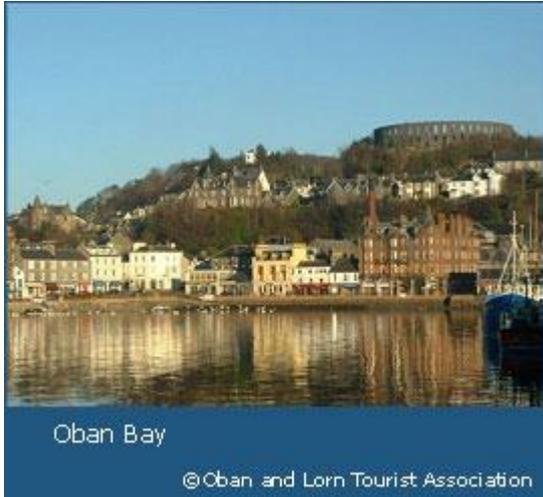


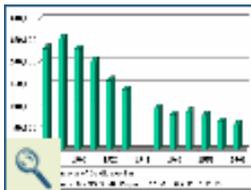
Gaelic tongue on the menu

11 Oct 2003



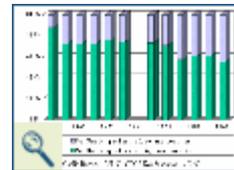
In October 2003, the Scottish parliament unveiled the first draft of the new Gaelic Bill. This will give the Gaelic language legal status and will require all public bodies to consider the need for a Gaelic Language Plan when providing services.

In a nation of 5 million, there are now less than 70,000 Gaelic speakers left. The Bill aims to promote new use of the language in education, cultural organisations and broadcasting. It is an important *symbol* that Gaelic is back on the Scottish national agenda, following the establishment of the Scottish Parliament during 1998-99.



This chart shows the decline in Gaelic speakers from 1881-2001. What reasons are behind this trend?

This chart shows the location of Gaelic speakers from 1881-2001. Where are Gaelic speakers declining?



Gaelic already features at all levels of education in Scotland: pre-school, primary, secondary, further and higher education. It is also included in teacher training courses. Specific grants for Gaelic education were introduced in 1986 and annual funding has since increased from £250,000 to nearly £3 million this year.

The Scottish Executive already supports Gaelic primary and secondary school education through the innovative use of video-conferencing. Small schools in isolated rural areas can receive specialist on-line teaching of Gaelic using the Internet. There is also a Gaelic college, Sabhal Mor Ostaig, in Skye.

Scottish First Minister Jack McConnell said: "I believe that securing Gaelic is important for all of Scotland. It gives us a link with our past and demonstrates that diversity and the rights of minority communities will be valued and protected for the future."

It is hoped that with legal status granted, Gaelic may begin to make the fuller recovery that the Welsh language (Cymraeg) already has. Bilingual road signs have been in place in Wales since 1972 and one fifth of the population now speaks Welsh.

Gaelic festival

The announcement of the Gaelic Bill coincided with the start of the 100th Royal National Mòd on 10th October in Oban, Argyll. This is Scotland's premier festival of Gaelic language, arts and culture and is held annually in October at a different location in Scotland. The Mòd is a competition-based festival which celebrates Gaelic through music, dance, drama, arts and literature.

First held in Oban in 1892 (and returning here for the 100th anniversary), the Mòd has expanded to become the second biggest cultural festival in Scotland. It attracts 2,500 competitors and 20,000 visitors, thereby providing a major economic and cultural boost (a temporary multiplier effect) to the area in which it is held.

Financial support from organisations such as The Royal Bank of Scotland has been vital to its success. In turn, the Mòd attracts competitors and visitors from as far away as Canada, America and Australia. People of Scottish ancestry are found throughout the English-speaking world, descended from migrants who were evicted during The Highland Clearances in the early Nineteenth Century. Crucial to the success of Scotland as a tourist destination in recent decades has been the fostering of closer links with the worldwide Scottish [diaspora](#).