

## TRACS Languages Policy

*Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland (TRACS)* is committed to recognising and supporting all of Scotland's languages, and to welcoming Scotland's multilingual identity, through English, Gaelic, Scots and other minority languages.

Gaelic and Scots in particular are of great cultural significance in the traditional arts, and TRACS recognises their equal status as national, classical and vernacular languages insofar as they display symbolic and national importance, a high oral tradition and have retained relevance in everyday usage.<sup>1</sup> The cultural importance of Scots and Gaelic in their written form, within the oral tradition and in social usage cannot be underestimated and in Scotland we have a unique responsibility to represent this. This flows into many different areas – literature, the oral tradition, landscape, the environment, history, heritage and community cohesion. It is also notable that the use of both Gaelic and Scots in social contexts can foster and facilitate intergenerational exchange in a unique and special way.

Furthermore, TRACS recognises in this policy and its prospective outcomes the value of languages in and of themselves, and the many benefits that can result from bilingualism and learning more languages in terms of understanding other worldviews and perspectives. Every language is unique in its ability to communicate specific meanings and impressions, and it is through this diversity of languages that we are able to better learn about and understand other cultures and people. Languages are vitally important in fostering inclusion and confidence in the sphere of cultural and creative education to which TRACS is also committed, paying particular heed to appropriate UNESCO conventions such as the Seoul Agenda for Arts Education, as well as the conventions relating to cultural diversity.<sup>2</sup>

The primary aim of TRACS in this Languages Policy is to recognise the special responsibility of Scotland and TRACS in celebrating and promoting the richness, diversity and creative potential of the Gaelic and Scots languages. This focus is influenced by the special importance of Gaelic and Scots as an integral force in the make-up and growth of the traditional arts in Scotland, and furthermore, the importance of considering Gaelic and Scots in tandem, with special regard to the many creative links that connect the two languages, as well as English.

Although Scots and Gaelic feature strongly in the principles and focuses of TRACS in their status as traditional languages of Scotland, so too do all of Scotland's minority languages, especially in relation to the preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and the general health of the arts in Scotland. Furthermore, TRACS fully recognises and appreciates British Sign Language in its Scottish expressions, which also deserves a priority in the consideration of the diversity of Scottish languages.

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<sup>1</sup> Both languages are also protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Gaelic has official status as a 'national language' of Scotland under the Gaelic Language Act (2005). Scottish Government Scots Language Policy published 2011.

<sup>2</sup> One of the goals stated in the Seoul Agenda is to '*Support and enhance the role of arts education in the promotion of social responsibility, social cohesion, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.*'

With this in mind, TRACS recognises the importance of cultural diversity and cross-cultural exchange, paying particular heed to the UNESCO Conventions on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and the Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which states:

*The Universal Declaration makes it clear that each individual must acknowledge not only otherness in all its forms but also the plurality of his or her own identity, within societies that are themselves plural. Only in this way can cultural diversity be preserved as an adaptive process and as a capacity for expression, creation and innovation.*

TRACS aims to address its Languages Policy through its work with three main strands of engagement:

1. Our events programme with its focus on the traditional arts, incorporating both festivals (Scottish International Storytelling Festival and TradFest) and our day-to-day programming at the Scottish Storytelling Centre.
2. Education:
  - a. Through our courses and workshops at the Scottish Storytelling Centre and further afield.
  - b. Outreach projects (incorporating schools visits) and online resources.
3. Community wellbeing and cohesion (through projects such as The People's Parish)

In more practical forms, these three strands will take the form of:

- Freely available online resources, including the exploration of digital technology that has specific benefits to language learning and accessibility.
- Events incorporating Scots and Gaelic.
- Commissioning creative work in Scots and Gaelic.
- Access to primary material in Scots and Gaelic.
- Appropriate bilingual support, to assist with learning and familiarisation.
- A clear publicity and marketing strategy on TRACS' use of Scots and Gaelic in communications and marketing which will focus on familiarising the use of Scots and Gaelic.

TRACS is located at and works in close partnership with the Scottish Storytelling Centre, and together we contribute to Edinburgh's status as a Festival City. This creates a platform and exchange mechanism to share our culture with others, and in turn to share and experience the diversity of languages. In this vein, it is also important to draw the crucial connection between linguistic diversity and cultural diversity, another primary focus of TRACS in promoting the traditional arts in all their varieties.

The annual Scottish International Storytelling Festival has a focus each year on a different area of the globe, and brings storytellers from those areas to Edinburgh to participate together in cultural exchange. These can take the form of cross-cultural Open Hearth sessions, or bilingual storytelling events, which showcase Scottish culture and languages alongside other world traditions.

TradFest is the other major festival organised by TRACS and the Scottish Storytelling Centre, taking place in venues across Edinburgh at the end of April, over the May Day and Beltane festivities. It will now also have a strong focus on cultural diversity through partnering with *BEMIS (Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and Cultural Minority Communities)* in order to strengthen and create better links

with minorities, and therefore encouraging a wider celebration of linguistic and cultural diversity throughout the TradFest programme.

In line with these policies and activities, TRACS has also recently developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for 2016-2018 in line with Creative Scotland guidelines, which aims to guide the work of TRACS and the traditional arts in general to being generally positively engaged in inclusivity and equality. The following excerpt is also significant in approaching TRACS' engagement with languages:

*TRACS aims for inclusive and mainstream programming to creatively harness and embrace minority or marginalised experiences as a collective asset. Such experiences play an important part in the origin and evolution of traditional and folk culture and as a rich part of contemporary resource. The traditional or folk arts are the source of a worldwide sense of human creativity and value, while strengthening cultural diversity and local sustainability. TRACS sees this as a vital part of Scotland's own cultural ecology, a significant part of what communities can offer to each other and to the wider world.*