



SECTION 1: PROJECT DEFINITION

1.1 Overview

Cultarlann Inbhir Nis is a charity registered in Scotland, number SC050549 and a company limited by guarantee, number SC653865, established in 2020.

It was formed as a result of a Feasibility Study commissioned by Alba Heritage Trust and conducted by Impact Hub to ascertain the viability of a Gaelic Cultural Centre being established in Inverness. This study concluded that there was overwhelming support for a Gaelic Cultural Centre and recommended the creation of a business entity with charitable status to progress, realise and manage the vision.

A Board of Directors was established, and the project began to define the project in greater detail and to assess what kind of building would be suitable to house such a project.

In 2023 we successfully purchased a former Church of Scotland building in the centre of Inverness in order to create a community owned and managed Gaelic Cultural Centre.

The Board of Cultarlann Inbhir Nis consists of 8 trustees who have long experience of involvement in the Gaelic language and culture together with personal community involvement experience.

1.2 Project Background

A Feasibility Study was carried out by **Impact Hub**, Inverness to assess the interest in the creation of a Gaelic Cultural Centre in Inverness. The response was over 90% in “strong support” from over 600 respondents.

In 2022 and 2023 two Crowdfunder campaigns were organised raise funds to purchase a suitable building. Over £50,000 was raised from hundreds of individuals online and with many other in-person donations demonstrating the widespread support for the project.

In 2023, following an Options Appraisal and Viability Study conducted by MAAC studio, and with the additional support of a grant from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Highland Council Common Good Fund we were successful in purchasing the beautiful, B-listed church with Gaelic connections dating back to 1790. We received the keys to the building in February 2024.

The former East Church building is located within the SO1010620 SIMD data zone (Inverness Central, Raigmore and Longman) and is ranked amongst the top 10% most deprived communities in Scotland.

Since that time, our focus has been on fund-raising and managing the external refurbishment of the building. In addition, we have continued to run a programme of community engagement activities focussed on meeting the needs and interests of the various Gaelic community groupings within the city.

At the moment our capacity is limited to 150 people due to having only 4 toilets. In order to increase usage of the facility we need to build a new toilet block which will increase our capacity to 300.

SECTION 2: PROJECT RATIONALE

2.1 Reason for Project

The reason behind the creation of the Cultarlann was that despite being the capital of the Highlands, with the highest proportion of Gaelic speakers of any city in Scotland (and therefore the world), as well as 40 years' worth of young people who have gone through Gaelic medium education, there was nowhere in the city where people could go to meet up and use the language in a natural environment and nowhere for visitors to the city to hear or experience such an environment.

The aim was to create a gathering place where Gaelic speakers, young people who have gone through Gaelic medium education, Gaelic learners, visitors, and all those with an interest in the language and culture can meet socially, use the language in a variety of activities, enjoy Highland cultural events, attend language classes, support well-being, strengthen connections and build a stronger feeling of community. The aim is to maximise opportunities to provide the widest possible range of activities through the medium of Gaelic, thereby normalising Gaelic usage in everyday life. The Gaelic language carries within it the songs, dances, stories, poetry, customs and way of seeing the world which is unique to this part of the world and helps the community to feel confident in themselves, better equipped to recognise diversity and to positively engage with cultures from other parts of the world.

There are many benefits to the community from this project:

- To provide employment and training opportunities for young Gaelic speakers

- To bring people of all ages together to overcome isolation among speakers and learners
- To build confidence, build friendships and enhance well-being.
- The creation of inter-generational opportunities and connections
- To overcome barriers and strengthen the sense of inclusion and community.

2.3 Stakeholder Groups / Target Audience

The target audience is wide and includes a number of different specific groupings.

- There are older first language speakers who are often isolated and don't get the opportunity to use their language regularly.
- There are many Gaelic learners at all different stages who are keen to learn the language for many different reasons – some with a cultural or family connection, some who have moved to the area and want to learn more about the place, some with an interest in the history, some who find it a fascinating and beautiful language and others who want to learn more about placenames of Scotland or learn what Gaelic songs mean.
- Young Gaelic speaking families who are raising their families through the medium of Gaelic.
- Children who are attending the local standalone Gaelic primary school.
- Young people who have gone through Gaelic Medium Education and want to use the language they have learned.
- Local people whose parents/grandparents spoke Gaelic and who want to connect with their culture.
- Visitors who want to learn more about the culture of the Highlands.
- Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia, Ireland and across the globe who want to make links and connect with Gaelic speakers in the Highlands.

2.4 How will the Project Operate

The project was successful in attracting funds to employ a Community Engagement Officer to promote and manage usage of the building.

We have so far independently run Open Days, Ceilidhs, Cafaidh Cabadaich events (Saturday Gaelic coffee sessions), Gaelic short immersion courses, talks of Gaelic placenames, children's events, study leave sessions for secondary Gaelic learners, host Gaelic evening classes, Gaelic Society of Inverness

talks, meetings of local community groups, Gaelic conversation circle, Gaelic pantomimes, Gaelic products Christmas fayre, book events etc. This year we have so far had around 1500 attendees.

Our Business Plan outlines how we plan to expand the offering and both generate income for the project as well as meet the needs of our community with regular events for Gaelic speaking families, learners, older speakers and young people.

In addition, we have around 25 voluntary members of the community who wish to help with the project and who come along regularly to take part.

SECTION 3: PROJECT ENABLERS

3.1 What are the Project Enablers

In order to run a Gaelic Cultural Centre offering the activities and events which will have the impact we seek, we need to have a building which meets modern requirements as a base and centre for this provision.

The building we have purchased has a large church events area, a community hall, various offices and upstairs educational rooms.

We have already carried out work to insulate the hall and classroom space as well as essential repairs to the rest of the building exterior to make it wind and watertight.

The design work for phase 3 of the project focusing on the interior of the building to planning permission and LBC is now complete and we await the Building Warrant.

As part of the internal refurbishment Phase 2 and to make the building fit for purpose, we require to:

- build a new toilet block to increase the capacity usage of the building up to 300 from the present 150. (funding applied for)
- install a lift to enable disabled access to the upstairs of the building.
- Replace the boiler and heating system to enable more efficient use of energy and more comfortable usage.

In order to do all of this we require funding.





SECTION 4: PROJECT STATUS

4.1 Achievements So Far – Development Phase

TIMELINE OF ACHIEVEMENTS					
2018	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
Impact Hub Feasibility Study Results show overwhelming support for a Gaelic Cultural Centre Alba Trust recommend formation of a new organisation to develop the Gaelic Cultural Centre	Cultarlann Inbhir Nis formed Charity No. SC050549 and Company Limited by Guarantee No. SC653865 Board and governance established	1st Crowdfunding Launched Togalach fund (building fund) established £30k raised	Impact Hub Options Appraisal 10 buildings are appraised to identify a suitable building as the Centre East Church which was for sale was identified as the preferred option Funding sought to purchase East Church £25k from Crowdfunding Highlands & Islands Enterprise Inverness Common Good Fund	Building Purchase concluded Dorsan Fosgailte (doors open) - approx. 300 attend External repairs to East Church Scottish Gov funding £360k Upgrading utilities (support from Next Port) Develop Policies Includes H&S, and operational policies Gaisgich na Gàidhlig (Gaelic heroes) Cultarlann Inbhir Nis was honoured by the Highland Council at Na Trads with a special award	Building Closed for Repairs Activities held on temporary venues including: Inverness Cathedral, Spectrum Community Centre, Kenneth Street Hall and CNAG offices Activities included Cafaith Cabadaich is ceol (around 10 sessions / a Ceilidh with Feis Rois Ceilidh Trail/ a concert in Inverness Cathedral/ 4 Gaelic immersion courses Governance, Planning & Finance Development of: - 2025-2030 Business Plan - 2025 -2028 Financial Projections - Project Capital Works Budgets & Timelines



4.2 Next steps – Delivery Phase

TIMELINE OF NEXT STEPS					
2026		2027		2028	
JAN to MAR	APR to DEC	JAN to APR	MAY to DEC	JAN to MAY	JUNE
Member of Staff Appointed Community Engagement and Activities organiser Post funded for 2.5 yrs by the BnaG Officers Scheme		Building Closed for Repairs Activities to be held in temporary venues	Building Partially Closed Ground Floor Church closed for Phase 3 works	Building Closed for Repairs Activities to be held in temporary venues	Building to Re-Open All areas of building fully opened
	Secure Funding for All Phases NLHF, Scottish Government and HIE	Phase 2 Works to Continue Works to Toilet Block, Rear Hall, Kitchen & First Floor to continue with completion planned for Apr 2027	Phase 3 Works to Commence Works to begin May 2027	Phase 2 Works to Continue Phase 3 works to Ground Floor Church to continue with completion planned for May 2028	
Building Warrants Building Warrant preparation (to RIBA 4a)					
	Tenders for Building Works Issue Tender, review bids and appoint contractors for Phase 2 Works (Toilet Block, Rear Hall, Kitchen, and First Floor) and Phase 3 (Ground Floor Church)	Building to re-open Rear Hall and First Floor			
	Phase 2 Works to Commence Works to begin Dec 2026				



SECTION 5: COLLABORATORS AND SUPPORT

5.1 Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Area of Support
Highlands & Islands Enterprise	Grant funding towards the purchase of the building, funding towards basic equipment
Scottish Government	Grant funding for exterior refurbishment work and equipment costs.
Slikk7	Consultancy support for Business plan, funding supporting documentation
Inverness City Heritage Trust	Grant funding for exterior repairs
Architectural Heritage Fund	Grant funding for design interior work.
Bòrd na Gàidhlig	Funding for staff member
Inverness Common Good Fund	Grant funding towards the building purchase
Highland Council	Funding towards Gaelic language learning resources.
MAAC Studio	Production of Feasibility Study, Architectural work and advice
Oberlanders Architects	Design work for the interior of the building
Lottery Awards for All	Purchase of table and chairs
Impact Hub	Feasibility Studies
First Port	Electrical Works