

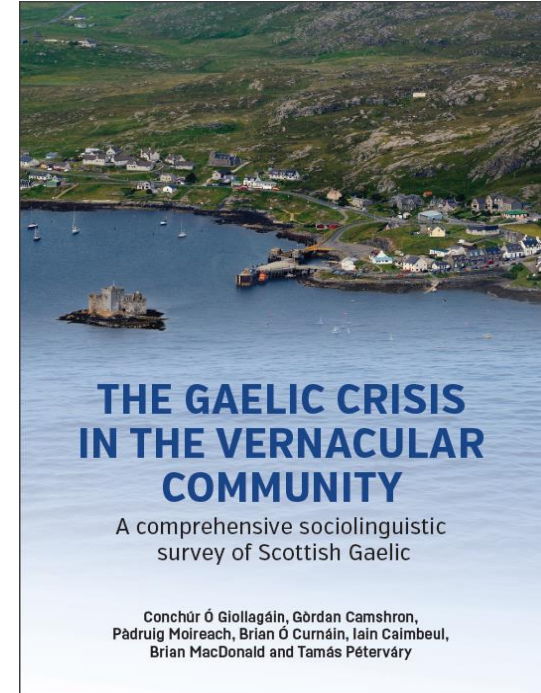
Staing na Gàidhlig anns a’ Choimhearsnachd Dhùthchasaich: Làn-sgrùdadh Sòiseo-chànanach air Gàidhlig na h-Alba

Taisbeanadh:
Comann Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath

17mh An t-Òg-mhios 2022

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SOILLSE



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean



THE GAELIC CRISIS IN THE VERNACULAR COMMUNITY

A comprehensive sociolinguistic
survey of Scottish Gaelic

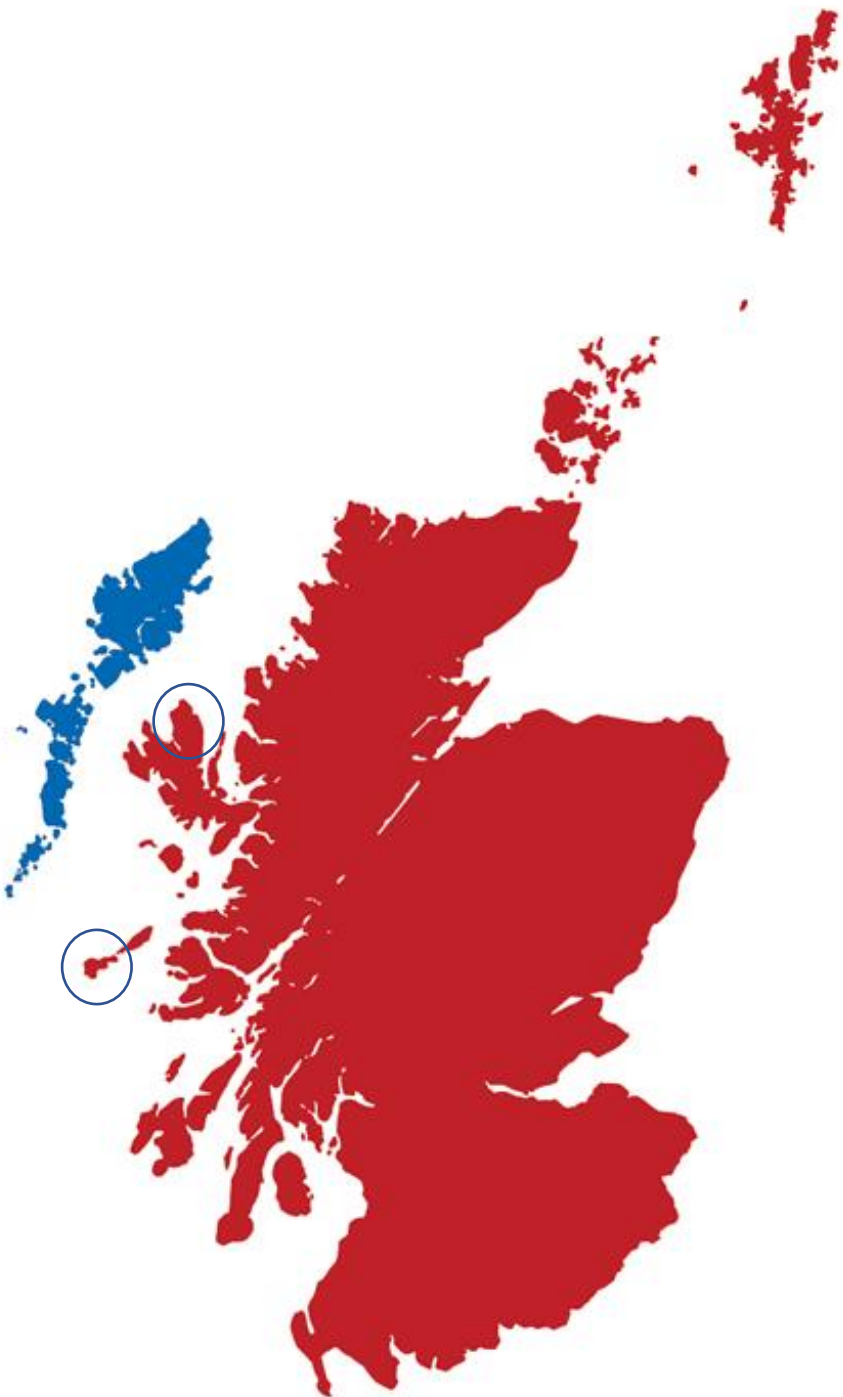
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Research Aims of *Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community* study (GCVC)

- *In-depth focus on the use and transmission of Scottish Gaelic as a communal language in the Western Isles, in Staffin in the Isle of Skye and in the Isle of Tiree in Argyll and Bute*

Research Digest:

<https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/research-enterprise/research-themes/humanities-and-arts/language-sciences-institute/publications/research-digest/>



Geographic areas of the remaining Gaelic vernacular communities:

Western Isles; Staffin, north Skye; Isle of Tiree.

Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community. Ó Giollagáin et al. (2020)

Core evidence of Gaelic Crisis

- **Demolinguistics:** Gaelic vernacular group now circa 11,000 speakers (<2000 3-17 yr old speakers)
- **Home transmission** of Gaelic now vestigial aspect of the community in the islands (<5% of preschool cohort)
- **Weak youth socialisation** in Gaelic vernacular society (20% of teenagers in Western Isles fluent, but <2% speak Gaelic to peers)
- **Policy** not addressing societal reality of endgame demise of remaining vernacular communities, under current circumstances (inappropriate policy for communal context).

Key Policy Reform Points from *Gaelic Crisis* Research

- a) The vernacular Gaelic group is in crisis and is in advanced-stage language shift to English
- b) Current Gaelic policy is weakly relevant to this sociolinguistic crisis
- c) Policy reform should build the social capital and leadership capacity of the Gaelic community to address their sociolinguistic circumstances
- d) A re-adjustment of policy priorities should focus on the distribution of resources to protect the societal continuity of the vernacular group.

<u>Local Authority</u>	<u>Total Population 3+</u>	<u>Gaelic Speakers</u>	<u>Gaelic Spoken at Home</u>	<u>% Gaelic of Total Pop.</u>	<u>Gaelic at Home as % of Speakers</u>	<u>% Gap: Reported Ability & Use</u>
Eilean Siar	26,929	14,066	10,882	52.2%	77%	23%
Highland	224,606	12,039	5,447	5.4%	45%	55%
Argyll & Bute	85,684	3,451	1,278	4.0%	37%	63%
Glasgow City	572,633	5,891	2,305	1.0%	39%	61%
Aberdeen City	215,597	1,628	405	0.8%	25%	75%
Edinburgh City	460,103	3,157	867	0.7%	27%	73%
Rest of Scotland	3,532,671	17,143	3,790	0.5%	22%	78%
Scotland Overall	5,118,223	55,935	24,974	1.1%	45%	55%

Source: NRS (Census 2011) Table DC2119SC

Gaelic Spoken in Households

<u>AREA</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>2001</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>% Change 1981-2011</u>
Lewis	3,052	1,766	1,320	1,161	-62%
Harris	457	273	186	134	-71%
North Uist	350	195	195	114	-67%
Benbecula	258	177	131	120	-53%
South Uist	663	416	276	228	-66%
Barra and Vatersay	359	212	149	137	-62%
Total: Age 3-17 Population Speaks Gaelic	5,139	3,039	2,257	1,894	-63%
Total: Age 3-17 Population	7,453	5,995	4,870	4,592	-38%
% Total Population Speaks Gaelic	69%	51%	46%	41%	-28%

Source NRS: ADAPTED FROM TABLE CT_0079a_1981, 1991, 2001, and 2011. Age 3-17 Population Speaks Gaelic By Area

Eilean Siar: Trends in Gaelic Speakers in the 3-17 years population

Caibideil 2: Deama-chànanachas na Gàidhlig/Gaelic demolinguistics

- Àireamh luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig gach deichead a' sealltainn cho luath 's a bha an crìonadh anns na buidhnean aoise 50+ agus 3 gu 17
- *Number of Gaelic speakers per decade illustrating rate of decline in the 50+ and 3 to 17 year-old age-groups*

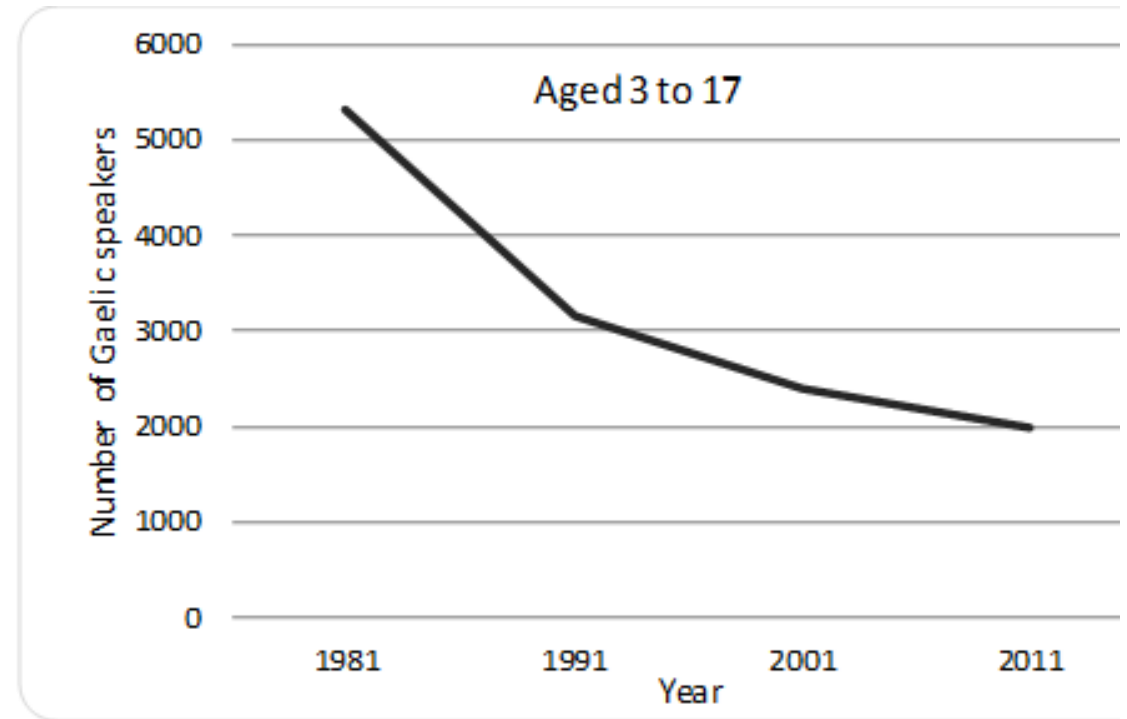
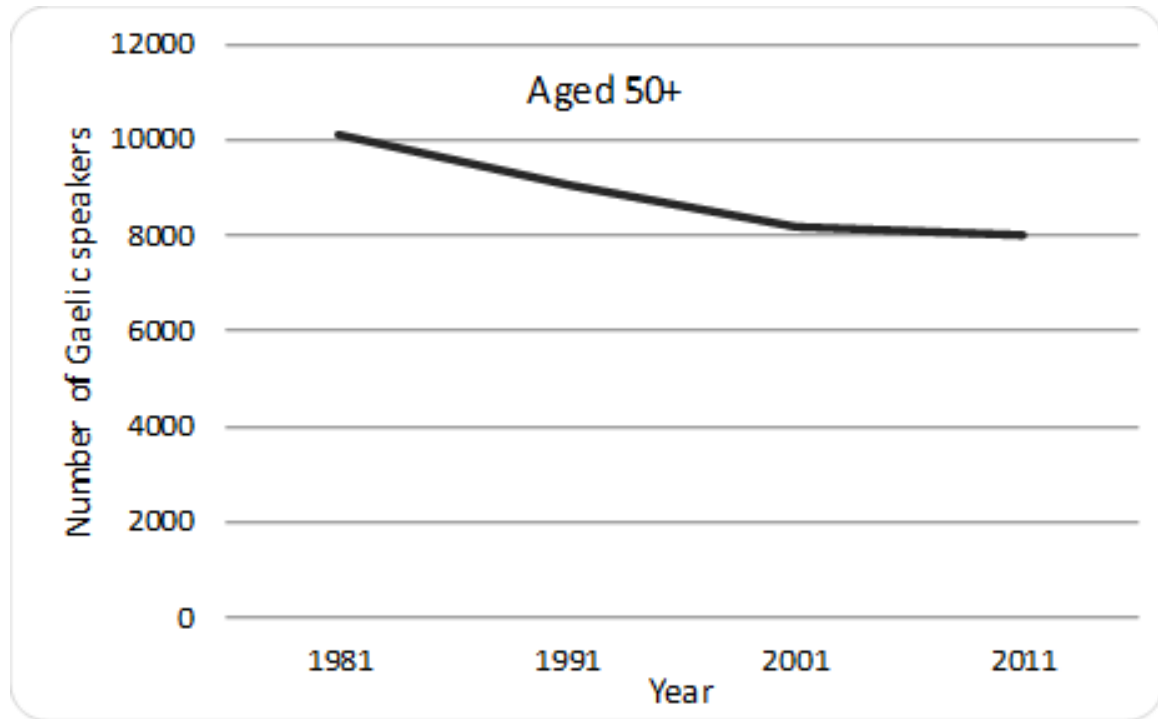


Figure 2.10 provides a summary of reported ability in Gaelic of all ages (3+) in the 1981–2011 census periods in the Pooled Study Districts.

Decadal trends for Gaelic ability in Pooled Districts 1981- 2011

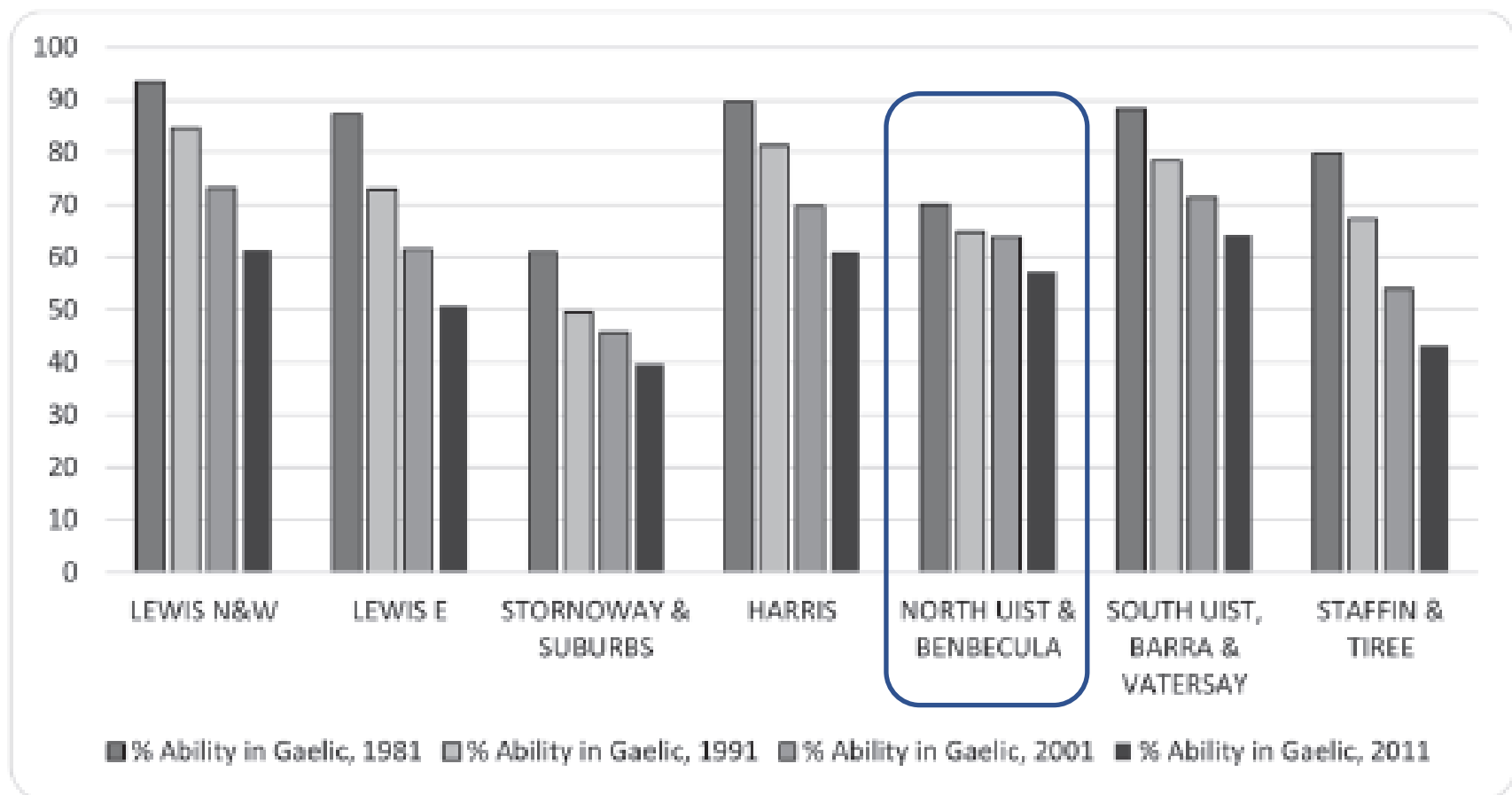


Figure 2.10 Decadal percentage trends in reported ability in Gaelic in the 1981–2011 census periods in the Pooled Study Districts, in order from north to south of the RA

**Projected % ability
in Gaelic per
district based on
existing trends for
Census 2022**

Study District	Population (aged 3+)	Gaelic ability %	Projected % loss in Gaelic ability	Projected Gaelic ability %
	2011	2011	2011 to 2021	2021
01. West Side of Lewis (central)	1,012	62.75	12.99	54.60
02. West Side of Lewis (south)	807	58.98	13.20	51.20
03. Uig District	760	52.24	16.17	43.79
04. West Side of Lewis (north)	933	65.81	11.70	58.11
05. Ness	1,228	64.17	12.02	56.46
06. Tolsta	491	56.42	14.61	48.17
07. Loch a Tuath	1,525	54.62	14.75	46.57
08. Tong	614	43.81	18.02	35.92
09. Stornoway, Barvas Road suburbs	1,606	41.78	15.40	35.34
10. Stornoway Town	4,861	39.21	12.15	34.45
11. Stornoway, Point Road suburbs	1,353	38.36	15.83	32.29
12. South Point	1,428	48.32	17.44	39.89
13. North Point	757	43.20	18.91	35.03
14. North Lochs	873	52.23	16.45	43.64
15. South Lochs	889	54.67	15.16	46.38
16. North Harris	955	64.71	10.53	57.90
17. South Harris	914	57.00	13.58	49.26
18. North Uist (north & west)	955	61.05	11.39	54.09
19. North Uist (south & east)	624	60.42	11.11	53.70
20. Benbecula	1,283	52.84	-0.61	53.17
21. South Uist (north)	867	65.74	8.52	60.14
22. South Uist (south)	972	65.84	10.30	59.06
23. Barra & Vatersay	1,222	62.27	10.27	55.88
24. Staffin	469	49.68	17.39	41.04
25. Tiree	626	38.34	19.80	30.75
Total for RA	28,024	51.97	13.31	45.05

Caibideil 4: Deugairean: cleachdadh, comas agus beachdan a thaobh na Gàidhlig/ Teenagers: Gaelic use, competence and attitudes

	Mother from the islands (%)	Father from the islands (%)	Mother and father fluent in Gaelic (%)	Pupils reported fluent in Gaelic (%)	Always or mainly speak Gaelic to their parents (%)	Always or mainly speak Gaelic to their friends (%)	Always or mainly speak Gaelic to their neighbours (%)
Pooled Study District							
Lewis N&W (N = 49)	58.4	58.4	40.8	32.7	12.6	4.3	12.5
Lewis E (N = 80)	61.5	65.8	17.5	18.8	5.1	1.3	13.1
Harris (N =37)	54.0	55.5	42.9	21.6	8.4	0.0	5.6
North Uist, Benbecula (N = 19)	55.5	83.4	27.8	26.4	5.3	0.0	5.3
South Uist, Barra & Vatersay (N = 30)	60.7	72.4	30.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	10.7
Stornoway & Suburbs (N = 78)	72.0	53.4	5.5	14.1	1.3	1.3	2.6
Research Area (Western Isles)	61.2	60.6	18.4	20.3	5.1	1.3	8.2
All Rural Areas (N = 215) Areas other than Stornoway	58.8	64.8	29.7	23.4	6.6	1.4	10.6

Pupil Trends 2012-13 to 2020-2021-

	<u>Sgoiltean-àraich</u>	<u>Bun-sgoil</u>				<u>Ard-sgoil</u>	
	Saoghal Beag	Paibil	Cairinis	Uibhist a Tuath	% School GME	Lìonacleit	<u>% School GME</u>
	<u>Pupils</u>	<u>Pupils</u>				<u>Pupils</u>	
2012-13	12	24 (100%)	14 (82%)			55	19%
2013-14	10	24 (62%)	12 (100%)			58	21%
2014-15	13	22 (58%)	12 (100%)			66	25%
2015-16	9	28 (62%)	11 (100%)			72	28%
2016-17	9			41	45%	65	26%
2017-18	12			36	43%	78	29%
2018-19	9			42	50%	88	31%
2019-20	16			40	54%	81	29%
2020-21	15			38	48%	91	33%

Source: Bòrd na Gàidhlig Schools Data

Gaelic Crisis Research & Community Conversations(1)

- ***Gaelic Crisis Research***: Proposed a New Model for community-led Gaelic revitalisation in the islands. *Urras na Gàidhlig* would be a community development Trust for the Gaelic-speaking Group.
- ***Community Conversations: Urras na Gàidhlig*** – Most participants believed this idea should be explored further in terms of structure, membership and resource. Aspects of a decentralised structure, with power and resource equitably distributed and situated throughout affiliate communities, should be considered. Any trust should be inclusive and incorporate a holistic approach to the language in the community, for example addressing the language's place in land management, housing and economy. In this sense, it would be important to reflect how current organisations, such as community land trusts and heritage societies, could be involved from an early stage. Recognising high levels of volunteer fatigue, any exploration into the feasibility of a language trust should not be left to the communities to undertake.

Gaelic Crisis Research & Community Conversations(2)

- ❖ “Within the remaining Gaelic vernacular communities of Scotland, the social use and transmission of Gaelic is at the point of collapse”.
 - ❖ *“Without a re-orientation of public policy and interventions focused at the community level, the present Gaelic vernacular group do not have the demographic or societal resources to sustain a communal presence in the islands beyond the next 10 years”.*
-
- ✓ “The decline in ‘natural’ usage....represents the larger challenge for community usage.preserving Gaelic as a native language, acquired in the home and community, should be recognised as the primary aim of revitalisation efforts in the vernacular communities”.
 - ✓ *“The perceived threat to Gaelic’s position as a language of the home and community had two main drivers – the overall reduction in opportunities to speak Gaelic and low levels of confidence. Both factors represent a vicious circle where Gaelic-language ability suffers through infrequent and irregular use, which in turn erodes confidence and the will to engage in the language”.*

Caibideil 8: Bunait airson dol an sàs ris a' choimhearsnachd anns an àm ri teachd/ Societal Reality as Basis for future engagement

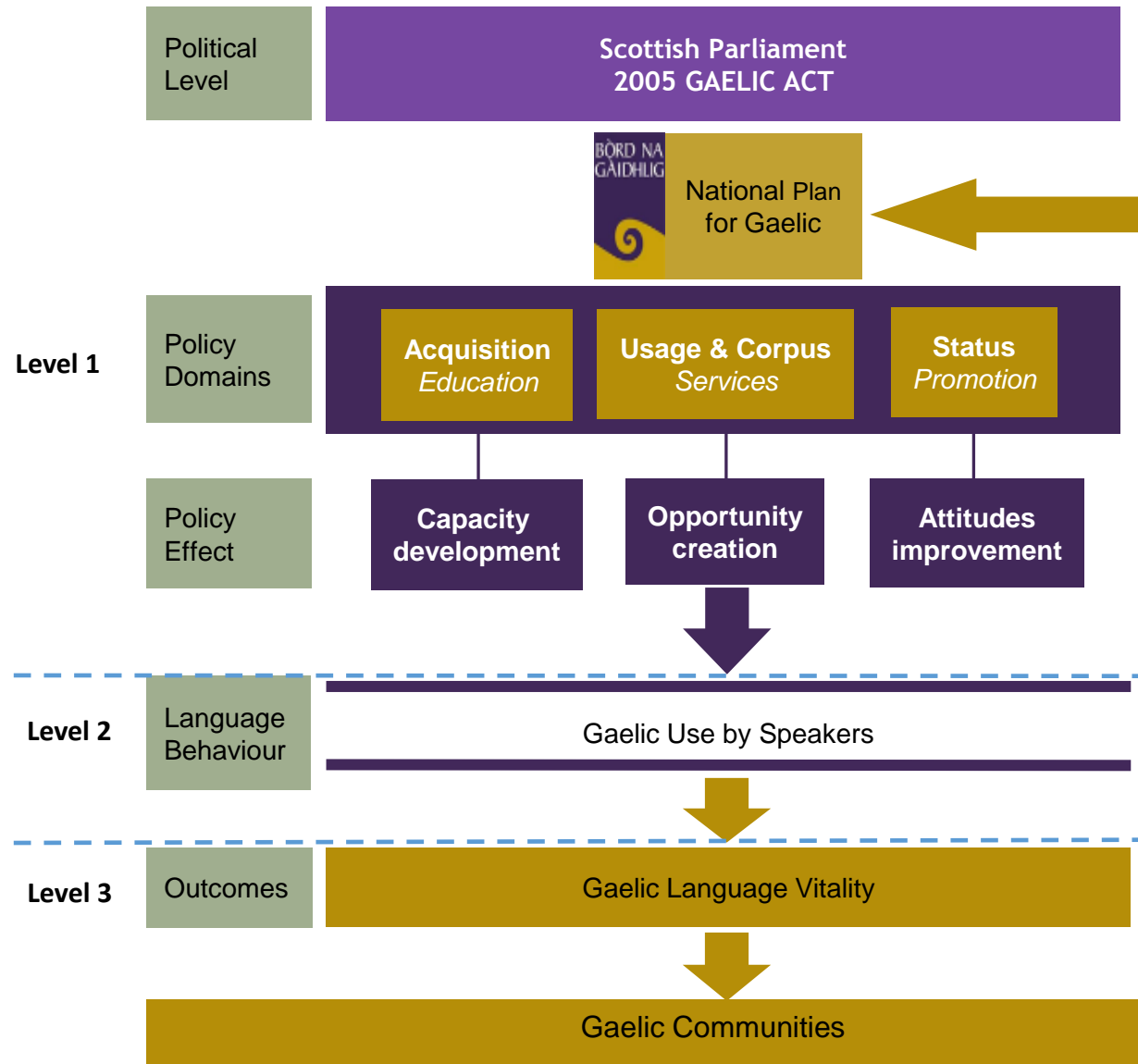
Feumaidh trì nithean deatamach a bhith aithnichte an toiseach, ma thathas ag iarraidh dol an sàs gu h-èifeachdach ann an coimhearsnachdan nan eilean:

- a) Luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig an sin a chur ann an **teis-meadhan ghnòthaichean poileasaidh**
→ **Prìomhachas a chur air Dìon-Cànain**
- b) A bhith ag innse na fìrinne agus a bhith a' toirt seachad **tuairisgeul onarach** mu an suidheachadh
- c) **Planaichean torrach** agus mionaideach a dhealbh a tha comasach air com-pàirteachas a bhrosnachadh ann an gnìomhan a bheir piseach air suidheachadh luchd-bruidhne na Gàidhlig

Productive engagement with the communities in the islands involves three fundamental prerequisites:

- a) Placing the Gaelic-speaking group at the **centre of policy concerns**
→ **Prioritising Language Protection**
- b) Providing an **honest narrative and description** of their situation
- c) Developing an **agenda of productive and coherent plans** capable of encouraging participation in cooperative activity to improve the circumstances of Gaelic speakers.

Gaelic language development and the pathway-to-outcomes model



The Issue:
 Without a radical change in policy direction Gaelic will soon cease to exist as a community language in any part of Scotland.

In light of the critical challenge, it is clear that clinging to the current *status quo* in language planning and policy is not a credible option.

An Alternative Approach:
 A Civic Forum to consult on Gaelic strategy in the Islands
 Explore community development methodologies similar to *Leader Programme*
 Create a new strategic process: Working group to explore way ahead – community representatives, public servants and academics

Source: adapted from Grin, 2003. Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Caibideil 9: Modail ùr airson ath-bheòthachadh na Gàidhlig/A new model for Gaelic revitalisation –
Urras na Gàidhlig: an structar a tha aig teis-meadhan modail a’ Cho-chomainn Mhion-chànain Cho-obrachail

1. Initial Phase of Emergency Refocus

2. Representative Forum of the Language Community Cooperative

3a. Board - Urras na Gàidhlig



3b. Executive - Urras na Gàidhlig

4. Research & Advisory Support

5. Socio-economic return on investment: new enterprises; employment opportunities; family support schemes; youth participation; enhanced social and linguistic capital.

6. Sociolinguistic return on participation: revitalised vernacular use of Gaelic in families, communities and schools.

1. A’ Chiad ìre de dh’Ath-chuimseachadh Èiginneach

2. Fòram Riochdachail a’ Cho-chomainn Choimhearsnachd Chànain

3a. Bòrd - Urras na Gàidhlig



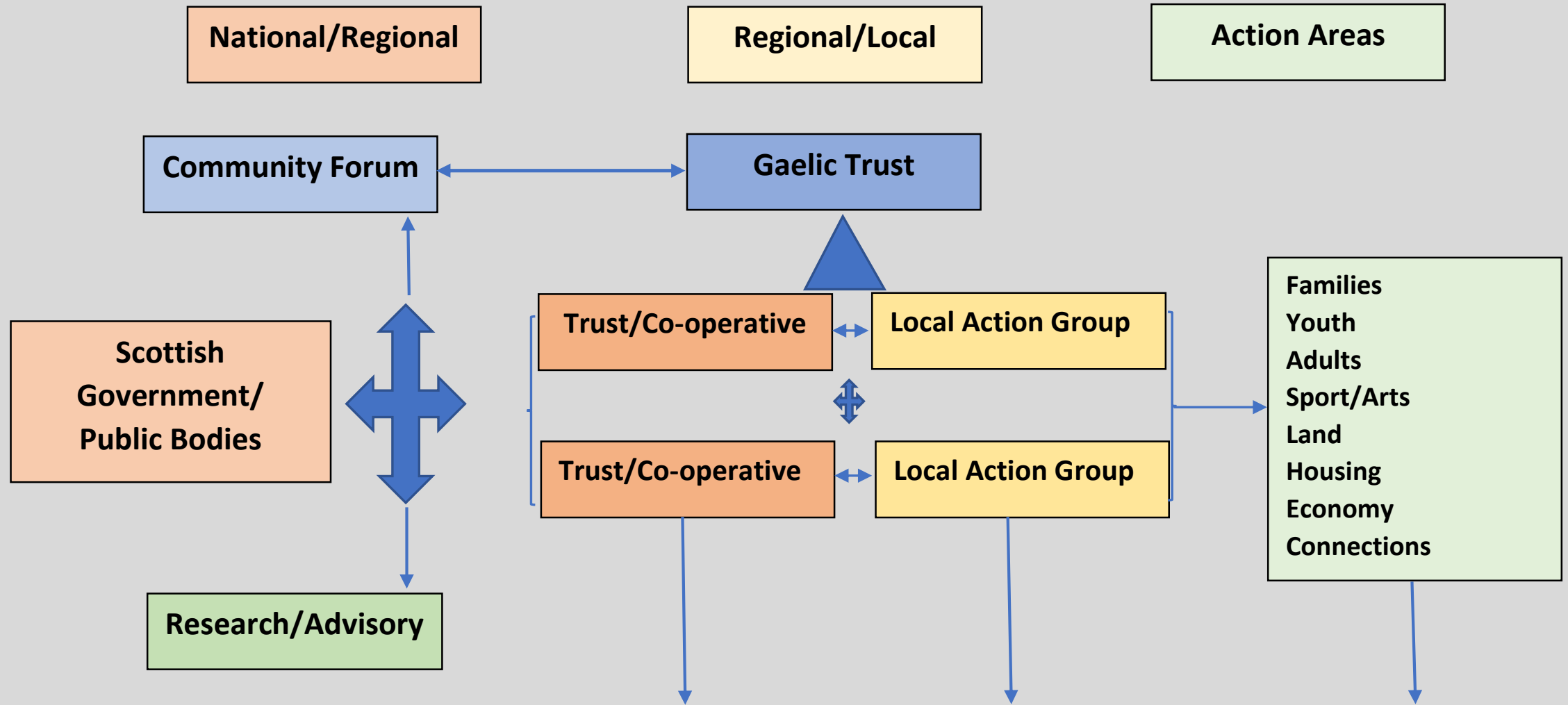
3b. Àrd-oifigearan - Urras na Gàidhlig

4. Taic rannsachaidh & chomhairleachaidh

5. Buannachdan sòiseo-eaconamach air in-ionmhas: gnìomhachasan ùra; cothroman cosnaidh; sgeamaichean taic theaghlaich; compàirteachas òigridh; calpa sòisealta is cànanach air a leasachadh

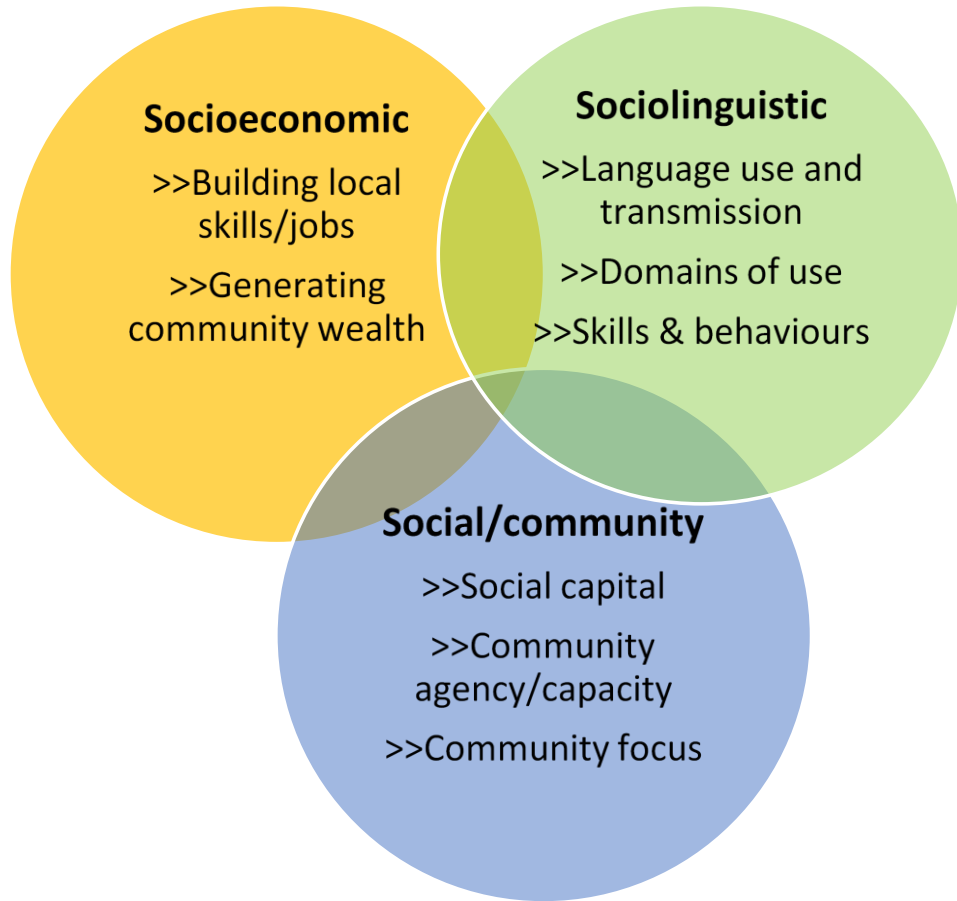
6. Buannachdan sòiseo-chànanach air compàirteachas: cleachdadh dùthchasach na Gàidhlig air ath-bheòthachadh ann an teaghlaichean, ann an coimhearsnachdan agus ann an sgoiltean.

A Pathway to Success



Community-based language development is holistic....

...it is results based; it works from the inside out and from the bottom up; it is language-aware; and it is empowering. [Lewis and Simons (2016)]



Model Principles:

- ✓ To strengthen social capital, community cohesion and well-being
- ✓ To build community resilience and leadership capacity
- ✓ To address community governance
- ✓ To recognise the centrality of community agency in creating and implementing a new future

The Soillse & Language Sciences Institute Community Partnership

Societal Analysis

- Enhancing skills and building capacity, centred on the vernacular realm and utilising indigenous knowledge, and investment in heritage and cultural assets.
- Gaelic Crisis research recommendations are aimed at consolidating the social and cultural capital of the Gaels and the building of their linguistic assets, through partnership with community bodies such as local co-operatives and community trusts.

Empathetic Ethnography

- Ethnographic research and cooperation with community groups
 - E.g. Guthan nan Eilean; Stòras Beò nan Gàidheal, Leacag/Leacan, Mediating Multilingualism.
- Projects which engage directly with community speakers and develop an effective interface between research evidence, policy elaboration, and community engagement and participation.

Tapadh leibh!

Post-d:

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