



Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Draft Gaelic Plan 2022-2025

Public Consultation Analysis Report

August 2022

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1 OVERVIEW

This report discusses the findings of a public consultation on the second iteration of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) Gaelic Language Plan.

The Service has a statutory requirement under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act (2005) to have a Gaelic Plan in place. Prior to drafting the final Plan, a six-week consultation exercise was undertaken to inform its development.

The report sets out the consultation approach and the communications undertaken to support its launch and implementation. The survey questions are reproduced with corresponding, quantitative data and an abstract of emerging themes.

Those themes were analysed to provide a summary of responses with an accompanying narrative.

Overall, there was a negative response towards the proposals for progressing Gaelic within SFRS, with around two thirds of respondents expressing an adverse view. Conversely, others were ambivalent or felt that Gaelic did not get the platform or exposure that it deserved. Only a small number of respondents supported the further development and progression of Gaelic within SFRS.

Care has been taken to ensure that only those responses which relate to proposals within the Plan are considered in this analysis. Wider comments about the perceived worth of Gaelic have been, as far as is practicable, omitted. However, it should be noted that where particularly strongly held views have been expressed, where these relate to a proposal within the Plan, these have been considered and reported here.

The report concludes with an overview of feedback, considers the Service response to issues raised and the consequences for the final Plan.

2 INTRODUCTION

A public consultation on the SFRS draft Gaelic Language Plan 2022-2025 was launched on 17 January 2022 and closed on 27 February 2022.

Employees, stakeholders and communities across Scotland were invited to share their views on how the final Gaelic Language Plan should be developed and implemented.

In line with other public-sector organisations in Scotland, SFRS supports the aims of Bòrd na Gàidhlig by widening access and promoting Gaelic across the Service. Bòrd na Gàidhlig places an emphasis on continuing commitment and yearly progress, therefore the 2022-2025 draft Plan highlighted the actions undertaken over the duration of the 2018-2021 Plan. Suggestions on how these activities could be scaled up over the next three years were incorporated also.

The purpose of this consultation exercise was to establish to what degree respondents agreed with the proposed options for integrating Gaelic into SFRS practices and operations.

3 METHODOLOGY

The stakeholder exercise was designed to draw out quantitative and qualitative responses in relation to the draft Plan.

An online survey, in English and Gaelic, was published alongside the draft Gaelic Language Plan and the exercise was supported by social media to alert the public and stakeholders to the consultation going live. The Plan and supporting social media were provided in both languages.

The survey was hosted on SFRS's Citizen Space online hub to ensure accessibility and user-friendly design as standard. Paper copies of the consultation in English or Gaelic were available on request. The public could also get in touch with written responses, questions or comments relating to the consultation.

The consultation survey contained 12 questions designed to capture data on the diversity of respondents and to the Plan itself. All questions were optional.

The profiling questions asked for respondents' name, email and partial postcode. If an individual was completing the survey on behalf of an organisation they were asked to name the organisation. The survey asked SFRS employees to self-identify and to select from a drop-down menu where they were based. This information could be used, if desired, to order employee views by Service Delivery area.

Questions regarding the Plan's aims and objectives required tick box Yes/No answers with the provision of additional free text boxes. Questions 4 and 5 asked for views on specific scenarios with the respondent selecting the option that best represented their opinion. The final question invited general feedback on shaping the approach to working with the Gaelic language medium.

Analysis was undertaken on a question-by-question basis using keywords or phrases to identify common themes. This was a subjective, qualitative approach undertaken to identify the prevalent subject areas.

4 PROMOTION OF THE CONSULTATION

To support the consultation exercise, a dedicated web page and FAQs were created. A specific consultation email address enabled people to submit queries or offer feedback.

Other communications included a launch video with Gaelic subtitles featuring the Director of People and Organisational Development, a media release including a Gaelic version for target media, and an interview with Scotland's Gaelic language television station, BBC Alba. Dual language social media posts supported the consultation at launch, mid-point and as it ended.

Internally, the consultation was promoted to staff via the Intranet and the weekly staff newsletter.

5 STAKEHOLDERS

In preparation for the consultation a mapping exercise was undertaken to review and identify key stakeholders. A consultation plan was developed to ensure the consultation process was communicated widely.

The consultation mailing, encouraging recipients to participate, was emailed to 509 stakeholders in the following categories: SFRS Local Senior Managers, emergency and multi-agency partners, representative bodies, local authorities, community councils, MSPs, health and social care partnerships, NHS boards, third sector, charities and Bòrd na Gàidhlig contacts.

The mailing, which linked to the draft Gaelic Plan and an online survey, was delivered to 409 recipients (93.1%). There were 138 unique opens and 1,267 total opens i.e. those who opened the communication more than once. The click throughs to the survey represented 16.7% with the total number of clicks, including returners to the survey, being 54.

6 OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

- The public consultation exercise generated a total of 190 responses through the online survey.
- Not all of the questions were answered by every respondent.
- Responses were received from 45 SFRS staff which equates to 24% of the total.
- No written responses were received
- Overall there were 188 responses to the English language version of the consultation and 2 responses were received in Gaelic.

7 QUESTIONS AND ANALYSIS OF REPOSESES

In presenting the analysis, all relevant personal identifiers have been removed from the findings set out below. Respondents were asked six demographic questions.

Questions 1-6

- Q1 All but eight people supplied their name; however, 25 of the 182 doing so provided a first name only.
- Q2 Five respondents stated they were responding on behalf of an organisation rather than a personal capacity. These organisations were:
- Glasgow City Council
 - Dumfries & Galloway Council
 - Dumfries & Galloway LGBT
 - Dumfries Property Rentals
 - Cross Keys Hotel, Kelso

- Q3 141 people (74%) provided an email address.
- Q4 124 respondents (65%) provided a partial or full postcode.
- Q5 45 responders (24%) identified themselves as SFRS employees.
- Q6 Work locations were cited as:

Service Delivery Area (SDA)	Employees
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	4
City of Edinburgh	2
City of Glasgow	7
Dumfries and Galloway	3
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	4
East Ren, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	4
Falkirk and West Lothian	3
Highland	3
Lanarkshire	5
Mid and East Lothian and Scottish Borders	3
Stirling, Clacks and Fife	6
Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland	1
Total	45

Question 7: Have we chosen the right High Level Aims in our Gaelic Language Plan?

Responses: 184
YES 64 (35%) NO 120 (65%)

Themes

- Gaelic should not be a priority for SFRS
- Gaelic has limited relevance to SFRS
- Resources (staff time, effort, and public money) could be better utilised elsewhere within the Service
- Gaelic should be treated as a minority/ regional language
- The proposals are an acceptable start but more could be done

Question 8: Have we chosen the right Corporate Service Aims in our Gaelic Language Plan?

Responses: 182
YES 60 (33%) NO 122 (67%)

Themes

- The proposals in the Plan do not represent a good use of public money
- Gaelic should not be a priority for SFRS
- Other areas are more important
- Gaelic is a minority language

Question 9: Do you think the actions as detailed in our Gaelic Language Plan will achieve our aims?

Responses: 186

YES 71 (38%) NO 115 (62%)

Question 10: Please give your views on the following areas – tick the box that best represents your view.

	Option A - In all areas of Scotland	Option B - In those areas of Scotland where Gaelic is used by the local population as part of everyday life (e.g. where 10 - 20% of the population use Gaelic)
Should SFRS buildings have signage in both Gaelic and English?		
Should SFRS vehicles be branded in both Gaelic and English?		
Should SFRS uniforms be branded in both Gaelic and English?		

Responses: 185

	Option A	Option B
Building signage	51 (28%)	133 (72%)
Branded vehicles	0 (0%)	53 (29%)
Branded uniforms	56 (30%)	12 (6%)

Question 11: In our next Gaelic Language Plan, where do you feel our focus should be? - tick the box that best represents your view.

Option A - In all areas of Scotland	Option B - In those areas of Scotland where Gaelic is used by the local population as part of everyday life (e.g. where 10 - 20% of the population use Gaelic)

Responses: 185

Option A	Option B
50 (54%)	135 (73%)

Question 12: Have you any other views on our draft Gaelic Language Plan 2022 – 2025?

Responses: 172

Overarching Themes:

- **Cost** and the associated time, effort, and resource
- **Relevance** to SFRS, Scotland and wider society

8 THEMES

Respondents who provided additional comments did not focus solely on the content of the Gaelic Language Plan. Opinions were expressed more generally about the use of Gaelic, its status and role in Scotland. These points are highly subjective. In these cases, care has been taken to ensure that this analysis reflects only those points made – however strongly – *as they relate to the proposals within the Plan.*

Questions 7 and 8

There was a significant crossover in the views expressed about the high level aims and the corporate aims.

Of those who expressed a negative opinion (Q7: 65% and Q8: 68%) the strong feeling is that a Gaelic Language Plan for SFRS was unnecessary and not a good use of public money.

“Why is so much time, effort and money being spent on this, instead of concentrating on real priorities?”

“I think the idea of spending money and time in this is a failure of the public services”

“Gaelic language should not be a priority for SFRS”

“...spend your time, efforts and money on what a fire service should be primarily interested in, fighting and preventing fires and saving lives”

Efforts at promoting a language that is spoken by less than 2% of the population was questioned by respondents. It was asserted that while Gaelic has traditionally been spoken in some areas, it is not a nationwide language, and therefore its relevance to all the country was challenged.

“This language will never be more than a token language spoken by a few”

“This is a minority language that does not need to be introduced at a national level”

“...it is not a viable language - never in Scottish history has the Gaelic language been spoken by more than 20% of the population

“There is no need to waste the money or the time of fire personnel on this when everyone who speaks Gaelic already speaks English”

Equally, a minority were enthusiastic saying a Gaelic Language Plan was ‘commendable’ ‘powerful’ and ‘fantastic’. These respondents called for Gaelic to be more prominent and suggested that SFRS could go further in its use of the language.

“the inclusion of the high-level aim of promoting the language is extremely powerful”

“At a high level ... commendable and achievable but perhaps only as a starting point”

“A reasonable Plan which requires to be strengthened as outlined and regularly monitored to ensure its effective implantation”

“Saving our native tongue is everyone’s responsibility. Being used by our valued and respected emergency services can only be a good thing”

Question 9

When asked if the Gaelic Language Plan would achieve the organisation’s aims, 63% of those who responded did so negatively.

Responses typically given to questions 7 and 8 were repeated here:

“this is just wasting money and resources”

“Why should Gaelic 'be used more often'? It makes very little sense because so few people speak it”

One respondent observed **“Gaelic not required to put out fires”** while another thought that [the Plan would] **“help broaden knowledge and understanding of the Gaelic language across Scotland”**

A more balanced view is illustrated by the comment:

“This cannot be a priority over the main service objectives, but it is a reasonable secondary aim”

Another respondent observed; **“The actions in the Plan will only achieve the aims if the plan is national in scope with national visibility”**

Question 10

The subject of dual language branding was opposed by many respondents.

“The cost alone of rebranding will be a huge expense...”

“Is it really necessary to have every building, vehicle and uniform branded in both languages? Surely fire stations and fire engines are recognisable?”

“you should be looking at ways of saving money not a pointless exercise of adding a language to signs that the majority of Scotland don’t speak and never will”

A significant majority (72%) considered signage on buildings was appropriate only in areas of Scotland where Gaelic is used as an everyday language.

“I feel the aims to add signage to all appliances and service buildings in areas where Gaelic isn't spoken is unnecessary”

“Gaelic should not be used on any building in Scotland unless privately funded by the owners”

However, a minority considered:

“A recognition of this language is important throughout the sfrs in Scotland. All appliances and stations should have this at the forefront of signage”

No respondents considered that dual branded vehicles should be brought in across the country.

“Don’t think this is really that important, if anything, putting Gaelic on signs/vehicles just confuses people”

“It is a ridiculous waste of money to rebrand vehicles [and uniforms] in a language that 90% of the country have no knowledge of”

29% of respondents however thought this was appropriate in Gaelic speaking areas.

There was more support for the dual branding of uniforms, with 30% considering it suitable for adopting nationwide.

Question 11

This question asked if the focus of the Gaelic Plan should be in all regions of Scotland or only where Gaelic was commonly spoken. There was a clear divide here with only 27% of respondents considering that it should be national, with the remainder stating effort should be only in areas where Gaelic is a part of everyday life.

“The Gaelic language plan in my opinion should only be used in areas where the local population use it as part of everyday life”

“I feel that it would have no impact in areas that don’t use it and could be seen as a waste of tax payers’ money”

“Local areas where Gaelic is prominent should be given autonomy to control the engagement with Gaelic”

Question 12

In the final ‘Any other Views’ section of the survey, over 90% (172 people) chose to provide further comments. Respondents took the opportunity to repeat their support or opposition to developing and implementing a Gaelic Language Plan. A significant number reiterated or expanded on points they had made earlier and consequently very little new content was introduced.

Cost

A dominant theme was concern around the financial cost to the SFRS. Strong feelings were expressed and there were many references to limited resources and more meaningful, practical ways to spend money. Issues cited as more pressing to address were; aging buildings, fleet, basic equipment, firefighters' pay and training. There was recognition of the additional challenges associated with Covid recovery and budget cuts.

“This should be at the bottom of the list of priorities, we’re recovering from a pandemic”

“It is a waste of valuable resource and totally unnecessary”

“Please stick to the core business of Fire and Rescue, not expanding a language that will not enhance the role of the Fire Service”

A common critical comment linked to the proposals within the Plan related to the cost to the taxpayer and the use of public money. One respondent suggested that the cost of such a proposal far outweighed the social value to be gained.

Another commented:

“I feel that it would have no impact in areas that don't use it and could be seen as a waste of tax payers' money”

Relevance

An overriding topic was the relevance of Gaelic to SFRS. This issue raised a variety of strongly held views ranging from a desire to focus more on the language;

“If fire heritage is important, then Scottish traditional language is important also”

...to its limited adoption;

“The Gaelic language plan should only be used in areas where the local population use it as part of everyday life”

...to an appeal for SFRS to concentrate on its core activity;

“We want the fire service to fight fires, not waste time and money offering training in a dead language”.

A minority pointed out strongly that Gaelic is our native language and it was important to acknowledge and uphold that heritage with activities to support our distinctive Scottish culture.

“The Service should see this is an opportunity to drastically rethink its commitments for Gaelic and to be forward-thinking and pro-active in helping to create an environment where Gaelic can thrive”

However, most respondents considered a Gaelic Language Plan as ‘surplus to requirements’.

“The invaluable work you do surely transcends any language. If lives need saving, they need saving regardless of what language people prefer to speak”

“Scotland has coped without this level of promotion, in a language, for years”

A small number of respondents stated there should be equal respect for Gaelic, and that spoken and written Gaelic should be ‘normalised’, made more visible, and rolled out across Scotland.

“This Plan will help engage with staff and the wider community and encourage an interest in the language. With the support of senior management, actively encouraging staff to use, learn and promote Gaelic in their daily lives, SFRS will help to normalise Gaelic in Scotland and deliver a sustainable future for Gaelic language and culture”

“Gaelic is a national language and its vital that the plan be national in terms of visibility.

There was support for investment in Gaelic courses and actions such as including bi-lingual email footers and citing Gaelic skills as ‘being desirable’ in job advertisements. These respondents were hopeful that a Gaelic Language Plan was an opportunity for SFRS to re-think its commitment to Gaelic and do more.

“Perhaps look to increase/expand the range of Gaelic modules available for staff and place a timeline on this”

“Would be good to have the availability to do a Gaelic course since there has been members of public dealt with that speaks both English and Gaelic”

“Whilst offering more training to your staff, if possible offer out to wider communities where there may not be any other access to Gaidhlig”

9 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PLAN

All responses were read and considered. In the main, comments referred to the use and promotion of the Gaelic language generally rather than the SFRS Plan. However, as stated above, care has been taken in this analysis to consider only those comments – both supportive and oppositional – as they relate directly to the proposals in the Plan.

Gaelic language is a topic which stimulates strongly opposing views and this was evident from the comments received. However, as the Plan develops there will likely be criticism from vocal elements on either side.

These findings indicate that the majority of respondents consider a Gaelic Language Plan to be irrelevant and a low priority for SFRS. However, ardent Gaelic supporters are keen to see Service do a lot more to promote the use of Gaelic.

SFRS has a statutory duty to have a Gaelic Language Plan. The challenge lies in achieving this in a pragmatic approach that respects Gaelic speakers but manages this within an environment of competing priorities and limited resources.