

31 January 2022

Mr Richard Leonard
Convener
Public Audit Committee
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP
Dear Convener

THE 2020/21 AUDIT OF BORD NA GAIDHLIG & THE 2020/21 AUDIT OF NHS HIGHLAND

At its meeting of 13 January 2022, colleagues and I briefed the Committee on my report *The 2020/21 Audit of Bòrd na Gàidhlig*; followed by my report *The 2020/21 Audit of NHS Highland*.

The Committee raised a number of questions related to these reports which we offered to provide more information on.

The 2020/21 Audit of Bòrd na Gàidhlig

The recruitment of board members

Members were interested in how board members were recruited to the Bòrd.

As Scottish ministers are responsible for the appointment of board members, the Scottish Government leads on this process. Board members are normally appointed for a period of four years and may reapply to be members for a further four years once their initial appointment comes to an end.

Board members may stand down for a variety of reasons during their period of appointment. This means that recruitment of new members tends to take place as the need arises, rather than at defined points in time. The following table provides details of the current make-up of the board and when individuals were appointed. The next recruitment process, to replace members who have resigned, or are due to stand down, is expected to conclude shortly with the announcement of new appointments.

Name	Term in Office
Donald MacLeod	Appointed March 2014. Reappointed March 2018
Allan Campbell	Appointed March 2016. Reappointed March 2020 for two years
Mary T MacInnes	Appointed March 2016. Interim Chair from January 2019 and Cathraiche from March 2020
Johan Smith	Appointed March 2016. Reappointed March 2020 Resigned December 2021
Jennifer Gilmour	Appointed March 2017. Reappointed March 2021
Stewart Macleod	Appointed March 2020
Donald MacKay	Appointed April 2021

The impact on recruitment on the requirement to speak, or learn to speak, Gaelic

Members were interested in how the Bòrd's policy requiring new staff to be able to speak Gaelic, or be committed to learning to speak Gaelic, has impacted on recruitment.

As part of its consideration of my predecessor's report on the 2018/19 audit of *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, the Ceannard wrote to the Public Audit and Post-Legislative Scrutiny Committee in June 2020. The Ceannard outlined that, following audit recommendations, the Bòrd had reviewed its Gaelic policy and agreed that it would be appropriate to develop its own Gaelic language plan. This includes a clear statement that Bòrd employees need to be able to use Gaelic in order to deliver the organisation's commitments. A post will be advertised twice before the essential skill of Gaelic is reviewed. Any staff joining the organisation will be required, where they are not Gaelic speakers, to commit to learning the language.

Since its introduction, the Bòrd considers that all recruitment has complied with the policy. All board members and staff that have been recruited have either been able to speak the language with sufficient proficiency or have committed to increasing their language skills.

The 2020/21 audit of NHS Highland

Members were interested in an update on the progress NHS Highland has made with its first round of succession plans which it intended to have in place by December 2021.

The board have told us that due to the ongoing pressures across the system their plans have slipped from original aspirations. NHS Highland now expect to have completed the first round of succession plans by 30 June 2022. The national group established to look at succession planning across the health and social care system (and referenced in my report) is delayed for similar reasons but NHS Highland remain involved in this work.

I hope the Committee will find this additional information useful. Do let me know if we can assist further on the Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Boyle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Boyle
Auditor General for Scotland