

Report to Partnership Meeting – 4th February 2011

EUROPEAN

AFLOAT Project Proposal

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Members with details of a funding opportunity that HITRANS has been alerted to through our European funding contacts. The proposals relate to an Atlantic Area ERDF INTERREG IVB project that is being developed by Transport and Travel Research Ltd on behalf of Merseytravel.

BACKGROUND

In terms of accessibility between the regions and their transport networks, one of the weaknesses of the Atlantic Area (as noted in the Operational Programme for Transnational Cooperation 2007-2013) is insufficient interconnection of networks and problems of continuity and interoperability of the networks. Moreover, the maritime heritage of the Atlantic Area regions represents a common identity that should be preserved for economic reasons. Ports and the various activities linked to them are important economic drivers in the Atlantic Area.

Within the Atlantic Area region, ferries provide key transport services within and between member countries, cities and regions. Ferries are one of the most sustainable forms of transport.

The importance of ferries to the Atlantic region is significant. Busy international ferry routes cross the English Channel, the Bay of Biscay and the Irish Sea. Local ferry services in the region provide important transport links across rivers, estuaries and to off-shore islands. These local services are essential for the local economies providing access to jobs, services and customers.

Many ferry ports across the Atlantic region currently struggle to provide fully integrated facilities with other transport modes compared to what has been achieved by other transport hubs such as airports and rail stations. Greater coordination is required between the operators of the different modes and focus given to the facilities provided to them.

The port facilities also operate using a range of operating standards for boarding, accessibility, ticketing etc. This makes it difficult to establish new routes between ports on a trial basis thereby inhibiting potential growth in this sector and curbs the current growth in the region of the cruise ship tourist industry.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Merseytravel (the Integrated Transport Authority for the Liverpool City Region in North-West England) is interested in developing a bid with partners investigating the future development of

passenger ferry and leisure operations within the Atlantic Area Territorial Cooperation Programme. Interest has been received from potential partners in Spain and the UK though more partners are being sought to ensure the effectiveness of the project.

The overall aim of the project is to share best practice between partners, identifying and implementing appropriate standardisation measures to increase passenger numbers in a sustainable way across the Atlantic Area.

The project would investigate further:

- Integrating ferry terminals with cruise liner facilities and the local public transport network;
- Development and implementation of strategies to maximise passenger and tourist levels for local ferries;
- Introducing sustainable improvements to ferry operations;
- Develop and implement solutions to counter problems caused by variations in accessibility between ports across the Atlantic area; and
- Integration of Ferry terminals with local bus, rail, air and road networks through provision of more appropriate services and facilities;

The AFLOAT consortium is looking for regional authorities, port authorities and ferry operators interested in collaborating to form an Atlantic Area ferries' interest group. The group would work to prepare and submit a funding submission responding to the next Call for Proposals which would enable a number of measures to be delivered to align with the project aims.

OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS:

The AFLOAT project will have the following objectives:

- i. Formation of an Atlantic region ferry stakeholder network

The development and recruitment to a ferry stakeholder network with online forums, document sharing, online webinars and training events as part of existing conferences. The stakeholder group will also be able to contribute to the other project activities as experts.

- ii. Development and implementation of strategy for greater ferry port integration with bus, rail, air and road transport networks.

This will involve an analysis of the connectivity to other transport modes of a number of existing ferry ports and ferry services. An implementation strategy to improve the connectivity at these ports will be developed and introduced through demonstration sites.

- iii. Development and implementation of strategy to increase levels of tourist related local ferry activity at partner sites.
- iv. Review and development of sustainability measures appropriate for ferry operations including solar power, hybrid engines, clean fuels, waste handling and efficient design of ferries and ferry ports. Of particular interest are measures which can be retrofitted to existing ferries or ports at low cost.

The objective is to increase passenger numbers in a sustainable way across the Atlantic region. This will increase direct and indirect employment to the area.

AFLOAT DEMONSTRATION OPTIONS

Discussions with the European Partnership team at Merseytravel indicate that they are comfortable with taking the lead partner role and their aspiration for AFLOAT is that it will, like the START project, provide funding that will support the delivery of good practice for modal integration. The project is likely to be broken down into a smaller number of work packages and there will be a heavy emphasis on information sharing on the impact of each measure delivered through the project. This will require a similar approach to Evaluation, Publicity and Communication to the START project programme.

Advisors are asked to consider projects in their area which could be included within the AFLOAT Demonstration Projects. Match funding will as ever be a key consideration as while HITRANS can provide in kind support our core funding is limited.

Considering previous work commissioned by HITRANS two projects that officers have identified which may meet the AFLOAT criteria and where match funding could be sourced are:

- Oban Multimodal Interchange – match funding could be provided by Argyll and Bute Council through their CHORD programme.
- Orkney Smart Card Project – match funding may be available through Transport Scotland.

These two projects have been identified as examples only. No commitment has been made that match funding would be available for either project.

Next Steps

The AFLOAT Project objectives align well with the Regional Transport Strategy and offer an opportunity to progress a number of initiatives with an attractive intervention rate available from ERDF. As a bid for funding there is the risk that the project may not secure the support of the Atlantic Area Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS). However the project has a solid foundation with Merseytravel being an experienced lead partner and the project has a number of similarities to the START project. The project is also targeting Priority Areas that the JTS has highlighted as areas that have not been the subject of significant interest or programme spend to date. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that AFLOAT has a good chance of securing funding.

HITRANS have registered interest in the AFLOAT project under the following proposed work packages:

- Use of LPG Fuel
- Use of Hydrogen Fuel
- Use of solar power in boat and ports for supplementary energy
- Eco-refit of ferry port facilities
- Interchange with other modes - facilities (e.g. Bus shelter, RTPPI information)
- Interchange with other modes - vehicles (e.g. Bus connections to rail)
- Smart Card ticketing
- Integrated ticketing with other transport modes

The next key step for the project will be a meeting of those partners who have expressed an interest before a formal project proposal is submitted to the Atlantic Area JTS. This will agree the final direction of the project and agree the parameters for the funding application.

If the Board are supportive in principle, a project programme will be developed by the potential partners. Provided HITRANS officers and Advisors believe this programme can be funded and membership of the consortium represents the best interests of HITRANS and our partners details of the programme will be reported to the next HITRANS Partnership meeting seeking approval for HITRANS to be included in the formal bid for funds and the scale of involvement HITRANS would have within any project.

HITRANS and our partners will not be committed to the project legally until the Joint Technical Secretariat issues a formal offer of funding and a Partnership Agreement is signed by all partners. However it is essential that any projects submitted as part of the HITRANS programme can be fully funded and that we can access the requirement to provide a 40% share of costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Members are asked to note the report.
2. Members are asked to approve the drawing together of a project programme of projects in the Highlands and Islands based on proposals submitted by Partnership Advisors.
3. Members are asked to approve HITRANS engagement at officer level with Merseytravel and other potential project partners in developing a project proposal for the Atlantic Area project call.

Report by: Ranald Robertson
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Date: 20th January 2011