

## Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

**Petition Number:** [PE1795](#)

**Main Petitioner:** Màrtainn Mac a' Bhàillidh on behalf of Misneachd

**Subject:** Maoineachadh do Spòrs Gàidhlig - Funding for Spòrs Gàidhlig

Airson gun iarr Pàrlamaid na h-Alba air Riaghaltas na h-Alba coinneachadh ri Bòrd na Gàidhlig a bhruidhinn mu mhaoineachadh seasmhach nas fhaide-ùine do Spòrs Gàidhlig, iomairt shòisealta a' libhrigeadh ionnsachadh air a' bhlàr a-muigh do dh'òigridh tro mheadhan na Gàidhlig.

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to meet with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to discuss longer term and sustainable funding for Spòrs Gàidhlig, a social enterprise delivering outdoor learning to young people through the medium of Gaelic.

### Introduction

It was announced in October 2019, that Spòrs Gàidhlig had secured 18 months of funding. A press release from Spòrs Gàidhlig said:

“It had been feared that the service would have to close, with two staff being made redundant, as sales uptake had not grown as quickly as first expected.

“The new £45,000 funding package from Bòrd na Gàidhlig means that Spòrs Gàidhlig can continue for at least the next 18 months, during which time it is hoped that more schools and parents will take advantage of the opportunities offered.”

The full press release and a statement by the Bòrd na Gàidhlig is included in an annexe to this briefing.

The remainder of this briefing focuses on the Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Spòrs Gàidhlig.

### Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Bòrd na Gàidhlig is an executive non-departmental public body, responsible through Ministers to the Scottish Parliament. Established under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, The Bòrd is the principal public body in Scotland responsible for promoting Gaelic development and providing advice to the Scottish Ministers on Gaelic issues.

The sponsorship team at the Scottish Government is in regular contact with the Bòrd.

The 2005 Act (s.1) provides for the following general functions of the Bòrd:

- (a) promoting, and facilitating the promotion of—
  - (i) the use and understanding of the Gaelic language, and
  - (ii) Gaelic education and Gaelic culture,
- (b) advising (either on request or when it thinks fit) the Scottish Ministers, public bodies and other persons exercising functions of a public nature on matters relating to the Gaelic language, Gaelic education and Gaelic culture,
- (c) advising (on request) other persons on matters relating to the Gaelic language, Gaelic education and Gaelic culture,
- (d) monitoring, and reporting to the Scottish Ministers on, the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages dated 5 November 1992 in relation to the Gaelic language.

The Act sets out that these functions are to be exercised with a view to, “securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language”. The Bòrd should do this by:

- (a) increasing the number of persons who are able to use and understand the Gaelic language,
- (b) encouraging the use and understanding of the Gaelic language, and
- (c) facilitating access, in Scotland and elsewhere, to the Gaelic language and Gaelic culture.

### ***National Gaelic Plan***

The Bòrd has a duty (s.2 of the Act) to prepare a national Gaelic language plan which sets out how it will fulfil its statutory duties. The current Plan covers the period 2018-2023.

The Plan set out the Bòrd’s aim that, “Gaelic is used more often, by more people and in a wider range of situations”. This is broken down under three headings: increasing the use of Gaelic; increasing the learning of Gaelic; and promoting a positive image of Gaelic. Perhaps the second heading is most relevant in relation to this petition. Under that heading, the Plan identifies the following priorities:

- Gaelic in the family

- Gaelic medium workforce recruitment, retention, training and supply
- Resources and support for learning • Gaelic in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)
- Gaelic medium education (GME) in primary and secondary schools
- Gaelic learner education (GLE) in primary and secondary schools
- Gaelic in Higher and Further Education
- Adult Gaelic learning

The statutory process for the national Gaelic language plan is that the Bòrd consults and then prepares a plan which is approved by the Scottish Government.

### ***Budget and funding***

At the time of writing, the 2020-21 Budget had provisionally allocated £5.125m, a small increase in cash terms from 2019-20 when the budget was £5.100m. The Bòrd may also receive small amounts of income from other sources.

The Bòrd distributes funds to organisations for the development of the Gaelic language. The Bòrd supports 11 delivery partners.

The [Bòrd's website](#) currently identifies the following additional funds which can/could be applied for:

- **Gaelic Education Grants 2019/20**  
Support for individuals currently working towards a career in Gaelic teaching or Gaelic-medium teachers looking to develop their professional skills. Applications deadline was 6 September 2019).
- **Early Years Education Grants 2019/20**  
Support for voluntary early years groups that support parents, families and children aged 0-5 years, to encourage and increase the day to day use of Gaelic, and to encourage continuity into Gaelic education. Applications deadline was 14 June 2019.
- **Gaelic Arts Fund 2018-19**  
Applications deadline was 28 September 2018
- **Taic Freumhan Coimhearsnachd 2020/21**  
Support for community groups to undertake projects in support of the national Gaelic language plan. Applications deadline was 21 January 2020.
- **Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) 2020/21**  
Support for public authorities in the delivery of commitments in their Gaelic Language Plans, and in support of the national Gaelic language plan. Applications deadline is 16 April 2020.
- **Colmcille 2020/21**  
The Colmcille scheme is run jointly by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Foras na Gaeilge to promote cultural exchanges between Scotland and Ireland, and in particular the Gàidhlig and Gaeilge languages. Applications deadline was 20 February 2020.

Audit Scotland's 2018/19 [Audit of Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Governance and transparency](#), raised several concerns relating to governance and transparency and found, among other things:

“There was also a lack of consideration of whether ongoing grant funding to organisations was contributing towards the Bòrd's strategic aims and thus achieving value for money.”

## **Spòrs Gàidhlig**

Spòrs Gàidhlig is a part of [Comunn na Gàidhlig](#) which delivers wider youth and community work throughout Scotland although it operates as a separate company. Comunn na Gàidhlig is one of the Bòrd's 11 delivery partners which receives separate funding from the Bòrd.

Spòrs Gàidhlig's website describes itself as:

“Spòrs Gàidhlig is a social enterprise working throughout Scotland which creates opportunities for young people to use and learn about Gaelic in a fun, positive and supportive setting. We offer outdoor activities, residential camps, educational programmes and events.

“We can provide a range of outdoor activities, educational programmes and bespoke events. Our residential camps are popular and provide young people with the opportunity to engage in activities and meet new friends.

“We cater for young people who speak Gaelic, those who are learning and also those who have no current knowledge of the language.”

**Ned Sharratt**  
**Senior Researchers**  
**5 March 2020**

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### Media statements

#### Spòrs Gàidhlig media release, 31 October 2019

##### *'Spòrs Gàidhlig' to Continue*

The pioneering 'Spòrs Gàidhlig' service, delivering Gaelic-language outdoor activities, is set to continue following the announcement of further funding support from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

It had been feared that the service would have to close, with two staff being made redundant, as sales uptake had not grown as quickly as first expected.

The new £45,000 funding package from Bòrd na Gàidhlig means that Spòrs Gàidhlig can continue for at least the next 18 months, during which time it is hoped that more schools and parents will take advantage of the opportunities offered.

Spòrs Gàidhlig is a service created by youth and community development company Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG). CnaG Chief Executive Donald MacNeill said: "We are delighted that we have been able to reach agreement with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and to secure this additional support. We've been working on this service for four or five years, but are as convinced now, as we were at the beginning, of the value of this service – supporting young people's language, social and physical development.

"This new Bòrd na Gàidhlig support is a vital part of our funding package, but it remains the case that we will have to earn £120,000 in sales income over the next 18 months to make the service sustainable into the longer term. This will be quite a challenge, but we are optimistic based on the progress we have made already and the offers of support we have had on social media from parents and schools."

Shona MacLennan, Bòrd na Gàidhlig CEO, said: "Bòrd na Gàidhlig has supported Spòrs Gàidhlig since its inception and we are delighted to continue support for the next 18 months. Sport contributes greatly to the use of Gaelic, so we look forward to working with Comunn na Gàidhlig, the other funding partners, parents and schools to help this service continue and be a success."

Formally established in 2017, Spòrs Gàidhlig has focussed on training a small team of Gaelic-speaking instructors in a variety of outdoor activities. These qualifications, and the securing of the essential AALA (Adventurous Activities Licensing Agency) in 2018 allowed the team to begin delivering outdoor activity sessions in Gaelic – primarily to schools, but also through bookings with individual parents or groups of parents.

The activities provided range from climbing to gorge walking, SUP paddle boards to orienteering, bush craft, or Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. All of

these are delivered in Gaelic – helping to support the language learning of pupils following Gaelic Medium Education (GME). In a strong partnership with Glenmore Lodge, sportscotland’s national outdoor training centre near Aviemore, it has also been possible to deliver high-quality residential trips to GME pupils.

Spòrs Gàidhlig service manager Donald Morris said: “It is great news that we can continue for the next 18 months. We are extremely grateful for the supportive letters and comments we received from parents and others when Spòrs Gàidhlig was threatened with closure. Knowing the work was so widely and highly-regarded was a boost to the staff and gives us a lot of confidence to sustain our efforts.

“Our challenge now is to turn this support into bookings for the months ahead, and we already have firm plans in place to visit schools and parent groups to outline the opportunities and activities we can deliver, and to start putting firm bookings into our calendar.

“We would urge any school, or parent group who wants to know more to get in touch.”

## **Statement from Bòrd na Gàidhlig on Spòrs Gàidhlig 23 September 2019<sup>1</sup>**

A spokesperson for Bòrd na Gàidhlig said: “The Spòrs Gàidhlig project, run by Comunn na Gàidhlig, has been supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig since its inception 18 months ago because we recognise how sport contributes to using Gaelic and the value that brings. Our initial funding was to establish the project and subsequent funding was for equipment. We have also funded groups of young people to take part in Spòrs Gàidhlig activities. To date Bòrd na Gàidhlig has committed more than £60k to this project.

“Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comunn na Gàidhlig have been in discussions about further funding for the project. The board is supportive of providing additional funding and required more financial information and projections to progress this further. Bòrd na Gàidhlig remains willing to continue discussions in collaboration with Comunn na Gàidhlig and other funding partners about the future of the Spòrs Gàidhlig project.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gaidhlig.scot/statement-on-spors-gaidhlig/>