



Recommended Terms

(For use alongside our Gaelic Place-Names Policy)

Last updated: October 2020

Executive Summary

This recommended list of terms is a guide for use in forming new Gaelic names where appropriate, such as street names. They are not to be considered definitive; some interpretive flexibility is allowed, depending on context.

1. Nouns

This list is not to be considered definitive; some interpretive flexibility is allowed, depending on context. In particular the capitalisation of an element after a hyphen may be appropriate in certain cases.

<i>English</i>	<i>Gaelic</i>
<i>Arcade</i>	Aircèad
<i>Avenue</i> (formerly 'tree-lined street' originally 'approach to house in its own grounds')	Craobhraid
<i>Boulevard</i>	Bulabhàrd
<i>Bow</i>	Bogha
<i>Brae</i>	Bruthach
<i>Bridge</i>	Drochaid
<i>Buildings</i>	Togalaichean
<i>Business Park</i>	Pàirc Gnothachais
<i>Bypass</i>	Seach-rathad
<i>Causeway</i>	Cabhsair
<i>Centre</i> (building)	Ionad
<i>Circle/Circular</i> (road)	Cuairt-rathad
<i>Circular Route / Loop</i> (footpath)	Cuairt-cheum
<i>Close</i> ('passageway to rear premises' originally 'enclosure, courtyard')	Clobhsa
<i>Cottages</i>	Cotaichean
<i>Court</i> ('complex of buildings' originally 'courtyard at rear of building')	Cùirt
<i>Crescent</i>	Corran
<i>Croft</i>	Croit
<i>Cross</i> (roads)	Crois
<i>Cycle Route</i>	Slighe Baidhsagail
<i>Cycle Track</i>	Frith-rathad Baidhsagail
<i>Distributor</i>	Sgaoil-rathad
<i>Drive</i> (often 'main thoroughfare' originally 'approach to house in its own grounds')	Dràibh
<i>Flats</i>	Flataichean
<i>Gardens</i> (originally 'town houses round central gardens')	Gàrradh
<i>Gate</i> (Scots <i>gait</i> 'street' in the sense of a 'way')	Bothar
<i>Gate</i> (English <i>gate</i> in the modern sense)	Geata
<i>Glade(s)</i>	Glac
<i>Grange</i>	Grainnseach
<i>Green</i>	Àilean
<i>Grove</i>	Doire
<i>Heights</i>	Bràigh

<i>Hill</i>	Cnoc
<i>Houses</i>	Taighean
<i>Hub</i>	Co-ionad
<i>Industrial Estate</i>	Raon Gnìomhachais
<i>Industrial Park</i>	Pàirc Gnìomhachais
<i>Junction</i> (interchange)	Ceann-rathaid
<i>Junction</i> (intersection)	Snaidhm-rathaid
<i>Land</i>	Fearann
<i>Lane</i> (originally 'narrow way between houses or behind terraces')	Caolraid
<i>Link</i>	Ceangal
<i>Link Path</i>	Ceum-ceangail
<i>Loan(ing)</i> (grassy track to or between fields)	Lànaig
<i>Mall</i>	Malla
<i>Medway</i> (often 'link road' originally 'central, main thoroughfare')	Meadhraid
<i>Mews</i> ('stabling' originally 'falcon cages')	Marclann
<i>Orchard</i>	Gart
<i>Parade</i>	Pairèad
<i>Park</i> (also 'recreational area' originally 'field, grazing land')	Pàirc
<i>Passage</i>	Bealach
<i>Path</i>	Ceum
<i>Pend</i> ('vaulted or arched passageway, esp. to back of houses')	Stuagh
<i>Place</i> (originally 'residential square with garden or open space in centre')	Ceàrn
<i>Precinct</i>	Àrainn
<i>Promenade</i>	Promanàd
<i>Quay</i>	Cidhe
<i>Reservoir</i>	Loch Tasgaidh
<i>Retail Park</i>	Pàirc Reic
<i>Ring Road</i>	Iadh-rathad
<i>Rise</i>	Uchd
<i>Road</i>	Rathad
<i>Roundabout</i>	Cearcall
<i>Route</i>	Slighe
<i>Row</i>	Sreath
<i>Side</i>	Taobh (see 3.2)
<i>Slipway / Slip</i>	Sliop
<i>Square</i>	Ceàrnag
<i>Stairs</i>	Staidhre
<i>Steps</i>	Steapaichean
<i>Street</i>	Sràid
<i>Terrace</i> (row of joined houses, formerly along hillside, originally 'shelf in hillside')	Barraid
<i>Tower</i>	Tùr

<i>Towpath</i>	Ceum-tarraing
<i>Track</i>	Frith-rathad
<i>Trade Park</i>	Pàirc Malairt
<i>Trail</i>	Slighe
<i>Unit</i>	Aonad
<i>Vennel</i>	Aisir
<i>View</i>	Sealladh
<i>Walk</i>	Ceum
<i>Way</i>	Slighe
<i>Woodland Trail</i>	Slighe-choille
<i>Woodland Walk</i>	Cuairt-choille
<i>Wynd</i> (originally 'small winding street or lane round obstacles from a main street to rear premises')	Lùb

2. Affixes

English	Gaelic
<i>East(ern)</i>	an Ear
<i>Great(er)</i>	Mòr
<i>Inner</i>	a-Staigh
<i>Lower</i>	Ìochdrach (see 3.4)
<i>Main (+ noun)</i>	Prìomh (+ noun)
<i>Mid(dle)</i>	Meadhanach
<i>New</i> (in the sense of 'newly made')	Ùr
<i>New</i> (in the sense of 'replacement')	Nuadh (see 3.1)
<i>North</i>	a Tuath
<i>Old (+ noun)</i>	Seann (+ noun)
<i>Outer</i>	a-Muigh
<i>South</i>	a Deas
<i>Upper</i>	Uachdrach
<i>West(ern)</i>	an Iar

3. Usage Guidelines

3.1 New

Nuadh should be used when modifying an existing name.¹ When the element modifies a generic element representing a place that has not existed before then *ùr* should be used.² *Ùr* has the sense of 'newly (at the time) made'.

¹ E.g. New Elgin ~ Eilginn Nuadh (NJ218618).

² E.g. Newton ~ Am Baile Ùr (NS667605).

3.2 Side

The usage of *taobh*³ in traditional place-names is generally confined to usage as a generic element with an adjective.⁴ English-named settlement names containing *side* may be translated as *taigh*.⁵ In other cases where the name does not denote a settlement, other options may be used, for instance *bruach* ‘bank’ may be used in cases where the place-name represents a genuine path or way beside a linear feature such as a road or watercourse.⁶ The word *side* may, on occasion, not be translated at all.⁷

3.3 Hill

In the absence of local parallels, and when the referent is not known, *cnoc* should be used. In some cases however ‘hill’ is used in Scots to mean: “a common moor where rough grazing rights are enjoyed jointly by neighbouring farmers; a piece of rough moorland where peats are cut, a peat-moss”.⁸ In such cases *monadh* should be used.⁹

3.4 Upper / Lower

If there is an affix in English for *upper/over* or *lower/nether*, but there is no evidence for these affixes in Gaelic, *uachdrach* for *upper/over*, and *ìochdrach* for *lower/nether* should be used.

Where one of the following pairs is known the other is likely to be:

uarach ‘upper’ and *iarach* ‘lower’¹⁰

àrd ‘upper’ and *fhàn/ìosal/iseal* ‘lower’¹¹

On the east coast:

shuas ‘upper/west’ and *shìos* ‘lower/east’¹²

On the west coast:

shìos ‘upper/west’ and *shuas* ‘lower/east’. *Shuas* and *shìos* literally mean upstream and downstream respectively, so usage will change depending on which watershed the places are in.

uachdar, ‘upland’ and *ìochdar*, ‘lowland, laigh’ (followed by the genitive form of the place-name)

bràigh(e) may be used for ‘upper’ in cases where this is geographically justified.¹³ (see also 3.10.)

³ In Sutherland Gaelic, it can refer to a district, such as Taobh Mhealanais ~ Melness District Grannd, 2013, 198.

⁴ E.g. Tubeg ~ An Taobh Beag (NC658634).

⁵ E.g. Braeside ~ Taigh na Leacainn (NN860488).

⁶ E.g. Burnside ~ Bruach an Uillt (NG794327) with no evidence there was a settlement here.

⁷ E.g. Burnside ~ Taigh an Uillt (various).

⁸ <http://swap.nesc.gla.ac.uk/database/?page=3&search=&view=table&order=1&d=2#results>

⁹ E.g. Ochil Hills ~ Monadh Ochail (NN90).

¹⁰ These are shortened forms of *ìochdrach* and *uachdrach* common in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

¹¹ E.g. Forsinain ~ Forsain Fhàn (NC911489)/ Forsinard ~ Forsain Àrd (NC892438).

¹² E.g. West Strathan ~ An Srathan Shuas (NC563639)/ Strathan ~ An Srathan Shìos (NC575648).

¹³ E.g. Falkirk High ~ Bràighe na h-Eaglaise Brice (NS891798).

3.5 -ton, -town

In general *baile* should be used if a Gaelic generic element is justified, especially if parallels exist elsewhere.¹⁴ In some cases *baile* may be omitted for reasons of length or aesthetics.¹⁵

3.6 Head

If relating to a coastal promontory, the term ‘head’ should be represented as *rubha* (or, if appropriate, with another term such as *àird*), not *ceann*. *Ceann* as a generic element in place-names is generally used only as meaning the end of a feature.¹⁶ There are some instances where *ceann* was used as a translation of Scots *heid*, or Scottish Standard English *head*¹⁷ but this is not to be employed as a rule.

3.7 River

In cases where the English form of a watercourse name contains ‘river’ or ‘water’ as a generic element but the Gaelic form is not in evidence, *abhainn* should be used.

In general where the river-name is ‘primary’, i.e. it derives from the name of the watercourse and not some other feature such as a glen or settlement, the name should be in the nominative.¹⁸ Otherwise the element should be in the genitive.¹⁹

3.8 Hall

Taigh should be used for ‘hall’ when in the Scots/English traditional sense of ‘a large and spacious building, esp. one which is the residence of a magnate’.^{20, 21} *Talla* should be used for ‘hall’ in the more modern sense of a large room or long central room in a house, or in the sense of a community building primarily containing a large room for activities.²² When used in an ironic sense *taigh* should be used.^{23, 24}

3.9 Forest

Forest should be translated as *coille*, unless it refers to a deer forest (i.e. a large area in which deer live, not necessarily wooded), in which case *frìth* should be used.²⁵

¹⁴ E.g. Milton or Milltown ~ Baile a’ Mhuilinn (NH766744) or Baile na Muilne.

¹⁵ Cf. Clynmilton ~ Clin a’ Mhuilinn (NC913069).

¹⁶ E.g. Lochgilphead ~ Ceann Loch Gilb (NR862881).

¹⁷ E.g. Peterhead ~ Ceann Phàdraig (NK124456).

¹⁸ E.g. River Tay ~ Abhainn Tatha (NO1918).

¹⁹ E.g. Peterburn ~ Allt Phàdraig (NG739831).

²⁰ <http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/hall>

²¹ E.g. Woodhall ~ Taigh na Coille (NS344739).

²² E.g. Corran Halls ~ Talla a’ Chorrain (NS763510).

²³ Taylor, S., with Márkus, G., 2012 v, 216.

²⁴ E.g. Larkhall ~ Taigh na h-Uiseig (NS763510).

²⁵ E.g. Forest Lodge ~ Taigh na Frìthe (NN270422).

3.10 Brae

Bruthach ‘hillside’ is the equivalent of modern Scots *brae* ‘road which has a steep gradient’.²⁶ *Bruach* ‘bank or edge’ is a separate word. *Brae* is often confused with *bràigh* ‘upper part’, and though they have some overlap in meaning they are not equivalent. Despite this, in some cases *brae* is used as an anglicised form of *bràigh* in place-names.²⁷ *Bràigh* may be used for ‘upper’ if the place in question is physically higher.²⁸

3.11 ‘Dale’

Gaelic *dail*, means ‘meadow by a river’.²⁹ Norse *dalr* ‘valley, dale’ generally appears at the end of the name as *-dal* in Gaelic.

3.12 Land

Fearann is to be used in the sense of ‘property or farm land’.³⁰ *Talamh* is to be used in the sense of ‘earth or soil’. *Tìr* is used in relation to ‘dry land as opposed to water’.

4. Religious Names

English	Gaelic
Mary	Moire (not Màiri)
Andrew	Anndra (not Aindreas)
Peter	Peadar (not Pàdraig)

²⁶ http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/snd/brae_n1 meaning 3.

²⁷ E.g. Brae Lochaber ~ Bràigh Loch Abar (NN2781).

²⁸ E.g. Falkirk High ~ Bràighe na h-Eaglaise Brice (NS891798).

²⁹ E.g. Dalneigh ~ Dail an Eich (NH654449).

³⁰ E.g. Ferrindonald ~ Fearann Dhòmhnail (NG648073).