English. Whilst, in early years, most recordings were created by project staff, in later years the project encouraged community members to contribute their own pieces to the collection.

In terms of metrics, the website and social media have thousands of followers and by 2018, its YouTube hits had exceeded a quarter of a million. In the view of the organisers, the provision of community members encourages islanders to assert their 'ownership' of their own language.

From May 2022, the website has also featured resources from the *Aire air Sunnd* project - a project focussing on Gaelic, Heritage and Wellbeing. This is a collaboration between CEUT<sup>72</sup> (the Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath - North Uist Historical Society) and the Universities of Aberdeen, St Andrews and the Highlands and Islands.

In the project they aim to examine how heritage can be used to improve wellbeing activities and help shape their community base in Sgoil Chàrinis.

Amongst their activities have been three heritage walks to important archaeological sites in North Uist, undertaken in Gaelic<sup>73</sup>.

Another part of the project has involved a survey<sup>74</sup> of individuals in North Uist and Benbecula, co-created with the community and launched online and in hard copy. Launched in October 2022, over 80 responses were received allowing some useful in-depth analysis which was then shared and discussed with the community in March 2023.

In the results, concern about the environment was voiced strongly, together with a concern that North Uist was not being consulted or heard locally or nationally. The importance of community in island life was highlighted together with a concern relating to heritage, culture and in particular Gaelic language decline, which was a common concern between speakers, learners and non-speakers of Gaelic – with many respondents believing that 'Gaelic has an

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.feisean.org/wp-content/uploads/Westbrook-Report.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Wells, G. 2018 Reading Island Voices. Paper for Reading aloud in Britain symposium. UCL

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.ceut.scot/>

<sup>73</sup> <https://ceut.northernheritage.org/walks/>

<sup>74</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_16l4FtDgNI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_16l4FtDgNI)

important symbolic value in the community as a vehicle for transmitting our island culture and heritage'. Support for Gaelic heritage and wellbeing activities and events was strong as was support for Gaelic classes and activities that support natural and cultural heritage.

As MacPóilin (2018) has pointed out "*languages live in communities in a constant dynamic between a complex past and a complex present*"<sup>75</sup>. In 2020, the new and complex dynamic of Covid-19 brought particular difficulties in terms of the wellbeing of rural communities – many of which were in the Gàidhealtachd. There was a recognition of this at a very early stage by the **BBC Gaelic unit**, who adopted a focus on dealing with the immediate technical impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in how media – through BBC Alba and also Radio nan Gàidheal altered their modus operandi to help focus in part on the wellbeing of the communities they felt a responsibility towards. Comparative studies of Gaelic media<sup>76</sup>, Welsh language media<sup>77</sup>, and Irish media<sup>78</sup> considered the manner in which the respective media authorities dealt *inter alia* with wellbeing, with the approach of BBC Gaelic unit coming out well in this comparison.

Amongst the approaches adopted by the BBC Gaelic unit were the re-localisation of news gathering and dealing with the increased demand for community focussed programmes in general. To fill the gap in the TV news slot two new inserts were created – a community information slot Fiosrachadh (information) alongside a new wellbeing/inspirational strand called A-Staigh (At home). Fridays (especially evenings) on Radio nan Gàidheal have always relied heavily on request programming which was then extended and used to solidify links between families and within communities unable to meet up face-to-face. Given the very tight restrictions on access to Gaelic-speaking communities and the rapid development of new ways to access Gaelic speaking contributors, viewers were encouraged to send in reports of how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected them. As a result, 140 user-generated films were created by a pool of over 70 new contributors/content creators' with 91 of those packaged by the channel for broadcast over almost 20 weeks on BBC ALBA. All are now situated on [YouTube](#) for wider viewing.

With regard to children especially, wellbeing is defined by eight indicators in Scotland, with the aim of everyone having the same understanding of what wellbeing means. The indicators are: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI)<sup>79</sup>. Subsequently, the importance that hope for the future has in improving wellbeing and outcomes has been highlighted. Interestingly, this set of indicators was developed 'by young people for young people', and so there are parallels with the current research on young Roma in Glasgow by Rom Romeha and the previous approach by Oxfam Scotland in designing their own index.

Oxfam Scotland constructed a Humankind Index based on people's views on what matters to their wellbeing, and then populated this with data from various sources<sup>80</sup>. Figure 3 below

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<sup>75</sup> MacPóilin. A (2018) Our tangled speech - essays in language and culture. Belfast. Ultach Trust, p.16

<sup>76</sup> <https://www.ecmi.de/infchannel/detail/minority-language-media-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-the-case-of-scottish-gaelic-an-interview-with-dr-douglas-chalmers>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.ecmi.de/infchannel/detail/minority-language-media-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-the-case-of-welsh-an-interview-with-prof-elin-haf-gruffydd-jones>

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.ecmi.de/infchannel/detail/minority-language-media-and-the-covid-19-pandemic-the-case-of-irish-an-interview-with-dr-john-walsh>

<sup>79</sup> Scottish Government information on GIRFEC for children, young people and families or the GIRFEC wellbeing page on the Young Scots website

<sup>80</sup> <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/oxfam-humankind-index-the-new-measure-of-scotlands-prosperity-second-results-293743/>



presents the findings from the 2013 report<sup>81</sup>, showing the results for the Oxfam Humankind Index at that point.

**Figure 3: Oxfam Humankind Index 2010/11**

OXFAM HUMANKIND INDEX 2010/11				
SUB-DOMAIN	WEIGHT	MEASURE	SCORE	CHANGE SINCE 2009/10
Housing	11	52.3	558	-20 ↓
Health	11	94.0	1,004	11 ↑
Neighbourhood/Environment	9	60.0	524	9 ↑
Work Satisfaction	7	70.8	496	- ↓
Good Relationships	7	13.3	91	1 ↑
Safety	6	23.0	134	17 ↑
Green Spaces	6	44.0	256	3 ↑
Secure/Suitable Work	6	91.1	531	-3 ↓
Having enough money	6	47.0	274	-12 ↓
Financial Security	5	-4.3	-21	29 ↑
Culture/Hobbies	5	63.5	308	12 ↑
Local Facilities	4	44.0	171	-4 ↓
Skills and Education	4	27.0	105	4 ↑
Community Spirit	4	75.0	291	12 ↑
Good Transport	4	76.0	295	4 ↑
Good Services	3	66.0	192	3 ↑
Tolerance	3	66.0	192	- ↓
Feeling good	2	80.4	156	-1 ↓
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>5,558</b>	<b>65</b>

**Source:** <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/293743/rr-humankind-index-second-results-100613-en.pdf;jsessionid=8FA9079998DE41F2A9914A82479BD06C?sequence=1>

The domains used in the Oxfam Humankind Index can inform consideration of how Gaelic and wellbeing are connected within Scotland, by adapting this *"new approach to measuring prosperity in Scotland...moving beyond economic growth and increased consumption and looking instead at a broader range of factors that matter to people and communities"*.

One example of the inclusion of language use into wellbeing indexes is the *'Wellbeing of Wales: National Indicators'*<sup>82</sup> and, in particular, the National Well-being Indicators around Goal 6: 'A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language', which includes indicators about the Welsh language (see below for an extract of the relevant indicators), showing how Cymraeg (the Welsh language) is incorporated into the overall assessment of wellbeing in a similar context to what could be done for Gaelic and Wellbeing in Scotland.

<sup>81</sup> <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/293743/rr-humankind-index-second-results-100613-en.pdf;jsessionid=8FA9079998DE41F2A9914A82479BD06C?sequence=1>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/wellbeing-wales-national-indicators>

### **National Wellbeing Indicators**

35 Percentage of people attending or participating in arts, culture or heritage activities at least three times a year

36 Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh

#### ***37 Number of people who can speak Welsh***

38 Percentage of people participating in sporting activities three or more times a week

39 Percentage of museums and archives holding archival/heritage collections meeting UK accreditation standards

40 Percentage of designated historic environment assets that are in stable or improved conditions

National Wellbeing indicator 37 (Number of people who can speak Welsh) is also used to measure the progress towards a National Milestone – in this case, the National Milestone is to have “A million Welsh speakers by 2050”<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-national-indicators-2021-html>

### Examples of the Contribution of Gaelic to Aspects of Wellbeing (extracted from the Gaelic Economy in Glasgow Study – pp.62-65)

Focusing on the wellbeing aspects where the highest proportions of survey respondents reported moderate and major impacts of Gaelic (i.e., Increased interest in Scotland and/or increased pride in Scotland (86%); Greater sense of own identity (82%); Greater pride in your local community (81%); Improved mental health and wellbeing (77%); and Increased happiness (77%)) this section presents some examples from the interviews and consultations that have been carried out for this study as well as additional information from the surveys.

The order in which they are presented reflects the proportion of survey respondents that reported the impact of Gaelic on these aspects of wellbeing as being major/moderate.

#### Increased interest in Scotland and/or increased pride in Scotland

*"[T]ha i mar phàirt de dh'fhèin-aithne nàiseanta agus fèin-aithne ionadail a tha làidir agus in-ghabhalach. Tha an cànan a' toirt coimhearsnachd do dhaoine" ["...it's part of the local and national identity that is strong and inclusive. The language gives people a community"]*

*"I chose Gaelic since, apart from the folk music I'd liked I was going to be at Edinburgh university and it seemed to be the most Scottish topic that could be studied at a Scottish University"*

*"It's this idea of identity and land and culture, I think that are so tied in together... we have some beautiful words for the different types of Hills that there are in the landscape. It's giving that depth."*

*"I feel like it has given me much more of an overall kind of awareness of Scottish history and Scottish language and culture, and politics and all of that. It arms you."*

*"I do feel like it's just given me more knowledge, it's an access point into more knowledge, and into learning more about the culture and history of the country I would never have had that otherwise"*

#### Greater sense of own identity

*"Tha Taic do Gaidhlig laidir ann a Glaschu agus dheanamh e feum barrachd taic a thoirt dhan oigrigh toabh a muigh na sgoile airson a bruidhinn agus a cleacadh an canan" ["Support for Gaelic is strong in Glasgow and it would do good to give more support to the youth to speak and use the language outwith school"]*

*"In terms of wellbeing, I speak Gaelic at home with my child. It's a part of me now."*

*"Language is so connected to your identity that I think it's a really good thing for Scottish people to connect with Gaelic."*

*"I think the fact was that until I started learning Gaelic I thought that I was a relatively well educated person that knew about the country I lived in, and I wasn't because learning Gaelic unlocks a whole other aspect of Scottish history that I had hitherto been completely unaware of."*

*"Tha Gàidhlig cudromach do dh'eachdraidh Ghlaschu, ach anns an là th'ann le feadhainn fhathast a' nochdadh sa bhaile bhon Ghàidhealtachd, agus ga h-ionnsachadh tro FTMG, tha i cheart cho cudromach. Tha i a' cuir, dha rìreabh, do dh'ìoma-chultarachd a bhaile-sa" ["Gaelic is important to Glasgow's history, but today with people still arriving in the city from the Gàidhealtachd, and learning through GME, it is just as important. It definitely adds to the city's multiculturalism"]*

*"... learning Gaelic: minority languages appear interesting to those on societies' margins..."*

*"I think you get a much more in-depth knowledge of your culture. I remember a girl saying to me, she was from Skye, and she hadn't had Gaelic growing up, that once she had gone to Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and learned it, she said that all of a sudden, the world was in colour, and I thought well that's a really beautiful way to see it"*

### Greater pride in your local community

*"Às dèidh dhomh fhèin Gàidhlig ionnsachadh aig an Oilthigh ... cho-dhùn mi gun robh còir agam a sgaoileadh do dhaoine eile le ùidh, ach gun robh beàrn mòr ann le dè cho daor agus a bha clasaichean-oidhche airson mo charaidean, mòran dhaibh aig nach eil fastadh no teachd a-steach, air adbharan ciorramachd agus eile. Bha sin a' ciallachadh gun robh daoine le ùidh mhòr sa chànan, agus cuid mhath dhaibh aig a bheil teaghlach le Gàidhlig air a' Ghàidhealtachd no a tha buinntainn ri sliochd nan Gàidheal, agus mar sin, tha mi air a bhith a' tabhann clasaichean-oidhche saor an-asgaidh gach seachdain airson còrr agus leth-bhladhna nist"* ["After learning Gaelic myself at the University ... I decided that I should share it with other interested people, but there was a big gap with how expensive evening classes were for my friends, many of whom aren't employed or don't have an income, for disability and other reasons. That meant that there were people with a keen interest in the language, many of whom having families with Gaelic in the Gàidhealtachd or descended from the Gaels, and so I have been offering free evening classes each week, for over half a year now"].

*"The place names....it's the wealth of Gaelic that you get in them. And what you can learn, they are amazing historical sources as well. So that is attractive to me"*

*"Tha Gàidhlig cudromach airson Glaschu, airson na h-Alba"* ["Gaelic is important for Glasgow, for Scotland"]

*"Mo bheannachd air Baile Ghlaschu! Tha e na chuis naire dhomhsa gu bheil barrachd uidh aig coimhearsnachdan a' bhaile mhor sa chanan na tha aig a' choimhearsnachd air an eilean far an deach m'arach"* ["Well done Glasgow! It's a disgrace to me that the communities of the city are more interested in the language than the communities on the island where I was raised"]

### Improved mental health and wellbeing

*"Tha coimhearsnachd cho cudromach do fèin-aithne agus mar sin do deagh shunnd neach sam bith, agus tha coimhearsnachd na Gàidhlig feumail do mhòran 's bu chòr dha a neartachadh"* ["Community is so important to self-identity and therefore to anyone's good wellbeing and the Gaelic community is necessary to many and it should be strengthened"]

*"And there's also a cultural significance and it has enriched my life. Because I can do two things, I can look at BBC Alba, and also at Channel 4. And what is bad about that?"*

*"It does add to your mental well being I would say if you manage to engage with your native language, even if it's sort of, even if you were never a fully fluent speaker...it reduces your stress and you also get quite a lot of pleasure in it when you see and you know you are making progress"*

*"If inclusion and diversity and all the rest of it is important (which it is), it is the same principle when it comes to language, especially minority languages. The difficulty is we're even more invisible. And we're also not on a list of protected characteristics. I'm not saying we're more important in terms of access and inclusion compared to folk from whatever other background, I'm not saying it's an either or. It's a plus. We should be in the mix."*

*"Learning Gaelic gives all much confidence and so very powerful tool and medium for learning/wellbeing"*

*"Online church services are an important help for many and introduced/much improved internet skills for older people especially, giving comfort/contact for widowed/lonely ... and give access where there no other opportunities places to use/reuse/revive their Gaelic"*

*"Gaelic learners are overall a diverse community of learners<sup>84</sup>: it suggests those from/joining a minority language community are different from those learning French/German etc..."*

<sup>84</sup> Additional evidence about those interested in, and supportive, of Gaelic being a more diverse community can be found in the Glasgow Household Survey (2019) which found that, "Those most likely to be encouraged to find

*because classes for such majority learners in school/uni would tend to be all the same. Gaelic and Church communities both offer intergenerational, varying backgrounds, opportunities definitely to speak to for example over 60s outwith family. Learning Gaelic context therefore breaks down generational and other barriers"*

### **Increased happiness**

*"Gaelic makes people happy. It makes enough people happy to matter. It adds to the sort of happiness indicator which the Nordic countries are much more advanced in appreciating"*

*"The most important thing I would say, and we don't see it often enough, is that it just enriches people's lives. And that might be through a passive thing of enjoying the songs, enjoying the music. But also, once you immerse yourself in the language, and in the culture, it's a way of making friendships, making acquaintances, getting to know people on a deeper level. And I think being part of a network, even if it's an informal network, is actually a very positive thing, certainly in today's dispersed world"*

*"Iain Noble once referred to this as one of the problems that Scotland had, a sort of cultural desertification that was taking place. A lack of identity, a lack of culture, a lack of belonging, and feeling of belonging. And Gaelic has a place of making people feel cultured and of belonging. And many of the problems of drug addiction and alcoholism, in other minority language communities such as the Native American communities arose from not feeling you belonged. It was very much an issue of alienation."*

*"Tha a' Ghàidhlig gu math cudromach do Ghlaschu gu h-eaconomaigeach. Tha obraichean Gàidhlig ann - an t-oilthigh, beagan oifigearan leasachaidh aig buidhnean poblach, FtG, cothrom do dhaoine a tha ag obair air an ceann fhèin tron Ghàidhlig (ceòl, eadar-theangachadh, sgrìobhadh, teagasg Gàidhlig 7c) agus tha tòrr dhaoine ann le sgilean Gàidhlig"* ["Gaelic is economically very important to Glasgow. There are Gaelic jobs – the university, a few development officers at public organisations, GME, opportunities for self-employed people who work through Gaelic (music, translation, writing, teaching Gaelic and many people with Gaelic skills"]

*"Tha comainn Ghàidhlig agus Ghàidhealach ann an Glaschu, agus mu chuairt, leithid An Comann Sgitheanach, Comann Leòdhais agus na Hearradh, smsaa, a bhitheas a' coinneachadh gu cunbhalach ann an talachan pobalach a' toirt cothrom do dhaoine a bhith a' cur ri eaconamachd a' Bhaile agus a bhios a' togail airgid a thèid a chleachdadh gu math an t-sluaigh air fad ann an iomadach dòigh, agus a bhios cuideachd a' cur ri sonas agus fèin aithne dhaoine san fharsaingeachd"* ["There are Gaelic and Highland associations in and around Glasgow such as the Skye Association, The Lewis and Harris Association etc. that meet regularly in public halls giving people the opportunity to add to the City's economy and raise money that is used well for the people in many ways that also adds to people's happiness and self-identity in general"].

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out more about Gaelic language and culture were: • younger respondents (33% of 16-24 year olds and 25% of 25-34 year olds compared with 19% overall); • BEM respondent (24% compared with 18% of non-BEM respondents)..." (p.17) see <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=46672&p=0>

### ANNEX 3: SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES FROM CONVERSATIONS

#### Issues and Opportunities around Gaelic's Links to Wellbeing

This annex summarises the key themes around the links between Gaelic and wellbeing that emerged from the Conversations stage of the research. It highlights the key issues and opportunities around Gaelic and wellbeing from the perspective of both those involved in the current (and developing) wellbeing policy landscape as well as those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world at the current time. It also reflects on the key areas where consultees feel that Gaelic does have links to, and contributes towards, wellbeing – something that is explored in more detail in other sections and annexes of this report.

Setting the wider context for the study, consultees (especially those working in Gaelic roles) clearly appreciated the **importance of showing the relevance of Gaelic to wellbeing** in order to highlight the link and contribution of Gaelic to the Scottish Government's current focus on wellbeing.

It is clear to many of those consulted who are directly involved in Gaelic, and involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world, that **Gaelic plays a role in supporting and contributing to wellbeing** – and various examples were offered highlighting the contribution (see later in this annex and other sections and annexes of the report for key examples). However, some of those working in Gaelic roles do concede to not having given too much consideration to the wellbeing aspects of Gaelic.

*"There is a relationship, isn't there between Gaelic and wellbeing, but I suppose it depends on where these [two concepts] are crossing – the context. For me, at least I haven't thought about this in huge detail, but I suppose a lot of it is about the context within which Gaelic and well-being come together – as a concept, as a kind of framework, where they intersect."*

Reflecting the issues around the **lack of a commonly accepted definition of wellbeing** (see below for more detail), one consultee noted that *"if wellbeing is seen to involve the concepts of a fulfilled life in all aspects, then in the Gaelic community people do have a genuine sense of identity and community through their shared culture"*.

However, some of those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world feel that there is a **misunderstanding and lack of recognition about Gaelic and wellbeing** – not helped by the aforementioned lack of clarity around the concept of wellbeing – described as *"an opaque concept"* by one consultee.

Also, there is **notable concern from some consultees about the wider impacts on wellbeing due to the challenges facing the traditional Gaelic communities**. A key concern highlighted by some is that if the traditional Gaelic communities are facing clear economic and social challenges then the wellbeing of those in these areas and communities will be negatively affected by this. As such, the impact of the wider economic and social context on the wellbeing of individuals in these areas is a key issue around the links between Gaelic and wellbeing.

There was very little, or no, awareness of examples of the use of wellbeing and Gaelic together for many of the consultees that are involved in the current and developing wellbeing policy landscape. As such, there is clearly work to do here to address this lack of awareness and appreciation.



This issue of limited – “*very little*” – consideration being given by non-Gaelic organisations (i.e., those involved in the wellbeing policy landscape) about Gaelic’s role around wellbeing – clearly echoes the issues highlighted in the Gaelic Economy in Glasgow study<sup>85</sup> about the level of consideration given to Gaelic’s economic role and contribution by those not directly involved in Gaelic.

As one consultee reflected that *"quite frankly it wasn't a consideration that had ever been raised by anyone working with [them individually] in the field of wellbeing."*

Another consultee, one who is involved in a general, local policy role, reflected that wellbeing is a *"contextual concept"* – something that is in the background of many policy-related discussions, but not something that has been explicitly discussed in and of itself.

For many of those involved in wellbeing policy, there is a reflection that there is a wide range of policies and activities that contribute to wellbeing (including Gaelic), but the focus of wellbeing policy is primarily through the lens of the economy and how the economy and economic activity contribute to wellbeing. As such, some of those involved in wellbeing policy see the impact of improving wellbeing (especially for rural/remote areas) as a way of the wellbeing economy helping to support more resilient communities, and resultantly helping to sustain the population in these areas, and therefore support Gaelic communities in this way – so it is **seen to be more about the contribution of developing a wellbeing economy to support Gaelic as much as/more than Gaelic’s contribution to wellbeing.**

Notwithstanding this, some of those consulted who are involved in the wellbeing policy landscape rather than directly involved in Gaelic roles or activities do reflect on some of the areas where Gaelic does contribute to, or have links with, wellbeing. One common area is around the **'cultural capital' aspects of Gaelic** – e.g., via tourism, festivals, arts, etc. – as well as around **Gaelic Medium Education (GME)**. This is typically where Gaelic’s role is considered for those outside of the Gaelic world rather than in other areas of the wellbeing economy.

This position is confirmed in recent correspondence from the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy in relation to this research (see later in this Annex for a copy of a letter received in February 2024) which stated that: *"Languages, including Gaelic, are fundamental to Scotland's identity, heritage and culture – and thus our collective wellbeing"* and also that: *"The daily use of Gaelic and Scots remains important to many of our communities and education is key to their continued success"*.

In addition, some of the consultees not involved in Gaelic do **reflect on the broader role of language generally** (rather than Gaelic specifically) **around wellbeing** – and the links that language development can provide in terms of self-determination, helping with a sense of connectedness, and relationship control. These examples around language highlight the importance of self-determination in improving and maintaining wellbeing at individual and community level.

Similarly, other consultees note that multiculturalism, networking and exposure to and experience of wider communities, cultures and languages improve wellbeing and these dimensions of social life *"can and should be measured"*.

However, in general, whilst there is an acceptance that there is a link between Gaelic and wellbeing, there is typically little done about it, or very much consideration given to it, by those working in wellbeing policy.

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<sup>85</sup> <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/29502>

As noted above, there are issues around wellbeing in relation to the **lack of a commonly accepted definition of wellbeing**, and the **different conceptions of wellbeing** that there are for individuals and for communities.

As such, there is recognition from those working in wellbeing that it is important to agree on terminology, especially as wellbeing economics and wellbeing lacks clear definition, or suffers from a multiplicity of definitions, which can be problematic. As one consultee reflected, "*wellbeing economics means developing an economy to serve the people and create outcomes for the people rather than vice versa*".

Therefore, some of these **wider issues around wellbeing policy are important aspects to consider in exploring and identifying Gaelic's role and links** to wellbeing.

Consultees reflect that this can include issues around approaches to/uses of subjective measures of wellbeing, issues and challenges around measurement and definition of health-related wellbeing outcomes, wider considerations about the uncertainties on both how and what to measure around wellbeing economics, and the use of proxy measures to capture different aspects of wellbeing.

Some of those involved in wellbeing policy emphasise that wellbeing, for some, is focused on the essential 'tangibles' – e.g., housing, food, poverty – but that there is recognition of the role that culture, language, heritage and history can have in wellbeing. There is acknowledgement that "*they can help build a sense of community*" – but in the context that they are not regarded as being at the core of wellbeing in the same way that housing, food, poverty, etc. is.

Building on this, and as noted above, the appreciation of Gaelic's role and contribution to wellbeing is not strongly evident from consultees working in the wellbeing policy landscape. However, the consultations also highlight that this is **possibly/probably not a Gaelic-specific issue, but more of a broader issue around culture more generally and the appreciation of its role around wellbeing**.

Some consultees reflect that culture is almost absent from the literature on wellbeing economics, but also consider that this is an issue that should be easily resolvable. Consultees involved in wellbeing policy and research suggest that 'culture', broadly defined, should be an objective of a wellbeing economy; and as such, wellbeing economics and a wellbeing economy should support culture, heritage and language in all its guises/manifestations. This can also include an appreciation within wellbeing economics of aspiration and achievement of better economic outcomes within a wellbeing context through creative and cultural activities.

Furthermore, consultees also point out that cultural activities can provide ways in which to achieve a wellbeing economy: "*a wellbeing economy needs people to have common terminologies, conversations, networking, etc*" and "*a wellbeing economy needs to have a common space for narrative, truth, discourse*" and within this, that culture – including Gaelic – can help around these aspects in the transition to a wellbeing economy.

Therefore, **for some, Gaelic's role in wellbeing is as a contributor**, i.e., Gaelic can contribute to wellbeing in various ways. **For others, Gaelic can benefit from a wellbeing economy** – in that if society, culture and the wellbeing economy are flourishing, then people will be more active in heritage, culture, and also socially and in a community role – spending more time with family and friends, neighbours, in greater social interactions – all of which is very good for mental health and wellbeing. As such, it is a "*complex and complicated landscape*" where consultees acknowledge it is "*difficult to unpick different effects and causalities*".



A very strong theme that emerged from the consultations for those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world at the current time, is about the **negative wellbeing aspects surrounding the criticism of, and treatment of, Gaelic.**

This can manifest itself in various ways, and consultees highlighted a number of examples where **negativity, criticism and a lack of support, surrounding Gaelic can have an impact** on people in Gaelic communities and those involved in the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world – negatively affecting their (mental) wellbeing if Gaelic is being opposed and attacked.

These negative wellbeing issues for Gaelic can include:

- The impact of **general criticism and negativity surrounding Gaelic** through societal attitudes, and the way in which Gaelic can be used as a *"political football"*.

This includes the discrimination and attitudes about Gaelic; and there are still challenges here for Gaelic speakers – which can have a negative impact on individual wellbeing.

Those working in Gaelic roles within public policy also reflect that there is a *"constant challenge"* to Gaelic, which is there almost all the time: *"it is hard work working in the Gaelic sector... it is relentless and needs 110% contribution all the time"*; and *"it can wring you dry"* – and as such it can affect (negatively) the wellbeing of those in Gaelic roles.

In addition, some reflect on the way in which Gaelic can be used as a *"political football"*, and highlight that there is a lack of understanding generally, which affects the appreciation of the role of Gaelic on wellbeing in policy spheres.

- The negative wellbeing impacts that result from the **decline in the language and in the traditional Gaelic communities.**

A number of consultees appreciated that the example where, if someone has grown up with Gaelic and witnessed the decline in the language and the decline in traditional Gaelic communities, it can be challenging for them – losing many cultural and community references – and can negatively affect their wellbeing.

An example reflected on by one consultee was around bilingual signage and Gaelic appearing in the linguistic landscape and the expectation that this will help boost the wellbeing of communities that use Gaelic, helping to *"give validity to their existence"*, and emphasising how cultural identity is an important aspect of wellbeing. Importantly, also reflecting that if the reverse were to happen – i.e., the existing bilingualism were to be removed – then this would have a deleterious outcome on wellbeing.

One consultee gave the example of their grandfather who had been brought up in a Gaelic household, but went to an English-speaking school. This was a terrible experience, as were other aspects of the anti-Gaelic sentiments of the authorities at the time. *"In many ways aspects of his life were taken away from him – he wasn't allowed to express himself through his culture. Without Gaelic he definitely lost something in his life, which affected his wellbeing."*

- The negative impact of a **"hostile public policy environment"** for Gaelic. Some say this has improved in recent times compared to previously, but others remain concerned, and describe an **"institutional disregard"** for Gaelic.

One consultee noted that, at one time, it might have been the case that being a Gaelic speaker in a hostile public policy environment might have led to some negative outcomes, that this was less the case now in general. However, others reflected on the **"institutional disregard"** for Gaelic, which can be profound, and also the status (or lack of status) that Gaelic is given

by some, the challenges that this then creates – and the negative social and wellbeing impacts that this can have.

Those involved in Gaelic roles, or work around the understanding of wellbeing issues in the Gaelic world, strongly argue that Scotland needs to learn to celebrate Gaelic in order to be able to "*fully tap into*" the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing. For these consultees, Gaelic is not celebrated enough within Scotland – arguing that, as supported by evidence<sup>86</sup>, some international visitors seem to appreciate Gaelic more than those living in Scotland.

- The "*tokenistic approach*" that can be taken to Gaelic – in terms of support for it within public policy and also the **scale and level of funding provided to support Gaelic** as well as the challenges that Gaelic faces when it is affected by a "*silos approach*" or "*silos mentality*" within public policy.

The silo approach taken towards Gaelic's position in public policy (e.g., a major focusing on GME, and the resultant positioning of Gaelic then within the educational aspects of many mainstream public sector institutions) – doesn't help develop a wider appreciation of the wellbeing links and fuller contribution offered by Gaelic in this field.

Alongside this, consultees feel that the lack of funding for Gaelic, as well as the lack of security of funding for Gaelic, can have negative wellbeing impacts – both on those working in Gaelic roles and also on the resources able to be used to help make and support the case for Gaelic's links and contributions to wellbeing.

Other issues around funding can include the short-termism due to project/time limited funding, and the inefficiencies that this can create. In addition, the lack of funding can also manifest itself in the perception that "*Gaelic doesn't feel celebrated*", and is poorly funded in terms of Gaelic media, which can "*become embarrassing*" – resulting in Gaelic comparing itself poorly when looking at the investment for Welsh language media in Wales, for example.

As such, Gaelic's status within public policy affects its wellbeing role, the wider social and economic infrastructure for (traditional) Gaelic communities affect its wellbeing role, and the lack of sufficient funding affects the wellbeing role of Gaelic. These are the challenges those in the Gaelic world reflect on – some are more positive than others in terms of the direction of travel, but the challenges are well recognised.

One final consideration on these issues around Gaelic's position and the position of Gaelic communities and the negative impact that these various aspects can have on wellbeing, is that it will be important for any subjective wellbeing measures that are developed around Gaelic to show the links between Gaelic and wellbeing to be able to identify and capture these types of negative impacts (and hopefully the diminution of them over time) as well as the more positive aspects reported elsewhere.

On reflecting on these key challenges, it is important to also recognise that despite these challenges, all of those consulted who are involved within Gaelic roles do also highlight many examples of achievements around the links between Gaelic and wellbeing. These are considered elsewhere in this report.

Linking to the point above about wellbeing measures for Gaelic, the consultations also found that **developing approaches to measuring the connection between Gaelic and wellbeing would be very difficult**. This is in part linked to the issues outlined earlier around wellbeing measurement itself. Some consultees offer examples where specific

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/policies/ro-innleachd-turasachd-na-gaidhlig-do-dhalba.pdf>

initiatives (e.g., projects) have a matrix of criteria for assessing and capturing what is being achieved, but that in general it is very difficult to do, with some consultees readily acknowledging the previous issues around standard monetary and economic measures being “really inadequate” in this context.

When asked what evidence there was to measure Gaelic and wellbeing, and how can it best be measured, one consultee reflected that they “[t]hink it’s very difficult to measure really”, and wonders “*what ‘outcomes’ can be conceptualised - it’s difficult*”.

Others reflect that there are a broad set of indicators: for example, around identity, sense of belonging, social connections, time and energy devoted to culture, and the range of cultural experiences accessed which could be measured and would indicate higher or improved wellbeing. There is an acceptance that it is achievable – developing a set of wellbeing measures to reflect and measure Gaelic’s links and contributions to wellbeing – but that this has not yet been done.

Finally, on other aspects of wellbeing, it is interesting to note that some consultees reflected on issues around community wealth-building and how this is different in rural Scotland when compared to urban Scotland, with a greater emphasis on culture, language, heritage and history, and therefore can provide an interesting contrast and a need around wellbeing economy considerations, with there being, resultantly, a **different contrast and different perspective on the role of Gaelic in rural areas compared to urban areas in terms of Gaelic’s links to and contributions towards, wellbeing.**

### The Contribution of Gaelic to Wellbeing – Key Themes

This part of the annex reflects on the key areas where consultees feel that Gaelic does have links to, and contributes towards, wellbeing. This therefore reflects consultee themes, and is complementary to the wider contributions outlined in the rest of this report – i.e., in the Annex 1 literature review and the Annex 3 cases. The findings presented here around the key areas where there are links between Gaelic and wellbeing and, in particular, where Gaelic contributes to wellbeing are also supported by previous research about this<sup>87</sup>.

Whilst a list of separate aspects is set out below, it is also important to recognise that many consultees who are sufficiently aware of Gaelic's contribution to wellbeing to have offered the example below, **emphasised the multifaceted nature of the contribution of Gaelic to wellbeing**, highlighting the wide range of links, and the array of inter-relationships between Gaelic and wellbeing. As such, many of the aspects considered below inter-relate to each other in terms of the role of Gaelic on various different wellbeing benefits and impacts.

The key areas where consultees regarded there to be links between Gaelic and wellbeing and, in particular, where Gaelic contributes to wellbeing were as follows:

In terms of **general wellbeing**, Gaelic is seen as contributing in a wide variety of ways, appealing to different people for different reasons – some for family reasons, which can add to the level of "feel goodness" that people get, others for a mix of different reasons. Generally Gaelic is well recognised as contributing to general wellbeing. As one consultee highlighted: *"But to me, if there wasn't that Gaelic dimension to life here, it would be the poorer for it."*

At the level of **individual wellbeing**, consultees suggest that for native speakers Gaelic is *"core to who you are – how you think, how you imagine life"*, and so it has a role in all aspects of individual wellbeing. As noted by one consultee, Gaelic *"...speaks to my sense of personal identity I suppose in that sense...although I don't spend all day discussing it...I would say it has an impact on a personal level on my sense of well-being."*

The multifaceted nature of the wellbeing connections of Gaelic was also emphasised by consultees around individual wellbeing, where it was noted that Gaelic is *"imbued within communities and still extends and is part of their wellbeing, and it relates to the language... it weaves with economic opportunities, and to social interactions and the environmental, so there is a kind of sustainability dimension to that too, across these different components."*

The **sense of belonging, sense of connection and feeling part of the community** was a key aspect around Gaelic's links to wellbeing for relevant consultees, who reflected on the role it has as *"an element of one's individuality"* with others noting that *"it makes me feel that I belong more to my community"* and that *"I feel a connection to where I come from"* due to Gaelic. *"So, for me, it strengthens the feeling of belonging, gives people a sense of being rooted in the place and the place of belonging."*

Gaelic also has a relationship to a **sense of identity**, and this has an important positive relationship to wellbeing. This sense of identity can be reinforced through having local connections – e.g., to the local landscape, local history, etc. (see below). *"If you have a genuine sense of identity and realise it is somewhat special, different then this can affect their behaviour and interactions positively. People with Gaelic do get a positive sense of wellbeing, when they are able to interact in their mother tongue."*

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<sup>87</sup> See Section 4 of: <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=57783&p=0>

The contribution of Gaelic to **mental health and wellbeing** is also a commonly identified aspect, including the role of Gaelic in helping to support and improve the mental wellbeing of **young people** through increased pride, confidence, etc., that comes from their engagement with Gaelic – both through education and also via extra-curricular activities (see below). Gaelic's role in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of **older people** is also recognised – helping to address and overcome loneliness. This can be through community activities, inter-generational activities, as well as through church-related activities.

The role of Gaelic in care provision for older people was identified by some consultees – both through examples of specific initiatives that are successfully helping and supporting older people to continue to engage in Gaelic through their care provision, but also around the need for more strategic interventions around this.

The **wellbeing links through Gaelic Medium Education** (GME) were also clearly identified by consultees, with the increased interest from parents in sending children to GME in both the traditional Gaelic communities as well as other/newer urban communities being recognised. For those with Gaelic in the family tradition, there is an aspect of continuity of the culture and tradition, whilst for others it is recognised as a "*fantastic way to be become bilingual*" and realise the benefits that this provides. As such, there are various wellbeing benefits of GME for those in both traditional Gaelic communities and also in newer 'typically urban' communities.

On GME and wellbeing, it was also noted by some consultees that there can be concern about the negative impact on wellbeing if parents find that they cannot get access to GME for their child/ren.

Beyond formal education, the **wellbeing benefits of learning Gaelic** as an adult were also noted. Consultees mentioned that the process of being involved in learning (i.e., the learning itself) can impact positively on wellbeing – so in this way language and new skills development around Gaelic can contribute to wellbeing.

Consultees also pointed towards the link between how people feel about their heritage, culture and community, and their **confidence** or *misneachd*<sup>88</sup> in their community and the way in which this adds to strengthening the economy as well as individual and collective wellbeing.

In addition, investment in local communities (many named examples were provided by those consultees involved in Gaelic) with funding and the addition of a "*shiny new building*" has increased the *misneachd* within the community. Furthermore, the examples of community buyouts and the positive economic benefits these can bring (through employment, income, etc.) were highlighted as contributing to wellbeing. Part of this is about such activity helping to develop **confidence** and, importantly, allowing the community to feel that they are "*no longer being supplicants*". Consultees feel that having this *misneachd* in a community with a strong cultural heritage can only make the community stronger.

Another strand of Gaelic's links and contribution to wellbeing relates to the **connections to nature, connections to the past, and better understanding of history** that Gaelic helps support and the increased wellbeing that this engenders. Within this, consultees emphasise the significance of placenames, better connection with nature through understanding Gaelic names, better understanding of the history and heritage of an area, and the role that bringing these to the fore can have on wellbeing around culture, continuity, connections to the past, and heritage through Gaelic. For example, "*there's a really important dimension there, I think, in terms of the way in which Gaelic and the environment interact: I think it's diminishing...it's*

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<sup>88</sup> *misneachd* means 'confidence' but also has meanings beyond that with no direct comparison in English, including 'encouragement' and 'fortitude' both of which, of course, are positively related to wellbeing.

*really important to readdress that relationship between Gaelic, nature, and the landscape and environment."*

These aspects also link back to the sense of identity wellbeing benefits mentioned above, and also link to supporting a better understanding of the history of Scotland as well as specific communities and areas.

*"The fulfilment and self-confidence that comes from your culture being reflected is something that of course varies from area to area and can be boosted."*

*"On Gaelic there are lots of aspects, that impinge positively on people's sense of identity – names of hills if you're mountain climbing, family connections, connections with the diaspora. If Gaelic was to be removed, it would be of huge detriment to Scottish society as a whole."*

The **openness and inclusivity of the Gaelic community** is also noted by consultees as a wellbeing benefit of Gaelic. Consultees reflect that the Gaelic community is open, inclusive, and diverse. For some consultees this is due in part to the benefits of openness developed through bilingualism, whilst others mention that the challenges and criticism faced by Gaelic speakers and Gaelic communities in the past have helped the Gaelic community to be more open and inclusive to others.

Another aspect where there are links between Gaelic and wellbeing is about the **profile of Gaelic** – in the media but also more generally in society. This increased profile and recognition can help to underpin the aspects around confidence and sense of identity discussed above. As such, the profile of Gaelic media and Gaelic in the media is recognised as linking to, and supporting, wellbeing. This is achieved through *"helping to instil and grow a confidence amongst people and communities in the language and use of the language, [and] engaging with it."* Others do recognise that the media has an important role to play in Gaelic and wellbeing – but that it can be positive and negative, and also that diversity in the media is important for improving wellbeing amongst BAME communities: *"If can't see it, can't be it"* e.g., for newsreaders and presenters.

The increased profile of Gaelic is also supported through the increased numbers of those learning Gaelic – e.g., on Duolingo – consultees feel that many learners are *"encouraged and (pleasantly) shocked"* when they see that people are interested in the language and the culture, where even a small number of years ago this would not have been believed. In addition, the profile of Gaelic bands and musicians, and wider arts and culture in Gaelic, helps encourage younger people to see the increased or improved profile of Gaelic.

Clearly, for some there are also **direct economic wellbeing benefits of Gaelic** if they are employed in Gaelic jobs or careers. Consultees highlight that there are clearly economic wellbeing benefits of Gaelic for those in roles such as journalists, actors, scriptwriters, as well as more generally in Gaelic media and the creative industries as well as Gaelic education, all of whom are "making a living from Gaelic".

The links of Gaelic to **intergenerational wellbeing** are also recognised by some consultees. Whilst for some it can be a complicated issue (due, in part, to a lack of self-confidence in the Gaelic abilities of different generations), others clearly identify the intergenerational benefits of Gaelic activities – such as GME school children visiting day care centres – and see *"huge community (and individual) wellbeing benefits of this"*. Bookbug was highlighted as a really good example of Gaelic and intergenerational wellbeing – due to the impact on the parent(s), grandparent(s), family and the child/ren from engaging with it.

On the aspects around **national wellbeing** and Gaelic's role and contribution, whilst this is recognised, building on some of the aspects outlined above (sense of identity, connections,



etc.) some consultees feel that the 'Scotland versus local' situation is complicated. There are some concerns about Gaelic's role in national wellbeing due to the polarisation of views on Gaelic. As a result of which, Gaelic's links to national wellbeing can be both positive and negative.

However, there is clear recognition of the role of Gaelic in supporting identity as outlined above, and this can be at the national as well as community or sub-national levels. For example, one consultee reflected on the Gaelic aspect of the Highland identity being seen as positive, and identified the contribution of the sport and media profile of shinty as an example: *"People are tuning into the Gaelic channel to watch it...this must have some connection with their sense of identity being in the Highlands. For Gaelic speakers, seeing part of their identity being broadcast must be part of national wellbeing."*

In addition, others reflect on the community wellbeing role of Gaelic and the fact that this is now recognised in the cities as well as the traditional Gaelic areas: *"It is more positive now, and there is more understanding in policy in the Central Belt now"*. As such, consultees emphasise that there are likely to be different needs, and different wellbeing benefits, in different types of areas (e.g., urban compared to traditional Gaelic areas).

Finally, the role of Gaelic around **cultural wellbeing** was well recognised. This was seen to be engendered through for example the Fèis which *"has had a massive influence on the wellbeing of our children allowing other children to come from the mainland, to be with them, and it strengthened the possibility for them to learn dancing, music and all that kind of stuff."*

There is clear recognition that access to the arts and culture is important to wellbeing, and Gaelic plays a role in this through the provision of Gaelic arts and culture – through activities at the local, national and international level.



## Copy of Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy

Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy  
Mairi McAllan MSP



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Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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21 February 2024

Dear Professor Danson,

You posed a question to my predecessor, Neil Gray, at the Wellbeing Economy cross-party group virtual meeting on 8 December 2023, about his view on the connection between the Gaelic language and wellbeing. I have picked up this correspondence in my role as Cabinet Secretary Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy. I trust this letter will go some way to responding to your question and I apologise for the delay in responding.

Languages, including Gaelic, are fundamental to Scotland's identity, heritage and culture – and thus our collective wellbeing. The daily use of Gaelic and Scots remains important to many of our communities and education is key to their continued success. We will continue to work with communities and organisations to meet the growing interest in Gaelic and Scots education, recognising also the wider economic benefits.

Our commitment to Gaelic reflects the cultural legacy and importance of the language in Scotland. We are committed to protecting, respecting and fulfilling the fundamental rights of Gaelic speakers in Scotland and support the UN approach in advocating the protection of cultural diversity.

Our languages are an important asset in our transition to a Wellbeing Economy. Scotland's culture and creative sectors can play a key role in moving towards a Wellbeing Economy that values and promotes cultural identity and civic engagement. Research into the economic value of Gaelic has found that it contributed £82 million - £149 million to the Scottish economy in 2011 and 34% of visitors were interested to find out about the Gaelic language or it had enhanced their visit to Scotland in 2016.

In 2021, research on the contribution of Gaelic media to the economy and communities found the sector was responsible for £17 million gross value added and 340 jobs, with a return on investment of £1.34 for every pound spent.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

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I therefore look forward to seeing the conclusions of your research on the Gaelic economy once published. If you would like to discuss these issues further with our Chief Economist, Gary Gillespie, I would be grateful if you could contact [Terri.Williamson@gov.scot](mailto:Terri.Williamson@gov.scot) to make the necessary arrangements.

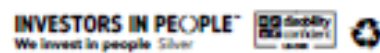
Yours sincerely,



**MÀIRI MCALLAN**

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## ANNEX 4: CASE STUDIES

Case Study Place/Name	natural capital	social capital	human capital	economic capital
BBC/MG Alba		√	√	√
City of Glasgow		√	√	√
Comunn Eachdraidh Nis		√	√	
<i>Cultúrlann, Northern Ireland</i>		√	√	√
<i>Felin Uchaf, Wales</i>	√	√	√	√
Film G		√	√	√
Galson	√	√	√	√
Guthan nan Eilean		√	√	
<i>Māori, New Zealand</i>	√	√	√	√
North Uist Sunnd Project		√	√	
People of Glasgow		√	√	√
Portree and Braes Community Trust		√	√	
An Taigh Cèilidh		√	√	
Tiree Community Development Trust	√	√	√	√
Urras Ceann a Tuath na Hearadh (North Harris Trust)	√	√	√	√

### Case Study 1. BBC ALBA

In 1991 the Gaelic Broadcasting Fund was set up with £9.5m administered by the Gaelic Television Committee whose remit was later extended to radio. In 2003 the Gaelic Media Services were formed (MG ALBA<sup>89</sup>) and in 2007 a new partnership was formed with the BBC to launch the BBC ALBA service in September 2008, available initially on digital satellite only, then extended to digital terrestrial (Freeview) in June 2011, and later to cable providers in Scotland.

Alba is, of course, the Gaelic word for Scotland so the choice of this in the title was important in referencing not only Gaelic but also the inclusive concept of the whole of Scotland, and not just Gaelic-speaking areas – something important in terms of wellbeing impact outwith the Gàidhealtachd.

#### A service aiming at inclusivity

All BBC ALBA adult programmes (except live programmes) have open English language subtitles enabling access for the majority of deaf viewers as well as to hearing viewers who do not speak or understand Gaelic. Since its inception, the approach of BBC ALBA to broadcast is also cross-media through BBC ALBA, Radio nan Gàidheal and online, with complementary content and resources on TV, radio, online and on social media. In terms of its remit, BBC ALBA therefore aims to deliver programming of value to communities of interest across Scotland, including news, music, sport and documentary.

The overall viewing figures for the BBC ALBA channel have in general well surpassed the original projections, which were set by the BBC Trust in 2008 to be at least 250,000 people on a weekly basis. According to audience research by TNS-BRMB, overall viewing figures have at times been in excess of 600,000 viewers with a mid-2013 peak at 780,000 viewers. According to BBC ALBA figures, this represents 15% of the Scottish audience over 16 years of age. Indeed, Ofcom's annual reports on BBC ALBA<sup>90</sup> over a six-year period from 2008 to 2014 indicated that audiences, when asked whether BBC ALBA was a worthwhile thing for the BBC to be spending the licence fee on, answered positively, with between 41% and 66% of respondents agreeing with this statement with a Likert-scale score of 8, 9 or 10, 10 indicating "strongly agree".

#### Wellbeing during the COVID-19 Pandemic

##### Personal wellbeing

From March 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic almost completely dominated the news agenda on BBC ALBA and Radio nan Gàidheal, including nearly all community-level stories. News is a core component of BBC ALBA services and the maintenance of regular news programming and bulletins was treated as an immediate priority. The new social distancing rules initially resulted in a slightly reduced duration of news slots on radio and TV and to fill the gap in the TV news slot two new inserts were created – a community information slot *Fiosrachadh* (information) alongside a new well-being / inspirational strand called *A-Staigh* (At Home).

Given the very tight restrictions on access to Gaelic-speaking communities and the rapid development of new ways to access Gaelic-speaking contributors, viewers were encouraged to send in reports of how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected them.

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<sup>89</sup> <https://mgalba.com/>

<sup>90</sup> [https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/83276/annex\\_3.iii-audience\\_opinions\\_bbc\\_alba.pdf](https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/83276/annex_3.iii-audience_opinions_bbc_alba.pdf)

One of the early tragic reports in the COVID-19 pandemic was the coverage of deaths in a care home in the Isle of Skye – something which Gaelic news led on in terms of coverage.

### **Social capital through language learning**

Over the last few years, MG ALBA and the BBC worked in collaboration with partners, including the Gaelic college Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to develop *Speak Gaelic* which is a new 'digital first', multiplatform brand through which they are hoping to 'create, deliver and streamline resources to attract and inspire people to Speak Gaelic'. It is aimed to be accessible to Gaelic learners of varying abilities and it replaced the previous radio-based *Beag air Bheag* (Step by Step) offering.

### **Community wellbeing and solidarity**

Similar to the manner in which news gathering became localised during the COVID-19 pandemic there has been an increased demand for and supply of community focused programmes in general (something which has continued), with one of the knock-on effects being the creation on radio of a slot for *Rannan Beaga* (lockdown poetry) which has proved very popular.

Fridays (especially evenings) on Radio nan Gàidheal have always relied heavily on request programming, which also came into its own during the COVID-19 pandemic, being extended and being used to solidify links between families and within communities unable to meet face-to-face. During the strictest periods of lockdown which limited attendance at funerals to 5, families took advantage of this aspect of programming to mention and celebrate the lives of those the community had lost.

### **Aiming at wellbeing for younger generations**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the children's team continued to produce content on a weekly basis including daily links for Childrens BBC (CBBC). With the advent of home schooling at the end of March, BBC ALBA's daily children's schedule between 5 and 7 pm was adapted to incorporate learning content from early April. With lockdown came home-schooling for the majority of Scotland's children. BBC ALBA supported this with special schedules and collections of education programmes and resources. Maths and phonics series for early years' learners were broadcast on the linear channel, along with science and nature programmes for upper primary, with catch-up for all in a newly created iPlayer collection *Ionnsaich le BBC ALBA*<sup>91</sup> (Learn with BBC ALBA). All of the Gaelic Bitesize animations for primary school content were also made available on iPlayer. This was supported with the launch of a new BBC ALBA YouTube channel<sup>92</sup> featuring short form children's and youth content such as stories and fun links with songs from CBBC and CBeebies ALBA. During this period the popular Saturday morning children's programme *Aileag* was stripped down in focus, and presented a simplified programme talking to children about their pastimes during lockdown, and playing their music requests, something which helped counteract the isolation which was widespread for young people during this period.

### **Using BBC ALBA to stimulate discussion on health and wellbeing**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Scotland's then First Minister (FM) Nicola Sturgeon gave daily broadcasts (in English) regarding Covid. Whilst the FM's broadcasts dealt at some length with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and where they impacted rural and sometimes minority

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<sup>91</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p087fhw2>

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9QfDPou5ir62PFnMePbqDg>

language speaking areas, there was no consideration of any special impact on minority language communities.

The contents of the FM's broadcasts were discussed regularly however in the Radio nan Gàidheal *Aithris na Maidne*<sup>93</sup> (Morning Report) programme and in the popular conversational programmes such as *Prògram Choinneach*<sup>94</sup> with Gaelic-based commentary on events as they unfolded. This was also the case on the Gaelic TV evening news spot *An Là*<sup>95</sup>.

The positive impact of Gaelic language broadcasting to English-speaking communities has on occasion been noted, although in general English language media rarely comments on matters pertinent to the Gaelic language community. It may be worth noting however two unexpected compliments given to Gaelic output recently by the 'establishment backed' Sunday Times:

*"Operating on a tiny budget with programmes targeted at a Gaelic-speaking Scottish audience, it would be easy to overlook BBC ALBA if it didn't keep making such lyrical and engaging documentaries. The latest is this half-hour wonder about the life of the Pittsburgh-born folk-archivists Margaret Fay Shaw." (Sunday Times On Demand Picks).*

*"Sometimes it is a relief not to fully understand what is going on. The Gaelic language BBC Radio nan Gàidheal, broadcasting from Stornoway, Lewis, was commended recently for airing more interesting music than many of its network rivals. It's true." (Sunday Times)*

### Related information:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/naidheachdan>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tv/bbcalba>

<https://mgalba.com>

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<sup>93</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007jddy>

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000nmtx>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00drynf>

### Case Study 2. City of Glasgow Wellbeing

In 2021-22, a study of the Gaelic economy in Glasgow included detailed analysis of the economic value of Gaelic, showing the growth in its use, and illustrating how the language and culture impacted on the wellbeing of Glasgow and its citizens. The research was extensive and included a survey of individuals and focus groups about Gaelic and Wellbeing in the city. The results revealed the range of ways in which Gaelic contributes to economic and social wellbeing for those with Gaelic who live, work, or study in and around Glasgow.

#### Human capital

Glasgow has been a pioneer in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and the city offers more GME provision and across more subjects than anywhere else in the world, confirming the significance of the city's Gaelic education provision for the nation and the language. Although there were higher pupil-teacher ratios and average class sizes, costs for the provision of GME were demonstrated to be no greater than average, at all stages and qualification levels. Further, the percentages of pupils gaining awards was and continues to be significantly better than Scottish national averages and for similar schools and pupils. Therefore, these performances are beyond expectations given the balanced intake from areas of deprivation.

The life and economy of Glasgow continue to be enhanced through further and higher education, adult and community learning enriching the city's status as a leading place of lifelong and inclusive learning, research and knowledge exchange. The contributions to identity, literature, culture and heritage confirm the role of Gaelic in this cosmopolitan city.

These significant findings confirmed there are substantial net benefits to the city overall from Gaelic bilingual education, in terms of education outcomes for Glasgow but also in offering considerably higher value for money than expected. As students graduate from school and higher education into work, there are further strong positive benefits to the supply of skilled, qualified labour in the local economy, appreciably improving human capital in the city and beyond.

#### Economic capital

The report to the City Council suggested there were more than 200 Gaelic-essential posts (a combination of full-time and part-time positions) equating to around 154 FTE jobs. In addition, organisations identified a wider range of posts currently filled by individuals with some level of Gaelic ability (including those fluent in Gaelic) as well as roles that will become Gaelic-essential posts but have not yet been designated as such. Beyond these, there were Gaelic desirable posts identified and other posts that are not Gaelic-essential/desirable but where the positions are dedicated to the delivery of Gaelic-related services and goods.

In aggregate, and just in the organisations cooperating with the study, it was estimated there were almost 300 jobs in the city (equivalent to 235 FTE jobs), and this was undoubtedly an underreporting of the overall scale of Gaelic essential/desirable posts.

The importance of the creative industries – most notably the media – for the Gaelic economy in Glasgow was highlighted in the research, with education also a significant sector.

Complementing this, more than £20 million of investment in Gaelic was identified for the most recent year (2020-21). As with the sectoral patterns for employment, the media and creative industries (including arts and cultural provision) were the dominant area accounting for more than half of this total, followed by education provision (especially primary and secondary Gaelic Medium Education).



### **Social capital and wellbeing**

The survey and focus groups of speakers and learners demonstrated that 79% were in employment (either full time (63%) or part time (16%)), with an almost equal split between those for whom Gaelic is critical, highly important or moderately important for their current employment situation (49.7%) and those for whom Gaelic has no role at all or is of minor importance for their current employment situation (50.3%).

As is clear from other work, regular volunteering is associated with being active in other ways including learning a language, itself correlated with positive wellbeing.

Specifically on the contribution that Gaelic has to the wellbeing of Gaelic speakers and learners and their families, a series of positive attitudes and feelings were expressed. For more than three-quarters of respondents, Gaelic was shown to have very strong positive impacts around national and local pride, sense of identity, pride in local community, individual mental health and wellbeing, and happiness:

- Increased interest in Scotland and/or increased pride in Scotland (86%)
- Greater sense of own identity (82%)
- Greater pride in your local community (81%)
- Improved mental health and wellbeing (77%)
- Increased happiness (77%)

### **Natural capital**

Active citizens' interests and enjoyment of the natural environment were seen as enhanced through learning Gaelic placenames, and related to this, there was a greater connection and inclusivity felt with parts of Scotland's identity and with its history. For more than half of those surveyed, greater understanding of, and engagement with, nature and the outdoors enhanced their wellbeing through Gaelic. By getting people's 'stories told' and making people feel represented lessens alienation.

### Case Study 3. Comunn Eachdraidh Nis

Comunn Eachdraidh Nis (Ness Historical Society) is part of a network of over 20 Historical Societies in the Western Isles. It aims to record, preserve and promote the history, language and culture of North Lewis for local and global communities, and also aims to promote social health and wellbeing through a range of activities for all ages, with Gaelic at the heart of their activities.

Based in the former Cross Primary School, in North Dell, the organisation, through its museum, café and community activities provides a service that has the wellbeing of the community at the centre of its everyday practice.

Retaining intimate connections with the Dualchas (heritage/history/culture/tradition) of the area, Comunn Eachdraidh Nis has operated for over 40 years in the community and has evolved with the changes in the community itself.

#### Social and human capital

Believing that a living connection to the past, and a modern view of the future can be intrinsically linked, Comunn Eachdraidh Nis uses the newly adapted building (2019) to serve a multiplicity of functions around which the community can focus, and many of which have a wellbeing focus.

The museum and exhibition area – both bilingual – in this modern and ecologically sustainable building are a constant reminder of the context in which today's Niseachs live and work.

Major exhibitions link the heritage and history of the area to those living locally – either native to the area, or those who have found their way to the area and decided to stay.

The subjects of the exhibitions of the past have included the re-creation of a 'sgoth' style sailing boat 'An Sùlaire' – originally constructed according to this style in the 1990s but linking back to the longer term tradition of Ness being a fishing community – which still remains part of its heritage and some of its current economic activity.

Another exhibition examined the links between the people of Ness and the yearly expedition to hunt 'guga' – young gannets, found on the very inhospitable island of Sùlaisgeir.

There have been people living in the Ness area since Neolithic times (10,000 – 2200 BCE) and this reality featured in an exhibition of pottery from this time, together with a hammer, grinding stones and implements for shaping bone tools and arrowheads – all found in the local Loch Marabhat.

The late Bronze Age (1000 – 800 BCE) also features in the current exhibition An Tilleadh (The Return) which features Bronze Age artefacts found near Adabrock, Ness in 1910.

Photography also plays a key role in the linking of the past to living present, and Nis Aosmhor (Historic Ness) featuring black and white photographs from the 1930s to the 1990s was the subject of a popular exhibition, with weekly photos still appearing every Wednesday on CEN's Facebook page.

The Facebook page is very popular having gained 2.6k followers, and hosting bilingual posts in both Gaelic and English. The CEN website offers a Gaelic or English version, and also contains links to Gaelic resources for those in the community wishing to refresh or add to their abilities. Every year they host additional activities in Seachdain na Gàidhlig (National Gaelic Week).

### **Research into current and past reality of Ness**

Comunn Eachdraidh Nis has hosted an archive, open to the public by appointment, for the last 40 years and is currently updating its inventory of this. In connection with the archive, the centre offers 'Bronze, Silver and Gold' packages which supply local croft histories, including aerial photographs, a Gaelic glossary of local placenames, details of WW1 losses relevant to the applicant's family, and in one of the packages local tours and, for those outwith the area, contact with living relatives if possible.

### **Connectivity and welfare of those with difficulties in travelling and the elderly**

In a community consultation conducted by Comunn Eachdraidh Nis in 2022, transport emerged as a prominent barrier preventing some residents from engaging in social activities. This discovery emphasised the urgent need for improved transport options to foster greater inclusivity and participation among all community members.

Following an additional survey involving participants of their day club service, it was found that a substantial 80% of respondents experienced some form of mobility issue. These individuals identified a range of journeys they would undertake if provided access to suitable transportation. These journeys include attending local clubs, football matches, day trips, medical appointments, and travel to the airport or ferry terminal.

As a result of this, and through the support of a Motability's Community Transport Grant, Comunn Eachdraidh Nis now offers an accessible vehicle designed to accommodate wheelchair users and those with limited mobility. Comunn Eachdraidh Nis see this as a significant milestone in their ongoing commitment to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of the community's disabled members. They believe that mobility challenges, when combined with social isolation and loneliness, can significantly impact individuals' physical and mental health, as well as their overall quality of life and longevity.

In addition to offering their accessible transport initiative, Comunn Eachdraidh Nis also delivers a lunch service, with bilingual Gaelic and English quiz sheets from the archives to over 60s in the area and provides a weekly Day Club every Thursday.

### **Economic Capital**

#### **Sustainability at the heart of the operation**

The modernised building has a renewable heating system, and is establishing electric car charging points in the near future, while the work of the café draws on the production from their local Polycrub and helping to develop local supply chains from the community. Comunn Eachdraidh Nis currently employs a sustainability development officer, and the shop also supports local art and craft producers. Staff are employed under the Scottish Government's Fair Work First policy guidelines.

### Case Study 4. Cultúrlann, Northern Ireland

Within Northern Ireland, there has been a revival in the Irish language and a number of cultural centres have been established in the last few decades building on the model from Ireland as a whole. These 'Cultúrlanna' are located across the country and are networked into their wider communities with potential lessons for Scotland. Indeed in 2009, Fèisean nan Gàidheal was considering the feasibility of establishing centres along the lines of the Irish Cultúrlann model, envisaging an infrastructure of Gaelic 'hubs' where Gaelic organisations could work together as social and cultural centres, with learning spaces and cafés<sup>96</sup>.

#### Social capital

Establishing and promoting the Irish language and culture within the context of Northern Ireland has been especially demanding but there has been great progress in Cultúrlann across rural communities, towns and cities and across divides. Because of the recent history of the Troubles, the difficulties and challenges in these developments have been several degrees greater than in Scotland. Bonding capital has been facilitated by the centres within different communities in Belfast (West Belfast: Cultúrlann McAdam Ó Fiaich; East Belfast: Turas), Armagh (Aonach Mhacha), Derry (Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin) and Limavady (Leim An Mhadaidh). Turas, for instance, aims to connect people from Protestant communities to their own history with the Irish language because it is based on the belief that 'the language belongs to everyone and that it can be a mechanism of reconciliation'.

Crucially, and despite or maybe because of the peculiar context of Northern Ireland, bridging capital has also been evident and significant with 'connections that link people across a cleavage that typically divides society (such as race, or class, or religion)'. The Cultúrlanna are offering that 'bridge' between communities, groups, and organisations. Turas, located in the East Belfast Baptist Mission, provides workshops and talks on the historic links between Protestants and the Irish language, as well as discussions around the relevance of the language in present-day society. Other Cultúrlanna similarly offer opportunities for networking and lifelong learning and so are building and affirming identity, 'at a symbolic level rather than just flegs'. Such efforts by nature are limited but they serve to increase plurality, respect for different identities, and promote multilingual connections which historically in ways have not usually been possible. These have demonstrable positive impacts on individual and community wellbeing.

It is noteworthy that language and culture activists in Northern Ireland look to Scotland for good practice, including regarding wellbeing indicators. In particular, the Scottish Government's description of wellbeing in terms of eight indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI) was referenced as being of relevance in several ways to local circumstances. A Cultúrlann or other facility where members of a community specifically felt 'Safe', 'Respected', 'Included' is emphasised by commentators as being crucial in improving wellbeing for the individual and the community. Being able to confirm your identity, to have your heritage and traditions recognised and respected and being able to enjoy these in a safe environment are appreciated by participants across the country, including from nationalist and unionist, catholic and protestant communities.

Contrasts between parts of the north where speaking Irish has been associated with poverty and lack of social mobility, with shame, embarrassment and lack of self-esteem, and the much more positive attitudes in the Dingle peninsula where enterprises and tourism have sustained

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<sup>96</sup> Developments around this continue presently, with a key example being Cultarlann Inbhir Nis <https://cultarlann.scot>.

self-confidence in initiating conversations in Irish suggest some parallels between the Irish Gaeltacht and the Scottish Gàidhealtachd. In Northern Ireland addressing the former mindsets about how the language is used and changing official behaviours and beliefs is recognised as a long-term project but “when those communities can speak and use Irish, live their lives in Irish, register their children in the Irish language ... then all these aspects of life will be improving their feelings of being Safe, Respected and Included and so improve their and their community’s wellbeing, and ultimately the wellbeing economy”. The centres therefore have been having a key role to play in self-efficacy which is very important in health and mental health.

### **Economic capital**

Cultúrlanna present very good examples of positive stories in Northern Ireland of Irish cultural milieu, offering a full range of goods and services, activities, etc. Regarding culture, they offer a very creative environment, promoting the bardic poetry tradition in a safe environment which breaks down barriers across boundaries. Allowing people agency over their lives and spend is supporting new enterprises and in fostering community development with resulting improvements in economic activity. The most pertinent indicators in SHANARRI are seen as key to nurturing the environment for Irish to be used, respected, identified with facilitation of entrepreneurship and lifelong learning, and so for wellbeing and wellbeing economics to be achieved.

### Case Study 5. Welsh Cultural Centre: Menter Y Felin Uchaf

#### Where and what

There are a number of Welsh language and cultural centres established across the country, many like Ymddiriedolaeth Nant Gwrtheyrn<sup>97</sup> (Nant Gwrtheyrn Trust) being charities or social enterprises. One such initiative is Menter Y Felin Uchaf Cyf, which is located in north-west Wales in Rhoshirwaun, Pwllheli and operates as a social enterprise (Company Limited by Guarantee) and as a not-for-profit charity. The founders of the Centre bought an old 23-acre farm and have developed it as a community skills hub and cultural centre. The land has been transformed to create 'a biodiverse patchwork of gardens and pastures with thousands of young trees, public access footpaths and a range of workshops and visitor resources the land, cultivate gardens and help build the new facilities'.

#### Capitals

This summary of their activities confirms the progress since the beginnings in 2004 in meeting the vision of the trustees to invest and operate in each of the capitals: natural, social, economic and human capitals. To that end, over the last two decades they have established facilities to deliver apprenticeships and significant volunteering opportunities; a community garden cafe, farm shop and workspace hub; CLAS – a centre for living and science; accommodation provision in roundhouses, bunkhouse, cabin and camping; and small business enterprises; while current crowdfunding is seeking to finance the development of CAMAS - a Centre for Archaeology, Mythology and Storytelling, a New Heritage Visitor Centre.

#### Personal wellbeing

In terms of the SHANARRI elements of personal wellbeing: [from The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which includes key parts of the Getting it Right for Every Child approach (GIRFEC), assesses children and young people's wellbeing in terms of eight indicators of wellbeing: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (known as SHANARRI), this visionary social enterprise – Canolfan Felin Uchaf Centre – has pursued activities with the aim of creating 'an experiential campus based on a holistic learning approach'. Beyond volunteering on a casual basis, young people can join a six month or one year Initiative Programme offering 'a balance of practical skills learning and dedicated study time'. Small business enterprises located at the centre provide opportunities 'for students to work alongside experienced practitioners and craftspeople, gaining specialist skills and a sound understanding of the varied aspects of running a small business enterprise'.

#### Community wellbeing

By organising craft apprenticeships, accredited courses and business enterprise workshops, the centre is both addressing many of the SHANARRI dimensions of wellbeing, but also contributing to community and national performance wellbeing objectives. These involve creating directly and in volunteers' and participants' communities places that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe, by holding events and workshops that are creative and promote vibrant and diverse cultures, especially in and through the medium of Welsh, building inclusive and sustainable enterprises, and through its learning and entrepreneurial activities well educated and skilled workers able to access quality fulfilling jobs and fair work.

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<sup>97</sup> <https://nantgwrtheyrn.org/nant-gwrtheyrn-trust/>



### **Integrated and inclusive**

There is a year-round cultural programme of events and activities including those in and of Welsh. A state-of-the-art community kitchen has been established to help seed new local produce enterprises and support former apprentices to set up their own craft businesses within their communities. As a Green Enterprise Centre, Felin Uchaf accommodates businesses which have access to common eco-facilities such as shared marketing, studio, public gallery, shop and exhibition spaces.

### **Challenges**

The above notwithstanding, it is notable that this Welsh cultural centre underplays both the delivery of activities and services in Welsh and the specifics of the culture of Wales, perhaps to be able to access multinational and UK-wide funding. This seems to reflect the challenges that other Welsh cultural centres have faced in surviving in an era of cuts and unstable finances<sup>98</sup>.

In such contexts, there are issues in being overdependent on Welsh-speaking visitors, customers and volunteers alone, with an appreciation that the market of fluent Welsh speakers is limited and the potential for wider numbers with an interest in the language and culture to be attracted makes commercial sense. This holds despite Felin Uchaf being in the part of the country (Gwynedd) with 90,700 speakers, the highest proportion in Cymru (75.5%).

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<sup>98</sup> See <http://www.ourcwmtaf.wales/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=181&mid=444&fileid=35> for discussion on a regional Well-Being Assessment Briefing Document: Culture and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48689878> for the impact on a particular arts centre, and the 'abandonment' of plans for the Welsh Government's own planned Welsh Cultural Centre <https://cardiff.moderngov.co.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?IID=12643&PlanId=59&RPID=0>.

### Case Study 6. FilmG

FilmG is a Gaelic short film competition, and this year is celebrating its 16th anniversary. In recent competitions, the organisers have invited contributions based on specific bold new themes for each year's festival of events. Since its launch by MG ALBA in 2008, FilmG has established a distinctive role of finding, nurturing, and developing new talent for Gaelic media, and serving as a springboard for many successful media careers, within BBC ALBA and beyond.

#### Human capital

With dedicated competitions for both under 18 and over 18, the FilmG team offers workshops and support for films at any level.

Independent judges evaluate the films, with the winners announced at an awards ceremony in February.

The workshops, training and guidance are considered to be the most important part of the project as these support schools, schoolleavers and graduates from schools. Skills are delivered as part of the curriculum, confirming the prestige and value appreciated in these opportunities to acquire human capital, as skills, experience and knowledge. Workshops are supplemented by workbooks in terms of script writing and planning and offer other networking and media access opportunities to improve employability, production skills and enterprise.

The achievements delivered by these preparations for submitting to the annual competition include:

- a) Skills development for Primary and Secondary pupils
- b) Facilitating schools to engage with filmmaking, opening possibilities for careers in filmmaking, with a good number having started from FilmG experiences
- c) Schools recognising how the process exposes children to different types of Gaelic, of Gaelic accents, etc.
- d) Offering exciting experiences and engagement for pupils
- e) Addressing various Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with over 80 films annually, and over 160 this year<sup>99</sup>, and without funding there would be many fewer Gaelic film activities
- f) There is a significant social media presence before and during the FilmG event, which reinforces the importance of the language and exposure for all involved
- g) Children acquire metaskills on location, and HM Inspectorate appreciate the learning and contextualisation of the whole process
- h) Becoming members of community of practice in filmmaking, meeting other schools
- i) Opportunities to win considerable prizes, relevant to further learning in media.

From the initial years onwards, there has been appreciable investment in securing human capital in young people in the Gaelic world.

#### Economic capital

As an established event in the cultural calendar of Glasgow and Scotland, FilmG is valuable in terms of the output created, the rich learning process by which the content is generated, and the legacy of content available online. The Awards Ceremony is live streamed and televised, creating strong inter-generational interaction. As FilmG is MG ALBA's key vehicle for digital

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<sup>99</sup> [https://www.filmg.co.uk/2023/12/11/farpais\\_filmg\\_16\\_duinte/?lang=en](https://www.filmg.co.uk/2023/12/11/farpais_filmg_16_duinte/?lang=en)

media participation and talent development, with a key goal an increasing volume of user generated content, the annual Training & Outreach budget of almost £300k is spent in Scotland under the FilmG umbrella. As this prestigious event is broadcast live and available on catch-up furth of Scotland in a quiet month for tourism and conferences, raising the popularity, there are further economic impacts for Glasgow and the nation's hospitality and accommodation sectors. These all suggest FilmG contributes an annual direct and indirect spend of over £600,000 per annum. Enhancements to the economies of scale and scope of the economic capital of the media sector from this investment in Gaelic people and facilities are significant and qualitatively better than from similar spend in equivalent English language media.

### **Social capital and wellbeing**

As FilmG has generated more public interest across all parts of Scotland, with local media in Orkney and Shetland down to the Borders promoting the event and participation of local schools, more people have been following the event live and encouraged to learn and use Gaelic in the community. The event undoubtedly continues to improve attitudes to Gaelic: it gives opportunities for young people, their parents and teachers to experience a glamorous occasion with celebrities, Gaelic and Scots language, who are there to recognise and appreciate their efforts and talents. FilmG has demonstrated to young people very positive images of Gaelic, with their productions acknowledged for the levels of technical competence and excellence. Critiques of FilmG have confirmed that the quality of Gaelic outputs in the medium of film are very good and accessible, with modern stories and issues covered with interest and intelligence. Feedback broadcast from the FilmG event itself has confirmed the progression of former winners and participants into networks, jobs and enterprises as a result of their experiences. As planned, building social capital and resilience amongst young Gaelic people has been delivered from 2008 and continues apace, with benefits for individual and community wellbeing. Addressing such contemporary themes as migration, gender, drug and alcohol addiction as well as challenges facing Gaelic communities and speakers has been contributing to identifying, raising and offering explicit commentary on the need for inclusion, tolerance and diversity: especially significant in the context of a minority and vulnerable language.

### **Natural capital**

Almost inevitably, with many entrants to FilmG living in rural Scotland with both traditional crofting and land-based economies and concerns over biodiversity, climate change and conflict to their fore, natural capital features in many productions. These films, scripts and visuals complement the landscapes and environments of the participants' homes, encouraging viewers to recognise and appreciate the reality of living and recording Scotland through a Gaelic lens.

### Case Study 7. The Galson Estate

The Galson estate comprises of a 'remote rural area' community of coast, agricultural land and moor in the North West of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. Within its 56,000 acres there are 860 homes, 400 local businesses, and 22 crofting townships with more than 600 crofts running from Upper Barvas to Port of Ness. Almost 2,000 inhabitants live within the estate, which was purchased from private owners in 2007.

The estate is currently run by the Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Galson Estate Trust), which has a philosophy of striving 'to involve the whole community in its decision-making process through ongoing consultations and communication'. Its overarching vision is to build a sustainable future for the communities of the Galson Estate<sup>100</sup>.

#### Human Capital

Several commentators have noted the increase in human capital which arises from land reform (such as the Galson community buy-out). This includes a shift from dependency to independence, and from individuals moving from being net drains on the taxpayer to net contributors through this experience<sup>101</sup>. The enhanced value given to crofters and crofting who "help to protect what is left of these degraded ecosystems"<sup>102</sup> also acknowledges the value of the human capital protected within a more positive entrepreneurial environment.

Within this the role of Gaelic (which features heavily on the Trust's website and in its online presence "There is a Gaelic backdrop to most events"<sup>103</sup>) is seen as a key component of ensuring sustainable development of the area, and it also plays a role in the 'Sunnd' Health and Wellbeing programme (including Cùirtean Slàinte – Health Walks)<sup>104</sup> which was primarily aimed at over 60s in the community – the majority of whom are Gaelic speakers – but which has now been opened to other ages. This confirms that business alone is not the only objective of a community owned estate, and that the ability to function both in English and Gaelic is seen as an asset, tapping into the linguistic abilities of those living in the area.

The Sunnd wellbeing activities are described in its programme as follows:

*'S e iomairt a bhios a' brosnachadh slàinte is fallaineachd a th' ann an 'Sunnd' aig Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn, a bhios a' toirt chothroman do dhaoine pàirt a ghabhail ann an tachartasan coimhearsnachd a bhios gam fàgail a' faireachdainn fallain, slàn agus sàbhailte.*

(The 'Sunnd' Health & Wellbeing programme is an initiative led by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (UOG), which aims to facilitate opportunities for the community to support all to have a high quality of life, by remaining active, healthy, safe and included.)

#### Social Capital

Amongst the points made in the community's twenty-year strategic plan<sup>105</sup> is their aim to sustain a unique and cohesive community, remaining a Gaelic stronghold, with bilingual businesses and organisations, and a strong crofting base and a sustainable community sector (Galson Trust, 2022, p. 6).

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<sup>100</sup> <https://www.galsontrust.com/community-engagement>

<sup>101</sup> McIntosh, A. (2015) Consultation response to the Future of Land Reform in Scotland, <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2015-McIntosh-Land-Reform-Consultation.pdf>.

<sup>102</sup> Danson, M (2020) Scoping the classic effects of monopolies within concentrated patterns of rural land ownership. P 25

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Agnes Rennie, Galson Trust Director 23/11/23

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.galsontrust.com/single-post/cuairtean-sl%C3%A0inte-health-walks>

<sup>105</sup> [https://www.galsontrust.com/files/uqd/682f71\\_9d74390d4dac4d16b27dbd39c75e19b4.pdf](https://www.galsontrust.com/files/uqd/682f71_9d74390d4dac4d16b27dbd39c75e19b4.pdf)

In 'Visioning the Future', they formulate this first in Gaelic and then in English:

*'Ar Lèirsinn: Coimhearsnachd a tha soirbheachail le deagh cheanglaichean anns a bheil sàr sheirbheisean agus ghoireasan ionadail, a' cleachdadh a stòrasan nàdarra gus cultar agus àrainn a tha sònraichte a dhèanamh seasmhach'*

(Our Vision: A thriving and well connected community with excellent local services and amenities, harnessing its natural assets to sustain a unique cultural and social environment).

### **Economic Capital**

The development of a Community Renewable Energy Project coupled with income from commercial developments has provided the Urras with an income stream which they see as enabling the Urras to give back to the community.

Within their sustainable approach to economic development, the role of Gaelic in contributing to the community as an economic asset fits in with the approach of HIE, noted as early as 2006, when Willie Roe, then chair of HIE said that:

*"placing more value on, and investing in, the native language and cultural traditions of the region will result in fortifying cultural identity and sense of place, increasing confidence and self-esteem" that in turn could lead to "population retention, inward migration, greater entrepreneurial activity, business creation and ultimately higher GDP"* (Roe, 2006, as quoted in DC Research, 2014).

It fits in with the findings of the *Ar Stòras Gàidhlig* report (DC Research, 2014). This concluded that there was substantial feeling of goodwill towards Gaelic which extended well beyond speakers of the language, so that the markets for goods and services which embedded characteristics of the language were substantial and not restricted to native or new speakers.

As a result of their "localist" approach, the Galson Estate has seen new supply chains starting to emerge with businesses working together in crafts, heritage and retail outlets in shops and the museum. The Trust has assisted through encouraging embryonic partnerships in goods and services that position both crofting and Gaelic within the goods and services. These are beginning to flourish and include "sustainable" cultural place linkages between crofters, farmers and hospitality providers with bilingual signage a crucial element:

*Blasad bìdh – Eat & Drink Local*

*Fuirich còmhla rinn – Stay Local*

*Tadhail air ar bùithtean – Shop Local*

*Thig is Faic – See Local Be inspired*

In the Scottish Government's strategy for the rural economy, cultural assets such as language heritage are claimed as valuable to any wider economic growth potential (i.e., including regeneration), such as the role of Gaelic in tourism economies of the Hebrides and much of the Highland region (Visit Scotland, 2018). The practice of the Galson estate appears to be working in this direction.

### **Related information:**

Galson Trust (2022), Strategic Plan 2017-2037. 2022 Update, [https://www.galsontrust.com/files/ugd/682f71\\_9d74390d4dac4d16b27dbd39c75e19b4.pdf](https://www.galsontrust.com/files/ugd/682f71_9d74390d4dac4d16b27dbd39c75e19b4.pdf)

Visit Scotland (2018), *Gaelic Tourism Strategy for Scotland (2018-2013)*. <https://www.visitscotland.org/about-us/what-we-do/working-in-partnership/gaelic-tourism-strategy>

### Case Study 8. Guthan nan Eilean

Island Voices/Guthan nan Eilean is a community based online audio-visual project originally established with EU Leonardo Project funding in 2005. Its website<sup>106</sup> states from the onset that it comprises of “Slices of Life and Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Hebrides – for language learners and anyone else!”

The project has developed through several phases since its appearance, moving originally from one where materials were curated and uploaded by its (minimal) staff, to one where today it has an emphasis on facilitating and hosting community participation.

For the last 5 years it has worked closely with the Language Science Institute of UHI and was closely aligned with the Soillse Gaelic research network.

Its work has attracted a substantial online following – over 6000 followers on WordPress and YouTube, with its YouTube video hits exceeding 400,000 (the channel has almost 1,500 subscribers and hosts just short of 350 videos). It also has a presence on SoundCloud, in Gaelic, English and French.

It has a sophisticated approach to the capabilities of modern technology, with visitors to the site being able to watch video and read transcripts simultaneously. In addition there is a ‘one-click’ facility allowing access to an online dictionary for translation. Using YouTube’s close captions functions, viewers are also able to read Gaelic language subtitles on the Gaelic videos.

#### Increasing human and social capital

Its approach is firmly focussed on the use of Gaelic within the vernacular community which is ‘deliberate and unequivocal in profiling the project’s geographical focus on Hebridean communities as prime societal carriers of still unbroken Gaelic tradition and transmission’<sup>107</sup>. In its contents, it also asserts the primacy of speech over that over the written word, believing that positively re-evaluating oral skills may well pay language awareness and confidence building dividends<sup>108</sup>.

There is an assertion of the benefits that this will give to members of local communities (and those further afield) who use the facilities. It particularly welcomes participation and contributions from individuals who may have been both raised locally and also have a natural Gaelic proficiency, stating “the latter might need no help in speaking the language, yet may still take pleasure in seeing their own community and speech represented, and perhaps even like to add submissions of their own”<sup>109</sup>. This approach believes that “each contributor has something of true worth to say about themselves and their community”<sup>110</sup>.

The work of the project also situates itself against the context of the recent 2020 work, *The Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community*, which suggested the end of Gaelic as a community language in the islands within a decade unless current circumstances change.

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<sup>106</sup> <https://guthan.wordpress.com/>

<sup>107</sup> Wells G, (2023) Island Voices – Guthan nan Eilean: Hebridean language capture and curation, 2005-2023 p.11

<sup>108</sup> Wells p.8

<sup>109</sup> Wells p.7

<sup>110</sup> Wells p.21



### **Covering a wide range of current Hebridean experience through a Gaelic lens**

The project is situated in the Uists, where Wells (2012) has noted "*high prestige English is firmly established, while the traditionally stigmatised Gaelic struggles to maintain its position*"

<sup>111</sup> Parts of the earliest themes highlighted included 'Slices of Contemporary Hebridean Life and Work'.

This approach has continued with wide ranging coverage dealt with in interviews, shot in both English and Gaelic and dealing with topics as varied as: the everyday activities of a day care centre, Hebridean Cookery, a Music Festival (Ceòlas) and with other themes looking at different generations growing up in Gaelic communities. Here there are interviews examining the Children's Parliament in Barra (a young member of the community interviewed in English and Gaelic), parents from the community are interviewed as are teachers and students. Occupations are dealt with – both traditional and modern, including aspects of indoor and outdoor life. A boatbuilder is interviewed as is a crofter, peatcutter, razorfish catcher and a cook.

Crofting and harvesting is discussed both historically and through a modern lens, the latter particularly featuring in an interview with a council biodiversity officer who explains the relationships between traditional crofting and conservation practices. It is not only occupations that are dealt with - surfing and windsurfing (both popular sports in the Uists) are also discussed.

### **Economic Capital**

It is not only benefits for social and human capital which are evident in this project. Under the theme of enterprise, videos feature the Gaelic language work in Tobar an Dualchais (The Well of Heritage) project in Ostaig, Skye which focuses on digitising old recordings of Scottish folk music and other aspects of the oral tradition. This outlines the technical opportunities given to staff involved and the manner in which this expertise and practice can be used for other languages and cultures.

### **Future work**

Although they currently work closely with the Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath they also acknowledge that a closer collaboration with local history societies across the islands would also be a positive way forward to develop the Stòras Beò nan Gàidheal (Gaelic living resources) collection.

### **Examples of some of the resources to be found on the site:**

Peatcutter Archie Campbell on the peat cutting process:

Peatcutting (English): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhQx8V0i1To>

Peatcutting (Gaelic): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN6WNGlvYcQ>

A guide to cultivating using Lazybeds:

Cultivating Lazybeds (English): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E015U6h1Ns>

Cultivating Lazybeds (Gaelic): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CqE6Gku5yYM>

Sarah Macinnes, member of the Childrens Parliament of Uist and Barra:

English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqvA-hqkZg4>

Gaelic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0CoVo10oJg>

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<sup>111</sup> Wells G (2012) Wells, G. (2012) ESOL in the Hebrides and Island Voices: "Hey, hang on a minute, tha mise bilingual!". In David Mallows (Ed) Innovations in English language teaching for migrants and refugees: British Council. p 162-163 Available at: <https://guthan.wordpress.com/research/>

### **Case Study 9. He Ara Waiora: framework to understand waiora, a concept that relates to Māori perspectives on wellbeing and living standards**

*The health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples is part of a broader campaign, which individually and collectively explores different dimensions of Indigenous culture and identity<sup>112</sup>.*

*Indigenous health and wellbeing: Social and emotional wellbeing is the foundation of physical and mental health for Indigenous Australians. It is a holistic concept that encompasses the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality and ancestry, and how these affect the wellbeing of the individual and the community<sup>113</sup>.*

*Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Theories of Wellbeing and Their Suitability for Wellbeing Policy* Mackean T, Shakespeare M, Fisher M., 2022, Int J Environ Res Public Health.

He Ara Waiora gives an indigenous and uniquely Aotearoa New Zealand response to questions posed by the New Zealand Treasury's vision of 'lifting living standards for all New Zealanders'.

- What are the living standards that New Zealanders value? Are they the same for everyone?
- How well equipped is the public service to understand what living standards mean to a wide range of New Zealanders?
- Might we be able to learn and apply lessons from cultures other than the dominant one?

There are a number of features of this Treasury's approach to a wellbeing economy that have generated interest across the alliance of Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) especially but also more generally, including in Australia and the US. Parallels with Gaelic language and culture deserve exploration.

#### **What is He Ara Waiora?**

The term 'waiora' speaks to a broad conception of human wellbeing, grounded in wai (water) as the source of ora (life).

He Ara Waiora presents a holistic, intergenerational approach to wellbeing and deepens our understanding of living standards. While its principles are derived from mātauranga Māori (Māori (traditional) knowledge), many of its elements are relevant to lifting the intergenerational wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

He Ara Waiora articulates both the ends, or what are important elements in Māori perceptions of wellbeing and living standards, and the means, or the tikanga (values or principles) that help us achieve the ends.

The ends are: **Human, Social and Natural Capitals**

Wairua (spirit) is at the centre to reflect that it is the foundation or source of wellbeing. Values, beliefs and practices related to waiora are essential to Māori conceptions of waiora.

Te Taiao (the natural world – the environment), is paramount and inextricably linked with human wellbeing. Humans have responsibilities and obligations to sustain and maintain the wellbeing of Te Taiao.

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<sup>112</sup> <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/our-goals/healthier-lives/health-wellbeing-indigenous-peoples>

<sup>113</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-health/indigenous-health-and-wellbeing>

## Identifying the links between Gaelic and Wellbeing

Te Ira Tangata (the human domain) encapsulates human activities and relationships, including the relationships between generations. The concept of mana (power, authority) is seen as key to wellbeing.

The means, or key principles, are:

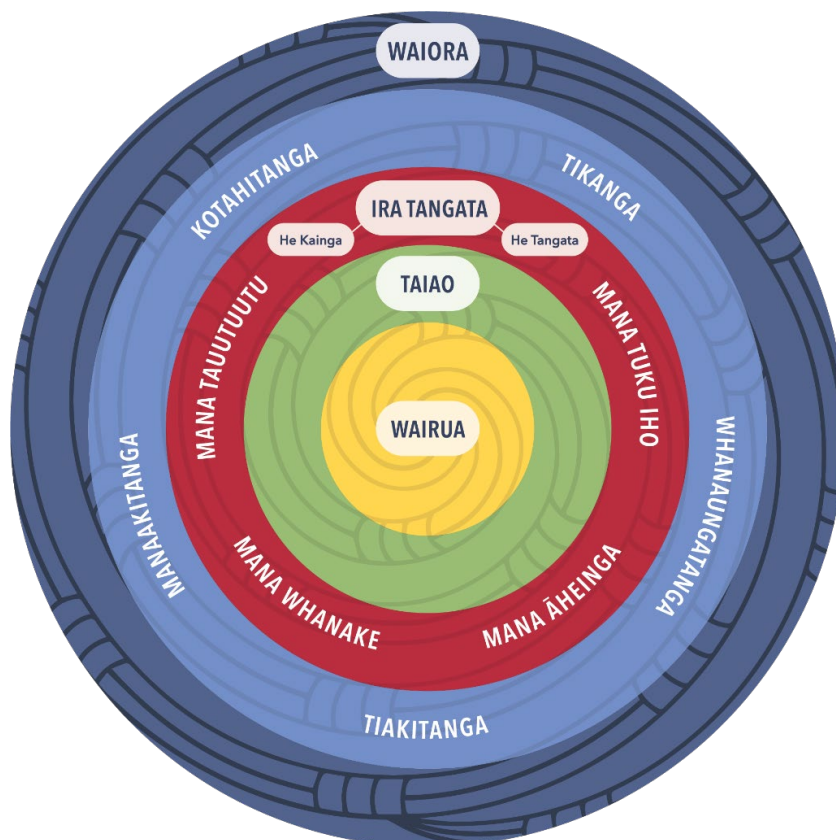
Kotahitanga – working in an aligned, coordinated way

Tikanga – making decisions in accordance with the right values and processes, including in partnership with the Treaty partner

Whanaungatanga – fostering strong relationships through kinship and/or shared experience that provide a shared sense of wellbeing

Manaakitanga – enhancing the mana of others through a process of showing proper care and respect

Tiakitanga – guardianship, stewardship (e.g. of the environment, particular taonga or other important processes and systems).



He Ara Waiora

### Where did it come from? [Economic capital]

He Ara Waiora was initially developed with the Tax Working Group, which sought to think about how tikanga Māori could help create a more future-focused tax system. This involved a

process of engaging with iwi and Māori across the motu<sup>114</sup>, with the ongoing input of a number of Māori business and thought leaders.

As the NZ Treasury admits, it is at an early stage of its journey in piloting the application of He Ara Waiora in a range of policy issues, but it does see how He Ara Waiora can help them to interweave and embed Te Ao Māori perspectives in their policy advice with integrity. Given the criticisms of Scottish Government and agencies in not understanding the aspirations for the Gaelic language and culture, especially for those in the vernacular community in the Gàidhealtachd, can a similar approach inform policies for human, social, natural and economic capitals in Scotland?

### **Related information:**

[He Ara Waiora - brief overview A3](#)

[Using the LSF and He Ara Waiora](#)

[He Kāhui Waiora: Living Standards Framework and He Ara Waiora COVID-19: Impacts on Wellbeing \(DP 20/02\)](#)

[He Ara Waiora/A Pathway Towards Wellbeing \(DP 18/11\)](#)

[Te Tai Waiora: Wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022](#)

[Trends in Māori wellbeing: Background paper to Te Tai Waiora \(AP 22/02\)](#)

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<sup>114</sup> Māori is the ethnicity, motu is the country, and an individual's iwi/tribe is who they are and how they are connected to the land.

### Case Study 10. Aire air Sunnd (Attention to Cheerfulness/Wellbeing)

The *Aire air Sunnd* (Attention to Cheerfulness/Wellbeing) project, was launched on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022, in North Uist.

The project is run in a partnership between Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath and the universities of St Andrews and Aberdeen, with the close involvement of the *Guthan nan Eilean* (Island Voices) project from UHI.

#### Community Wellbeing

The project aims include learning how local wellbeing activities can be improved by working with health partners through heritage and discovering how recent research into the community use of the Gaelic language can enrich Gaelic only activities. One of the hoped for outcomes is to look at how the community can use such pilot studies to shape the development and refurbishment of the local primary school, Sgoil Chàrinis.

Activities are directed at helping local speakers explore their pivotal place in the Gaelic world in their own terms, yet in a way that can also give their non-speaking neighbours and friends an understanding of parts of their local community culture to which they may have had limited previous access.

There is a belief that although the majority of people in North Uist recognise the importance of the Gaelic language to the local culture, even if not all speak it themselves, it can be the case that in the interests of "inclusion" there is an often-felt pressure on Gaelic-speakers to use English more and more, and Gaelic less and less. This is often felt particularly in community groups which aim to bring people together.

Those initiating the project self-described their initial group as:

*"... a mix of long term Gaelic speaking Uisteachs, Uist returners and some who had chosen to settle here and had lived here for over twelve years, with all of us acknowledging the Gaelic language as the pulse or heartbeat of our small, remote island community".*

The Aire air Sunnd project specifically hopes by drawing on the island's Gaelic heritage in an inclusive way it can not only overcome these issues but also enrich the cultural life of those involved, whether Gaelic speakers or not.

A unique part of the Island Voices contribution is to draw upon its Gaelic resources to help stimulate Gaelic discussion, reminiscences and ideas which will in turn help create a contemporary and accessible record of speakers' thoughts, memories and opinions.

The transcription of these discussions can then be disseminated to enable any and all interested community members to gain increased knowledge and understanding of local stories, customs, practices and issues, without first requiring them to be voiced in English.

The resources found in Tobar an Dualchais are also drawn upon to offer innovative ways of forward-looking engagement with the island's Gaelic heritage which is positively valued by so many.

#### Personal wellbeing

In the testimony of one of those involved in the activities:

*"I cannot stress enough the importance of using Gaelic names and related stories, after all that is what they are. I may not understand the language, but it means so much to me to get*

*a full and complete picture to immerse myself in. It feels rounded and whole by being true to the Gaelic language.*

*I valued the Scots Gaelic being spoken and the way you introduced it as important for community.*

*Wonderful to learn and hear Gaelic spoken”.*

There are several ways in which these Gaelic-based resources are made available locally – the local primary Sgoil Chàrinis has operated a drop-in café where people can stop by for a chat, or simply sample some of the many local Gaelic voices that have been recorded over the years.

There have also been a series of ‘intergenerational’ walks exploring Gaelic heritage between the chambered cairn of Barpa Langais and the Poball Fhinn stone circle during the *Fèis Shamhraidh* (Summer Festival) which the community has run.

### **Social and natural capital**

A recent survey carried out of those involved in the project highlighted their view of:

- the striking importance of community in island life – a major asset
- concern that North Uist was not being consulted or heard locally or nationally
- concern relating to the rapid decline in awareness of the distinctiveness of North Uist’s heritage, culture and, in particular, Gaelic language
- concern about the environment, coastal erosion, loss of biodiversity
- the commitment of the local community to developing Sgoil Chàrinis
- support for Gaelic, heritage and wellbeing activities and events in the school
- support for Gaelic classes and activities that support natural and cultural heritage
- the use of digital technology for heritage and culture preservation and transmission, with the caveat that individual support with accessing digital technology is a clear need.

### **Next Steps**

Following this, some of the possible next steps acknowledged are to work out how more confidence can be developed in the groups own sense of agency with a question being posed of how remote is their heritage (its unique environment, language, culture of resilience) to the dominant discussions in the seats of power? They also wish to present their findings in such a way that our welcoming and inclusive Gaelic heritage, and the crucial part this plays in the island’s wellbeing, will be better promoted and recognised at local and national levels.

The local Comann Eachdraidh acknowledges that it has taken them time to recognise their assets and the importance of their local language and traditional cultural knowledge. They feel that it is imperative now to build on these strengths, resisting any attempts to ‘colonise’ those involved in ways that do not result in mutual benefits to researchers and the Comann Eachdraidh itself.

### **Related information:**

<http://www.ceut.scot/>

<https://guthan.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/>



### Case Study 11. People of Glasgow

Modern Glasgow is a contemporary, multicultural city. Many of the people within the Gaelic community are not connected via the traditional routes such as the Church, Highland associations, or family. Although these still exist, those participating in Gaelic learning and other groups are from much more diverse backgrounds than previously.

#### Human and Economic capital

In addition to the oft spoken about jobs in teaching and the media, Gaelic speakers are able to utilise their skills to generate a source of income. Tutoring, be it privately or through organisations such as Glasgow Life, has supplemented a main income for some allowing them to develop their skills and interest in the language while maintaining a full time job, often in a non-Gaelic related field. For those unable to pursue full-time employment due to parental or caring responsibilities, or due to health conditions, tutoring has become a main source of income. Secondary school pupils and students in higher and further education can use their Gaelic as tutors and playleaders as an alternative to lower paid entry roles in the hospitality or retail industries thus avoiding longer, often more antisocial hours.

Gaelic speakers have benefited from new career opportunities as a result of their skills with some learners exploring a career change while others found having Gaelic has enhanced their existing career. Individuals have been able to make money from hobbies or expand existing small business ventures through the inclusion of Gaelic in their products, particularly those involving crafts while some have lent their talents to the creation of Gaelic media such as films, music and cartoons.

Gaelic is also leading to the discovery of new hobbies, and vice-versa. Recipes from the Hebridean Baker and Fuine on BBC Alba have inspired some to try cooking and baking with people sharing old family recipes written in Gaelic. Conversely, people of all ages are developing an interest in Gaelic as a result of their interest in sport with football and shinty matches being shown on BBC ALBA, FC Sonas'<sup>115</sup> workshops as well as their involvement with Partick Thistle Football Club.

#### Social capital and wellbeing

The Gaelic community has proven to be a lifeline for many. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic with many people feeling isolated as a result of lockdown restrictions. Gaelic classes were among the first online sessions offered by Glasgow Life<sup>116</sup> with learners joining from across Scotland and further afield, including mainland Europe and North and South America. While some participants had a pre-existing interest in and talent for languages and were bilingual, if not multilingual, for many this was a return to learning after a break of many years, possibly decades. In addition to community leisure classes, many learners are continuing onto further and higher education by enrolling in SQA and degree courses through Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, local and online colleges, and universities.

A majority of learners stated the sessions had a positive effect on their wellbeing through connecting with others, learning new skills and developing their interests in the language and culture. For some, it provided a break from responsibilities with one learner explaining, *"as a full time carer lockdown has been brutal. These classes have been a godsend. I've met new people and we've got this little community going and just for a couple of hours my world is*

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<sup>115</sup> <https://fcsonas.com/>

<sup>116</sup> Glasgow Life is the principal trading name and brand of Culture and Sport Glasgow, a charity based in Glasgow. It is an Arms' Length External Body from Glasgow City Council with operating responsibility for managing the arts, music, sports, events, festivals, libraries and learning programmes for the Council.

*bigger than [family member's illness].* "Classes continue to offer that sense of community now that restrictions have been lifted. Some have joined as a way of connecting with older family members or remembering those no longer here. Others have found learning Gaelic has given them a deeper understanding and appreciation of Scottish culture and heritage. Members of other minority communities such as the LGBTQ+ and BAME communities have described feeling more accepted in Gaelic environments and, for those who have moved to Scotland, being a part of the Gaelic community has given them an increased feeling of "Scottishness" and "belonging".

Free public sessions such as Bookbug held within libraries have attracted families from diverse backgrounds with different levels of knowledge and interest in Gaelic. It has also served as an introduction for many to the world of Gaelic and the possibility of sending their child to GME. One parent explained, *"I feel my journey into Gaelic was serendipitous. We just happened to come into the library one day and there was a Gaelic Bookbug session on. My wee one loved it and I did too. We came back week after week and the more I chatted with parents and the session leader the more I fell in love with everything – the language, the culture, the ethos. Both of my children now attend GME and it's been the best decision we made."* These public sessions, along with playgroups, Fèisean and other groups provide an early opportunity for families looking to send their children to GME to join this city-wide community of interest. A number of participants have spoken about the positive effect Gaelic family sessions have had on their mental health, particularly post-partum.

While many activities and events in Glasgow are within local neighbourhoods and communities, sessions and groups in Gaelic are attractive to different cultures and to families from diverse backgrounds. Both formal and informal feedback has confirmed that families with autism and neurodivergence among children have benefited from being in an environment where everyone is experiencing differences together. In many cases, activities and contexts are promoting inclusion of intergenerational and cross-generational families. Overall, identity with the Gaelic community transcends other differences and helps transitions to belonging, to expanding networks and friend circles, and to GME. Wellbeing benefits are demonstrable.

Gaelic events such as those organised by An Lòchran and Glasgow Scottish Gaelic Meetup Group as well as the numerous Glasgow choirs, have provided further opportunities for people to connect outwith the classroom. In addition to free conversation sessions, events such as monthly boardgame sessions, hot-desking, drama groups and music nights have made Gaelic a living, everyday language.

### **Natural capital**

With Gaelic rooted in much of Scotland's landscape, people have long opted to learn as a way of connecting with nature. Various informal walking groups have been established in and around Glasgow including a "buggy group" for parents with young children. Closer to home, Gàrradh Phàdrùig on BBC ALBA has encouraged individuals and families to develop an interest in gardening with children being taught about the world around them in playgroups, nurseries and school gardening clubs.

### **Case Study 12. Portree & Braes Community Trust: Development Trust as the essential umbrella, anchor organisation**

Portree & Braes Community Trust (PBCT) aims to stimulate and coordinate the economic, cultural and environmental regeneration of Portree and Braes in response to community-identified priorities. Within that overall aim, the purpose of this development trust includes securing land and buildings for community use, promoting renewable energy projects, organising community events and improving access to education and training opportunities. These varied objectives address the four capitals across the board through different sub-groups of trustees and directors. 'Speak up for Gaelic'<sup>117</sup> is one such joint initiative between the PBCT and the Portree & Braes Community Council and in the long term the organisers "really hope this project will go some way towards re-establishing Gaelic as the language of Skye", increasing from the 29% Gaelic speakers recorded in the 2011 Census.

#### **Human and Social capitals**

The award of a grant from the Gaelic Communities Fund, administered by Community Land Scotland and financed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, allowed PCBT to employ a project officer, to undertake marketing and hold events to promote community events in Gaelic. The sums involved were modest (£10k) and yet delivered significant outputs and outcomes: almost 600 people using Gaelic across the different events. Weekly events were attended by a regular cohort, with occasional attendances by others. The events were recognised by locals who respected, for example, the Gaelic Hour in the Pier Hotel and used some Gaelic if they were not fluent. The "Strùpag" group, generally meeting at Gasta, were a strong Gaelic-speaking group and staff and other customers would use Gaelic if interacting with them.

Gaelic learners, including tourists dropping into sessions, had opportunities to practise their conversational Gaelic and lapsed and nervous native speakers refreshed their knowledge and participated more freely in Gaelic conversations and discussions. It was notable for the organisers that, where it was highlighted and promoted that Gaelic would be spoken, there was much interest and participation by local native speakers as well as learners. This crystallised the need for more opportunities for spoken Gaelic, bringing together a number of Gaelic groups locally – formal and informal, learners, GME parents, etc. They were able to report that some were now explicitly using Gaelic more, especially where they had Gaelic but it had lapsed, to the extent that some were now giving interviews on Radio nan Gàidheal in Gaelic. "It's all about speaking Gaelic in everyday situations", suggesting that it contrasts with many initiatives which are perceived to be "too off-putting because too formal, too academic, too pedantic...especially for native speakers. A casual/light-hearted approach changing attitudes to Gaelic."

The Speak up for Gaelic Facebook page<sup>118</sup> confirms that the momentum gained from the initiative continues with groups meeting up after the funding came to an end.

#### **Natural capital**

Although this is not highlighted, the project included boat trips around Portree Bay and into the Sound of Raasay, with commentary entirely delivered in Gaelic. Gaelic was the language of the group, and fluency level was high. In other venues, participants would discuss Gaelic words for fish or birds and other terms of the natural world.

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<sup>117</sup> <https://www.portreeandbraes.org/blank-1>

<sup>118</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100080150803889>

### **Economic capital**

A key element of the initiative was to encourage more enterprises to use Gaelic in their everyday activities. By the end of the project, 15 local businesses had pledged to use and encourage Gaelic in their premises and had put the *#Cleachdi* sticker in their window or near their till. Follow-up checking has confirmed that this pledge continues to be in place and businesses are willing to use Gaelic.

As with other such community-based initiatives, in their end of award report PCBT recorded that the project has reinforced Gaelic within the Scottish identity locally. It has attracted a great deal of local interest, and on a commercial level there is a realisation that we have a USP in Gaelic and Gaelic culture. Realising the longer-term possibilities, PCBT recognise there is much more that could be achieved: with an aspiration of having an Irish Gaeltacht equivalent as a marketing tool, making Gaelic fashionable without 'the formality of education' to underpin its use. Although the potential is apparent, resources of staff and finance are stretched and so others are need to take on the initiative. With more layers and with that enthusiasm, PCBT believes more and a much bigger facility could be developed to accommodate speakers, musicians, etc., to attract people dropping-in; and so a massive impact is envisaged if there was a specific permanent building i.e. a hub or cultarlann.

### **Social capital – especially bonding and bridging**

A typical experience for participants in the conversational sessions was that they had lost Gaelic growing up, and very few continued to speak Gaelic including in rural Skye. But many would relearn if they did not have to do it in a formal educational setting (e.g. at SMO). They have always needed the opportunities to speak the language, conversationally, and this initiative had started to provide these. Overcoming implicit social barriers to using Gaelic clearly improved self-reported wellbeing as measured by satisfaction, achievement, socialisation and identity.

### Case Study 13. An Taigh Cèilidh

The Taigh Cèilidh - Àite Dualchais agus Cafaidh Coimhearsnachd (Gaelic Cultural Centre and Community Café) in Stornoway opened on December 17<sup>th</sup> 2022, backed by NatWest Social and Community and also supported partly with the help of a crowdfunding initiative which included a £5000 donation from writer Peter May whose Lewis trilogy of crime fiction has sold widely.

Open 10am to 5pm Monday through Saturday, it has proven to be popular with individuals wishing to be able to use Gaelic in a town where the language is not always as prominent as Stornoway's status in the Western Isles might suggest. According to work undertaken by Dr Ingeborg Birnie<sup>119</sup>, despite 58 percent of Lewis residents being able to speak Gaelic less than ten percent of conversations in Stornoway publicly feature it.

Although on its opening there was some suggestion within social media that the initiative might be overstating the lack of Gaelic use in the Western Isles capital, the initiative has garnered lots of vocal support online (with over a thousand followers on Facebook), and also locally with growing support from the community, including Gaelic speakers, learners and tourists. Many of their music and poetry sessions are streamed live on Facebook.

There are three shops integrated into the centre, based just off Stornoway's Broadbay – a coffee shop, a bookshop, and a cultural workshop (with daily events). There is the intention that the centre should be 'a window into a world where Gaelic is not a minority language, just like you'd use French and see French everywhere in a French café, or Italian in an Italian café'. Incentives are in use to encourage the use of Gaelic, such as 10% discount on drinks if you order in Gaelic, and a meal deal if you turn up to one of the conversation circles.

Their mission statement declares their aims:

*To provide a vibrant and welcoming social space for the Gaelic community and those interested in Gaelic culture; to be a living "museum" of intangible cultural heritage which promotes, documents, and invites service users to participate in traditional Lewis culture and heritage; to empower Gaelic speakers of all levels and showcase the value of Gaelic to the community, culture, economy, and reputation of Scotland; to add Stornoway and Isle of Lewis as a cultural destination, making Stornoway a nicer place to visit, live in and work in and to address commitments made in the National Gaelic Language Plan and the National Islands Plan regarding culture, language education, community, and economy*

The range and scope of events carried out since the opening have been very wide and testify to the wide-ranging use of the centre in its first year of operation. In addition, it is somewhere to buy Gaelic-focused cards and books ("*no books at all in English*").

### Human capital and social capital

They have celebrated European Folk Day through song and discussion, with Gaelic poets and novelists such as Sgitheanach Maoilios Caimbeul discussing his work; they have celebrated contemporary Gaelic cultural icons such as Uist piper, Rona Lightfoot; hosted sessions for international visitors from Poland, Pennsylvania, New York and – nearer perhaps culture wise – County Clare in the West of Ireland.

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<sup>119</sup> Birnie, I, (2018) Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn an seo? Code choice and language management initiatives in Stornoway. Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 10. Found online at: <http://www.soillse.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Inge-Birnie-G%C3%A0idhlig-ga-bruidhinn-an-seo.pdf>

For older people, taking in issues of wellbeing and dementia, they have had a weekly Gaelic singalong, in conjunction with the Luminare group – billed as Scotland’s Creative Ageing organisation.

For younger people aged 0 – 3, they have hosted fun sessions when their older siblings have attended school.

They have hosted meetings with a team from the Scottish Government to discuss how to make carer support payment service better.

They have hosted adult learners’ workshops:

“Adult Learners’ Workshop: Come with your homework and questions: Grammar, pronunciation, etymology, anything!”

### **Natural and linguistic capital**

They have held a *Cèilidh na Gnàth-thìde* (Climate Cèilidh) and have worked with Bragar and Arnol community trust (on the West Side of Lewis) to explore the links between Gaelic and living nature. They have also hosted talks organised on the ‘danger to wildlife from maritime litter’ organised by Clean Coast Outer Hebrides, and on ‘What the Peatlands have done for us’ with the Carloway Trust.

They have had Poetry evenings – existing Gaelic poetry plus poetry from other cultures such as France. In addition, they have hosted poetry evenings bringing new Gaelic poets together, and also evenings on the theme of Gaelic jokes and storytelling.

They have held talks on the preservation of Gaelic words for future generations and have encouraged young fluent people to come and speak with older people who also visit the centre:

*“Amas An Taigh Cèilidh a tighinn gu da-rìribh! Sgioba de dhaoine òga fileanta ag èisteachd gu dlùth i na bodaich ‘s na cailleachan a tha tadhal gach latha.”*

They have hosted discussions with visiting academics on the importance of young people involving themselves in academic STEM subjects:

*“Disathuirne sa tighinn. Thigeanh a chluinntinn mar a tha cuspairean STEM feumail ga sgoilearan. Science, Matamatics, Engineering agus Teicneolas ga luchd obrach san am ri thighinn.”* (Saturday coming, come and hear how STEM subjects are important to pupils... Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology...)

There have even been drop-in workshops to learn Manga and Anime through Gaelic – and situated in the Western Isles. Unsurprisingly perhaps it also advertises itself as a place to go when it’s wet (‘Tha An Taigh blàth seasgair air latha fliuch’)

There have been many tributes to their work from tourists and those already involved in the Gaelic community:

*I attended this event last weekend. It was truly an amazing experience! Such a welcoming and inviting atmosphere. The entire town of Stornoway was incredible, but this place was a highlight of my trip.*

*Dean Frederick (tourist)*



*I must mention the precious phenomenon which is An Taigh Ceilidh. Where else could you sit down for coffee with total strangers and engage in conversation, exchange stories and be regaled with freshly published poetry in the vernacular tongue?*

*Tha cultar is cànan nan Gàidheal beò ann an Steòrnabhagh-an seo co dhiù. This initiative deserves support from everyone who cherishes our dùthchas.*

*(Tribute posted to their Facebook page)*

Well known speakers have also praised the work they are currently undertaking:

*"For Gaelic to thrive, it needs spaces that people will go to in the knowledge that Gaelic will be spoken there. It is sometimes hard to develop a network of Gaelic speakers if you are unfamiliar with a particular place and so places like An Taigh Cèilidh are great initiatives ... **Cleachd i no caill i** (Use it or lose it)."*

Gillebride MacMillan

*"The cafe is an 'embarrassment-free zone' where you could 'speak freely' and 'lose your inhibitions'".*

Local musician Torquil MacLeod

### **Related information:**

<https://www.taighceilidh.com/contact>

<https://www.facebook.com/taighceilidh/>

<https://socialenterprise.scot/member/an-taigh-ceilidh-cic/>

<https://www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/food-and-drink/an-taigh-ceilidh-p585351>

### Case Study 14. Urras Thiriodh (Tiree Community Development Trust)

Tiree Community Development Trust was established to work towards long-term sustainable community development goals, and so to address all elements of the four capitals taking regard to the unique culture, heritage and environment of the island.

#### Human and social capitals

Complementing that overall aim, the Tiree Growth Plan<sup>120</sup> highlights the *"very rich culture and heritage ... celebrated through language, music and story"*. The Gaelic language is extremely important to the island and community, with 240 people (38% of the population) able to speak Gaelic and of that number 65% use it at home (2011 Census)<sup>121</sup>. The plan notes that the community wishes to protect and develop Gaelic language, culture and heritage for future generations. 'Gaelic culture and language, crofting, the way of life, the pace of life, architecture, the scenery and the people make Tiree what it is – a unique, living, historical, environmentally important and bio-diverse landscape which supports the community'.

Urras Thiriodh was successful in securing a grant from the Gaelic Communities Fund, Bòrd na Gàidhlig through Community Land Scotland, and applied this finance to promote use of Gaelic in the community. Normalising the use of Gaelic was emphasised in this initiative with a range of activities and facilities introduced to support this: a Cafaidh Gàidhlig being a vehicle to issue prompt cards in the language for all ages, bilingual bingo in partnership with the local care for older people organisation, "Faclan na Seachdainn" videos on Gaelic social media to encourage understanding and use of Gaelic, etc. Instagram and Facebook posts supplemented these and a much enhanced use of Gaelic on the website<sup>121</sup>.

Staff have been redeployed within the Trust to deliver more services in Gaelic whilst trying to meet the challenges of recruiting speakers to the dedicated posts. Learning from other Development Trusts has facilitated new directions and plans for the island's Gaelic plans, with positive outcomes confirming the benefits of building such bridging and linking social capital.

Other issues to be met included the apparently general reluctance of local people *"as ever, ... to actually encourage attendees to speak Gaelic"*, a common thread across many communities. Nevertheless, as elsewhere: "Our community consultation carried out this year also noted strong value expressed by the community in our Gaelic activities". The Trust reported that their work has a very high focus on community engagement, and with their new community development strategy for the next five years being developed a specific focus group on Gaelic development has been part of that. These developments are based on the high value given to Gaelic 'by many in our community who are keen to see us continue to have it as a priority of our work'.

#### Economic and natural capital

Gaelic is recognised as a strong tourist attraction within the Tiree natural and cultural environments. The Trust has implemented a significant new shift towards the use of Gaelic in their work on Discover Tiree<sup>122</sup>, the official destination management organisation for the island. Efforts have been made to make the language a 'much more routine/targeted feature as part of the higher quality materials output and website'. This includes incorporating Gaelic into the integral ranger service. The recent community consultation and event participation

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<sup>120</sup> <https://www.tireetrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Tiree-Growth-Plan-2017-2020.pdf>

<sup>121</sup> For example, <https://www.tireetrust.org.uk/new-initiative-seeks-to-promote-gaelic-in-tiree/>

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.isleoftiree.com/>

feedback under the Gaelic Communities Fund showed that Gaelic is recognised as a cultural and a commercial asset (e.g., for tourism).

The ongoing, iterative processes involved in engaging with their community as a Development Trust and in evaluating and reporting on outcomes of funded projects has been demonstrating that people's and Tiree community's wellbeing have been enhanced through a greater emphasis on and commitment to "mainstreaming Gaelic use as broadly as possible as key" to sustainable development.

Underpinning this direction of travel, the Trust have argued for a dedicated post teaching Gaelic to adult learners and newcomers, supporting GME, organising and promoting events alongside a community development officer post specifically working with native speakers. Plans to recruit a Gaelic speaker for a Community Projects Officer position, effectively a 'Social Worker' to get native speakers out of their houses, have led to Highland musician and broadcaster Mary Ann Kennedy accepting a role to work as part of a Gaelic team alongside Gaelic-speaking islander Lauren MacArthur: *"Mary Ann will be working a hybrid combination of remote working and time in Tiree for two days a week, while Lauren will be expanding her existing role in the trust to include days working on Gaelic-related projects"*<sup>123</sup>. As well as the clear wellbeing benefits in terms of employment and job satisfaction for all members of the team and Trust, these posts promise to have wider wellbeing benefits for the community as a whole: *"We are excited to see how our new Gaelic team will work with islanders to celebrate and support their language"* (Trust general manager Phyl Meyer) and Trust Chair Rhoda Meek added: *"The community is the soul of the language"*<sup>124</sup>.

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<sup>123</sup> <https://www.tireetrust.org.uk/new-initiative-seeks-to-promote-gaelic-in-tiree/>

<sup>124</sup> <https://www.tireetrust.org.uk/new-initiative-seeks-to-promote-gaelic-in-tiree/>

### **Case Study 15. Urras Ceann a Tuath na Hearadh (North Harris Trust)**

Like many traditional crofting communities in the Gàidhealtachd heartlands, North Harris has been suffering from interconnected ills of an ageing and declining population, low incomes, a lack of affordable housing for local people, few jobs, exacerbated by Brexit, the cost of living crisis and public sector cuts. For a long time, these and related conditions have created challenges for the mental health and wellbeing of the community. Urras Ceann a Tuath na Hearadh was established to reverse these negative trends and use Land Reform powers to empower the community under the Community Right to Buy. Recent research has drawn attention to the successes of community buy-outs across a whole series of locations and objectives, and this Trust has been demonstrating its own positive developments<sup>125</sup> (<https://www.north-harris.org/>).

#### **Natural, social and human capitals**

While the Trust pursues sustainable community development in terms of the people and natural environment, engaging with the community, encouraging and nurturing crofting and enterprises, integral to achieving its aims and objectives and highlighted specifically in its plans is: "To generate awareness, understanding and appreciation of the cultural heritage of North Harris including the Gaelic language".

Consistent with that particular objective, and integrating the use of Gaelic into its operations explicitly, North Harris Trust launched a project – funded under the Gaelic Communities Fund – to hire a ranger who could speak Gaelic. The ranger has been contributing to several areas of the Trust's work through the use of Gaelic. This has included acting as a guide to tourists and other visiting groups, preparing events in the estate such as tours, and working and planting trees with volunteers in the winter. As Gaelic is spoken by most of the population and most children are in GME, he has been able to teach Gaelic pupils about the native land of Harris, and to help them with activities through the medium of Gaelic. Interviews with the ranger have confirmed that he initiates conversations with local people about land affairs, invasive species, and other things through the medium of Gaelic; often this is a reversal of past practices and yet has become again the normal medium of communication. Disseminating knowledge about the estate to visitors, by using his Gaelic skills, and knowledge of the Gaelic heritage, there are benefits in growing awareness and self-confidence for the community. Leaflets and other materials have been produced in Gaelic about the flora and fauna – eagles and plants – of the place, and guides for walks in the area translated into Gaelic.

#### **Social capital and wellbeing: feedback on the ranger service**

The community of North Harris has been able to use more Gaelic to communicate with the Trust, with staff using Gaelic more within the office and in carrying out the Trust's work. The nature of the involvement with GME children and staff means there have been opportunities to use Gaelic in different contexts: about the country of the place (i.e., land and landscape), crofting and the environment. Outcomes include more being encouraged to use Gaelic when they talk about nature and heritage, using the language naturally. By collecting information from people in the community about the place, the stories and heritage, he is able to connect country, heritage and information about the environment when he is on tours with tourists and visitors. Younger people are more likely to speak to the ranger and others in Gaelic when outwith the formal school setting, and then continue this on into post education and work contexts.

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<sup>125</sup> <https://www.north-harris.org/>

These various subtle developments have been changing behaviours and so attitudes to using Gaelic, improving self-esteem and confidence. Allied with the positive housing, population, enterprise and employment impacts of the North Harris Trust generally, there are obvious benefits to individuals' and the community's wellbeing whether measured in terms of mental health, economic or social indicators.

Social capital has been improving with reports that increasing numbers of people in the workforce are engaging with locals in their own language, significantly helping in creating strong bonds. This has led to positive feedback spirals with increasing numbers dealing with the Trust in Gaelic because they know that there is more Gaelic being used. For some, their default language has returned to being Gaelic suggesting the reticence to speak in their own language is being overcome and their isolation reduced, both for those not confident in English but also by choice for others.

Local and national identity have been bolstered with this revival of Gaelic, and its worth confirmed through its importance 'for understanding our environment, and how the Gaelic language can help to create a sustainable and environmentally friendly Scotland'.