



A Gaelic hub for Edinburgh? Report on community survey

December 2024

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of an online community survey developed by Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Eideann on the potential to establish a Gaelic cultural hub in Edinburgh. The survey aimed to assess the potential interest in and demand for a hub and to consider the different kinds of events and services that a hub might best offer.

The survey ran from 15 June to 16 September 2024. It was open to anyone aged 16 and over, regardless of place of residence.

The survey produced a strong response, with 444 individuals and five organisations completing it.

There was overwhelming support for the hub and respondents provided a large number of detailed responses concerning what they would like to see in a hub.

There were eleven questions in the survey, of which four were open-ended and allowed respondents to enter their own responses. Responses were sorted according to themes and topics and a summary of the views expressed is given in this report.

Section 1 presents general information about the background of the survey respondents, in terms of age, gender, residence and ability in Gaelic.

There was a concentration in the middle age bands (age 35-54), with respondents under 35 significantly under-represented. 59.6% of respondents were female and only 36.5% male.

Although the survey was not limited to residents of Edinburgh, 78.9% of responses came from City of Edinburgh postcodes, with a further 11.2% from other parts of the Lothians. There was a marked concentration of responses from the Leith (EH6) and Leith Walk (EH7) areas.

Fewer than half (43.7%) of respondents categorised their Gaelic speaking ability as fluent or intermediate, with only one fifth identifying themselves as fluent.

Section 2 summarises respondents' general views on the hub, in particular how useful they would find it and how often they expect they might visit or use it.

85.4% of respondents felt that a hub would be 'very useful' for Edinburgh's Gaelic community and a further 9.4% felt that it would be 'somewhat useful'. Only 1.6% thought it would be 'not very useful' and 2.2% 'not useful at all'.

More than a third of respondents (33.6%) said they would visit a hub once a week and a further 38.1% once a month. 17.3% thought they would only visit a few times a year and 6.7% very rarely.

Respondents were asked about the kinds of services or activities a hub should offer. Eight options were suggested and respondents could also choose to propose other alternatives. These options were providing space for meetings; providing space for classes; providing space for events or performances; providing work space for Gaelic organisations or creatives; facilitating activities for children; a café; a shop; and exhibition space.

The most favoured options were ‘providing space for events or performances’, selected by 15.7% of respondents, ‘providing spaces for classes’, selected by 14.7%, and a café, selected by 12.9%. The least favoured option was a shop, selected by 8.7%.

Section 3 addresses in detail the issue of what a Gaelic hub might offer in terms of services, facilities and activities. Respondents offered a large number of suggestions, including the following.

Café/bar: many respondents stressed the potential value of a café, principally for its social role as an informal Gaelic gathering space. At the same time, many emphasised the importance of offering good quality food and drink and an attractive general ambience.

Bookshop/library: many respondents felt that a bookshop and/or library would be an important feature for a hub. Some also noted the potential of a shop selling other Gaelic-related products and materials.

Information centre: many respondents thought that the hub could serve as an information centre of some kind. This could involve publicising and providing information about Gaelic activities and events in Edinburgh and beyond. A hub could also provide more general information about Gaelic language, history and culture, perhaps in some kind of permanent exhibition. This could help raise the profile and build awareness of Gaelic in Edinburgh.

Meeting or work spaces: a number of respondents suggested that a hub might provide space for different Gaelic-related organisations for meetings and other activities. A related possibility is providing work space for individual Gaelic professionals, creatives or students.

Arts, music and performance: respondents offered a range of suggestions concerning facilities for music and other kinds of artistic performances, and the facilities needed to support them.

Provision for children and young people : many respondents stressed the importance of offering services and activities for children and young people, from babies and toddlers to young adults, and offered specific suggestions in this connection.

Adult learning opportunities: there were numerous comments concerning classes for adults and meeting the needs of Gaelic learners at different levels.

Respondents suggested a wide range of other activities that might be suitable for the hub, including book and poetry readings; lectures and discussions; quizzes and competitions; cooking classes/demos; craft activities; knitting; pottery; summer camp activities; and seasonal celebrations.

Several respondents proposed offering different kinds of games through Gaelic: board games, role-playing games, backgammon, snooker/pool and table tennis.

Respondents also noted that the hub could play an important role by offering paid or volunteer work opportunities.

Section 4 discusses the factors that respondents indicated might make a Gaelic hub either more or less useful or appealing to them.

Location: many respondents expressed the view that the hub should be in a central location, readily accessible by public transportation and ideally with parking. This would help maximise footfall and income.

Opening hours: many respondents felt it was important that the hub should have regular opening hours and ideally be open evenings and weekends as well as on weekdays.

Layout, atmosphere and cost: respondents felt it was important for the hub to have a modern and attractive interior and a friendly, welcoming and informal atmosphere. Others emphasised that the hub should be accessible and inclusive and should take into account the needs of those with disabilities. The space should be flexible, so that it could be used for different purposes and that different kinds of activities could be carried on simultaneously:

Respondents also identified aspects of the layout or ambience that might make a hub less appealing: drab, functional decor, poor lighting or acoustics, cramped or crowded space, uncomfortable seating, and general formality or inflexibility. Some also raised expense as a possible negative factor.

Range of activities: respondents noted that the hub should offer a sufficiently wide range of activities to appeal to different kinds of people.

Language used in the hub: some respondents expressed the view that Gaelic should be the normal language of the hub, or expressed concern that the hub would be undermined if too much English were allowed in. Others offered a contrasting view, emphasising that the hub should be accessible and welcoming to all learners and others with little (or no) Gaelic.

Balance between activities for children and adults: some respondents emphasised the importance of offering activities that were attractive to children and families, while some others expressed the view that too much emphasis on such provision might be off-putting.

Social or political factors: a small number of respondents expressed the view that the hub should not be used for political purposes, or expressed concern relating to specific social or political issues (e.g. sectarianism).

Section 5 sets out the issues that respondents identified as presenting challenges for the Gaelic community in Edinburgh, including the following.

The number of Gaelic speakers in Edinburgh is very small in relative terms (less than 1% of the total population). It is difficult to find other Gaelic speakers, partly as the result of small speaker numbers, partly the language's lack of visibility in the city.

There are not enough opportunities to use Gaelic in Edinburgh. In varying ways, this issue impacts on native speakers, adults learning the language, and children in Gaelic education.

The Gaelic community in Edinburgh is perceived as fragmented and lacking cohesion, and some questioned whether it was meaningful to speak of a 'Gaelic community' in the city.

Some respondents felt that Gaelic events in Edinburgh are not frequent and regular enough, and some said that the events currently offered were insufficiently attractive or varied. Others noted that many people are generally somewhat reluctant to come out to events, or are simply unaware of the Gaelic events that are currently being offered.

There is a lack of dedicated Gaelic spaces in Edinburgh, and this has a negative impact on opportunities to speak or learn Gaelic. Many respondents thought that establishing a hub would be an important means of dealing with these difficulties.

Insufficient funding, or getting access to funding, is a concern. This includes funding to support Gaelic development in general, for Gaelic education, and for the hub itself.

A range of issues relating to Gaelic education in schools were identified. These included the limited provision at primary and secondary level and the need to encourage children to use Gaelic outside the school context, whether at home or through dedicated activities.

Challenges facing Gaelic learners in Edinburgh were noted. These included issues involving the availability of classes at different levels, the difficulty of progressing to more advanced stages, and the lack of opportunity to use Gaelic with other learners or with fluent speakers.

Gaelic is perceived as being largely invisible in the city, and this contributes to low public awareness of the language.

There is a general lack of awareness of Gaelic in Edinburgh, and a degree of negativity or hostility towards the language. This negativity included a general resistance to the promotion of Gaelic or a more specific view that the language is irrelevant to Edinburgh.

Section 6 presents other comments or suggestions offered by respondents, in particular expressions of general support for the hub or ideas concerning possible funding mechanisms and partnership opportunities.

The **conclusion** notes that the survey demonstrates very strong support for establishing a Gaelic hub in Edinburgh and the high level of interest in the project among speakers, learners and supporters of Gaelic in Edinburgh. The survey has yielded an extensive body of information concerning the Gaelic community's preferences and priorities, which will be extremely useful in helping Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann plan the way ahead and take the next practical steps.

Acknowledgements

Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann would like to thank everyone who took time to complete the survey. We would like to extend particular thanks to Ann Paterson (Capital Gaelic Officer and member of the Ionad board) for her liaison and promotional work and Yvonne Gannon (Corporate Services, City of Edinburgh Council) for her work in adapting the questionnaire for the Council's Consultation and Engagement Hub and in processing the results. Finally, we are grateful to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for its support, which has allowed us to appoint a Development Officer, Sarah Scott, who played an important role in developing and promoting this survey.

Introduction

This report presents the results of an online community survey developed by Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Eideann on the potential to establish a Gaelic cultural hub in Edinburgh. The survey aimed to assess the potential interest in and demand for a hub and to consider the different kinds of events and services that a hub might best offer.

Background

Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Eideann is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation established in 2020 with the stated aim to create, operate and maintain, on a charitable and non-profit making basis, a linguistic, cultural, educational and social centre for the benefit of the Gaelic community of Edinburgh and the Lothians and generally to promote, within that centre and elsewhere, the usage, learning, study and enjoyment of Gaelic.

For many years, Edinburgh's Gaelic community has perceived the need for a cultural centre or hub as a base for Gaelic organisations and Gaelic activity in the city. Various initiatives have been planned and organised at different times but unfortunately these have not come to fruition. Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Eideann is now working to fulfill this long-standing objective.

Gaelic-medium education in Edinburgh has grown rapidly since the opening of Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce, the city's Gaelic primary school, in 2013, and the 2022 census recorded a significant increase in the number of Gaelic speakers in Edinburgh since the previous census. Speaker numbers rose by 46.6 per cent between 2011 and 2022 (to 4,628) and the number of those with other Gaelic skills (reading, writing or understanding) rose by 118 per cent (to 5,751).

The importance of Gaelic cultural hubs has been increasingly recognised by policy-makers. There are several initiatives underway in different parts of Scotland to develop Gaelic hubs, notably in Inverness, Glasgow and Stornoway. Bòrd na Gàidhlig's National Gaelic Language Plan emphasises the importance of community initiatives such as hubs, and the City of Edinburgh's Gaelic Language Plan 2024-29 provides that the Council will support Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Eideann with its plans to develop a hub in Edinburgh.

The survey

The survey was placed on the City of Edinburgh Council's Consultation and Engagement Hub and ran from 15 June to 16 September 2024. It was extensively promoted using social media, e-mail and printed information cards. It was open to anyone aged 16 and over, regardless of place of residence.

The survey produced a strong response, with 444 individuals and five organisations completing it. Three of these organisations submitted individual responses in letter form rather than completing the survey.

As discussed in detail in this report, there was overwhelming support for the hub and respondents provided a large number of detailed responses concerning what they would like to see in a hub.

Respondents had the option of completing the survey in Gaelic or in English. 74 respondents chose to do so in Gaelic and 372 in English.

There were eleven questions in the survey, of which four were open-ended and allowed respondents to enter their own responses. Many of these responses were lengthy and detailed. Responses were sorted according to themes and topics and a summary of the views and ideas presented is given in this report, with examples selected to give the flavour of respondents' perspectives. All told, there were more than 30,000 words of comments and suggestions, so the representative examples given here form only a small portion of the total body of responses.

The survey is attached as an appendix to this report.

Following the survey, a summary of responses was distributed to members of Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann and to those respondents who had provided their email addresses. They were also invited to a meeting to discuss the results. These meetings were held on 11 and 12 November, the first of them in English and the second in Gaelic. Those attending were given an opportunity to ask questions and especially to offer further suggestions about the way forward in developing the campaign for a hub in Edinburgh. This additional input will be very useful for the Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann committee in taking plans forward.

Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows:

Section 1 presents general information about respondents' background, in terms of age, gender, residence and ability in Gaelic.

Section 2 summarises respondents' general views on the hub, in particular how useful they would find it and how often they expect they might visit or use it.

Section 3 considers the range of services or activities that a Gaelic hub might offer, including a café/bar; bookshop/library; information centre/exhibition space; meeting or work spaces; music and performance offerings; provision for children and young people and adult learning opportunities.

Section 4 summarises respondents' views on what factors might make a Gaelic hub more or less useful or appealing. These include the location of the hub; opening hours; layout, atmosphere and cost; the range of activities offered; concern about too much English (or too much Gaelic) being used; the balance between activities for children and adults; and social or political factors.

Section 5 sets out the issues that respondents identified as presenting challenges for the Gaelic community in Edinburgh. These include the small number of Gaelic speakers in the city; the difficulty of finding other Gaelic speakers; limited opportunities to use Gaelic; the diffusion and fragmentation of the Gaelic community; the lack of regular or attractive Gaelic events and issues with attendance; the lack of dedicated Gaelic spaces; issues involving funding; issues involving Gaelic education in schools; challenges facing Gaelic learners; the low visibility of Gaelic; and the lack of awareness or negativity among the wider public.

Finally, section 6 deals with other comments or suggestions offered by respondents, in particular expressions of general support for the hub or ideas concerning funding and partnerships.

Section 1

Background of respondents (age, gender, residence and ability in Gaelic)

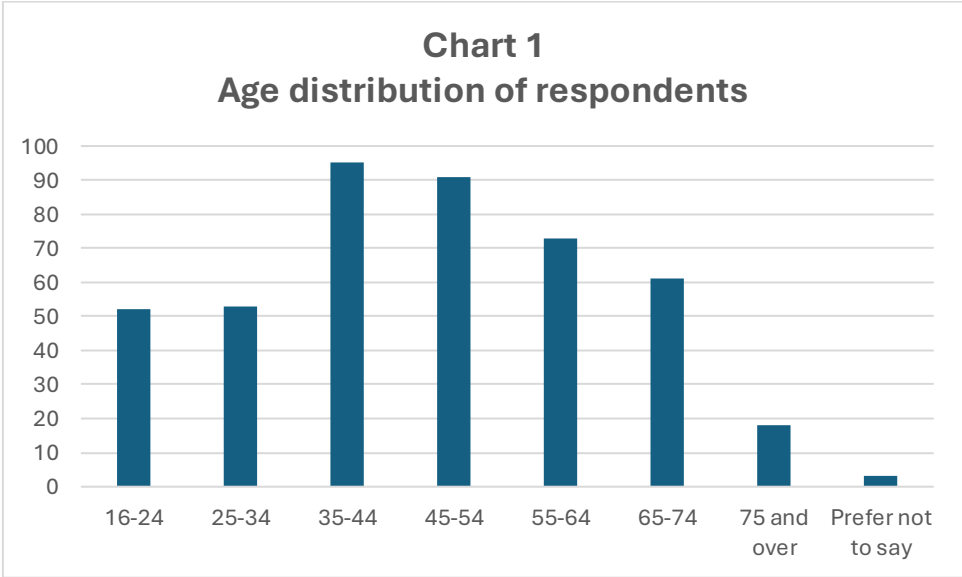
The introductory questions to the survey related to respondents’ age, gender, place of residence and Gaelic speaking ability. In order to keep the survey reasonably short and encourage a large number of responses, these questions did not explore respondents’ personal background in relation to Gaelic or Gaelic language use patterns in more detail.

Age of respondents

Table 1 and Chart 1 show the age distribution of those who responded to the survey. There was a concentration in the middle age bands (age 35-54), with respondents under 35 significantly under-represented relative to the general 16+ population of Edinburgh (23.6% as against 37.2%).¹

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents

Age	Number of responses	Percentage
16-24	52	11.7
25-34	53	11.9
35-44	95	21.3
45-54	91	20.4
55-64	73	16.4
65-74	61	13.7
75 and over	18	4.0
Prefer not to say	3	0.7
	446	100.1



¹ Source: www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk, Table UV102a.

Gender of respondents

There was a pronounced gender imbalance among respondents: 59.6% were female and only 36.5% male.

Table 2: Gender distribution of respondents

	Number of responses	Percentage
Female	266	59.6
Male	163	36.5
Non-binary	9	2.0
Prefer not to say	8	1.8
	446	99.9

Residence of respondents

Respondents were asked to provide the first part of their postcode (e.g. EH1). The survey was not limited to residents of Edinburgh, in recognition of the fact that a Gaelic hub might be used by people elsewhere in central Scotland who work in Edinburgh or visit the city frequently, and indeed by more occasional visitors. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of responses (78.9%) came from City of Edinburgh postcodes, with a further 11.2% from other parts of the Lothians.

Table 3: Respondents' place of residence

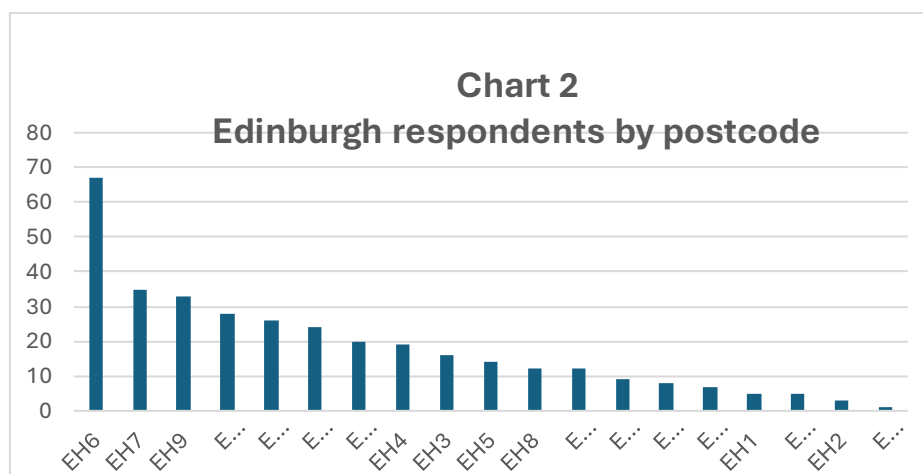
	Number of responses	Percentage
City of Edinburgh	344	78.9
Midlothian	22	5.0
East Lothian	15	3.4
West Lothian	12	2.8
Fife	10	2.3
Glasgow	8	1.8
Scottish Borders	6	1.4
Falkirk	4	0.9
Perth & Kinross	3	0.7
Dundee	2	0.5
England	2	0.5
Highland	2	0.5
North Lanarkshire	2	0.5
Western Isles	2	0.5
Aberdeen	1	0.2
North Ayrshire	1	0.2
	436	100.1

Within Edinburgh, there was a marked concentration of responses from the EH6 postcode area (Leith) – 67 responses, 19.5% of the total responses from Edinburgh, with a further 35 responses (10.2% of the Edinburgh total) from the adjoining Leith Walk area. This very likely reflects input from families connected to the city’s Gaelic primary school, Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce, which is located on Bonnington Road next to Pilrig Park.

As shown in Table 4, other well-represented Edinburgh postcodes were EH9 (Marchmont/Grange), EH16 (Liberton/Craigmillar), EH12 (Murrayfield/Corstorphine) and EH11 (Dalry/Gorgie/Stenhouse). In contrast, there were relatively few responses from the city centre or the far south of the city (EH1, EH2, EH13, EH14 and EH17 postcodes).

Table 4: Edinburgh respondents by postcode

Postcode	Number of responses	Percentage of Edinburgh total
EH6	67	19.5
EH7	35	10.2
EH9	33	9.6
EH16	28	8.1
EH12	26	7.6
EH11	24	7.0
EH10	20	5.8
EH4	19	5.5
EH3	16	4.7
EH5	14	4.1
EH8	12	3.5
EH15	12	3.5
EH14	9	2.6
EH17	8	2.3
EH13	7	2.0
EH1	5	1.5
EH30	5	1.5
EH2	3	0.9
EH29	1	0.3
	344	100.2



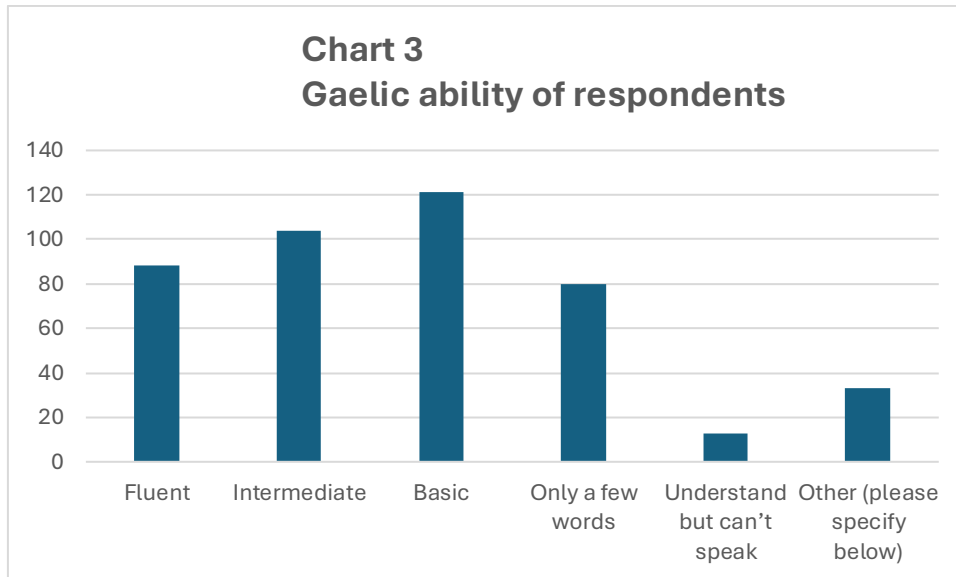
Respondents' ability in Gaelic

Respondents were asked to state their level of ability in Gaelic and were given six options: fluent, intermediate, basic, only a few words, understand but can't speak and other. Fewer than half (43.7%) of respondents selected fluent or intermediate, with only one fifth identifying themselves as fluent.² This pattern of responses suggests that there is significant interest in a hub among non-Gaelic speakers as well as those with stronger ability in Gaelic.

Table 5: Gaelic ability of respondents

Ability level	Number of responses	Percentage
Fluent	88	20.0
Intermediate	104	23.7
Basic	121	27.6
Only a few words	80	18.2
Understand but can't speak	13	3.0
Other (please specify below)	33	7.5
	439	100

² The options given in the survey differ from those in the national census, in which respondents must indicate whether they can speak, read, write or understand Gaelic. These are binary yes/no options, and there are no gradations for different levels of speaking ability. It is striking that only 3% of respondents to the current survey chose the 'Understand but can't speak' option, while in the 2022 census 36.7% of the Edinburgh residents who claimed to have some Gaelic skills chose 'Understand but cannot speak, read or write Gaelic'. A further 15.3% of Edinburgh census respondents chose 'Read but cannot speak or write Gaelic', an option not given in the current survey. Source: www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk, Table UV208a.



Some respondents who answered 'Other' to this question indicated they had some level of speaking ability, and so might potentially be placed in one of the first three categories. One identified as a native speaker, two as lapsed native speakers, another had gone through Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce and was currently studying Higher Gàidhlig, one was about to start an intermediate class and two explained that they had been using Duolingo for 3-4 years.

It should be noted that approximately twelve respondents appear to have completed the survey for the purpose of expressing general anti-Gaelic views and outright opposition to the establishment of a Gaelic hub in Edinburgh. If these responses are excluded then the proportion of fluent and intermediate speakers among respondents rises slightly.

Section 2

General views on the hub

Survey respondents expressed very strong support for the idea of establishing a Gaelic hub in Edinburgh. Question 5 asked ‘In your opinion, how useful would a Gaelic hub be for Edinburgh’s Gaelic community?’ 85.4% of respondents felt that a hub would be ‘very useful’ and a further 9.4% felt that it would be ‘somewhat useful’. Only 1.6% thought it would be ‘not very useful’ and 2.2% ‘not useful at all’.

Table 6: Usefulness of the hub

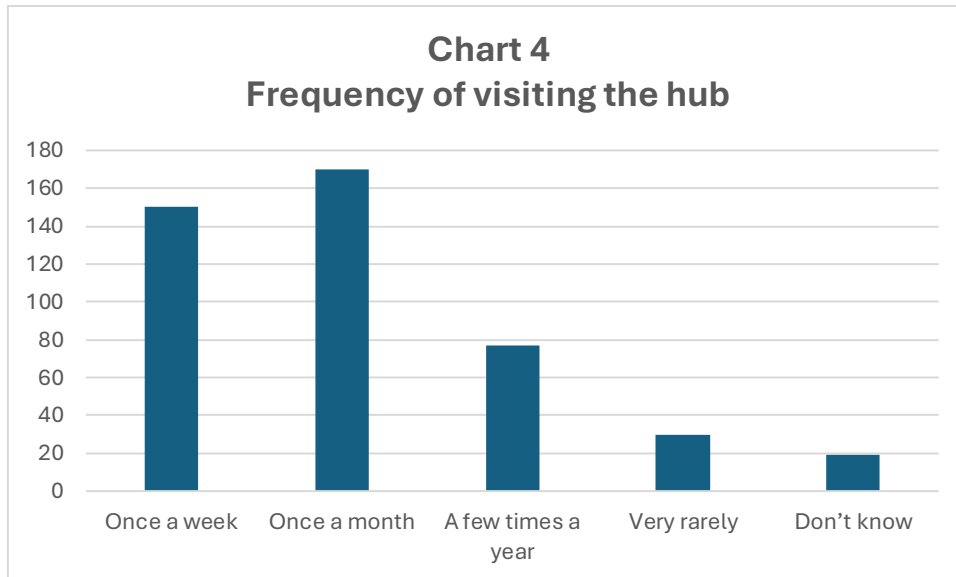
	Number of responses	Percentage
Very useful	381	85.4
Somewhat useful	42	9.4
Not very useful	7	1.6
Not useful at all	10	2.2
Don’t know	6	1.3
	446	99.9

With one exception, however, all those who thought that a hub would not be useful at all either expressed strong anti-Gaelic views elsewhere in the survey or did not give full answers to questions concerning what a hub might offer, thus suggesting that they did not intend to give a constructive response to the survey. The same pattern applied to almost all the respondents who said that a hub would not be very useful. If these rejectionist responses are put to one side, almost all respondents concurred that a hub would be very useful or somewhat useful, and the overwhelming majority felt that it would be very useful.

Question 6 asked respondents ‘How often do you think you might visit a Gaelic hub in Edinburgh?’ More than a third (33.6%) said they would visit once a week and a further 38.1% once a month. 17.3% thought they would only visit a few times a year and 6.7% very rarely. It should be borne in mind that 10% of respondents live outside Edinburgh and the Lothians, and that the ‘very rarely’ responses were mostly made by rejectionist respondents.

Table 7: Frequency of visiting the hub

	Number of responses	Percentage
Once a week	150	33.6
Once a month	170	38.1
A few times a year	77	17.3
Very rarely	30	6.7
Don’t know	19	4.3
	446	100.0



Question 7 sought respondents' views on the kinds of services or activities a hub should offer. Eight options were suggested and respondents could also choose to propose other alternatives. The eight suggested options were as follows:

- Providing space for meetings
- Providing space for classes
- Providing space for events or performances
- Providing work space for Gaelic organisations or creatives
- Facilitating activities for children
- Café
- Shop
- Exhibition space

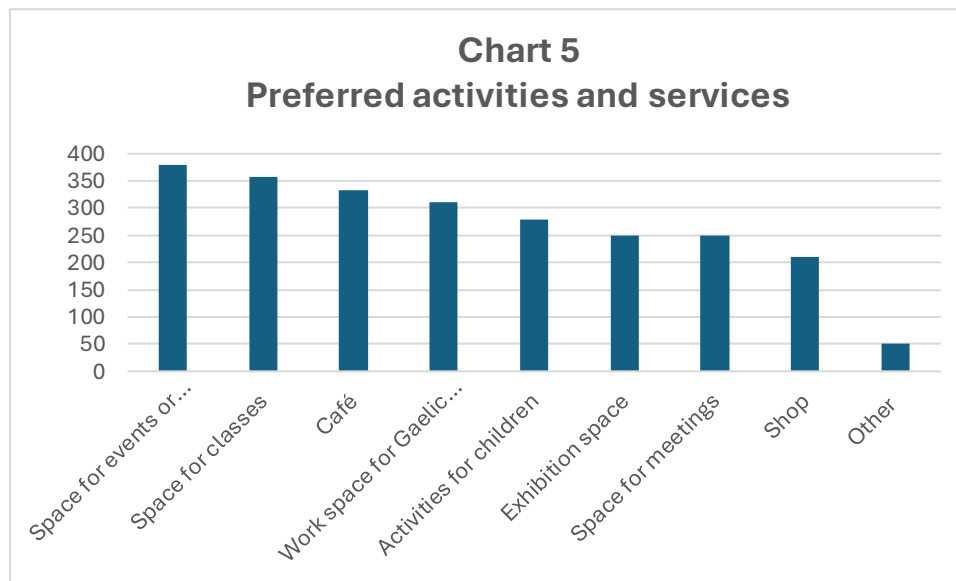
There were 441 responses to this question and a total of 2421 options were selected. The average number of options selected by each respondent was 5.5, although some respondents selected only one or two options and some ticked all the suggested options.

The most favoured options were 'providing space for events or performances', selected by 15.7% of respondents, 'providing spaces for classes', selected by 14.7%, and a café, selected by 12.9%. The least favoured option was a shop, selected by 8.7%.

Table 8: Preferred activities and services

	Number of responses	Percentage
Providing space for events or performances	380	15.7
Providing space for classes	357	14.7
Café	334	13.8

Providing space for Gaelic organisations or creatives	310	12.9
Facilitating activities for children	279	11.5
Exhibition space	250	10.3
Providing space for meetings	249	10.3
Shop	210	8.7
Other	52	2.1
	2421	100.0



Most of the additional suggestions provided by respondents in response to the 'Other' option were not entirely distinct services or activities, but rather amplified some of those that were suggested initially. The issue of what services or activities a hub should offer is discussed in more detail in the following section.

Section 3

Services or activities a hub might offer

Arguably the most important element of the survey is the issue of what a Gaelic hub might offer in terms of services, facilities and activities. Respondents offered their preferences and ideas in response to several different questions in the survey (7, 8, 9 and 11) and these are taken together for purposes of analysis. The issues discussed in this section have been grouped logically rather than in perceived order of importance or popularity among respondents.

- Café/bar
- Bookshop/library
- Information centre/exhibition space
- Meeting or work spaces
- Music and performance
- Provision for children and young people
- Adult learning opportunities
- Other suggested activities

Café/bar

Many respondents stressed the potential value of a café, principally for its social role as an informal Gaelic gathering space. At the same time, many emphasised the importance of offering good quality food and drink and an attractive general ambience. The following comments give a sense of respondents' views here:

I think a cafe would be a real asset and provide a great informal gathering space for Gaelic speakers to meet.

Cafè Gàidhlig far a bheil Gàidhlig air a bruidhinn leis an luchd-obrach, le leabhraichean Gàidhlig, fiosrachadh mu dheidhinn tachartasan, etc.

A Gaelic café where Gaelic is spoken by the staff, with Gaelic books, information about events etc.

Bhiodh café far am faighear cupa cofaidh, greim-bidhe agus fiù 's pinnt no gloinne fiona tarraingeach, le bùth leabhraichean is clàran-ciùil – àite car coltach ri Cultúrlann McAdam-Ó Fiaich ann am Beul Feirste. A bharrachd air clasaichean, cruinneachaidhean is eile, 's e an cothrom a dhol gu àite far an cluinnear a' Ghàidhlig ga bruidhinn gu neo-fhoirmeil a bhiodh tarraingeach dhomhsa.

A café where you could get a cup of coffee, something to eat and even a pint or a glass of wine would appeal, with a book and record shop – a place a bit like the Cultúrlann McAdam-Ó Fiaich in Belfast [www.culturlann.ie]. In addition to classes, meetings and so on, it's the opportunity to go to a place where Gaelic is spoken informally that appeals to me.

Bhiodh e uabhasach math cafaidh snog a bhith ann agus bùth le leabhraichean Gàidhlig ùr agus ath-làimhe. Nam bheachdsa tha biadh aig cridhe choimhearsnachdan agus mar sin tha cafaidh snog le cèicean blasta glè chudromach. An uair sin bhiodh daoine òg agus sean a' taghadh an àite seach a bhith a' faireachdainn 'O 's fheudar dhomh dhol dhan chafaidh aig an ionad o chionns gu bheil e feumach air taic!'

It would be great for there to be a nice café and a shop with new and second-hand books. In my opinion food is at the heart of community and so a nice café with tasty cakes is very important. Then both younger and older people would choose the place rather than feeling 'Oh, I have to go to the café at the hub because it needs support!'

Bookshop/library

Many respondents felt that a bookshop and/or library would be an important feature for a hub. Some also commented on the potential of a shop selling other Gaelic-related products and materials. Some representative comments are as follows:

A bookshop would be a great addition. Particularly if it sold titles second hand

Particularly a shop would be great – when I've tried to buy Gaelic books for friends' children at Christmas or learning materials for myself I've really struggled.

We also think that a shop of some kind would be good e.g. book shop, music CDs, and objects from Gàidhealtachd artists and independent small businesses

A sale of merch in Gaelic and bookshop would no doubt raise funds that could assist to make the hub self-sustaining. It could provide jobs for Gaelic speak[ers], even on a volunteer basis.

A lending library with books in Gaelic would be great.

Some kind of Gaelic book library and/or exchange facility (So I could find a good home for books I have finished with and can buy or borrow others)

Information centre

Many respondents thought that the hub could serve an information centre of some kind. This could involve publicising and providing information about Gaelic activities and events in Edinburgh and beyond; elsewhere in the survey respondents noted the difficulty of finding such information at present. A hub could also provide more general information about Gaelic language, history and culture, perhaps in some kind of permanent exhibition. This could help raise the profile and build awareness of Gaelic, issues flagged up by respondents as challenges facing the Gaelic community in Edinburgh (see section 5). Comments on these issues included the following:

Àite fiosrachadh fhaighinn air dè tha dol ann an saoghal na Gàidhlig
A place to get information about what is happening in the Gaelic world

Opportunity to publicise Gaelic related groups and events – effectively a large noticeboard!

Bhiodh e math nan robh taisbeanadh maireannach anns an ionad mu eachdraidh is cultar na Gàidhlig, an dà chuid ann an Dùn Èideann fhèin agus ann an Alba, ach cuideachd gu h-eadar-nàiseanta

It would be good if there were a permanent exhibition in the hub about Gaelic history and culture, both in Edinburgh itself and in Scotland, and also internationally

Focal point for visitors to Edinburgh to learn about the historical and cultural importance of Gaelic in Scotland.

Meeting or work spaces

A number of respondents suggested that a hub might play a useful role in providing space for different kinds of Gaelic-related organisations for meetings and other activities. A related possibility is providing work space for individual Gaelic professionals, creatives or students. Some suggestions included the following:

As a uni student, some office or study space in a Gaelic environment would be brilliant

Cuideachd dh'fhaodadh e bhith na chothrom dhuinn nan robh oifis ri fhaighinn, no àite ann an oifis còmhla ri oifigearan-leasachaidh Ghàidhlig eile.

It might also give us an opportunity if an office were available, or an office together with other Gaelic development officers

Bhiodh hot-desking math mar a th' aca san Lòchran ann an Glaschu
Hot-desking would be good, like they have at An Lòchran in Glasgow
[www.anlochran.com]

Range of events and services

Respondents made numerous suggestions about the kinds of events or services that a hub might offer or facilitate. Three of the most widely raised categories of suggestions related to music and performance; provision for children and young people; and adult learning opportunities. These categories are discussed in turn, followed by a presentation of other kinds of suggestions made by respondents.

Arts, music and performance

Respondents offered a range of suggestions concerning facilities for music and other kinds of artistic performances, and the facilities needed to support them.

Bu chòir don àite deagh shiostam-chiùil a bhith aige is àrd-ùrlar airson sàr tachartasan ciùil, on as sin tha na phrìomh tharraing do luchd-ùidh na Gàidhlig.
The hub should have a good music system and a stage for excellent musical performances, given that this is the main attraction for people interested in Gaelic

Would be great to have a performance space that hosted open mic type events, writing, songwriting or dance workshops with a mix of traditional and contemporary practices!

Rehearsal space

Recording studio

Music lessons (fìdheall, clàrsach, feadan, pìoban, bocsa [fiddle, harp, flute, pipes, accordion]) through the medium of Gaelic.

Gaelic song workshops – Concerts from well-known artists who use Gaelic language in their music

Traditional dance and other types of classes.

Having an in-house Gàidhlig Bàrd along the lines of the Scottish Makar

Having an in-house Gàidhlig artist to create art work with local schools and groups.

It also has to be a space that's open to a broad spectrum of Gàidhlig creativity and interests. There is no one size fits all for Gaelic speaking cultural tastes. So the music doesn't always have to be Ceilidh music. . . . Don't pigeon hole or ghettoise Gaelic speakers. Be inclusive. Allow different kinds of Gàidhlig acts including young adults who are experimenting with different musical styles to make the language meaningful to them. Innovation and creativity is critical for growth, evolution, survival of the language and always keeps things interesting and fresh for all involved.

Provision for children and young people

Many respondents stressed the importance of offering services and activities for children and young people, from babies and toddlers to young adults. Suggestions included the following:

Provision for babies e.g. mother and toddler groups

Gaelic Bookbug sessions

Goireasan/clasaichean/gnothaichean do chlann aois 3-10

Facilities/classes/activities for children age 3-10

A space for Gaelic to be used in an informal social setting in ways which appeal to a range of age groups, so children see the language in contexts that aren't formal education

Space for events/activities to attract teenagers and those leaving school who are transitioning out of having Gaelic in their daily life.

Having opportunities for young adults and tweens.

Some respondents also noted the importance of having activities for families, i.e. things that parents and children could do together, or arranging activities for parents to run simultaneously with those for children:

As a solo parent, I would welcome the opportunity to have child and adult activities running side-by-side. Or activities that we could do together.

Activities for children and parents to learn Gaelic together.

Adult learning opportunities

There were numerous comments concerning classes for adults and meeting the needs of Gaelic learners at different levels.

A place for formal classes and also informal multi-level conversation in an immersive situation.

Workshops for adults in Gaelic language, culture and heritage

Providing space to improve Gaelic – chat groups for beginners / intermediate for example. It could also be a base for sitting exams in Gaelic e.g. in conjunction with the University of the Highlands and Islands

We need opportunities for fluent Gaelic speakers to mix with other Gaelic speakers. There is a lot of emphasis and money spent on beginners but those who are upper intermediate and advanced need opportunities to speak Gaelic too.

Conversational pairing get-togethers, involving scheduled regular weekly or fortnightly conversational dates between speakers of mixed ability and native and fluent Gàidhlig speakers, where each can practise their conversational Gàidhlig with one another, honing it with every date

Classes to support lapsed native speakers.

Availability of classes outside of working hours would be a great benefit

Other suggested activities

Respondents suggested a wide range of other activities that might be suitable for the hub, including the following:

- Book and poetry readings, for both children's books, and adult books.
- *Ionad airson òraidean agus deasbadan*
A place for lectures and discussions
- Visits from social media influencers who create Gàidhlig content
- Quizzes and competitions
- Cooking classes/demos
- Craft activities
- Knitting
- Pottery
- Summer camp activities
- Seasonal celebrations and gatherings, e.g. Michaelmas (Latha Fhèill Micheil), Christmas party

Several respondents proposed offering different kinds of games through Gaelic: board games, role-playing games, backgammon, snooker/pool and table tennis. Some also proposed different kinds of sports such as shinty.

Respondents also noted that the hub could play an important role by offering paid or volunteer work opportunities. Among other things this could help Gaelic learners by providing an immersion experience.

Section 4

What might make a Gaelic hub more or less useful or appealing?

Question 8 asked respondents what might make a Gaelic hub more or less useful or appealing to them, while question 9 asked the question from the other direction, asking what might make it less useful or appealing. There were 371 responses to question 8 and 301 to question 9. These responses identified a range of factors that might make a Gaelic hub more or less useful or attractive. Many of the responses to these questions addressed specific services or activities that a hub might offer, and these have been presented as part of the discussion in section 3. Eight issues are discussed in detail in this section:

- Location
- Opening hours
- Layout, atmosphere and cost
- Range of activities
- Concern about too much English being used
- Concern about too much Gaelic being used
- Balance between activities for children and adults
- Social or political factors

As might be expected, there is a diversity of views and in some respects different respondents' preferences appear contradictory. In particular, it might be challenging to reconcile the preferences of those who would like Gaelic to be used almost exclusively and those who would like more accommodation of non-Gaelic speakers, and those whose main concern is provision for children as against those focused on activities and events for adults. It is also notable that some of the stated preferences in terms of location, capacity and opening hours might be challenging to meet in terms of cost.

Location

Many respondents expressed the view that the hub should be in a central location, readily accessible by public transportation and ideally with parking available. Comments included the following:

Central location, easily accessible by public transport.

Being on a bus route / secure cycle parking.

Bhiodh àite-parcaidh caran feumail cuideachd ach tuigidh mi gum biodh seo doirbh ri lorg ann am meadhan a' bhaile.

Parking space would be quite useful too but I realise that this would be hard to find in the city centre.

The location is important, central so equidistant. With spaces for parking unless public transport well provided. Not part of another building, as it is often the case

(education - “units” inside other premises). The French Institute in Edinburgh is a very good example.

One respondent commented that a central location would also be important in order to maximise footfall and income:

Needs to be in accessible (probably central) location to make the most of income generating opportunities (cafe, shop, potential festival/fringe events) and to maximise footfall

Conversely, respondents noted that a hub that was in a relatively inaccessible or peripheral location would be less appealing, and they would be less likely to visit it.

Opening hours

Many respondents felt it was important that the hub should have regular opening hours and ideally be open in the evenings and at weekends as well as during the day on weekdays.

Convenient opening hours

If it can be accessed outside of very specific hours (e.g. by having a café, shop or similar open routinely). It's important the space is open routinely on a walk-in basis and not just for events or bookable events.

Open some evenings and weekends, not just during typical ‘work hours’.

Layout, atmosphere and cost

Respondents felt that it was important for the hub to have a modern and attractive interior and a friendly, welcoming and informal atmosphere.

A comfortable, attractive space

Well-designed and aesthetically pleasing interior

A welcoming and inclusive environment

Warm, inviting, stimulating, positive atmosphere.

Informal, friendly atmosphere.

Àite nach eil ro choltach ri sgoil, furasta a bhucadh airson bhùthan-obrach 's an leithid, dathan tarraingeach.

A place that is not too much like a school, easy to book for workshops and so on, with attractive colours

Other respondents emphasised that the hub should be accessible and inclusive and should take into account the needs of those with different kinds of disabilities:

Make it as accessible as possible – for physical disabilities and for people with other disabling conditions.

Accessible, especially for the visually-impaired.

Accessible for those with mobility restrictions and those who are neurodiverse e.g having quiet spaces within the hub.

Respondents also felt that the space should be flexible, so that it could be used for different purposes and that different kinds of activities could be carried on simultaneously:

I think it would need to be big enough that you could use it for a wide range of activities.

Flexible space

Multiple spaces for different activities, so the hub can continue to be used for recreational activities whilst exhibitions or classes are happening

Respondents also identified aspects of the layout or ambience that might make a hub less appealing: drab, functional decor, poor lighting or acoustics, cramped or crowded space, uncomfortable seating, and general formality or inflexibility. Some also raised expense as a possible negative factor:

Too expensive.

Charge to enter

Requirement to spend money in the cafe/shop to use the hub.

Expensive to engage with and take part in, no heavily subsidised rates for those on low income or benefits

Range of activities

Respondents noted that the offer should offer a wide range of activities to appeal to different kinds of people. Observations and suggestions included the following:

Not just provision of space – a full programme of activities – classes, lectures, events, exhibitions, music performances. Something that's a showcase of Gaelic

culture and encourages people to become actively involved, even if their level of Gaelic is currently low.

An events programme that was modern and forward thinking

A range of different events for all ages

A variety of events catering to both native speakers and learners

Regular events at a specific time each week/month.

Respondents also identified certain factors that might make the events offer less appealing:

Irregular or unreliable events / groups.

If the events were overly traditional and twee, for example I want to use Gaelic in informal settings in a range of things I'm interested in, not just ceilidhs or clarsach events which are great but we need to take Gaelic into other more modern events too.

Gum biodh e dìreach airson ceòl is ealain. Bu chòir gum cothrom ann airson a h-uile cuspair a' brosnachadh tro mheadhan na Ghàidhlig! Saidheans, matamataig, nàdur, etc

If it was only for music and arts. There should be an opportunity to encourage every subject through the medium of Gaelic! Science, maths, nature etc.

Only including serious events and discussions (although there is certainly a place for that)

Concern about too much English being used

Some respondents expressed the view that Gaelic should be the normal or even the exclusive language of the hub. Some were concerned that the hub would be undermined if too much English were allowed in.

If Gaelic was the default language i.e. only exceptionally would English be used. At the hub you would speak Gaelic no matter at what level. Once English is accepted even to the smallest extent see how quickly Gaelic is edged out and disappears. It has to be a Gaelic speaking world in the hub.

Nam biodh e an dha-rìribh air a thogail dha Ghàidheil is daoine eile le Gàidhlig seach luchd-turais is 'luchd-ùidh'

If it really was set up for Gaels and other Gaelic speakers instead of tourists and those who are 'interested'

Àite far am b' urrainn dhuinn cruinneachadh, far am bi fios againn gum biodh Gàidheil ann agus cothrom Gàidhlig a chleachdadh gach turas.

A place where we could meet, where we knew that Gaels would be present and that there would be an opportunity to use Gaelic every time.

Predominantly immersive Gaelic language setting with a supportive approach to those with limited (or no) Gaelic.

It needs to not be shared with any non-Gaelic speaking activities.

Concern about too much Gaelic being used

Other respondents offered a contrasting view, emphasising that the hub should be accessible and welcoming to all learners and others with little (or no) Gaelic. Some expressed concerns that 'an overly assertive approach to the use of Gaelic' might make the hub unwelcoming or unapproachable.

Everything for fluent speakers & nothing for beginners.

Exclusively hardcore Gaelic

Too much Gaelic! I've been to a couple of events so far that feel hard to be part of when you don't have enough Gaelic to keep up. It would be lovely hearing and encouraging the language at all levels and I understand native speakers enjoy the opportunity to speak but ensuring there's an open encouraging vibe for all would be lovely to see. Clear explanations of what's happening would be good even if it's this event is entirely in Gaelic and may not be suitable for learners

A feeling that I might get judged for not speaking 'good Gaelic'

If it's insular and not welcoming to new learners

Balance between activities for children and adults

Some respondents emphasised the importance of offering activities that were attractive to children and families, while some others expressed the view that too much emphasis on such provision might be off-putting to them.

No child-friendly activities/events.

If it wasn't welcoming and only had adult activities

Too many children!

Too much focus on children's activities (at the expense of adult ones)

Social or political factors

A small number of respondents expressed the view that the hub should not be used for political purposes or by political groups. Specific concerns that different respondents raised related to sectarianism, religion in general, homophobia, nationalism and “progressive” agendas’.

Section 5

Challenges for the Gaelic community in Edinburgh

Question 10 asked respondents what they saw as the most pressing challenges for the Gaelic community in Edinburgh. 361 responses were received to this question. A number of recurring themes emerged in these responses, which have been grouped into eleven categories:

- Small number of Gaelic speakers
- Difficulty of finding other Gaelic speakers
- Limited opportunities to use Gaelic
- Diffusion and fragmentation of the Gaelic community
- Lack of regular or attractive Gaelic events and issues with attendance
- Lack of dedicated Gaelic spaces
- Issues involving funding
- Issues involving Gaelic education in schools
- Challenges facing Gaelic learners
- Low visibility of Gaelic
- Lack of awareness or negativity among the wider public

Small number of Gaelic speakers

The most fundamental issue that respondents identified was simply that the number of Gaelic speakers, particularly fluent speakers, in Edinburgh is very small in relative terms (less than 1% of the total population). Comments included the following:

Very few speakers and opportunities to use the language.

Chan eil go leòr dhiubh ann, agus tha iad sgapte gun àite coinnichidh

There are not enough of them, and they are scattered, without a meeting place

The number of fluent Gaelic speakers with both the ability and willingness to actually speak the language to give the space a sense of purpose.

Encouraging more people to develop their existing Gaelic language abilities and to try and get more people learning the language. I think more younger folk are needed to ensure that the language survives.

Difficulty of finding other Gaelic speakers

Another fundamental challenge identified by respondents was the difficulty in finding other Gaelic speakers. Partly this was the result of small speaker numbers, partly the language's lack of visibility in the city. Comments on this point included the following:

Finding other Gaels.

Ma tha thu ùr anns a' bhaile tha e gu math duilich Gàidheil eile a lorg (taobh a-muigh den oilthigh)

If you are new in the city it is very difficult to find other Gaels (outwith the university)

'S e an aon trioblaid a th' ann air feadh na dùthcha, chan eil dòigh sam bith a bhith aithnichte air cò aig a tha a' Ghàidhlig. Feumaidh sinn a' chànain a dhèanamh nas lèirsinneach

It's the same problem throughout the country, there is no way to know who has Gaelic. We need to make the language more visible

Limited opportunities to use Gaelic

Many respondents complained that there are not enough opportunities to use Gaelic in Edinburgh. In varying ways, this issue impacts on native speakers, adults learning the language, and children in GME.

Lack of opportunities for speaking Gaelic on a regular basis.

Native speakers not having enough opportunity/stimulation to communicate with others in Gaelic.

Although there are educational resources and initiatives, the opportunities to practice Gaelic in day-to-day interactions are quite limited, which makes it hard for learners to fully immerse themselves.

Gainnead chothroman aig clann agus òigridh Gàidhlig a chleachdadh ann an suidheachaidhean spòrsail taobh a-muigh na sgoile

Lack of opportunities for children and young people to use Gaelic in fun contexts outside school

Limited opportunities to use Gaelic outside school/classes/specific music or cultural events. We need Gaelic STEM and sports!

Diffusion and fragmentation of the Gaelic community

Many commentators described the Gaelic community in Edinburgh as fragmented, disconnected or lacking cohesion, and some questioned whether it was meaningful to speak of a 'Gaelic community' in the city. Comments included the following:

It seems very disconnected and sparse, with groups and pockets spread around but not unified

Being spread too far and too thin. The speakers are there but lack the network to converse with one and another and promote the everyday use of the language

An dràsda tha Gàidheil, agus luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig cho sgapte agus gu bheil e doirbh a ràdha gu bheil coimhearsnachd Ghàidhlig ann an Dùn Èideann.
At present Gaels and Gaelic learners are so scattered that it is hard to say that there is a Gaelic community in Edinburgh.

Nam bharrail, tha luchd-labhairt gu leòr sa bhaile, ach chan eil 'coimhearsnachd' ann. Tha lionraidhean ann, ach mar is trice, chan eil iad uamhasach làidir.
In my opinion, there are plenty of Gaelic speakers in the city, but there isn't a 'community'. There are networks but they usually aren't all that strong.

Lack of regular or attractive Gaelic events and issues with attendance

Many respondents expressed the view that Gaelic events in Edinburgh were not frequent and regular enough, and some felt that the events currently offered were insufficiently attractive or varied.

Not enough Gaelic things to see and do, nothing consistent.

Additionally, there is often a shortage of Gaelic events or community gatherings that would help build a stronger, more interconnected Gaelic-speaking community.

A lot of activities are during the day when parents are working.

That there are only a few environments in which Gaelic speakers feel encouraged to speak Gaelic, and these are mainly social and musical or artistic events that do not appeal to everyone. And they are often learner dominated so the level of Gaelic spoken doesn't go much beyond quite basic

I also feel like a lot of Gaelic activities in Edinburgh focus around children & families which is great but would also be great to have a space where adults can connect.

Other respondents noted that many people are generally somewhat reluctant to come out to events, or are simply unaware of the Gaelic events that are currently being offered:

Poor uptake in services offered – getting people through the door can be a challenge no matter how appealing or interesting the offer is.

Competition with other interest groups and cultural events makes turnout for Gaelic activities less reliable than in places with less choice. Information overload (use of numerous information channels, especially by younger people) makes it harder to get publicity for Gaelic-related activities to target groups.

Chan eil a' chuid as fheàrr de Ghàidheil sa bhaile a' tighinn còmhla. Tha buidhnean ann mar Bothan is Co-thional nam Manach Liath, ach 's e na h-aona daoine a chithear annta mar as trice – usual suspects, mar a their iad. Tha barrachd Gàidheil

a' fuireach sa bhaile ach cha tig iad dha rudan is tha mi a' smaoinneachdainn nach eil tòrr dhiubh fiù 's mothachail gu bheil rudan Gàidhlig a' tachairt.

Most of the Gaels in the city don't come together. There are groups like Bothan and the Greyfriars congregation, but you usually see the same people there – the usual suspects, as they say. There are more Gaels in the city but they don't come to things and I think that many of them are not even aware that Gaelic events are taking place.

Lack of dedicated Gaelic spaces

A large number of respondents commented on the lack of dedicated Gaelic spaces in Edinburgh, and the negative impact this had on opportunities to speak or learn Gaelic. Many thought that establishing a hub would be an important means of dealing with these difficulties.

The lack of any Gaelic-speaking space in Edinburgh outside of an educational setting (school, university or night class). The need for a place to meet with other Gaelic speakers and use Gaelic socially, where you can be surrounded by Gaelic and assume everyone there either already speaks or wants to learn to speak Gaelic. The lack of a focus for Gaelic cultural activities, classes or events.

Viable hubs for community to develop and retain resilience. There is very little of this in Edinburgh. The result is that Gaelic feels like a curated extra-curricular activity or hobby and cannot truly be integrated into the everyday lifestyle of a person's life easily. It's important for the community to be able to interact in natural, incidental ways and this is nearly impossible in Edinburgh and undermines the efforts of GME and cultural preservation etc.

There are some great organisations and individuals doing good work in the community but I really think that a Gaelic hub would be a great asset and provide a valuable, central meeting space where you are guaranteed to meet with other Gaelic speakers.

Àite mòr gu leòr ann am meadhan a' bhaile fhaighinn diofar bhuidhnean de dhaoine a tharraing, chan ann a-mhàin luchd-ionnsachaidh a tha nan inbheach ach cuideachd sgoilearan àrd-sgoil (às dèidh na sgoile) agus fileantaich (aig a bheil Gàidhlig on ghlùin no a dh'ionnsaich i san sgoil) cuideachd

Getting a big enough place in the city centre to attract different kinds of people, not just adult learners but also secondary school students (after school) and fluent speakers (whether native speakers or those who learned it in school)

I think you really need to encourage all the different and active Gaelic clubs, hobby groups and interest groups to make the place their first-choice place for activities. It might be a challenge to get such established groups to change their way of doing things.

Issues involving funding

Several respondents cited insufficient funding, or getting access to funding, as a concern. This included funding to support Gaelic development in general, for Gaelic education, and for the hub itself.

Maoineachadh fhaighinn airson tachartasan a chur air doigh.

Getting funding to put on events

Funding for [the hub's] activities and staffing, apart from capital funding

The size of the community, it is a small but mighty one that might not get the financial support for it to be sustainable.

Issues involving Gaelic education in schools

Respondents identified a range of issues relating to Gaelic education in schools. These included the limited provision at primary and secondary level and the need to encourage children to use Gaelic outside the school context, whether at home or through dedicated activities.

Need for more Gaelic primary schools and a dedicated Gaelic secondary school.

Establishing a second Gaelic primary school and a high school and more social events for young learners to use their Gaelic outside of school to embed it eg youth club etc

Non Gaelic speaking parents/carers who send their children have no intention to learn Gaelic. So that the community doesn't expand even though more children are now going to GME

A large number of children going through Gaelic Medium education without the context for the language very often outside of school.

Cleachdadh na Gàidhlig a-measg cloinne. Gnìomhan inntinneach dhaibh - geamaichean, clasaichean, fiolmaichean tro mheadhon a' chànain.

Gaelic use among children. Interesting activities for them – games, classes, films through the medium of the language.

Chanainns' gum biodh e math nan robh barrachd ann airson inbhich òga. Tha clann a' dol tro FMG ann an DE, ach feumaidh sinn am brosnachadh gus Gàidhlig a chumail a dol ann am beatha aca gu làitheil mar chànain sòisealta às dèidh na sgoile.

I would say it would be good if there were more for young adults. Children go through GME in Edinburgh but we need more encouragement for them to keep Gaelic going in their daily lives as a social language after school.

Challenges facing Gaelic learners

Some respondents flagged up the challenges facing Gaelic learners in Edinburgh. These included issues involving the availability of classes at different levels, the difficulty of progressing to more advanced stages, and the lack of opportunity to use Gaelic with other learners or with fluent speakers.

Access to learning resources or classes for different proficiency levels can sometimes be limited, making it challenging for new learners

Availability of affordable Gaelic classes and also evening/weekend/immersion classes for full-time workers.

Lack of easily accessible facilities for adult learners so that acquisition of Gaelic can grow across all ages . Much of what is offered to parents at the primary school happens during the day. I think there needs to be clearer signposting of existing resources for adult learners.

Getting people from knowing a few words to maintaining a conversation

A major challenge is making the transition from intermediate to more advanced. I, and many people I know, have effectively got stuck on a plateau.

The gap in the middle, between the confident, competent, fluent (or nearly so) people on the one hand, and beginners on the other.

Connection between learners. It's fine doing classes and online learning, but there needs to be greater opportunity for conversations between learners, so we can practice and improve.

Fostering contacts between native/fluent speakers and learners

Low visibility of Gaelic

Many respondents commented that Gaelic is largely invisible in the city, and that this contributed to low public awareness of the language. Observations included the following:

Chan eil a' Ghàidhlig faicsinneach anns a' bhaile idir
Gaelic is not visible in the city at all

It needs to be given a higher profile to raise awareness.

Making Gaelic part of everyday community . . . getting Gaelic signs everywhere: into shops and public buildings. Getting Gaelic onto products, foods, into bars, cafes, galleries and museums. A guidebook with where to find Gaelic in Edinburgh might be useful.

The Gaelic hub should be established so that everybody knows that there is a Gaelic community in Edinburgh because right now, barely anybody knows that it exists and they only see Gaelic through signs at railways and some of the schools but they are incomprehensible to non-Gaelic speakers.

Lack of awareness or negativity among the wider public

Numerous respondents pointed to what they perceived as the general lack of awareness of Gaelic in Edinburgh, and to negativity or hostility towards the language. This negativity included a general resistance to the promotion of Gaelic or a more specific view that the language is irrelevant to Edinburgh.

Poor understanding in the general resident population of anything to do with Gaelic.

Wider population views of it being unimportant

Hostility from English monoglots who see any money spent on Gaelic as a waste.

Gaelic is also still frowned upon by a lot of people here and there is a lot of backlash any time anything involving Gaelic is mentioned in local news

The fact that people perceive Gaelic not to have been a language of Edinburgh in the past, and use that to argue against the national language being supported.

Some respondents found that having to deal with these attitudes was personally draining:

Getting together in a relaxed way, just for the sake of that, without having to defend/justify/fight for/teach the language you love at the same time. It often feels political, fairly exhausting and so not entirely pleasant.

Evidence of anti-Gaelic attitudes and opposition to the promotion of Gaelic was apparent in some of the survey responses. As noted above, a small number of respondents appear to have completed the survey in order to express opposition to the establishment of a hub and to Gaelic in general. Examples of these respondents' views include the following:

It's a dead language that was never spoken in the Lowlands. Stop wasting time and money supporting and encouraging its use.

This is a complete waste of resources and is not needed.

I suggest that Edinburgh does not need a Gaelic hub, and the suggestion that Edinburgh does need one is a 'frillery.' Public funds should not be used to establish one, particularly at a time when Council leaders are seeking cuts & our services are being reduced & under severe stress.

Section 6

Other comments or suggestions

The last question in the survey asked respondents if they had any other comments or suggestions they would like to make. 202 responses were received, and as might be expected, these responses were varied. Two categories of responses are discussed here, those that expressed general support for the hub and those that proposed possible funding mechanisms and partnerships with other organisations.

General support for the hub

Many respondents used the opportunity provided by this question to express enthusiastic support for the hub. Comments included the following:

I think this is an excellent initiative. Scotland's capital city surely MUST have a Gaelic centre.

This is a great initiative to give a 'heart' to Edinburgh's Gaelic community. There are excellent opportunities to bring together the groups and organisations already working in and for Gaelic across the city, and also to capitalise on the skills and experience of many cultural groups sympathetic and supportive of Gaelic who are based in Edinburgh. As a native speaker working professionally in the Gaelic sector, who often feels invisible in the city, it would be a pleasure to know there's somewhere to go which is strengthening the place of Gaelic in the city.

Definitely progress things, it's a major priority, it's a great vision and the time is right. I'm so excited about the potential for the creation of a lighthouse for Gaelic culture in our country's capital – it has taken so long to get here, let's do what we can to make it happen soon!

Comments concerning funding and partnerships

A number of respondents offered practical suggestions involving possible funding options and strategic planning for the hub. Important issues include how to ensure the hub would be financially sustainable over time, whether a hub might share premises with other organisations, and whether it might be most practicable to start in a small space in a less than ideal location.

Find good sponsors for support.

Important to think re who (politically, culturally) will back this idea and shout its corner to funders?

Suggest you get strategic funding to get it set up but on your side you need to prove business case for balancing books. Be ambitious, get something accessible in the city centre, appeal to those who may help BUT do remember that an exclusive

building that provides for a financially sustainable set up is crucial. . . . Ideally though you want a building that doesn't need re-modelling.

I think the venue should try as much as possible to be a commercially viable operation (e.g. by operating primarily as a cafe or with a shop). While it will require funding to set up and operate, the more it can be financially independent, the more resilient it will be.

Bu chòir dhan ionad tòiseachadh am bad-eigin, fiù 's mura h-eil e ideal. Tha fios agam gum bi cuid ag iarraidh àite an teis meadhan a' bhaile, no àireamh sònraichte de sheòmraichean, no ge b' e, ach cha bu chòir dhuinn diùltadh cothroman nach eil buileach mar a bhitheamaid an dòchas.

The hub should start out somewhere, even if it isn't ideal. I know that some people want a place in the heart of the city centre, or to have a certain number of rooms, but we shouldn't turn down opportunities that aren't exactly what we might hope for.

Tha togalaichean uabhasach doirbh – cosgaisean cho àrd agus a h-uile sgillinn a' dol am pòcaid chompanaidhean mòra. A bheil dòigh ann 'pàirt àite' fhaighinn gus cosgaisean a roinn me ann an South Bridge Resource Centre leis a' Fringe?

Buildings are extremely expensive – costs are so high and every penny going into the pockets of big companies. Is there a way to get part of a space so as to share costs, for example with the Fringe in the South Bridge Resource Centre?

Not wanting to sound negative but after a hub is established is there funding to resource it ie staff?

'S e rudeigin mòr a th' ann a bhith a' feuchainn ri togalach a lorg is a chumail a' ruith. Chanainn gu bheil cunnart ann nach bi agaibh ach sgioba beag airson a h-uile rud a dhèanamh agus gun tachradh 'burn-out' ro thràth san iomairt.

It's a big thing to try to find a place and keep it going. I would say that there is a risk that you would only have a small team doing everything and that burnout might happen to early in the project.

Some respondents suggested that Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann should seek advice and assistance from various organisations. These included Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and Bothan, other language hubs in Scotland (An Taigh Cèilidh (Stornoway), Cultarlann Inbhir Nis (Inverness) and An Lòchran (Glasgow)). Some also recommended working with hubs in Ireland (Cultúrlann McAdam-Ó Fiaich (Belfast), Uimhir 6 (Conradh na Gaeilge, Dublin) and Áras Chrónáin (Dublin)).

Conclusion

The community survey has showed very strong support for establishing a Gaelic hub in Edinburgh and has demonstrated the high level of interest in the project among speakers, learners and supporters of Gaelic in Edinburgh. The survey has yielded an extensive body of information concerning the community's preferences and priorities, which will be extremely useful in helping Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann plan the way ahead and take the next practical steps. It is clear that the survey has helped stimulate thinking about the hub project in the Gaelic community and has served to give added prominence to the issue of how best to promote Gaelic in Edinburgh and bring Gaelic speakers, learners and supporters together. This will serve as a springboard for future action and development, which Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann will work to take forward.

Gaelic hub for Edinburgh

Overview

This survey aims to explore the possibility of establishing a Gaelic ‘hub’ for Edinburgh – a social and cultural space where Gaelic speakers and learners in Edinburgh could come together for different kinds of Gaelic activities and events.

This survey is being conducted by Ionad Gàidhlig Dhùn Èideann, a charitable organisation that is working to develop a Gaelic hub and to promote Gaelic in Edinburgh.

We want to assess potential demand for a hub and find out what people might like to see offered in a hub. What things should be prioritised to make the hub useful and attractive?

This is an initial exploratory survey to assess the community’s general views and desires. There will be many important practical questions further ahead, especially concerning funding and a possible location, but we are not at that stage yet.

This survey is open to anyone aged 16 and over. It is primarily intended for Edinburgh residents but others are welcome to complete it. If you would like to respond on behalf of an organisation or group please contact ionaddhuneideann@gmail.com.

Protecting your identity and keeping you up to date

Participation in this survey is anonymous. You will be given the option to leave your email address if you would like to participate in further engagement or be kept up to date on this work. Your email address will not be linked to your responses in the survey. Please visit our Terms of Use page to find out more about how we use your information.

About you

If you are responding as an organisation or on behalf of a group, please skip this section.

We want to get a wide range of views from different people to help us understand what is important to you. All these questions are optional. If you provide any information, we will use it to analyse your response.

Please tick the consent box and provide your email address if you would like us to contact you about this work in future.

Question 1: What is your age?

16-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75 and over

Question 2: What is your sex?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Question 3: What is the first part of your postcode (e.g. EH1)?

Question 4: What is your level of ability in spoken Gaelic?

- Fluent
- Intermediate
- Basic
- Understand but can't speak
- Only a few words
- Other (please specify)

Question 5: In your opinion, how useful would a Gaelic hub be for Edinburgh's Gaelic community?

- Very useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all
- Don't know

Question 6: How often do you think you might visit a Gaelic hub in Edinburgh?

- Once a week
- Once a month
- A few times a year
- Very rarely
- Don't know

Question 7: What are the main services or activities you would like to see in a Gaelic hub?

- Providing space for meetings
- Providing space for classes
- Providing space for events or performances
- Providing work space for Gaelic organisations or creatives
- Facilitating activities for children
- Café
- Shop
- Exhibition space
- Other (please specify)

Question 8: What might make a Gaelic hub more useful or attractive to you?

Question 9: What might make a Gaelic hub less useful or attractive to you?

Question 10: Based on your own experience, what do you see as the most pressing challenges that face the Gaelic community in Edinburgh?

Question 11: Do you have any other comments or suggestions?