

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 21 April 2023
RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY
SCOTTISH ISLANDS PASSPORT UPDATE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Members with an update on the Scottish Islands Passport Project.



Funding, Resource & Future Development

The Scottish Islands Passport team have successfully secured new funding of £95,000 from Paths for All. In line with the aims of HITRANS and Paths for All, this funding will support further development of the Scottish Islands Passport to encourage increased active and sustainable travel to and on the islands. Using the existing digital infrastructure within the app, 'rewards' will be added to incentivise desirable travel behaviours. These could take the form of additional stamps or a collectable points system.

Existing content within the Scottish Islands Passport database will be bolstered to better support and encourage active and sustainable travel. In line with the project's island centred ethos, this intelligence will be gathered from island residents, community groups and businesses on the ground to ensure it is represented realistically and appropriately through the 'island lens'. This will be accompanied by marketing messages to support and encourage active and sustainable travel for all or part of people's travel and we will seek to work with transport providers and the network of DMOs on joint messaging.

During early phases of the Scottish Islands Passport project a significant gap was identified in the availability and consistency of accessibility information at ferry ports and airports/strips. Active and sustainable travel should be accessible to people of all abilities, and we will use this next phase of the project to carry out a more informed gap analysis, understand what 'good' looks like for users seeking information about local adaptations, and work with partners to improve what is available. We would hope to extend this from transport points onto the islands and include island experiences that have adaptations to support disabled users.

A change in the team structure comes into effect at the end of April, after which the project will run with 0.6 FTE, supplemented by targeted freelance support. This change allows core spend to remain minimal, with the ability to flex in line with the changing demands and phases of the project. Reprofile of the budget to take these changes into account can support continuation of the project for 18 – 24 months. It is recognised that to achieve increased longevity, work needs to be prioritised to make best use of resources.

The Paths for All grant requires match funding and work is underway to secure the full match fund amount. Good progress has been made to date, with a small remaining gap of £13k at the time of writing. Given the benefits linked with active and sustainable travel to and on the islands, and helping to make these more broadly accessible, we are hopeful that we can address the gap with the support of investors who share these aims. The app has the ability to collect a range of data from our users and we will work to analyse this and share with investors as appropriate, in line with GDPR.

Travelogues and physical stamps

Sales of the first travelogue 'Meet the Makers' have been slow through the winter months, with activity increasing as we move into spring. This is forecast to increase further as more travelogues in the series are released, completing the collectable set.

The next release, 'Shaping Our Islands', celebrates the built heritage of the islands and will be released later this year. Future releases will highlight wildlife, food and drink, and wheeling and walking, which will support the activity undertaken with the Paths for All grant.

We continue to work with Isle20.com as our official online stockist for the travelogues and we are working with island retailers and transport providers to establish physical points of sale.

Work continues to install the full network of brass rubbing plates in partnership with island businesses and community groups, building on existing relationships and connections on the islands.

Digital app and Website

Since our last update to you in November, continued growth in app activity has been recorded:

- over 13,300 app downloads with 80% active users (an engagement rate well above comparable apps in the sector)
- 96% of our users are in the UK
- 19,704 individual badge unlocks covering all 72 islands, including the collection of historical trips dating back to 1960.

There is ongoing work to understand how we can best use push notifications in a targeted way, as well as refining the geofences used for the app to enable a better user experience and to improve the accuracy of the data we collect.

Our website, www.island.scot, is designed primarily to funnel visitors to the app and provide additional information to compliment the travelogues. We have added a blog page to the website which creates and addition channel to engage and inspire.

Engagement & working with Partners

We continue to work with island businesses and community groups across a number of strands; stamp hosts, content providers, featured businesses and stockists.

We attend monthly CalMac and West Coast DMO meetings where we share updates, and we maintain good links with their counterparts in the North with ad hoc meetings. We release stakeholder newsletters at key points in the project and continue to use social media to engage a wider audience.

As we progress work in line with the new funding from Paths for All we will seek to engage with Local Authorities, Transport Providers and DMOs to identify opportunities for joint working and marketing. As funding opportunities become more competitive, and the impacts of the cost of living spread across sectors and raise our supplier costs, it will be important for us to seek joint opportunities and strategic partnerships where we can join forces and funds to achieve shared goals.

Marketing

Ongoing marketing campaigns are in place with CalMac and HIAL. This will continue, but we will take a refreshed approach to our wider marketing strategy taking into account the new funding, seeking opportunities to collaborate with partners to reduce our spend and amplify shared messages.

We will continue to create and distribute island specific posters to partners within island communities, and provide official logos for them to use to help promote their own involvement with the project.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note this report and endorse the direction of travel.

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive

Policy

Impact – Positive

Financial

Impact – Positive

Equality

Impact – Positive

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Designation: Scottish Islands Passport Project Manager

Date: 7th April 2023