

Institution: Glasgow Caledonian University		
Unit of Assessment: 34 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: Rethinking Scots Gaelic as an Economic and Social Asset		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 – 2014		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Dr Douglas Chalmers	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer in Media and Journalism	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2002 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Scots Gaelic is a minority language spoken by up to an estimated 60,000 people, many in remote island communities. In the early 21st century, it was widely considered to be of declining relevance to modern Scotland and there continue to be concerns about its linguistic decline overall. GCU research, however, has resulted in a new, more positive perception and understanding of Gaelic language, arts and culture and an acceptance among Scottish policymakers that Scots Gaelic is not only a cultural but also an economic and social asset important to the material development of Gaelic-speaking communities. This led to Scottish policymakers supporting Scots Gaelic through £700,000 of extra funding for Glasgow's two Gaelic schools (2016), a £250,000 investment by Highlands and Islands Enterprise to encourage the economic and social use of the language (2015) and support for Gaelic culture and language as one of the thirteen strategic objectives in Scotland's first National Islands Plan (2019) to develop island communities.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>The body of research underpinning these impacts has been carried out at GCU by Dr Douglas Chalmers. Prior to GCU's research, approaches to the relationship between Gaelic language, arts and culture on the one hand and social and economic development and regeneration on the other had tended to be pessimistic, seeing each as a potential obstacle to the other. In wider Scottish society, Gaelic had also been the subject of some intermittent hostility and resentment over many years.</p> <p>In 2006, Chalmers co-authored (50% with Prof. Alan Sproull, then also employed by GCU [ret.2009]) a research report commissioned and funded by the Gaelic Arts Strategic Development Forum entitled The Demand for Gaelic Arts: Patterns and Impacts. [Section 3: R1] This was a ten-year longitudinal study which analysed artistic and cultural activity related to the Scots Gaelic language as a motor for economic development and argued for a more internally driven approach to sub-regional economic development. It established the concept of the 'Gaelic Economy' as the accepted approach to conceptualising work in this area.</p> <p>In 2008, Chalmers was one of four academic co-authors of a research report commissioned and funded by the Gaelic Language Board and Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Measuring the</p>		

Gaelic Labour Market: Current and Future Potential (2008). [R2] This two-year study was an initial attempt to quantify the size of the 'Gaelic Economy' and to identify areas of potential future growth. Chalmers also argued that minority language and economic development were not necessarily antagonistic but could be complementary [R3] and that arts and culture could be used as tools of economic regeneration within minority linguistic communities. [R4]

Chalmers contributed to the EU Integrated Project DYLAN – Language Dynamics and The Management of Diversity. DYLAN was a €5.5 million Framework 6 Project involving researchers from twenty universities in twelve European countries which was active from 2006-2011. It aimed to identify the conditions under which Europe's linguistic diversity could be an asset rather than a drawback for the development of knowledge and the economy. Chalmers headed the GCU team (funded value: £96,728) investigating and assessing language policies aimed at the promoted use of Gaelic in work practices, with a view to lessons for effective policy planning both at Scottish and wider European level (http://www.dylan-project.org/project_booklet/contributions/1-2_GCAL.pdf). The overall DYLAN project was described as 'exemplary' in feedback by the European Commission in terms of being at the cutting edge of interfaces between language and the economy. [R5]

In 2013, Chalmers was commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise as part of a public sector partnership involving a range of organisations with an interest in Gaelic (funded value: £14,500). [Section 5: C1] He was the sole contributing author from HE (providing the analysis of quantitative data supplied by research consultancy firms DC Research, Cogent Strategies and Pirnie Ltd.) in a six month study that pulled together these strands of previous activity to produce Ar Stòras Gàidhlig ('Our Gaelic Resource'): The Economic and Social Value of Gaelic as an Asset. [R6] The published 2014 report was described by Highlands and Islands Enterprise as 'a pioneering study' demonstrating (with detailed facts and figures) how Scots Gaelic is being used to deliver economic and social benefits for a varied range of different businesses and communities across Scotland and the potentials for future development.

3. References to the research

- [R1] Chalmers, D. and Sproull, A. (2006) The Demand for Gaelic Arts: Patterns and Impacts - A 10 year Longitudinal Study. Pròiseact nan Ealan: Stornoway. 47pp. <http://www.douglaschalmers.com/~dch/Papers/DemandForGaelicArts.pdf>
- [R2] Campbell, I., MacLeod, M., Danson, M. & Chalmers, D. (2008) Measuring the Gaelic Labour Market: Current and Future Potential. Parts 1 & 2, Hecla Consulting, for Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Bòrd na Gàidhlig: Inverness. 180pp.
- [R3] Chalmers, D. and Danson, M. (2006) "Language and Economic Development: Complementary or Antagonistic?" In McLeod, W. (Ed.) Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland. Dunedin Academic Press: Edinburgh, 239-256.
- [R4] Chalmers, D. (2009) "The Promotion of Arts and Culture as a Tool of Economic Regeneration: An Opportunity or a Threat to Minority Language Development? The Case of Gaelic in Scotland". In Pertot, S., Priestley T.M.S. and Williams, C.H. (Eds.) Rights, Promotion and Integration Issues for Minority Languages in Europe. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 141-164.
- [R5] Milligan, L., Chalmers, D. & O'Donnell, H. (2013) "What can Gaelic teach us about Effective Policy Planning?: Strategies in Gaelic Language Planning" in Exploring the Dynamics of Multilingualism: The DYLAN Project, eds. A. Berthoud, F. Grin & G. Ludi, John Benjamins Publishing Company: Amsterdam, 121-138. <https://doi.org/10.1075/mdm.2.06mil>

- [R6] Chalmers, D. with DC Research, Cogent Strategies International Ltd., Pirnie Ltd. (2014) Ar Stòras Gàidhlig: The Economic and Social Value of Gaelic as an Asset, Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Inverness. 177pp.
<https://www.hie.co.uk/media/3157/hieplusreportplus2014plusfinalplusonline.pdf>

Note: R3, R4 and R5 are peer-reviewed academic publications (at least 2* or above). R1, R2 and R6 are funded academic research reports which have had citations on Google Scholar (R1: 7; R2: 7; R6: 6)

4. Details of the impact

GCU research into minority language and culture has positively changed policymakers' perceptions of the economic and social value of Scots Gaelic. The research has been widely cited and used by the Scottish Government and various Scottish public agencies to justify additional investment and new legislation to better respond to the needs of the Scots Gaelic minority linguistic community across Scotland.

Changing Policymakers' Perceptions of the Value of Scots Gaelic

On publication in November 2014, the Ar Stòras Gàidhlig report received wide publicity, making the headlines in Scotland. It achieved wide coverage across Scotland including in The Herald, Press and Journal and The Scotsman newspapers. BBC Scotland News reported its headline finding that Gaelic was 'worth up to £148.5m a year to the economy' and stated the report had made the economic potential of Gaelic now much clearer: 'Until now, much less has been said about [Gaelic's] important role as a valuable economic and community asset'. It quoted the comments of the then Scottish Government minister for Gaelic, welcoming the fact that 'this report highlights for the first time ways in which businesses and other organisations are capitalising on the language to generate economic value.' [C5]

When he took over in 2016 as Scottish Government Secretary for Education and Skills, the Deputy First Minister of Scotland, John Swinney MSP, specifically cited the report and the economic benefits it outlined as a justification and defence of the importance to Scotland of Gaelic funding, when he announced £700,000 of extra Government funding for Glasgow's two Gaelic schools in order to help increase the number of Gaelic speakers. [C6] This funding has had sustained benefit – it helped to support the increased demand for both the Gaelic-medium education schools in Glasgow. This included additional Science labs for the Secondary and the development of an annexe for the Primary School in 2017-18, leading to the creation of the new stand-alone Govan Gaelic Primary School in August 2019. [C4]

Investing in Economic Development

In direct response to the publication of the Ar Stòras report, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) launched in 2015 a new Language Innovation Investment (LII) Fund in order to better use 'our indigenous languages as an asset' [C7], with an initial investment of £250,000 to support the development of ideas that would enhance the economic and social (as opposed to wholly cultural) use of minority languages. The fund supported a total of twelve innovation projects directly associated with the use of Scots Gaelic. [C1] It has had sustained benefit, allowing a variety of organisations to capitalise on Gaelic as a business asset. For example, the Shieling Project, an outdoor learning centre based near Beauly in the Scottish Highlands, received £20,000 of LII funding which enabled it to set up a digital Gaelic environmental learning service. £19,500 was awarded to Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the umbrella association of the traditional arts movement Fèisean, to help it take new digital services to market, including the streaming service 'Fèis TV'. This both helped increase company turnover and created access to new audiences for Gaelic content across the world. £20,000 LII funding was awarded to Comunn na Gàidhlig (a social enterprise delivering Gaelic services across Scotland) in order to develop its Spòrs

Gàidhlig concept – providing sports and outdoor activities for young people through the medium of Gaelic – and to help take this concept to market. As with those other examples above, HIE cites Spòrs Gàidhlig as an example of ‘a new service that is using Gaelic language to support economic and social benefits. Through the use of Gaelic it is differentiating its... services from that of its other competitors; increasing the appeal of its... services to new target markets’ and ‘the income generated’ helps ‘to stabilise and support long term viability’. [C7]

The Head of Community Growth at HIE, who spearheaded the Language Innovation Investment Fund in direct response to the publication of the Ar Stòras report, states that GCU’s research rethinking Gaelic as an economic and social asset has effectively been ‘mainstreamed’ in HIE’s investment thinking. [C1] That this has also been mainstreamed in thinking about Gaelic more widely can be evidenced by the fact that since 2014, there has been a ‘Gaelic as an economic asset’ award - recognising the company or organisation that has made best business use of Gaelic in the previous year - as part of the annual Scottish Gaelic Awards ceremony sponsored by the Gaelic Language Board and the Scottish Daily Record newspaper.

Influencing National Agency Strategies and Scottish Parliamentary Legislation

According to the Director of Language Planning and Community Developments at the Gaelic Language Board (Bòrd na Gàidhlig), the impact of GCU research, culminating in the 2014 Ar Stòras report, has been ‘high and widespread’. He states that the headline finding of the potential economic value of Gaelic to the Scottish economy being up to £148.5 million ‘has been used frequently by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and others over the years in discussions with key stakeholders across the public and private sectors and has been particularly useful in discussions with policy makers at local and national level’. [C2]

The research informed and influenced the production of the third National Gaelic Language Plan submitted to Scottish Government ministers by Bòrd na Gàidhlig as a requirement of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. This is the highest-level strategic document underpinning current Gaelic language development in Scotland. The 2018-2023 Plan makes ‘promoting the social, economic’ as well as cultural value of Gaelic a priority area and as justificatory evidence, the Ar Stòras research is specifically cited in the Plan under ‘National Priorities: Scottish Government’s Purpose and Economic Benefits’ [C8] and it exerted ‘strong influence throughout’ [C2] the construction of the entire document.

The research was also ‘hugely influential’ [C3] in the 2018 development of the first ever National Gaelic Tourism Strategy for Scotland led by VisitScotland, Scotland’s national tourism agency. According to VisitScotland’s Director of Industry and Destination Development: ‘it was referenced as a key piece of evidence when we were developing the strategy and provided important context for the wider strategy document’ in demonstrating to and encouraging tourism businesses ‘that there is an economic value in using Gaelic as part of their visitor offer’. [C3] This fed through to pre-pandemic campaigns in 2020, for example by Outer Hebrides Tourism, to draw tourists to the Outer Hebrides on the basis of the rich culture and traditions of Scottish Gaelic. [C9]

These national agency strategies also fed through to the 2018 passing by the Scottish Parliament of the Islands (Scotland) Act. The Act has been described as ‘historic’ because for the first time it mandated the Scottish Government to produce a National Islands Plan with the aim of economically and socially improving the lives of the inhabitants of island communities. The Scottish Government’s final National Islands Plan was published in December 2019. Support for Gaelic language and culture is included as one of the Plan’s thirteen strategic objectives for development of these communities because it is recognised that ‘language is more than a cultural issue and permeates all aspects of community life’. [C10]

This recognition underscores how much GCU-led research, rethinking Gaelic as an economic and social asset, has worked its way into mainstream public planning and legislation, with policy-

makers explicitly stating their support for Gaelic language as a key element underpinning not just cultural but social and economic development. Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Director of Language Planning and Community Developments states that 'the substantial contribution of the Glasgow Caledonian University team has been central to this impact'. [C2] The Head of Community Growth at HIE sums up the change: 'In summary, the research provided a complementary perspective to the prevailing "nurturing of Gaelic" perspective related to the acknowledged cultural and linguistic value of Gaelic. It raised awareness of the social and economic value of Gaelic and started a national conversation about what value Gaelic could potentially bring to social and economic activities, and how that in turn can support even greater appreciation of the Gaelic language'. [C1]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

The following individual users / beneficiaries were contacted to corroborate specific claims made in the case study:

- [C1] Head of Community Growth, Communities and Place Directorate, Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Testimonial letter, 18 December 2020.
- [C2] Director of Language Planning and Community Developments (previously CEO), Bòrd na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Language Board). Testimonial letter, 21 December 2020.
- [C3] Director of Industry and Destination Development, VisitScotland. Testimonial letter, 5 January 2021.
- [C4] Head Teacher, Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu (Glasgow Gaelic School). Testimonial letter (email), 9 July 2020.

The following reports and web links to documented sources of information provide external sources of corroboration for specific claims made in the case study:

- [C5] BBC News Scotland, 'Study Suggests Gaelic Worth Up to £148.5m to the Economy', 12 November 2014, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-30004483>
- [C6] Donald Walker, 'John Swinney: No Place for Hostility towards Gaelic in Scotland', The Scotsman, 19 October 2016, <https://www.scotsman.com/whats-on/arts-and-entertainment/john-swinney-no-place-hostility-towards-gaelic-scotland-1464532>
- [C7] Language Innovation Investments (Case Studies and Evaluation Document), Highlands and Islands Enterprise, supplied courtesy of Highlands and Islands Enterprise.
- [C8] National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2023, Bòrd na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Language Board), 21, <https://www.gaidhlig.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/National-Gaelic-Language-Plan-2018-23.pdf>
- [C9] Alison Campsie, 'How Gaelic Language and Culture is Driving Tourism to the Outer Hebrides', The Scotsman, 29 January 2020, <https://www.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/how-gaelic-language-and-culture-driving-tourism-outer-hebrides-1395731>
- [C10] National Islands Plan, Scottish Government, December 2019, 65, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-plan-scotlands-islands/>