

HITZARGIAK – Languages illuminating each other

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – Revival and Growth in Scottish Gaelic

GENERAL INFORMATION

DATE: 14-03-2016

1	Name	Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – Revival and Growth in Scottish Gaelic
2	Language	Gaelic
3	Working area (education, communication, teaching, leisure, administration...)	Education, Research, Language planning, Arts and Culture
4	Email and phone number for contact	Prof Boyd Robertson 01471 888200 br.smo@uhi.ac.uk
5	Social networks (Webpage, Facebook, Twitter...)	Website: http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/ Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/sabhalmorostaig Twitter: https://twitter.com/sabhalmorostaig

DESCRIPTION OF GOOD PRACTICE

1	Description of the practices	Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – Revival and Growth in Scottish Gaelic
2	Brief description of the practices	<p>Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO) is an academic partner of the new University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) which gained its university title in 2011. As a specialist college within UHI, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig continues to be the only institution of higher learning where students can undertake their degree and postgraduate studies entirely through the medium of Gaelic. Within the Gaelic degree programmes, which were initially delivered in 1998, there is an emphasis on language use and language acquisition, with students gaining fluency in the language by the end of their first year and with continued language support and enhancement thereafter. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig now offers four BA (Hons) degrees; in Gaelic Language and Culture, in Gaelic and Development, in Gaelic and Media Studies and in Gaelic and Traditional Music, as well as offering a post-graduate programme in Material Culture and Gàidhealtachd History. The MA (Hons) Gaelic with Education is delivered in partnership with the University of Aberdeen and the programme is designed for either Secondary Teaching (Gaelic as a subject) or Gaelic-medium Primary Teaching.</p> <p>Over the years, the number of courses on offer through Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has expanded greatly, with opportunities to study on-site or at a distance on programmes which provide opportunities to gain fluency in Gaelic and prepare students for employment in various fields such as teaching, media related employment or language and community development related jobs. Since 1991, media training in particular has been a very important part of the College's education provision, when a television training trust was established and a diploma course in television and broadcasting was introduced. This course, which has evolved through time in response to the developing needs of the broadcast</p>

		<p>industry, is now recognised as the main Gaelic media training course. This was the start of an active partnership between the College and the broadcasting companies and statistics show that 70% of students who have studied the diploma course are still employed in the media industry.</p> <p>The College has produced a Gaelic Language Plan under the terms of the 2005 Gaelic Language Act. The Plan, which was formally approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig in February 2012, builds on the College's long-standing Gaelic Policy which was updated and strengthened in 2010. In order to ensure full implementation of the Policy, a Gaelic Language Officer post was established with part-funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig.</p>
3	Precedents (reasons, needs...)	No institution of higher learning where students could undertake their degree and postgraduate studies entirely through the medium of Gaelic
4	Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote Gaelic and prepare people for employment in various fields such as teaching, media related employment or language and community development related jobs To support Gaelic language, culture and history To research and plan different projects in the fields of education, teaching and language planning
5	Main and close working areas	Gaelic language, culture and development, media studies
6	Collaborating entities and their working areas	University of Highlands and Islands, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, The Scottish Government. The Scottish Funding Council, Soillse Research initiative, BBC Scotland, Creative Scotland, MG Alba, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, University of Edinburgh, University of Aberdeen, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, The Highland Council, Comunn na Gàidhlig
7	Implementation period	Since 1973; university since 2011

FILE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BEST PRACTICES

8	Expansion (number of influenced people, internal and external expansion...)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and international level The doubling of the population of Sleat from 450 in 1971 to around 900 people in 2011 can be attributed, in no small measure, to the foundation of the College Each year, the short courses programme attracts in excess of 850 students, with participants attending from across the world. In the past year alone, there were students recruited from over 30 different countries
9	Investment (economic, time, people...)	54 full-time and 64 part-time staff. The College injects £3.4m income into the economy of Skye and Lochalsh annually and is the third largest employer on the island
10	Results	Over the last thirty years the growth in student numbers has been quite remarkable, with 227 students currently studying on the Higher Education (HE) courses and 198 students registered on An Cùrsa Inntrigidh, the College's Further Education (FE) distance learning programme. At the recent College graduation (October 2015), it was recognised that almost 1000 students have now graduated since the first cohort of 7 students were awarded their Higher

National Diplomas in 1985. Each year, the short courses programme attracts in excess of 850 students, with participants attending from across the world. In the past year alone, there were students recruited from over 30 different countries.

Visitors to the College are invariably struck by the extraordinary learning environment and the quality of the campus facilities and sense of vibrancy, dynamism and spirit of innovation in the institution. Throughout the years, the innovative teaching methodologies and the high quality learning resources developed by College staff have earned national and international recognition through reviews and awards, such as two European Languages Awards (2004 and 2009). In 2002, in recognition of its outstanding achievements in teaching and in other work related to the Gaelic language and culture, the College was awarded the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize. More recently, the research outputs and research environment at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig were highly commended in an extensive and intensive audit of research at higher education institutions in the UK. This was part of a UHI submission for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) for 2014 and the work of seven staff from Sabhal Mòr Ostaig was submitted in the discipline of Celtic and Gaelic Studies. Overall, 61% of this work was awarded the highest ratings, with 16% adjudged to be world-leading and 45% internationally excellent. In addition, 90% of the research environment, which included the library and learning facilities, achieved the same world-leading/internationally excellent ratings.

11 Documentation, reference material

<http://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/en/colaiste/welcome/>

12 Presentation video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1ST6TpgL6s>

13 Other relevant information

In 1972 Sir Iain Noble bought the then dilapidated farm steading of Ostaig, in the Sleat peninsula of Skye, which had previously been under Clan Donald ownership and was situated in an area where the former townships of Ostaig Mòr and Ostaig Beag had stood. His vision, and that of the first Trustees, was to establish a major centre of education and study for the Gaelic language and culture. A Gaelic library was started and the buildings were renovated sufficiently for the first Gaelic language short course to be delivered at the college in 1974. From such humble beginnings, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has grown into a vibrant institute of higher education and one that has gained recognition by successive Scottish Governments as the National Centre of Excellence for the Gaelic language and culture. This reputation was further enhanced in October 2015 when another significant milestone was commemorated with the official opening by Nicola Sturgeon, MSP and First Minister of Scotland, of a new building, Ionad Iain Nobail (Iain Noble Centre), bearing the founder's name and marking the first phase of the Kilbeg village development on the Ostaig site. This historic development will result in the first planned village to be built in Skye for about 100 years. It is a remarkable example of rejuvenation and growth, achieved within a relatively short period, not only for Sabhal Mòr Ostaig but also for the Sleat peninsula, Skye and the Highlands and Islands as a whole.

The history of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and its part in a resurgence of interest in the Gaelic language is well documented in Roger Hutchison's book '*A Waxing Moon*', published in 2005. The early developments at the College focussed mainly on the renovation of the buildings, fundraising, building up the library and planning for greater growth. The preparations and planning came to fruition in 1983 with the launch of the first full-time tertiary course to be delivered through the medium of Gaelic. The HND in Business and Gàidhealtachd Studies was established on the premise that students from the Highlands and Islands should have the

opportunity to be educated in Gaelic, equipping them with skills which would allow them to engage more fully in the economic and cultural development of their own area. Shortly after this, in the summer of 1985, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Comunn na Gàidhlig organised a major conference entitled '*Towards a National Policy for Gaelic*'. This landmark event was a forerunner of the College working in partnership with various organisations and was instrumental in the further expansion of Gaelic medium primary education and heralded increased investment in Gaelic broadcasting in the early 1990s.

Estate developments have kept abreast with the academic and research initiatives. For example, the Àrainn Ostaig campus, opened in 1993, provided the College with student accommodation for the first time. The award-winning Àrainn Chaluim Chille, the Columba campus, was completed in 1997 and, in addition to being the main hub building, it houses the College's valuable library collections which are deemed to be of national and international importance. In 2008 the impressive Fàs Building was opened. This building now houses the College's state-of-the-art training and broadcast facilities, including a television studio, a radio studio and post-production facilities. The focus of the building, as the centre for creative and cultural industries, stems from the vision that the College is not purely an institute of further and higher education but that it has many different facets. The latest initiative is that of a SMO YouTube channel (SMO TBH), which shows short films produced by our media students and other Gaelic-based learning materials.

The Fàs building is also home to national and inter-institutional projects such as Tobar an Dualchais (Kist o' Riches) which is engaged in preserving and digitising the Gaelic and Scots sound archives of the School of Scottish Studies, BBC Scotland and the John Lorne Campbell Collection and is making these rich folklore and song resources accessible online to schools, colleges, universities and the general public. Another major project located at SMO is Faclair na Gàidhlig which is in the early stages of producing an authoritative historical dictionary for Gaelic. Other projects include Ainmean Àite na h-Alba (Scottish Place-names Project) and Soillse, the inter-university research project which focuses on Gaelic education, the usage of Gaelic in the community and on language planning. Two film companies are based in Fàs, including Young Films which produces the flagship Gaelic drama, Bannan. The award winning multimedia company, Cànan, which offers design and web development services to clients was formerly housed in Fàs but is now in Ionad Iain Nobail. Cànan has been involved in a number of creative media projects, including FilmG, the annual Gaelic short film competition, which Cànan manages on behalf of MG Alba and has been extremely successful in uncovering new talent amongst school children and adults as well as encouraging grassroots filmmaking and storytelling in Gaelic-speaking communities across Scotland.

From its inception, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has had a strong track record of promoting the arts and, significantly, one of the first posts created was that of a filidh or writer in residence. Catriona Montgomery from Roag in Skye was the first person appointed to this role and she was followed in post by Sorley MacLean, who had been one of the original trustees of the College. Currently, under a programme of collaboration with Creative Scotland, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has four artists in residence; a writer, a musician, a visual artist and a dramatist in residence. The latter is a post shared with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. An artistic residency commemorating the work of the artist Jon Schueler (who had been based in nearby Mallaig), was established recently, attracting widespread interest. The latest recipient of the fellowship was selected from a world-wide field of over 400 applicants.

With such year round activity it is hardly surprising that Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has a significant socio-economic impact on the Highlands and Islands as a whole and this effect is particularly evident within the local area. The College is one of the largest employers on Skye, with 54 full-time and 64 part-time staff. A recent economic impact study demonstrated that that the College generates over £3.4 million income for the economy of Skye and Lochalsh. The doubling of the population of Sleat from 450 in 1971 to around 900 people in 2011 can be attributed, in no small measure, to the foundation of the College. The College also endeavours to establish and develop its links with other Skye communities. Short courses are offered in Flodigarry, in north east Skye in particular, with students able to learn Gaelic as a living language while situated in a strong Gaelic speaking community. The College also has strong links with the island of Islay through its involvement in Ionad Chaluim Chille (Islay Centre) and the Taigh Chearsabhaigh arts centre in Lochmaddy, North Uist as well as a partnership agreement with the Gairloch Heritage Museum.

Looking to the future, the College is well placed to be the international focal point for the development of Gaelic culture and education and to further contribute to the regeneration of the local area and to the socio-economic development of the Highlands and Islands. As well as providing the College with additional teaching, research and business premises, the Ionad Iain Nobail development also provided further services and infrastructure which will enable future elements of the Kilbeg Village Master plan to be delivered incrementally over a twenty year period. It is envisaged, as part of the second phase, to develop much needed indoor and outdoor sports and recreation facilities, which will be of wider benefit to the local community. The original farm steading at Àrainn Ostaig is also due to be revamped in order to provide additional conference, events and training facilities. Later phases include the development of 75 new housing units, a small hotel and further student accommodation. *A Waxing Moon* relates the story of the first thirty years of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and its place at the centre of a modern Gaelic revival. The new village development signifies another chapter in this growth and regeneration and can be regarded as a further manifestation of the aspirations and vision of Sir Iain Noble and the founding Trustees.