

Dà chànan: Mòran chothroman

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is the lead Local Authority in Scotland in relation to the use and development of the Gaelic language. There are sound socio-economic, cultural, and educational reasons why the Comhairle should strive to ensure that it not only maintains this position, but maximises the potential that this role presents.

In the current economic climate, it is essential that investment of time, effort and resources is properly targeted and produces demonstrable results. This Policy sets out key aims and objectives which the Comhairle has identified and intends to implement in order to achieve this.

“Gaelic First” reflects the Comhairle’s commitment, as agreed at a meeting of the Education, Skills and Children’s Services Committee in December 2019, to work towards creating a Gaelic ethos within its operations in which use of Gaelic is the default position of Comhairle services.

Staff will be actively encouraged and supported in progressing towards greater fluency and confidence in the use of the language, and all Comhairle developments, projects and policies will be scoped to take account of impact on Gaelic and for the potential to promote the language. Therefore, usage of Gaelic, at every practical opportunity, is expected to increase, and Comhairle staff will lead on this by example.

It makes learning languages easier.

If you can speak two languages already, chances are that you’re pretty good at learning them. According to studies, those who are bilingual find it much easier to learn a third or fourth language.

Bilingualism makes you better at multitasking.

Bilinguals are in a near constant state of linguistic multitasking. When they have to function in a world outside their first or native language, they have to switch, shift, and process different languages in real-time.

It makes you more empathetic.

Empathy is the ability to relate to someone else and to see things as they do. Empathy is an essential ability for human beings, it means to understand what other people feel emotionally and put yourself in other people’s position. And bilinguals are better at it.

Bilingualism can make you richer.

If you speak more than one language, you are likelier to get paid more over the course of your life. Being bilingual and living in the Western Isles gives increased employment opportunities and if you are able to do your job in more than one language, this is appealing to potential employers, including Comhairle nan Eilean Siar which has a Gaelic First Policy.

Bilingualism helps you see things differently.

The language you speak helps determine how you interpret actions. Bilinguals can interpret aspects of the world according to whichever language they are speaking.

It improves certain executive functions.

All those little jobs your brain does without any praise or consideration are called executive functions. If you tap your left hand while reading this sentence, that’s an executive function. If you decide to read this sentence backward, that’s an executive function. Bilinguals are better at certain kinds of them, namely, those that involve flipping between different types of brain activation.

It improves how you think, explore and figure things out.

Research proves that Gaelic Medium Education (GME) provides improved cognitive development for children. GME pupils, consequently, have high levels of attainment across all subject areas, and it has also been shown that GME pupils actually perform better in English language than those learning through the medium of English.

You will have a lifelong connection with our islands.

Speaking Gaelic allows us to connect with, and understand better, the culture, landscape, and history of the Isles, and its people and communities. It provides us with a unique identity, and helps to promote the Isles internationally as a culturally rich tourist destination.



Bilingualism reduces the chances of, and slows the worsening of, Alzheimer’s.

As we get older, the more our cognitive functions will grind to a halt. According to a global study on the topic, learning and speaking multiple language helps in two ways. First, it reduces the chances of getting dementia. Secondly, if you were to get dementia, it slows its onset and lessens the symptoms. Of course, this is not to say bilingualism stops people getting dementia, but it is a significant factor in reducing your chances from suffering its effects.

