

## Report to Partnership Meeting 20 April 2018

### RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

#### Scottish Islands Passport

##### **Purpose of Report**

To consult Members on the concept and merit of a Scottish Islands Passport as a marketing initiative that has potential to both support lifeline ferry and air services and develop tourism opportunities especially for the most remote islands.

##### **Background**

Among the most successful tourism initiatives are those which encourage the visitor to follow / complete a trail or visit a list of attractions. From the West Highland Way to Munro Bagging and the recent huge success of the NC500, they are all examples of existing attractions that have been marketed and packaged in ways that have encouraged significant increases in visitors.

Similarly, to help encourage visitors to the west coast of Ireland, local partners including the National Tourism Authority have marketed the coastal route as the *Wild Atlantic Way*. Below is an excerpt from its website;

*The Wild Atlantic Way is the world's longest defined coastal touring route. From Malin Head in County Donegal, the country's most northerly point, to Mizen Head in County Cork, the most southerly point, the route weaves and winds across 2,500km of beautiful coastline.*

*The Wild Atlantic Way website is the route's official tourism information source and is operated by Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Development Authority.*

*Here we provide essentials like maps, itineraries, region profiles and other comprehensive information to inspire you to visit this captivating coastal route.*

*The website enables you to virtually explore the route and its 15 Signature Discovery Point highlights along the way. You can also use the site to plan and tailor your trip and to find the most useful and up-to-date information relevant to your stay.*

##### **SIX REGIONS, COUNTLESS EXPERIENCES**

*Encompassing six distinct regions, Northern Headlands (County Donegal) the Surf Coast (Counties Donegal and Sligo), the Bay Coast (Counties Galway and Mayo), the Cliff Coast (Counties Galway, Clare and Kerry), Southern Peninsulas (Counties Kerry and Cork) and the Haven Coast (County Cork); visitors can explore it all or divide it into individual sections.*

*Explore the Route uses a map to outline the full coastal route of the Wild Atlantic Way, offering the option to select attractions and activities to enjoy as you go.*

*The Trip Planner helps you to plan your perfect trip using pins to save your trip ideas to an interactive map that can be edited, printed or shared with friends*

A key feature of the trail is the Wild Atlantic Way Passport <http://bit.ly/2pgsbGP>. The concept behind this is that it gives the visitor a guide to the route but also encourages them to complete the route offering the chance to pick up 188 unique stamps along the way and even a 'Wild Atlantic Way Certificate as an official record of your journey'. It is estimated that it attracted 1.3 million visitors last year.

### **Scottish Islands Passport**

A Scottish Islands Passport would seek to tap into a similar area but has arguably even more potential.

According to the 2011 census, there were 93 inhabited islands in Scotland. Their total population was 103,700. Almost all of these are served by at least a passenger ferry but many also by an air service. These services are operated by multiple different operators though the vast majority are accessed by services operated by the following; CalMac, Serco Northlink, Orkney and Shetland Island Councils, Loganair and Direct Air Services.

There is an opportunity for either a regional or national body to bring together these partners and develop a marketing strategy that could have the potential to draw significant additional visitors to Scotland's Islands with all the economic benefits that would bring. Among the added benefits, is that it would encourage many more visitors to the smaller and least accessible islands.

The marketing opportunities around this concept are endless. For example, the *Passport* could be issued to everybody in Scotland to encourage them to visit as many of the islands as possible over their lifetime. As with the Wild Atlantic Way, consideration would need to be given to supporting and administering the campaign including elements like the passport stamp but this in itself is an opportunity to support local post offices or businesses.

Such an initiative should help support many of the most fragile lifeline services and island economies within the HITRANS area and there is also a potential role for HITRANS in coordinating and promoting integrated travel information. However, for the project to be successful it arguably needs to be developed and by an organisation/s with appropriate marketing experience and reach.

### **Recommendation**

Members are invited to consider the merits of a Scottish Islands Passport; how it might be developed; and who should provide a lead if considered a proposal worth exploring.

#### RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – If successfully implemented the proposal has the potential to help support lifeline transport services to the region's most remote and fragile islands.

#### Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment – This work seeks to support economic development in each of Scotland's inhabited islands by increasing visitor numbers

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – No budget has been identified at this stage.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – This project seeks to encourage more people to visit all of Scotland inhabited Islands.

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