

Midlothian



Bòrd na
Gàidhlig

DRAFT

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL GAELIC LANGUAGE PLAN 2026-31

Plana na Gàidhlig

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the second iteration of Midlothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan, which outlines the steps we will take to preserve and promote the Gaelic language across Midlothian over the next five years, to 2031.

This new Plan aims to build on foundations of the first Midlothian Council Gaelic Language Plan, which covered the period 2021-26.

Our aim is to contribute to the Scottish Government's vision of safeguarding the future sustainability of the Gaelic language by enhancing the profile of the language and providing more opportunities for our communities to communicate in Gaelic.

Our new Gaelic Language Plan has been prepared in the context of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act and National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28. This highlights that the promotion of Gaelic is a shared responsibility and that a significant number of local authorities and public bodies make an important contribution to support the language.

Our commitments within the Plan set out what we will do to raise the status of Gaelic in a proportionate way. We will, however, encourage our services to exceed these commitments. The Plan reaffirms our ongoing commitment to the aspirations and objectives included in the National Gaelic Language Plan and the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

The 2022 Scottish census found that 1,268 Midlothian residents had some Gaelic language skills – an increase from 352 in 2011. However, we acknowledge that there remain significant challenges threatening the survival and continued growth of Gaelic.

We embrace our shared responsibility under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 to safeguard the long-term sustainability of the language.

Grace Vickers

Chief Executive

Midlothian Council

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SUMMARY

The Midlothian Council Gaelic Language Plan 2021-26 recognised that Gaelic is an integral part of Scotland's heritage, national identity and cultural life. The plan contained a number of actions to enhance the status of Gaelic, promote the acquisition and learning of Gaelic, and encourage the increased usage of Gaelic.

The Council has made some progress towards the delivery of its commitments. For instance, the Education service has undertaken initiatives to promote Gaelic in schools, such as the development of Gaelic learning packs for primary pupils and the provision of professional learning opportunities for both primary and secondary teachers.

Yet, despite concerted efforts at local and national levels, the Gaelic language remains in a fragile position.

The new Midlothian Council Gaelic Language Plan 2026-31 represents a dynamic and pragmatic approach to fostering a sustainable future for Gaelic in Midlothian. It lays out how we will use Gaelic in the operation of our functions, how we will enable the use of Gaelic when the public interact with us, and how we will promote the development of Gaelic in educational settings.

This document has been prepared in accordance with the statutory criteria outlined in Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, having regard to the National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28 and the Guidance on the Development of Gaelic Language Plans.

The Midlothian Council Gaelic Language Plan 2026-31 follows the below structure:

Section 1: Introduction

This section provides the background and context relating to the preparation of Gaelic Language Plans under the 2005 Act. It also provides an overview of Gaelic language usage in Midlothian.

Section 2: Commitments

This section demonstrates how Midlothian Council will use, and enable the use of, Gaelic with respect to our main functions. It covers key areas of business such as corporate identity, signage, communication with the public and the use of Gaelic on our website. It also sets out the level of Gaelic education we are committed to delivering over the duration of the plan.

Section 3: Implementation and Monitoring

This section details the processes for effective implementation and monitoring of the plan.

1.INTRODUCTION

The Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act seeks to secure the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect to English. It was the first piece of legislation dedicated to the preservation of Gaelic, which had experienced gradual decline over centuries.

One of the core provisions of the Act was the establishment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government responsible for promoting Gaelic development. The Act requires Bòrd na Gàidhlig to produce a National Gaelic Language Plan, which is a strategic framework for sustaining and strengthening the Gaelic language throughout the country.

The Act also requires public authorities in Scotland, such as councils, to prepare their own Gaelic language plans and submit them to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for approval.

Development of Midlothian Council Gaelic Language Plan 2026-31

The National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28 presents the current objectives for promoting and strengthening the Gaelic language in Scotland. Its overarching vision is: 'A measurable increase in the numbers of people speaking, learning, using and supporting Gaelic'.

The National Plan highlights a number of key priority areas, which public authorities are asked to consider during the creation of their own Gaelic language plans:

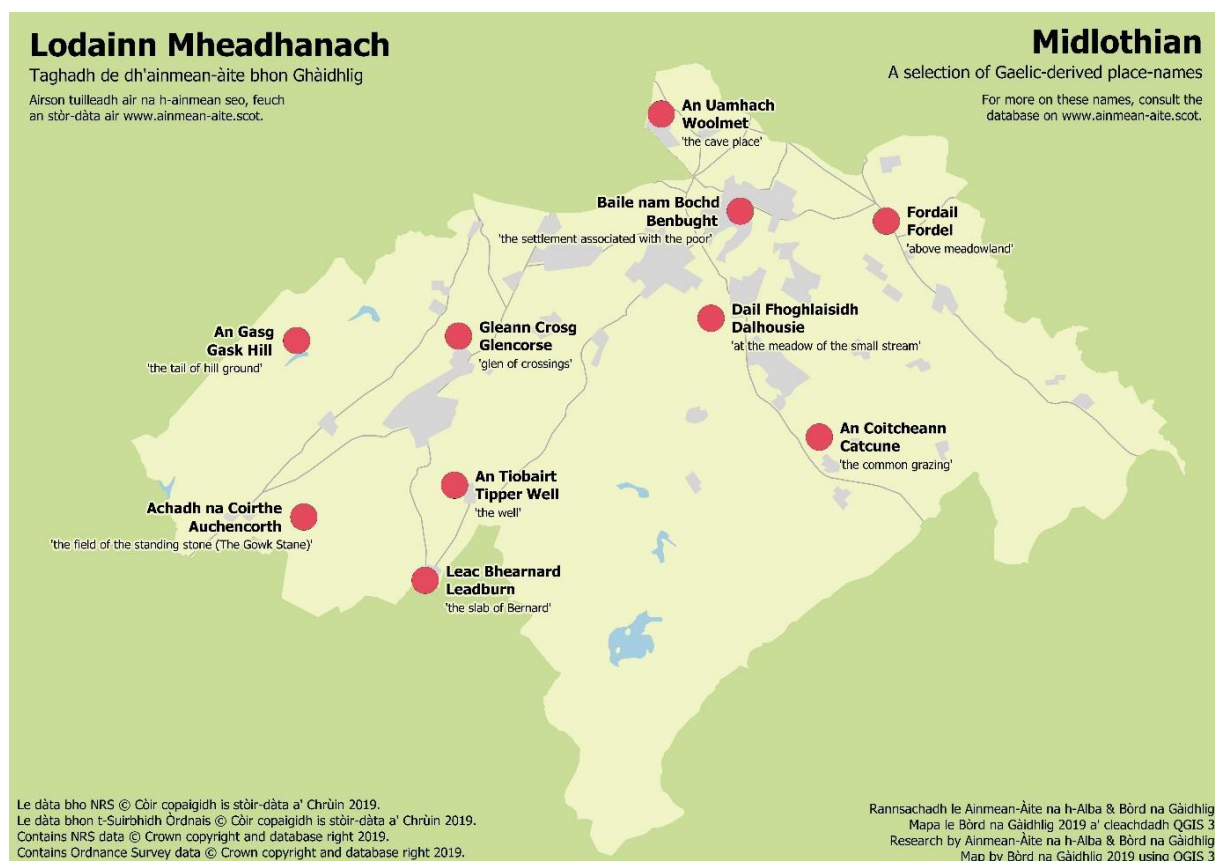
- Community support
- Support in the home
- Creative industries
- Business and economy
- Public authorities
- 0-18 education
- Post-school and adult learning

With these priorities in mind, Midlothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan 2026-31 has been developed with a focus on four strategic aims – **increasing community engagement opportunities, the sustainability of Gaelic education (GME), progression of Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and increased visibility of Gaelic resources and materials.**

Officers from across the organisation were involved in developing Midlothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan 2026-31. All actions agreed by services took account of progress in fulfilling the actions in the Council's previous Gaelic Language Plan, as well as the legislative framework as set out in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 (The Act) and the National Gaelic Language Plan 2023-28.

Gaelic in Midlothian

Midlothian is a historic county in the east-central lowlands, bordering the City of Edinburgh, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders. The Council area covers approximately 137 mi² and contains the towns of Dalkeith, Bonnyrigg and Penicuik, as well as parts of the Pentland Hills, and heritage sites like Rosslyn Chapel and Dalkeith Palace. Despite being one of the smallest local authorities by territory, Midlothian is among the fastest growing areas in Scotland. The population of Midlothian was recorded as 96,257 in the 2022 Scottish census, with this figure projected to grow to approximately 104,000 by 2028.



There are a number of people in Midlothian with Gaelic language skills. The 2022 census records the following:

Table 1: People in Midlothian with skills in Gaelic

All people aged 3 and over	93,257
Understands but does not speak, read or write Gaelic	556
Speaks, reads and writes Gaelic	365
Speaks but does not read or write Gaelic	124
Speaks and reads but does not write Gaelic	65
Reads but does not speak or write Gaelic	125
Other combination of skills in Gaelic	33

Gaelic in an education setting

Midlothian Council recognises and values the importance of the Gaelic language as part of strategic planning and the development of language learning. In accordance with Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we are committed to upholding the rights of our young people to access education in Scotland's indigenous languages.

In terms of education, Gaelic is defined by two distinct approaches to development: Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learners Education (GLE).

GLE refers to Gaelic learning as an additional language within English-medium education, introducing Gaelic as an additional language. GLE provides young people with progressive opportunities to learn Gaelic language and experience Gaelic culture as part of the wider offer of languages across Midlothian Council schools. GLE is an area which is currently undeveloped in Midlothian schools, but is planned through the Gaelic Language Planning process. This area is being developed in collaboration with key local and national partners including Bòrd na Gàidhlig, regional local authorities, higher and further education establishments, schools and parents.

GME involves an immersive approach and ultimately aims for students to achieve equal fluency and literacy in both Gaelic and English.

Gaelic Medium Education is high-quality learning through immersion. Alternative models lead to the dilution of standards and as such are non-compatible with the development of strong and sustained GME.

Education Scotland Lead Inspector for GME, Joan Esson, June 2015

Nationally, Education Scotland defines GME as based on the principle of language immersion. GME provision should encompass the four contexts of the curriculum within Curriculum for Excellence:

- The ethos and life of the school as a community
- Curriculum areas and subjects
- Interdisciplinary learning
- Opportunities for personal achievement

Education Scotland strongly advises that GME is not merely language learning, it is also the delivery of subjects through the medium of Gàidhlig and Gàidhlig at the heart of the life, culture and ethos of the school.

The Education Scotland Act (2016) and Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education include three key proposals regarding GME:

1. Authorities have a duty to promote and support GME
2. Establishment of a statutory process for authorities to assess parental requests for GME
3. Development of statutory guidance arrangements for the delivery of Gaelic education in schools and by authorities

Gaelic Medium Education in Midlothian Council

Midlothian Council currently provides GME through a partnership arrangement with City of Edinburgh Council. Partnership arrangements support developing capacity and effective resourcing across the region and high-quality Gaelic Medium learning for children and young people. This provision will be planned and assessed by Midlothian Council and local partners with local demand being assessed and monitored as part of ongoing future planning. This provision is supported by Midlothian Council and available on application by parents. Support and communications for parents wishing their children to access Gaelic Medium Education has been identified as an aim of the Midlothian Gaelic Language Plan and is included in the actions listed below.

Parents also have access to Gaelic Medium Playgroups in City of Edinburgh through partner providers and at a range of locations across the city.

In 2024/25, 13 primary learners from Midlothian attended Edinburgh GME provision at Parkside Primary/Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce) and 7 secondary learners attended James Gillespie's High School.

Midlothian Council Education officers support the ongoing development of effective partnership working with City of Edinburgh Council and leads support for schools in developing Gaelic learning.

Gaelic in a non-education setting

Midlothian Council libraries currently hold a collection of 34 Gaelic-language books, catering to both adults and children. Although there have been no requests for these titles to date, efforts are underway to raise awareness and generate interest in the collection.

As part of Bookbug Week's "Bookbug Says Hello" celebration, Gaelic Bookbug sessions were delivered in Dalkeith Library, with three sessions held during 2024–25, attracting a total of seven adults and eleven children.

The Council's Community, Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLLE) team also organised Gaelic family sessions at Dalkeith Library in autumn 2024. These sessions provided families with the opportunity to explore arts and crafts with a sprinkle of Gaelic - from simple words and phrases to songs and stories that bring the language to life

In addition, the CLLE team is offering a Beginners Gaelic course at Dalkeith Arts Centre, running from September to December 2025. Assuming no prior knowledge of Gaelic and suitable for complete beginners, the course introduces basic vocabulary, pronunciation, and language structures. By the end of the course, participants will be able to have a basic conversation in Scottish Gaelic, and will know more about the history and culture of the language. It could also suit those with minimal Gaelic knowledge who wish to learn with the support of a tutor in an in-person environment and/or enhance their understanding of basic phrases learned by rote.

The Council's translation and interpretation service is available to provide material in Gaelic upon request. Efforts are made to promote the availability of Gaelic within this service to uphold equal respect for the language.

The Council has installed 23 gateway signs on both major and minor roads, featuring the Gaelic message *Fáilte don Lodainn Mheadhanach* (Welcome to Midlothian). Bilingual signage will continue to be gradually introduced as part of an ongoing renewal process. Examples are shown below.



Implementing the Gaelic National Plan

Midlothian Council is committed to supporting the National Gaelic Language Plan at the local level by collaborating with public bodies and community planning partners.

In addition to the priority areas outlined in the Plan, the Council will explore opportunities to promote Gaelic through other policies and initiatives. We aim to integrate Gaelic into everyday life in Scotland, aligning with the principle of normalisation, and will proactively identify areas where Gaelic can be incorporated.

Recognising that a sustainable future for Gaelic relies on expanding its speaker base, the Council will focus on supporting learning in the home, education, and adult education. Our actions to foster a thriving Gaelic-speaking community in Midlothian are outlined in the Gaelic Language Acquisition and Usage section (2.5).

2.COMMITMENTS

Midlothian Council is dedicated to implementing the National Gaelic Language Plan, and this section outlines our approach to achieving this goal.

To maintain consistency with our previous Gaelic Language Plan, the actions we will take to meet the objectives of the National Gaelic Language Plan are structured under five key areas:

1. **Identity and Status:** Enhancing corporate identity, signage, and overall visibility, audibility, recognition, and respect for Gaelic.
2. **Communications:** Ensuring Gaelic is integrated into reception, telephone, mail, email, forms, and complaints procedures.
3. **Publications:** Promoting Gaelic in public relations, media, printed materials, and websites.
4. **Staff:** Fostering recruitment and training to support Gaelic language usage.
5. **Gaelic Language Acquisition and Usage:** Supporting the development of speaking, reading, and writing skills, while enabling Gaelic use in social, formal, and work settings.

These areas align with our strategic priorities: increasing community engagement, ensuring the sustainability of Gaelic Medium Education (GME), advancing Gaelic Learner Education (GLE), and enhancing the visibility of Gaelic resources.

Midlothian Council understands that action in these areas will raise Gaelic's profile and offer more opportunities for speakers to use the language.

We will ensure that community partners and third-party service providers are fully aware of our plan and commitments, and that they adhere to its principles.

All initiatives to promote Gaelic will be carried out within our existing resources. For example, bilingual 'Welcome to Midlothian' road signs will be introduced during routine renewals or replacements.

When needed, the Council will refer to the Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba database for authoritative Gaelic placename forms, ensuring proper orthographic conventions are followed.

2.1 Identity and Status

Incorporating Gaelic into the corporate identity and signage of a public authority enhances the language's visibility, boosts its status and signals its recognition and value.

Using Gaelic in signage also enriches the vocabulary of speakers, raises public awareness and contributes to its development.

Midlothian Council is committed to increasing the Gaelic's visibility, improving its status and fostering a positive image of the language.

Table 2: Identity and Status proposed actions

Function	Current position	Proposed action	Lead service
Corporate identity	Midlothian Council's corporate identity does not include any Gaelic language elements.	Digital versions of the Council logo will be updated to include a Gaelic element. Existing logos displayed in the physical environment, such as on public buildings, will be updated during scheduled renewals.	Communications
Signage	23 "Welcome to Midlothian/Fàilte don Lodainn Mheadhanach" signs have been installed at entry points to the Council area.	Road signs will continue to be updated with Gaelic on a renewal basis.	Roads Service

2.2 Communications

Using Gaelic in interactions with the Council online, in person or over the phone creates practical opportunities for the language and reinforces that its use is welcome.

Midlothian Council is committed to expanding opportunities for Gaelic in communications with local people, increasing provision incrementally.

Table 3: Communications proposed actions

Function	Current position	Proposed action	Lead service
Email signatures	The Council does not include a Gaelic option as part of a corporate email signature.	The option of bilingual email signatures is available to all employees.	Communications
Reception	While there is no specific Gaelic provision in reception areas, the Council provides access to translation and interpretation services, including Gaelic.	The promotion of Gaelic within translation and interpretation services will continue to ensure equal respect for the language. Service users who speak Gaelic will be able to request translated materials in Gaelic.	Communications
Telephone	The Council does not have specific provision for telephone call-handling in Gaelic.	Training will continue to be provided for contact centre staff to ensure that the Council meet the needs of service users who communicate in languages other than English, including Gaelic.	Communications
Written correspondence, digital communications and meetings	Translated materials in Gaelic are available upon request.	The Council will carry out further work to ensure that staff are aware of arrangements for translation and interpretation support, including: • Providing information about services • Helping with face-to-face meetings • Translation of documents • Consulting with service users.	Communications

2.3 Publications

The use of Gaelic in printed materials and media demonstrates a public authority's commitment to making information accessible in Gaelic. It also helps to enhance the visibility and status of the language, and even aids in developing and refining terminology.

Midlothian Council is committed to promoting the use of Gaelic in areas that are of greatest interest to the public or directly relate to Gaelic issues.

Table 4: Publications proposed actions

Function	Current position	Proposed action	Lead service
Website	The Council website has an accessibility and translation facility that enables content to be translated into Gaelic.	The Council website will include a bilingual Council logo for the first time. The translation facility enabling web content to be translated into Gaelic will be maintained and developed.	Communications
Public relations and social media	Limited Gaelic press/social media content is produced by the Council.	Press releases and social media updates in relation to relevant events, including public consultations, will be published in Gaelic as well as English.	Communications
Printed material – Council papers and documents	The Council does not routinely produce printed material in Gaelic.	The Council will highlight the availability of printed material in Gaelic upon request.	Communications
Printed materials in libraries	The Council now has an increased stock of titles related to Gaelic.	Libraries will maintain a stock of digital and print materials related to Gaelic.	Customer Engagement
Links between libraries and schools	There are limited connections between libraries and schools	Libraries will work with schools to raise awareness and learning of Gaelic by supporting Gaelic BookBug sessions and other Gaelic-related activities in libraries and other venues across Midlothian.	Customer Engagement

2.4 Employees

In order to deliver services through the medium of Gaelic, it is necessary to develop the requisite language skills of staff. The provision of learning for staff helps to promote the language by recognising Gaelic as a valuable workplace skill.

Incorporating Gaelic into advertising elevates the visibility and status of Gaelic in public life and signals that Gaelic speakers are valued by public authorities.

Midlothian Council views Gaelic as an important job skill and will work to identify situations in which its use is essential or desirable.

Table 5: Employees proposed actions

Function	Current position	Proposed action	Lead service
Internal communications	There are limited communications in Gaelic through the Council's internal channels.	The Council will promote its work to sustain and develop the Gaelic language internally on an annual basis, and highlight progress in delivering the Gaelic Language Plan, as part of World Gaelic Language Week.	Communications
Training and language learning	There has been limited provision of Gaelic training for employees.	The Council will highlight awareness-raising and learning opportunities about Gaelic to staff.	Corporate Solutions

2.5 Gaelic language acquisition and usage

Midlothian Council recognises that a sustainable future for Gaelic requires more people to learn, use and value the language across all areas of life. We are committed to embedding Gaelic more widely through community participation, education provision, and pathways for progression.

Our strategic aims in this area are to:

- **Increase community engagement opportunities** – by supporting local initiatives that raise awareness of Gaelic, encourage participation in Gaelic language and cultural activities, and create visible spaces for Gaelic in everyday life. This includes supporting Gaelic learning in community settings.
- **Secure the long-term sustainability of Gaelic medium education (GME)** – by ensuring that GME continues to grow with clear pathways from early years through to secondary and beyond. This includes maintaining and growing GME provision, identifying opportunities to work regionally and ensuring appropriate staffing, support, and transitions.
- **Promote progression of Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)** – by supporting all schools to offer Gaelic as an additional language (L3) within the 1+2 Languages Policy, ensuring high-quality, age-appropriate resources and professional learning for teachers, and encouraging creative approaches to teaching Gaelic.
- **Increased visibility of Gaelic resources and materials** – by ensuring Gaelic has greater visibility and presence within council material such as branding and email signatures.

As corporate parents, the Council will, where possible, ensure Gaelic speaking care-experienced children and young people face no barriers to access Gaelic education. This section aligns with Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which upholds the right of children to learn and use their own language, including minority and indigenous languages such as Gaelic.

Table 6: Gaelic language acquisition and usage proposed actions

Function	Current position	Proposed action	Lead service
Gaelic Medium Education (GME)	GME is currently delivered in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council. This arrangement is under review in response to rising potentially rising demand for GME.	Review existing provision in response to rising demand for GME. Track and monitor GME uptake. Collaborate with the City of Edinburgh Council and other neighbouring local authorities to strengthen and sustain GME provision, supporting alignment in strategic planning. Continue to ensure clear information is available regarding GME provision in line with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education and the Education (Scotland) Act 2016. Review planning processes following the enactment of the Scottish Languages Bill to ensure compliance with future statutory requirements. Capture the views of children and young people as part of any future planning and development. Involve parents in the planning process to ensure a collaborative approach. Create a local GME information pack for children and young people and their families.	Education
Gaelic Learner Education (GLE)	The Education service has undertaken several initiatives to support Gaelic learning in schools, including the development of primary-level learning packs and professional learning opportunities for both	Enhance support for schools in planning and developing GLE by providing teaching resources and professional development opportunities for teachers. Promote uptake of regional SQA-accredited courses.	Education

Function	Current position	Proposed action	Lead service
	primary and secondary teachers. ELC resources have also been produced.	Develop Gaelic learner opportunities as part of “1 + 2” and via partners. Continue to promote the use of Gaelic resources, including the e-Sgoil website, to support teachers in developing basic Gaelic language skills. Capture the views of children and young people to inform planning, identify interest in learning Gaelic, and explore ways to support and encourage engagement. Explore possibility of working with regional partners in this area.	
Adult Learning	The Council’s Community, Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLLE) team offering a Beginners Gaelic course, running from September to December 2025.	Continue to work with partners to identify opportunities for adult learning, expanding provision in line with what delivery partners can offer.	Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability (CLLE)
Gaelic in communities, partnerships and networks	Engagement and partnership work is underway with local Gaelic language partners. The Council is represented by lead officers on national Gaelic networks – e.g. Gaelic Local Authority Network.	Continue to engage with local and national partners to support the development of local Gaelic learning opportunities and GME provision. Continue to attend national network events, share opportunities and information related to the Gaelic language, and actively promote staff development,	Education & Corporate Solutions

3 Implementation and monitoring

Midlothian Council's Gaelic Language Plan will be published bilingually on our website and copies will be made available on request. In addition, we shall make the plan known to the public via a press release and social media and to employees via our intranet.

The Chief Executive will be ultimately responsible for ensuring that the council delivers on the commitments set out in this Plan.

The Council will monitor the implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan through annual progress updates on delivering the actions outlined in section 2. These monitoring reports will be submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.