# Gaelic Place-Names Policy

Last updated: March 2020

## Executive Summary

This document offers justification for and an explanation of how Gaelic place-names are dealt with by *Ainmean Àite na h-Alba* (AÀA) in its recommendations on Gaelic naming in Scotland.

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# 1  Introduction

## 1.1  History

In 2000, the Ordnance Survey (OS) recognised that some Gaelic place-names on its maps were incorrect and, in some cases, inconsistent across its scales of mapping. This situation had arisen because most names of natural features were collected in the 19th century, with revision in line with the Gaelic spelling system of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Further revisions have occurred since then.

A number of experts were consulted: Dr Roy Wentworth, Prof. Richard Cox, Prof. W.F.H. Nicolaisen, Mr Ian Fraser, Dr Peadar Morgan, Prof. David Munro, Dr Ian R. White and Dr Simon Taylor. They agreed that the OS should set up a Gaelic Names Liaison Committee (GNLC). The first meeting was held in July 2000. The OS encouraged the development of the GNLC, recognising the benefits that an authoritative Gaelic place-names database would bring.

In November 2000, the OS produced its *Gaelic Names Policy* (updated 2015). This provides the framework for the OS's usage of Gaelic names. The OS website includes pages that explain in more detail the issues around Gaelic names on its products, e.g. Taylor 2005, which includes a glossary of Gaelic place-name elements on its maps. The website also has information on the distribution of Gaelic place-names.

In 2003, when the Scottish Government started a policy of bilingual road signage in the West Highlands, GNLC was approached to research Gaelic names for the signs. In 2005, the OS carried out a pilot programme to review and update Gaelic place-names in their data. The outcomes from this pilot programme informed the further development of their Gaelic Names Policy to ensure consistency of names across OS products.

As the role of the GNLC expanded, it was refocussed in 2006 to form the Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba (AÀA) partnership. Increasingly, AÀA was approached to provide Gaelic place-name research for bilingual street, building and path signs as councils and other public agencies brought their respective Gaelic Language Plans into operation. By 2008, AÀA had two members of staff, a Project Manager and Researcher. In 2010, its national database of Gaelic place-names was launched online and continues to be updated. Since 2012, AÀA has produced a number of booklets in partnership with Scottish Natural Heritage, with additional funding support from Soillse, each focussing on a specific area of Scotland.

## 1.2  Partners and Committee

AÀA's partners are drawn from the authorities on and users of Gaelic place-names; at the time of publication, these are Argyll and Bute Council, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, The Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Historic Environment Scotland, Ordnance Survey, the Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Place-Name Society and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

AÀA is run by a committee comprised of both academics and representatives of each of the partners. It is primarily funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig; this support allows AÀA to provide services at a greatly reduced rate.

## 1.3 Aims and Objectives

AÀA is the national advisory partnership for Gaelic place-names in Scotland. As part of its remit, local knowledge, historical expertise and established principles are used to recommend appropriate forms of Gaelic place-names for uses such as signage, maps and other published materials.

The aims and objectives of the AÀA partnership are to:
a) determine authoritative forms of Gaelic place-names across Scotland with reference to both research into historical forms and consolidation of current usage,
b) apply consistent spelling of Gaelic in place-names,
c) encourage the adoption of these forms of Gaelic place-names,
d) establish a national database of Gaelic forms,
e) produce a national Gaelic database in cumulative stages with online access,
f) encourage and enable public access to the national database as it is produced,
g) advise on wording for signs incorporating place-names.

## 1.4 The Database

AÀA's national database is a centralised resource for preserving and promoting Gaelic place-names and the evidence for the recommendations made. This Database is an invaluable educational tool and a treasure trove of Scotland's historical, environmental and linguistic heritage. It can be found at www.ainmean-aite.scot.

## 1.5 Purpose of this Document

This document is designed to ensure that the Gaelic forms of place-names are determined in a coordinated manner to a national standard, thus strengthening their impact on Gaelic development and usage, and minimising the time and uncertainty for those implementing policies involving Gaelic place-names.

This document is also intended to give the place-name forms credibility with Gaelic users and non-users alike and to facilitate popular use.

## 1.6 What is a Gaelic Place-name?

A Gaelic place-name for the purposes of this document is a place-name used by Gaelic speakers when speaking Gaelic, whatever its linguistic origin, and, if written, represented in Gaelic orthography. It does not need to be originally of Gaelic origin, nor originally coined by Gaelic speakers. (See 6.2.)

# 2. Bilingual Naming Policy

The aim of this policy is to create consistent guidance, in order to tie bilingual naming closely to language derivation. The advantages of the tightening of this policy are seen to be:

   a)   cementing bilingual naming to scientifically-determined criteria, defendable from prejudiced attack,

   b)   marking the near-national presence of the historical Gaelic geographical spread,

   c)   linking national policy to be consistent as far as possible with the policy of its biggest client, Highland Council,

   d)   preserving traditional Gaelic naming patterns, with concomitant encouragement of adoption for use by Gaelic users innately attuned to these patterns, and focussed by a naming policy based on traditional usage.

Bilingual naming is applicable in all cases in Scotland where at least one of the following pertain to the name used in English:

## 2.1  Name of Gaelic Origin

A name which is derived from Gaelic by transliteration or translation (in full or partially).[1]

## 2.2  Name in Established Use

A name which has an alternative Gaelic form established in traditional or current use.[2]

## 2.3  Non-Gaelic Name in a Gaelic Milieu

A name situated amid other places having Gaelic-derived names and for which there is evidence for a parallel construction for such a Gaelic form.[3] (See 6.2 for a further definition of milieu.)

## 2.4  Embedded Names

A name which includes a noun, adjective or embedded place-name which is treated as a distinct word and where a Gaelic form can be paralleled (with appropriate grammatical mutations).[4]

## 2.5  Requested Name

A name for which a Gaelic name or form is specifically requested.[5] This does not include house names. (See 4.4.)

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[1] E.g. Kincraig ~ Ceann na Creige (NH694702); Dalswinton ~ Dail Shuantain (NX941854).
[2] E.g. Tain ~ Baile Dhubhthaich (NH780822); Livingston ~ Baile Dhunlèibhe (NT039678).
[3] E.g. Milton ~ Baile a' Mhuilinn (various).
[4] E.g. North Ronaldsay ~ Ronaldsay a Tuath (HY7654); Cotton of Balnamoon ~ Cotton Bhaile na Mòna (NO541635).
[5] E.g. Hartwood ~ Coille an Daimh (NS848590).

# 3. Orthography

Names should be spelled in modern standard orthography, adhering by default to the Gaelic Orthographic Conventions (GOC). In addition, the following points should be adhered to:

## 3.1 General Principles

### 3.1.1 Local Opinion

Where local feeling is clearly expressed an alternative spelling may be recommended.[6]

### 3.1.2 Dialect

Distinct dialect forms including choice of gender[7] (see also 4.1.3) should be preserved, depending on authentic usage. (See 1.2 in the List of Spellings Appendix for viable differing forms.)

### 3.1.3 Suppressed Letters

Suppressed vowels and consonants should normally be shown (i.e. they should not be replaced by an apostrophe[8] or omitted altogether), apart from the *a'* form of the article.

### 3.1.4 Final Vowel

Where reliable local evidence has previously recorded accretion or loss of such a vowel, or where there is consistent reliable evidence for its use, a final vowel may be added to[9] or omitted from a place-name or element.[10]

### 3.1.5 Variety of Viable Spellings

A name which has a variety of viable spellings in its Gaelic form should reflect its most probable derivation according to the best available scholarship.[11] (See also 3.4.8.)

## 3.2 Hyphens and Capital letters

### 3.2.1 Two or More Gaelic Elements

A name consisting of two (or more) Gaelic elements should reflect this in its spellings, unless it is to be written as one word for reasons such as the stress pattern.[12]

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[6] E.g. An Gearasdan rather than An Gearastan for Fort William (NN1174).

[7] E.g. Rathad a' Mhuilinn (Mheadhanaich) (NH673452), Rathad na Muilne (NB420342).

[8] E.g. Rubha an Dùin rather than Rubh' an Dùin (NR256587); Achadh nan Carragh rather than Ach' nan Carragh (NM409555).

[9] E.g. An Locha Dubh (NF821723) rather than An Loch Dubh.

[10] E.g. Camas na Muice would be the expected modern form, but the OS has consistently used Camas na Muic (NN155614).

[11] E.g. Knocknamad ~ Cnoc nam Bad. (NX364580) Galloway Gaelic has been shown to have eclipsis, whereby in this position *m + b* would be prounounced as *m*. The form Cnoc nam Bad is not, however, directly in evidence.

[12] E.g. Glasdrum ~ An Glasdruim (NN013461).

### 3.2.2 Distinct Words

Assuming the name is standing alone, names should be spelled with an initial capital letter for each distinct word. See below for exceptions.

### 3.2.3 Elements Following a Hyphen

An element following a hyphen should be capitalised.[13]

### 3.2.4 Lower Case

The following should be written in lower case:

#### 3.2.4.1 Prepositions

Prepositions which appear in the middle of place-names.[14]

#### 3.2.4.2 The Definite Article

The definite article appearing in non-initial position.[15]

#### 3.2.4.3 *t-* and *h-*

*t-* and *h-* as employed in certain grammatical forms.[16]

#### 3.2.4.4 *a* and *an*

*a* and *an* when appearing in directional modifiers.[17] (See 6.1 for a list.)

## 3.3 Personal Names

Where a place-name contains a personal name this should be treated according to GOC, with the addition or exception of the following principles:

### 3.3.1 *Mac* and *Nic*

If a name beginning with *Mac* or *Nic* (or *Ni'*, to be expanded to *Nic*) represents a surname, there should be no space after *Mac/Nic* and there should be internal capitalisation.[18] However, if it represents a patronymic (i.e. literally, X is the son of Y, or X is the daughter of Y), then it should be written with a space.[19] If there is any doubt, then the name should be written without a space.[20]

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[13] E.g. Glendaruel ~ Gleann Da-Ruail (NR9985).
[14] E.g. Loch gun Tòin (NH532501); Dail bho Dheas (NB483611).
[15] E.g. Allt nan Corp (NG713406).
[16] E.g. An t-Òban (NM858298), Rubha an t-Sasannaich (NM705424), Sròn na h-Àirde Duibhe (NG705410).
[17] E.g. Orcleit an Ear (NB117307), Uibhist a Deas (NF73).
[18] E.g. MacAilein, NicDhòmhnaill.
[19] E.g. Mac Ailein, Nic Ailein.
[20] GOC 11e: "Surnames including Mac and Nic should be written as one word, but with a capital letter on the second and any succeeding elements: MacAilein, MacCoinnich/MacChoinnich, MacDhòmhnaill, MacIlleMhaoil, NicIlleDhuinn, NicLeòid, NicThòmais. Exceptions are surnames which include the definite article: Mac a' Ghobhainn, Mac an Aba, Nic a' Phearsain".

### 3.3.2 *Gille-* and *Maol-*

In the absence of a clearly articulated or consistently adhered to spelling convention for these common categories of Gaelic personal names, the following convention should be used for given names: *Gille-* and *Maol-* should be spelled with no space and no internal capitalisation, thus *Gillebrìde, Maolìosa* etc.[21]

### 3.3.3 *O'*

Although not common, some Scottish Gaelic surnames (and place-names) contain the O' ('grandchild', now *ogha*), more commonly associated with Ireland. These should be spelled with a Ò with a space followed by the name with no lenition or slenderisation.[22] The genitive form of this element is also *Ò*. (See 4.2.3.3 for treatment of Irish surnames.)

### 3.3.4 *Mo* and *Do*

When prefixing the names of saints, these words, meaning 'my' and 'your' respectively, should be spelled with no space. The following element should be capitalised.[23]

### 3.3.5 Special cases

See 3 in the List of Spellings Appendix.

## 3.4 Names of Norse Origin

### 3.4.1 *dalr*

The element derived from Old Norse *dalr* 'valley' should be rendered *-dal* when deriving from an Old Norse name in which it appears as a generic element and where it occurs in the nominative form of a name in Gaelic.[24] [25] The genitive form of such names is *-dail*.[26] However, where reliable local evidence has recorded *-dail* in the nominative with some consistency and/or if it reflects local usage then this should be retained. (See also 3.11 in the Recommended Terms Appendix in a separate document.)

### 3.4.2 *setr* or *sætr*

These elements may be rendered as either *Siadar, -seadar or -sadar* depending on local usage.[27]

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[21] E.g. Port Ghillebrìde (NR286554).
[22] E.g. Ò Duibhne, an old name for Clan Campbell.
[23] E.g. Kimaluag ~ Cille MoLuaig (NG427739).
[24] E.g. Armadale ~ Armadal (NC785646) from ON *Ormadalr* 'snake valley'.
[25] GOC 3a: "An exception would arise in a compound place name where the final element is dal or dail, eg Grama**sd**al, Laca**sd**al, Loch Bagha**sd**ail."
[26] E.g. Beàrnasdal but Bruach Beàrnasdail (NF647020).
[27] E.g. Flashader ~ Flaiseadar from ON *flat-sætr* 'level dwelling' (NG351531).

### 3.4.3  *fjǫrðr*

Names ending in this element should be rendered *-rt* not *-rd*. Where the sound [*f*] is absent, *-fh-* need not be used in the Gaelic spelling. [28] [29]

### 3.4.4  *-b- and -p-*

Names containing Norse elements which appear in an unstressed position as -b- or -p- should be spelled according to established orthographical usage. This predominantly effects names containing Norse *ból*, *bólstaðr* or *pollr.*

### 3.4.5  *geodha*

When the element *gjǫ́* 'ravine, cove' occurs in a Norse name borrowed into Gaelic, then it should be spelled at the end of a word as *-geo* or *-geadh* as appropriate.[30] *Geodha* is the spelling of the Gaelic word which derives from *gjǫ́.*

### 3.4.6  Names beginning with *H*

Names of Norse origin which begin with *h* in Norse, and have [*h*] in the local pronunciation, should be represented as H- and not, for example, as *Th* or *Sh*.[31]

### 3.4.7  Other Initial Fricatives

Names of Norse origin which begin with a [*v*] should have that sound represented in its Gaelic equivalent form as *Bh*.[32]

### 3.4.8  Names of Norse Origin

Names of Norse origin which have a variety of viable spellings in their Gaelic form should, where possible and where acceptable locally, reflect the Norse origin.[33] (See also 3.1.5.)

### 3.4.9  Elements of Norse Origin

Names with a final element of Norse *-ey* 'island' should be spelled *-aigh* or *-eigh* and not *-idh* in order to indicate the distinctive open [a] pronunciation.[34]

### 3.4.10  The Spelling Rule

The 'leathann ri leathann is caol ri caol' rule as defined in GOC, Sections 1 and 2, may on occasion be broken in names of Norse origin.[35]

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[28] E.g. Eynort ~ Aoineart (NG383270) from ON obscure element + *fjörðr* 'sea-loch'. Cf Cox, 2007, 82.

[29] Cf. Cox, 2007, 22–23, "On the assumption that the derivation from ON *fjǫrðr* is correct … the Gaelic pronunciations appear to be reflexes of EG – *rdd* (sometimes written *-rt*) -/Rd/." Cox also spells all such names with *-rt*, pp. 81–88.

[30] E.g. Sloc Greiligeo (NL560794).

[31] E.g. Hèabhal instead of Sheabhal (NF767271).

[32] E.g. Waternish ~ Bhatarnais (NG2659) from ON *vatns-nes* 'stream promontory'.

[33] E.g. Names containing the element *fjall* should be spelled with *-bh-* as opposed to *-mh-*. Beinn Tartabhaill not Beinn Tart a' Mhill (NR209569)..

[34] E.g. Cf. GOC 2009, 11: "Beàrnaraigh, Èirisgeigh."

[35] E.g. Blaven ~ Blàbheinn (NG529217).

## 3.5 List of Spellings

See the List of Spellings Appendix in a separate document.

# 4. Guidelines for Translation

Direct evidence for Gaelic forms should be used where available. If direct or indirect evidence relating to a name exists, this should be employed as much as possible.[36] When a form is not directly in evidence and the name is to be translated (see 2.3 to 2.5 above), the following guidelines should be followed in addition to the spelling principles above.

## 4.1 Place-name Grammar

In general Gaelic place-names adhere to the syntax of general language. The following points should be borne in mind:

### 4.1.1 Embedded Place-names

In cases where a place-name contains another place-name, the embedded name form should be in the genitive case.[37] In general, if the embedded feature is that of a topographical feature it should not be lenited.[38] Settlement names (other than house names) or district names should be lenited,[39] subject to standard usage, i.e. where the root form of the name does not begin with the article and does start with a lenitable consonant.[40]

### 4.1.2 Non-Gaelic Orthography

Place-names not in Gaelic orthography should not be lenited.[41] (See also 4.2.3.4.)

### 4.1.3 Gender

The occurrence of the gender of nouns may vary depending on dialect.[42] Words originally of neuter gender in Early Gaelic sometimes show variation across Scotland.[43] If an element's gender is not known, the local dialect should be studied to discover, using parallels, the likely gender in any given location. (See also 3.1.2.)

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[36] E.g. Burnside, which runs past An t-Allt Odhar, should be translated as Bruach an Uillt rather than, for instance, Bruach a' Chaochain, reusing the element *allt*.

[37] E.g. Am Monadh Mòr > Gleann a' Mhonaidh Mhòir (NS016300).

[38] E.g. Loch Beinn a' Mheadhain (NG923286), i.e. the loch of Beinn a' Mheadhain, where Beinn a' Mheadhain (NG918288) is a name in its own right.

[39] E.g. Port Glasgow ~ Port Ghlaschu (NS326744).

[40] E.g. Loch na Creige Duibhe (NM763850), where the feature is A' Chreag Dhubh (NM768844). Lenition is not relevant because the name starts with an article.

[41] E.g. Belford Road ~ Rathad Belford (NN108742).

[42] E.g. *Giùthsach* is normally feminine but in the case of Kingussie ~ Ceann a' Ghiùthsaich (NH756006) it is masculine.

[43] E.g. Inbhir: Inverton ~ Baile an Inbhir (masculine) (NN745992) but Inver Cottage ~ Taigh na h-Inbhearach (feminine) (NR441714).

### 4.1.4 Flora

In some place-names, terms for flora as a specific element should be treated adjectivally (though they are indefinite genitives formally).[44] (See also 4.2.2.2.)

## 4.2 Standardisation Guidance

### 4.2.1 Elements

See 3 in the Recommended Terms Appendix in a separate document.

### 4.2.2 Broader Principles

#### 4.2.2.1 Referents

In some cases the referent in the Gaelic and English forms of a place-name is different.[45] (See 6.2)

#### 4.2.2.2 Flora and Fauna

The names of trees or plants, etc. appearing as specific elements in English names should normally be rendered in Gaelic in the genitive singular. The names of birds or animals may be singular or plural as appropriate.[46] (See also 4.1.4.)

#### 4.2.2.3 Plurals

The Gaelic form of a place-name may use a singular noun where the Scots or English equivalent has a plural. This is largely in cases where a natural feature has become the name of a settled or built up area. If the thing denoted genuinely forms multiple distinct units (including street-names[47]) then a plural may be used in Gaelic.[48]

#### 4.2.2.4 Numbers

Where a specific number is mentioned in a Scottish English name, it may be omitted from the Gaelic name in cases where it is used to represent the idea of 'several' and does not comprise the only specific element.[49] This does not apply to units of land measurement.[50]

#### 4.2.2.5 Genitive Plurals

For place-names which include a plural noun in the genitive case and where modern Gaelic usage allows two options, the nominative singular form should normally be used rather than the nominative plural.[51]

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[44] E.g. Badcall ~ Am Bad Call, gen. a' Bhaid Choill (NC157409). Here *call* is strictly a noun, but effectively treated as an adjective.

[45] E.g. Burnside ~ Taigh an Uillt, where the Gaelic form relates explicitly to a house, whereas the English form simply to the area directly next to the watercourse.

[46] E.g. Oak Road ~ Rathad an Daraich.

[47] E.g. University Gardens ~ Gàrraidhean an Oilthigh but Strathspey Gardens ~ Gàrradh Srath Spè where *gardens* pl. is used in the sense of 'a large garden'.

[48] E.g. Standing Stones ~ Na Clachan Mòra

[49] E.g. Well of the Seven Heads ~ Tobar nan Ceann (NN303991), but this would not apply to Ninewells (various).

[50] E.g. Forty Shilling Land ~ An Dà Fhichead Sgillinn (NN7543).

[51] E.g. Allt nam Bùth rather than Allt nam Bùithtean.

### 4.2.2.6 Colours

Gaelic colour terms have specialised application in place-names:

'Green' may be the equivalent of *glas*, *gorm* or *uaine*.[52]

'Red' may be the equivalent of *ruadh* or *dearg*.[53]

'White' may be the equivalent of *bàn*, *geal* or *fionn*; *bàn* can also denote fallow or wasteland, although this sense does not seem to occur in place-names;[54] *geal* may be used in the sense of 'bright', especially for certain types of rock;[55] *fionn* may be used in the sense of 'clear', especially when referring to water.[56]

## 4.2.3 Personal Names

### 4.2.3.1 Scottish Gaelic Surnames

Scottish Gaelic surnames are normally in the genitive in place-names.

### 4.2.3.2 Particular Individuals

If taken as referring to a particular individual, an established Gaelic byname for the person may be employed,[57] otherwise surnames with Gaelic *Mac* employ the genitive *Mhic*,[58] and other surnames employ the singular article and adjectival form of the name;[59] if taken as referring to a family or to bearers of the surname in general, the plural article and any adjectival form of the name are employed.[60] Where it is unclear whether an individual, family or clan is being referred to, it should normally be assumed that an individual is intended.[61] (See also 3.3.1.)

### 4.2.3.3 Irish or Manx Gaelic Surnames

Surnames derived from Irish or Manx Gaelic should be spelled in line with Scottish Gaelic, including the singular genitives *Mhic* [62] and *Ò* [63] (see 3.3.3).

### 4.2.3.4 Non-Gaelic Surnames

Non-Gaelic surnames should normally be neither lenited nor transliterated nor subject to other changes.[64] (See also 4.1.2.)

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[52] E.g. Greenstone Point ~ Rubha na Cloiche Uaine (NG857984); Greenfaulds ~ A' Bhuaile Ghlas (NS751732); Green Dasses ~ Meall Gorm, a partial translation (NG913486).
[53] E.g. An Tobar Ruadh for an iron or chalybeate well.
[54] E.g. Edinbane ~ An t-Aodann Bàn (NG347515).
[55] E.g. An Geal-Chàrn (NN475744).
[56] E.g. Am Fionn-Allt (NC328245).
[57] E.g. Sir Hector MacDonald Road ~ Rathad Eachainn nan Cath.
[58] E.g. McDonald Road ~ Rathad MhicDhòmhnaill (NT261751).
[59] E.g. Fraser Road ~ Rathad an Fhrisealaich, i.e. a specific person with the surname Fraser.
[60] E.g. Fraser Road ~ Rathad nam Frisealach, i.e. the Fraser family.
[61] E.g. Fraser Road ~ Rathad an Fhrisealaich, if it is not clear whether Fraser refers to a person or the family.
[62] E.g. MacCarthy Road ~ Rathad MhicCàrthaidh, not Mhic Cárthaigh.
[63] E.g. O'Connell Road ~ Rathad Ò Chonaill.
[64] E.g. Belford Road ~ Rathad Belford (NN108742).

### 4.2.3.5 First names

First names with a Gaelic equivalent should use that equivalent in the genitive as applicable.[65] Where no Gaelic equivalent is available or considered appropriate,[66] the name should be neither lenited nor transliterated.[67]

### 4.2.3.6 Titles

Titles of people given in full should use the article with the title in the genitive, in full or abbreviation, followed by the personal name in the nominative.[68]

### 4.2.3.7 Saints

*Naomh* should be used for saint as a title. *Naomh* should not be used either after *Cill(e),* with Celtic saints or with *Moire* (St Mary).[69] Where the name is in the genitive, the genitive article *an* with the form *Naoimh* should be used,[70] followed by the nominative form of the name. Feminine saints' names should normally be lenited in the genitive, unlike their secular counterparts.[71]

### 4.2.3.8 Biblical Names

Where a name pertains to a religious character, a specific form should be used. See 3 in the Recommended Terms Appendix in a separate document.

## 4.3 Terms for Translation

Further to the elements above, see Appendix Recommended Terms in a separate document for a list.

## 4.4 Names of Developments

In situations where a Gaelic name for a street or building or other development is required where an English name has already been given, there should be an effort made to make the equivalence of the Gaelic and English forms transparent. (See 2.5.) Greater interpretive flexibility may be employed in such cases to preserve comparability of length between the English and Gaelic versions of the name.[72]

### 4.4.1 The Article

In the interest of equivalence of name length, an initial article in a street-name should not normally be shown in Gaelic where the equivalent is also absent from the English representation.[73] This does not apply to street-names containing place-names.

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[65] E.g. George Road ~ Rathad Sheòrais.
[66] E.g. Gladstone Road ~ Rathad Gladstone.
[67] E.g. Victoria Quay ~ Cidhe Bhictoria (NT2767) is an exception.
[68] E.g. Doctor MacDonald Road ~ Rathad an Dr Dòmhnallach; Captain Stewart's Road ~ Rathad a' Chaiptein Stiùbhart.
[69] E.g. St Bridget Road ~ Rathad Bhrìghde.
[70] E.g. St Margaret's Crossing ~ Drochaid an Naoimh Mairead.
[71] E.g. Tobermory ~ Tobar Mhoire (NM504554) but Sgeir Màiri (NR703628).
[72] E.g. St Columba's Way ~ Slighe Chaluim Chille (missing Naomh)
[73] E.g. Main Road ~ Prìomh Rathad.

# 5. Concluding Remarks

Corpus planning can never be static and attempts at achieving consistency are rarely complete, so it is anticipated that this document represents but the latest stage in a process. AÀA would welcome comments and feedback to improve the completeness, authority and usefulness of future versions.

# 6. Appendixes

## 6.1 Recommended Terms

An up-to-date list of recommended terms for use as a guide in forming new Gaelic names, such as street-names, is available from the AÀA website. They are not to be considered definitive; some interpretive flexibility is allowed, depending on context.

## 6.2 List of Technical Terms

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| affix | An adjective or noun attached to an older, existing place-name to describe the later division of the settlement into separate places (see 6.1). |
| element | A building-block of a place-name. |
| Gaelic place-name | Not necessarily a place-name coined by Gaelic speakers but a place-name used by Gaelic speakers when speaking Gaelic, whatever its linguistic origin.[74] (See 1.6.) |
| generic element | An element containing information about the type of place denoted. It is usually qualified by a specific element. |
| given name | A personal name, as opposed to a surname, usually applied from birth in order to distinguish the individual. |
| milieu | A locality or toponymic environment in which names derived from or represented in the language are part of the onomastic environment. |
| referent | A thing referred to. In place-names this means the physical place or feature denoted by the place-name, rather than the name itself. |
| specific element | An element, usually an adjective or noun, which qualifies or describes the generic element. |
| surname | A personal name which is shared as part of a particular group, usually the family. |

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[74] E.g. Lacsabhat (NB251381) is considered Gaelic, though it is of Norse origin.

| | |
|---|---|
| translation | The conversion of a place-name into another language whilst preserving the sense. |
| transparent | A place-name is transparent where its etymology is readily apparent to the average speaker of Scottish Standard English or of modern Scottish Gaelic. |
| transliteration | For example, the rendering of a non-Gaelic name where the sounds have been replaced with the closest approximation of sounds in Gaelic. |

## 6.3  Research Methods and Process

No name should be taken at face value, although many will be straightforward. Sources and methods will vary greatly depending on which part of Scotland is being dealt with, whether Gaelic is still spoken, has recently died out or died out hundreds of years ago. The research process falls broadly into a number of stages:

### 6.3.1  Background Research

In order to discover the identity of the elements which comprise the name, the following pieces of information should be sought:

#### 6.3.1.1  Local Pronunciation

'Local' here does not simply mean someone who now lives in the area – it should be someone who has some well-established contact with local traditions, e.g. older people who grew up in the area (many of these will no longer be 'local' in the residential sense, but their evidence should be considered more important than someone who has recently moved in). The Gaelic form is of course preferable but, where the local Scottish dialect reflects the Gaelic pronunciation, this can also be informative.

#### 6.3.1.2  Written Evidence

Written evidence of the Gaelic form of the name, in any language or orthography and of any date, should be sought. This could be gathered from reliable scholars, as mentioned in Gaelic writing in general, or from older sources such as charters or maps. (See our reading list for a list of reliable resources.)

#### 6.3.1.3  Opinions of Reliable Scholars

The opinions of reliable scholars on the meaning of the name, or the elements contained in a name, should be sought. (See our reading list for a list of reliable scholarly works.)

### 6.3.1.4 Parallels and Themes

In cases where the elements contained in a name are known, but the exact phonetic or syntactic form is not known, it may be necessary to examine other place-names containing the same element where the authentic Gaelic form is known.[75] This is especially important in street-names and in areas where traditional Gaelic has ceased to be spoken.[76]

## 6.3.2 Further processes

### 6.3.2.1 Public Consultation

Public consultation on the proposed name and the reasoning behind it should be conducted. This can be either a full public consultation, or it could be with a smaller selection of people or bodies with relevant expertise. Where existing bilingual signs conflict with this guidance, the Gaelic should normally be changed in agreement with this guidance on sign renewal, other than where the existing Gaelic form is judged to have popular currency or particular historical resonance.

### 6.3.2.2 Proofreading

Proofreading to cover each stage of writing, typing and typesetting should be implemented. This involves both proofreading of the name form offered by AÀA to anybody requesting it, and also a proofreading of the name as it appears in hard format, e.g. physically applied to a road sign, prior to manufacture during the production process.

### 6.3.2.3 Recording of Names

On completion of the process, the names should be recorded and added to the Database. (See 1.4.)

# 6.4 Works used in this Document

Cox, Richard A. V. (1997) Modern Scottish Gaelic Reflexes of Two Pictish Words: *pett* and *lannerc, Nomina* 20, 47-58.

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Grannd, S., 2013, *Gàidhlig Dhùthaich MhicAoidh.* Taigh na Gàidhlig Mhealanais.

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Scottish Qualifications Authority (2009) *Gaelic Orthographic Conventions 2009* [GOC]: http://www.sqa.org.uk.

Taylor, S. (2005) *Guide to Gaelic Origins of Place Names in Britain.* Ordnance Survey: https://getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/guides/the-gaelic-origins-of-place-names-in-britain/.

Taylor, S., with G. Márkus (2012) *Place-names of Fife Vol. 5 Discussions, Glossaries, Texts.*

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[75] E.g. Newton may be translated as Am Baile Ùr based on other instances of the name Newton in the Gàidhealtachd.

[76] E.g. Cart Lane in a scheme of streets named for rivers is named after the River Cart and not after the vehicle.