

# AR STÒRAS GÀIDHLIG

The economic and social value of Gaelic as an asset  
- **Executive summary**

May 2014



Inverness Campus, Inverness

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# INTRODUCTION

Front cover image: Abhainn Dearg Distillery, Isle of Lewis

The overarching aim of this research was to consider, evaluate and robustly evidence the current and potential use of Gaelic as an asset to the economy and society of the Highlands and Islands and Scotland as a whole.

DC Research (working in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University, Cogent Strategies International Ltd and Pirnie Ltd) were commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) in partnership with Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Creative Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Highland Council, Argyll and Bute Council, and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to carry out the research project: Economic and Social Value of Gaelic as an Asset.

Overall, the research has attempted to assess the role of Gaelic as an economic and social asset, and the specific remit of the research is acknowledged as being a crucial first step in researching and evaluating this area of Gaelic development. As such, this research should be regarded as an initial, baseline study which has sought to explore and assess the current (and potential) role of Gaelic as an asset economically and socially and, where possible, to quantify the value of Gaelic as an asset.

However, this does not mean that the research is comprehensive, nor that it forms a census of all of those using Gaelic as an asset. The research has however achieved good coverage of the relevant business and social community, and has been able to construct an evidence base around Gaelic's role as an asset, as well as develop a range of case study examples of businesses and organisations where Gaelic adds value and is used as an asset. There is no doubt that there are many more examples not included/covered in this research where Gaelic is being used as an asset to add value to a transaction - social and/or economic.

## UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF GAELIC

Gaelic has shown a remarkable resilience in the face of challenges set against it historically and in the modern era, and is showing encouraging signs of renewal in certain demographics.

According to the 2011 Census, there are 57,375 Gaelic speakers in Scotland (approximately 1.1% of the population). By far the highest concentration is in the Outer Hebrides, followed by Skye and Lochalsh, the offshore islands of Argyll and Bute, the rest of the Highlands and of Argyll and Bute and specific areas in other authorities.

Due to a long term shift towards urban areas there are now in the region of 10,000 speakers of Gaelic in the greater Glasgow area, and likewise a substantial number in

the Edinburgh area (almost 6,000). Overall, according to the Census approximately 87,000 individuals were claimed to have 'some knowledge of Gaelic' in 2011.

There is a substantial feeling of goodwill towards Gaelic shown by the majority of the Scottish people as expressed in public attitude surveys (e.g. Attitudes Towards the Gaelic Language, 2011). In general this is also being expressed in the tone in which Gaelic is discussed in the press.

The community of Glenelg in the Scottish Highlands twinned itself with Glenelg on Mars and hosted an event entitled "Space, Stars and Mars". (L-R) Emma Maclean (local development officer and event organiser), Bonnie Dunbar (former astronaut) and Prof John Brown (Astronomer Royal) opened the event.





Cuillin FM studio, Portree, Isle of Skye

Benefits of Gaelic in helping decode Scotland's past and in general the benefits of bilingualism within Scottish society are also being increasingly acknowledged.

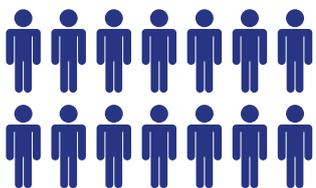
Gaelic Language Plans are now allowing local approaches to Gaelic to be discussed although much still remains to be done in terms of developing and implementing successful strategies regarding capacity building. The changing nature of Gaelic communities in Scotland, within and outwith the traditional Gàidhealtachd are throwing up new challenges to policy and also new opportunities amongst the 'New Gaels' in Scotland.

The positive role that Gaelic, in particular Gaelic arts and cultural activities, can play in economic activities, particularly in the media and in events such as Celtic Connections, are now generally acknowledged by policy makers, although more needs to be done to broaden and increase this awareness. Issues of skills accreditation remain, as do attitudinal issues regarding domains in which Gaelic is not yet seen as being used, or having the potential to be used, as an asset.

The problems facing Gaelic as a minority language within a context of majority English use are not limited to Gaelic alone, but are encountered by other minority languages

such as Welsh and Irish. Despite this, a positive framework can be developed around a 'linguistic political economy of development' where language, culture and development can co-exist positively and work with each other.

"Gaelic has shown a remarkable resilience in the face of challenges set against it historically and in the modern era."



**57,365**

Gaelic speakers in Scotland



Kiltearn Fiddlers, Eden Court Theatre, Inverness

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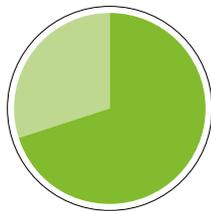
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## KEY FINDINGS

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In total, the primary research elements of this study consulted with, or received responses from, more than 300 businesses, enterprises and organisations – around two-thirds (more than 200) from the surveys, and more than one-third (120) from the focus groups and interviews. This primary research has achieved coverage of the key geographic locations, the key sectors (focusing on key sectors where previous research suggests Gaelic is used as an asset), and has covered both the economic and social dimensions of Gaelic as an asset. More information about the representativeness of the respondents is included in Annex 1 to the report.

The research findings highlight the scale of the use of Gaelic by businesses (more than 60% of respondents use Gaelic as a key element), the value that using Gaelic can add to businesses and community organisations (70% of businesses surveyed regard Gaelic as an asset to their business), and the types of benefits that using Gaelic provides to businesses (enhancing distinctiveness/ uniqueness of products and services, enhancing perceptions of authenticity and provenance, and increasing appeal of products/services to target markets).



## ALMOST 70%

of businesses consulted said that Gaelic is currently an asset to their business.



- More than half the businesses (60%) and 85% of community organisations surveyed stated that Gaelic is used, or features, as a key element of their main activities, products or services.
- Almost two-thirds of businesses consulted describe Gaelic as moderately, very, or critically important, and more than half the community organisations stated that Gaelic is critically important.
- Businesses that identified Gaelic as being critically important are most commonly in creative industries sectors (e.g. music, art, design, performance, theatre, media, publishing, digital/ICT). Other businesses that identify Gaelic as critically important include those in the heritage and learning sectors.
- Almost 70% of businesses consulted said that Gaelic is an asset to their main business/enterprise activity, with the greater representation of these being in creative industries, heritage, education/learning and community sectors.
- Commonly represented sectors within the 84% of community organisations who state that Gaelic adds real value to their organisation are creative industries (especially music), alongside Gaelic learning and other education, as well as community development and heritage organisations.



## MORE THAN HALF

the businesses and enterprises surveyed stated that Gaelic is used, or features, as a key element of their main activities, products or services.

Potential economic value of Gaelic as an asset to the Scottish economy could be in the region of between

**£82M AND £149M**

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## ALMOST TWO THIRDS

of businesses consulted describe Gaelic as moderately, very, or critically important to the success of their business.



Digital Showcase in Nairn Arts and Community Centre

Ways in which Gaelic is used by businesses and enterprises are varied, from being the focus of the enterprise to offering an add-on or enhancement to specific aspects of the enterprise.

## Common ways in which Gaelic is used include:

**As the explicit heart/core of the business** - where Gaelic (as a language, as well as Gaelic music, Gaelic heritage, Gaelic events, etc.) is fundamental to the enterprise.

**As an inherent/implicit element of the business** - where Gaelic (language, culture and heritage) has influenced and inspired the enterprise or business owner.

**Being used within the business or product names** - including for business names, product or service names, branding, company logos, etc.

**Being used to make events, performances, etc. bilingual** - i.e. Gaelic language being a key part of events, performances, festivals, etc.

**Being used to enhance the experience of the service or product** - for visitors (e.g. to museums and heritage sites), customers, etc.

**As the language of external communication** - where Gaelic is used in communication between staff and customers, staff and suppliers, etc.

**Being used in signage for the business** - either on its own, or in bilingual signage.

**Used in advertising, promotion and marketing** - either on its own or bilingually.

**As the language of the workplace** - where Gaelic is the language of communication between staff within the business.

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The research highlights the (two-way) inter-relationship between Gaelic and economic and social development - the role of Gaelic in supporting economic and social development and also the role of economic and social development in supporting Gaelic. Key themes that emerge around these issues, and about the wider inter-relationships between Gaelic and economic development include:

- The importance of positively treating Gaelic as an economic and social asset.
- Acknowledgement that it is jobs and the economy that can help to drive the development of Gaelic, more than the use of Gaelic on its own that can help to drive the economy.
- The importance of normalisation of the language, including the use of Gaelic by businesses, but also more generally (e.g. in the media), in education (i.e. Gaelic Medium Education) and in wider society.
- There is a growing belief in firms and organisations using Gaelic that this itself (business and organisation use of Gaelic) further positively reinforces impacts within Gaelic-speaking communities.



### The three aspects that are the most common major benefits for businesses from using Gaelic as an asset are that it:

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**1**

Enhances the distinctiveness/ uniqueness of products/ services.

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**2**

Enhances customer perceptions of authenticity and provenance of products/ services.

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**3**

Increases the appeal of products/services to target markets.



Gaelic was a critical factor/driver in the establishment of just over one-fifth of businesses/enterprises surveyed, and more than half of the community organisations.

More than 60% of businesses stated that business use of/association with Gaelic enhances the value of Gaelic in the community, and the pattern is even stronger within community organisations.

The inter-relationship between Gaelic use by businesses and Gaelic development is evidenced in the research which shows that business use of Gaelic:

- Increases the profile of the language (70% of respondents strongly agree).
- Increases awareness of the language (70% of respondents strongly agree).

- Increases the social value of the language (52% of respondents strongly agree).
- Increases the pride in the communities (51% of respondents strongly agree).

In terms of the social value of Gaelic, the primary research has highlighted and emphasised the role of Gaelic in this regard, and has provided additional evidence that supports some of the key social dimensions of Gaelic identified in previous research – such as self-confidence (individually and at the community level); pride in the communities; attachment of people to their communities; and increases in Gaelic-related job opportunities.

The case studies include examples where the social value of Gaelic is both a key reason for using Gaelic by the enterprise or organisation and is also an outcome of using Gaelic by the organisation or business.

The community organisation survey also provides evidence of various aspects around the social value of Gaelic - with more than three-quarters of survey respondents stating that their use of Gaelic increases the profile, awareness, use, appreciation, and social value of the language.

In addition the majority of community organisation respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the use of Gaelic by community organisations increased pride in local communities (72%); increased the attachment of people to their communities (64%); and increased Gaelic related job opportunities (61%). Additionally, more than half of businesses that replied to the business survey believe that their use of Gaelic helps increase the social value of the language.

# 60%

of businesses stated that business use of/ association with Gaelic enhances the value of Gaelic in the community.

# 72%

increase in pride within local communities by the use of Gaelic by organisations.



Isle of Skye Ferry

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## OPPORTUNITIES TO USE GAELIC AS AN ASSET

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Whilst Chalmers and Sproull's (2006) comprehensive survey about the demand for Gaelic goods and services primarily dealt with the arts, it would suggest a notable level of untapped demand for Gaelic goods and services in general, constrained more by availability rather than factors such as consumers' Gaelic fluency. This suggests that a target market, particularly for artistic goods, but not limited to that market, should not be seen as restricted to those who consider themselves as Gaelic speakers.

In terms of additional opportunities to use Gaelic as an asset – the majority of businesses that already regard Gaelic as an asset also see additional opportunities to enhance their business, whilst (conversely) the majority of those that do not currently regard Gaelic as an asset, do not see any opportunities to make use of Gaelic to enhance their business. Sectors that are more likely to recognise there are opportunities include creative industries, education and learning, heritage and tourism.

- Many consultees regard tourism and the various opportunities within this sector to be one of the main areas where there is strong potential to enhance and develop the role of Gaelic as an economic asset. Tourism opportunities can relate to two distinct markets, a Gaelic speaking/learning market (i.e. 'internal Gaelic tourism'), and also a more general (national/international) market where the role of Gaelic is about enhancing the distinctiveness, differentiation, and the appeal to tourists of visiting specific locations (especially island locations) within Scotland (in effect a 'volume market').
- Within the creative industries opportunities relate to the further development of the wide range of artistic, drama, literature, music and events and festivals related activity currently taking place through businesses and organisations – both those that communicate and express themselves (either mainly or exclusively) in Gaelic, and those for whom Gaelic is used as an enhancement or a feature.
- The role of education and learning is regarded by many consultees as being critical to the future development opportunities around Gaelic as an economic and social asset, and also the general language development for Gaelic.

The key barriers and challenges in terms of realising these opportunities include:

- The availability of job and employment opportunities, especially for young people.
- The general capacity and resources of businesses (and community organisations) - limiting their ability to increase the use of Gaelic due to capacity issues (staff ability and time), as well as resources required to develop the role of Gaelic in the business.
- The existing (lack of) Gaelic knowledge and expertise within the business or organisation. A lack of Gaelic (i.e. of Gaelic speakers and/or Gaelic literates) is a well-recognised barrier by many businesses – on both the supply side and demand side. Also, a lack of Gaelic speakers with the relevant, specific skills for the business.

- Cultural barriers and issues – relating to actual and perceived issues around confidence, resistance to change, lack of priority and support given to Gaelic, lack of awareness within businesses about the potential for Gaelic, concerns around tokenism and narrow treatment of Gaelic as an economic asset.

The anticipated impacts and benefits of realising these opportunities include:

- Profile and awareness benefits to the business (public awareness and credibility).
- Direct economic impacts on business (such as additional custom/increased turnover, increased audiences/visitors, creating new jobs).

- Mutual benefits to business and community (enhancing experiences; wider benefits from helping promote and sustain the language; better connectivity with the local area and its history; economies of scale; increased educational opportunities).
- Normalisation of Gaelic/support for Gaelic (increases in the quantity and quality of Gaelic exposure).

As such, the potential opportunities are anticipated to clearly benefit the individual businesses, as well as the communities where the businesses are located, and the wider language development for Gaelic - reinforcing and further evidencing the two-way inter-relationship between Gaelic and economic and social development mentioned previously.






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# QUANTIFYING THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF GAELIC AS AN ASSET

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[1] This excludes the turnover and employment of key Gaelic organisations that are reliant on public sector support, which would substantially increase this figure of £3.1 million towards £15 million.

[2] This excludes the turnover and employment of key Gaelic organisations that are reliant on public sector support, which would markedly increase this figure of 36 FTE jobs towards 65 FTE jobs.

The study sought to quantify the value of Gaelic as an asset; however, the results only capture some aspects of the quantifiable value of Gaelic as an economic asset, and the results should not be regarded as comprehensive or representative of the wider economy.

Whilst 70% of businesses surveyed stated that the use of Gaelic represents an asset to their main business/enterprise activity, the majority of these businesses are not able to provide quantitative estimates of the value of this.

Around one-third of businesses that regard Gaelic as an asset were able to provide some measurement of the value of Gaelic to the business, and an analysis of the data provided (and excluding key Gaelic organisations reliant on public sector support from the data to allow the analysis to focus on private sector businesses) found that, for these 34 enterprises, the turnover attributed to the impact of Gaelic is almost £4million. Alongside this (and again excluding key Gaelic organisations reliant on public sector support from the data to allow the analysis to focus on private sector businesses), the increase in the number of people employed attributed to the impact of Gaelic for the 18 businesses able to measure this is 47 FTE jobs.

Overall, the businesses for whom Gaelic is an asset and that are able to quantify the value of Gaelic to the enterprise commonly have the following characteristics: they are located within Eilean Siar or Highland, they are working in the creative and cultural industries, and they are micro-businesses.

A second level of analysis used a matching process through which businesses recognising Gaelic as an asset but not able to provide measures of the value were matched with businesses able to provide values on a case-by-case basis. In order to find the most appropriate match, the process involved seeking a match against four criteria – i.e. matching businesses between the two groups based on: recognition of Gaelic as an asset, geographic location, sector, and business size.

Adopting this process provided matches for 17 businesses/enterprises that identified Gaelic as an asset but did not quantify the value (all of which are located in Eilean Siar). This enabled the following estimates to be made of the value of Gaelic as an asset to these businesses/enterprises:

- Turnover: £1.7 million (leading to a combined total of £3.1 million for Eilean Siar when the matched respondents and original respondents [1] are added together).
- Employment: 11 FTE jobs (leading to a combined total of 36 FTE jobs for Eilean Siar when the matched respondents and original respondents [2] are added together).



In summary, taking the results from the 34 enterprises able to quantify the value of Gaelic to their business and the results from the 17 enterprises included in the matching process together, the turnover attributed to the impact of Gaelic for these 51 businesses/enterprises is around £5.6 million.

An assessment of the potential economic value to the wider economy of Gaelic as an asset was carried out, based on a number of key assumptions and caveats. The analysis combined the relevant survey results with data from the 2011 Census about Gaelic ability, and also with data from the Scottish Government about the size of the Growth Sectors.

The key assumptions and caveats underpinning this assessment were:

- A focus only on three key sectors where Gaelic is recognised as being used as an asset: the creative industries; tourism (including heritage); and food and drink.
- Using the primary research findings from those able to quantify the value of Gaelic as an asset to provide an average (34.6%) and median (20%) percentage value of turnover that businesses attribute to Gaelic and applying this to the wider economy.

- In the absence of other suitable evidence about the scale of use (i.e. the number of businesses in the wider population that do use Gaelic as an asset but that did not respond to the survey or engage in the primary research elements of this study) the most recently released data from the 2011 Census about Gaelic language skills at the local authority level has been used as a proxy measure to estimate and appropriately weight the potential scale of the value of Gaelic as an economic asset.

It should be acknowledged that this approach is effectively underpinned by a rationale that assesses what the value of Gaelic would be if the results of the survey were replicated across the key sectors in the economy where Gaelic is recognised as an asset, using the scale of Gaelic ability in each area as a weighting. Therefore, the results below should be regarded as giving an indication of what the benefits of Gaelic as an asset could be to Scotland if the survey results were replicated across the wider economy.

Adopting this approach, and applying it to Growth Sector statistics for 2011 (the most recently available data) allows an estimate of turnover to be developed for the three Growth Sectors – Creative Industries (including

digital), Food and Drink (excluding agriculture) and Sustainable Tourism (Tourism related industries). The results show that in total, the potential economic value of Gaelic as an asset to the Scottish economy could be in the region of between £81.6 million and £148.5 million.

In general, for many businesses there are both practical and conceptual difficulties in attempting to provide any quantitative assessment of the value of Gaelic to their business.

Given the implications of these findings for this study, consideration can be given to various actions to address these issues: (i) develop processes through which additional primary data can be collected from businesses that use Gaelic; (ii) develop support processes/systems through which businesses can develop and implement ways to measure the value of Gaelic; (iii) educate and inform businesses about the benefits to them (and the general benefits) of being able to quantify the value of Gaelic; (iv) systematise the collection of relevant data from businesses; (v) make use of additional data due to be released in the future from the 2011 Census, allowing a better understanding of the role of Gaelic as well as informing how the value of Gaelic can be quantified in a more robust and systematic way.

## EXAMPLES OF GAELIC AS AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASSET

The full report includes a range of case studies that provide profiles and examples of individual businesses, organisations and sectors that use Gaelic as an asset. These case study summaries highlight examples where Gaelic is an asset and adds value to the business, organisation or sector and include coverage of the main types of business and organisation where Gaelic is an asset, as well as the main sectors where Gaelic is recognised as adding value (or having the potential to add value).

### Individual Case Studies

- An Lantair, Stornoway
- Aros Visitor Centre and Arts Centre, Skye
- Celtic Connections, Glasgow
- Facal, Sutherland
- Fèisean nan Gàidheal and Blas
- HebCelt Festival, Stornoway
- Media nan Eilean (mneTV), Glasgow
- Port Charlotte Hotel, Islay
- Praban na Linne, Isle of Skye
- Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Isle of Skye
- Sealgar, Isle of Lewis
- Seallam Visitor Centre, Northton, Harris
- Storas Uibhist
- Taigh Chearsabhagh, North Uist.

### Sectoral Overviews/Case Studies

- Gaelic Cultural Hubs
- Gaelic Publishing Sector
- Gaelic Media Sector
- Gaelic and Scotch Whisky
- Tourism Sector

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