



## **Response to the development of Gaelic Language Plans**

The Scots Language Centre welcomes recent legislative initiatives aimed at enhancing the status of Gaelic, particularly where the language is, or has recently been, the traditional and recognised language of the community. We welcome the development of Gaelic plans by various national and local bodies as important to the long term survival of the language.

The Scots Language Centre believes that in developing Gaelic plans institutions must take into account the prior existence of Scots-speaking communities in many regions of the country. Policy initiatives should be developed in such a way that existing Scots-speaking communities are not disadvantaged in terms of provision of services and resources, either at present or in the future.

In many areas of Scotland Scots is the main minority language. In many regions Scots might be regarded as a majority language yet little or no provision is made to support and encourage its use. Throughout southern, central and eastern regions of Scotland, and in the Northern Isles, there are long-standing and well-defined Scots-speaking communities. The development of plans to promote Gaelic within those Scots communities, without reference to those indigenous communities, can give the impression of cultural and linguistic insensitivity on the part of the bodies instituting and implementing those plans. For instance, the erection of signs with Gaelic place-names, in regions where the main community language is Scots, and where long-standing Scots place-names are excluded from signage, would be an example of bad and insensitive practice.

The Scots Language Centre urges authorities to use this opportunity to develop broader language policies and to consider at each stage of the process how efforts might be made to sustain, encourage and enhance the status of Scots. We would particularly encourage authorities to take account of the data collected in the 2011 census with the purpose of assessing the level of support which languages spoken within their areas should receive.

The Scots Language Centre firmly believes that policies which fail to recognise the existence of Scots and which seek to promote the view that Scotland is a bi-lingual rather than tri-lingual country not only create a picture of Scotland's linguistic landscape which is misleading but also have the effect of establishing a linguistic hierarchy which has no basis in terms of number of speakers or any usually applied socio-linguistic principle.

The Scots Language Centre urges all bodies and institutions in Scotland that are engaged in this process to consider models of best practice found elsewhere in Europe. These are usually developed with reference to the following principles:

**Parity of esteem.**

**Equitable treatment in terms of resource allocation and provision of service.**

**Reference to numbers of speakers where resources are allocated according to the numbers of speakers found in a given community.**

Scots has a long history in many parts of Scotland. It forms the backdrop to the lives of the vast majority of Scots and is found in personal and place-names, in literature, drama and song and in the everyday speech of many hundreds of thousands of people. It has been subjected to ignorance and prejudice and even its status as a language has been denied in certain quarters. Communities of Scots speakers all over Scotland are the inheritors of a centuries old culture and they deserve respect and recognition. We urge you to take account of these facts when developing your language plans now and in the future.

**Practical steps which can be taken to recognise and support Scots.**

In developing Gaelic language plans and policies we would urge public bodies and local authorities to take the opportunity to consider how these could be further developed to recognise and encourage Scots. We suggest that each institution or authority engaged in this process should aim to develop a local or institutional language policy which sets out its position on the promotion of all indigenous languages and local dialects.

In developing Gaelic language plans we would urge all institutions and authorities to consider how they might develop similar plans to support Scots-speaking communities.

In developing statements for use online we would urge authorities to consider how they might develop similar resources for Scots. For example, any institution or authority which wishes to indicate its support for Gaelic by means of a statement on its web site might consider how it could do the same for Scots.

In formulating Gaelic plans which involve developing Gaelic signage we would urge authorities to consider how they might recognise the use of Scots in the communities they serve. For example, authorities might wish to assess how Scots place names might be recognised. For instance, Faw Kirk, Glesca, Lithgae, Jethart and Aiberdeen are all forms which are widely used but which have no official recognition. We would urge authorities to find ways to encourage and

sustain the use of historic names, not at the expense of Gaelic forms but alongside them.

We would urge authorities to develop Scots signage at the same time as signage in Gaelic is developed. Such signage should take account of local dialect forms.

We would urge authorities to consider how they might support and encourage Scots language activities. We note that a number of local authorities give various forms of support to Gaelic cultural and language learning groups and would suggest that efforts are made to find ways to support Scots in a similar fashion.

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