

**Report to Partnership Meeting 23 June 2017**

**EUROPEAN PROJECTS**

**SPARA 2020 Project Report**



**Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme**  
2014-2020



**EUROPEAN UNION**

Investing in your future  
European Regional Development Fund



**Purpose of Report**

To provide Members with an update on the SPARA 2020 INTERREG IVB Northern Periphery Programme project that has secured funding from the Northern Periphery and Arctic Area INTERREG Programme with HITRANS as Lead Partner.

**Project Overview**

Smart Peripheral and Remote Airports (SPARA2020) is a 3 year, €2.4 million Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme Project, designed to address the challenges facing peripheral & remote airports. These airports are economically vital, providing accessibility & connectivity to residents. However, with low traffic volume, strong seasonality challenges and ageing aircrafts, these airports suffer relatively higher costs of operating safely & compliantly, and inevitably require state subsidy/intervention. SPARA aims to maximise revenues at these peripheral & remote airports, and increase their self-sufficiency and resilience long-term.

The Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014-2020 is co-funded by the ERDF, and more generally aims to help peripheral and remote communities on the northern margins of Europe to develop their economic, social and environmental potential. SPARA2020 has been designed both to address the region's needs, but also to explore issues that have resonance beyond Northern Europe, and to develop outputs that will deliver enduring benefits after the project concludes in May 2018.

**Project Partnership**

HITRANS is the lead partner of the project. Other Scottish partners include the University of the Highlands and Islands and Robert Gordon University, whilst Sweden is well represented with Trafikverket (The Swedish Transport Administration), Sundsvall Timrå Airport and Storuman Municipality. The Northern Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) of Ireland represent airports such as Donegal and Ireland West (Knock) in the project, and Molde University in Norway and the University of Sydney in Australia are also project partners.

**Project Activities**

The Highlands and Islands area will benefit significantly, as all Scottish activity in the project will have a focus in the region.

The project includes work on Innovative Technologies to improve airport performance and control cost. These involve a close examination of Remote Air Traffic and Remote Security technologies, as well as distributed training, benefitting from broadband and communication technology advances. With the support of Eurocontrol, the project will also examine the business case for Airport Collaborative Decision Making (lite), as suited to the smaller airport (and budget) context.

Mindful of aviation's carbon footprint, two work strands have been developed to foster more sustainable energy use in the sector. Low carbon fuel airport surface access demonstrator trials are being developed by HITRANS, in partnership with their member Councils, Energy Savings Trust and Highlands and Islands Airports at airports in the Highlands and Islands. These are designed to be low carbon exemplar projects on how to decarbonise links from the airport to its local population centre, and will include support for electronic bus operation on airport services, EV car hire and EV / Hybrid Taxi roll out to serve airports. The business case for offering biofuels to incoming aircraft at the region's airports will be examined in some detail, learning from some pioneering work at Karlstad Airport in Sweden.

Based upon the recognition that the performance of many peripheral airports' scheduled traffic is structurally constrained by their small catchment size, significant budget has been assigned to examining non-aeronautical sources of income and diversification of roles for these facilities. A whole gamut of possibilities will be examined and best practice will be publicised and disseminated, and some more in depth pilot projects will be undertaken. Optimising an airport's role as an employment cluster will be explored extensively. The location selected for these activities are Ireland West (Knock), Donegal, Inverness and Oban. HITRANS are working with the Northern Western Regional Assembly (who are leading this work package) to conduct Audits of the four airports and identify suitable pilot projects for implementation.

The project will also examine in some detail the distinct socio-cultural role that airports play in the Northern Periphery and Arctic area, and to refine and improve economic impact assessment methodologies of SPARA airports, with a view to better guide future public investment. This includes studies led by RGU at airports in Ireland, Scotland and Sweden.

## **Project Progress**

### ***Low Carbon Solutions***

HITRANS are in the process of submitting a bid to the Energy Saving Trust to install two rapid charge points at Inverness Airport and in Inverness City Centre to support the feasibility of Inverness Taxis adding EVs to their fleet. Inverness Taxis have secured a 7-year contract at Inverness Airport and are committed to lowering their carbon emissions, with the intention of becoming fully electric long-term. To support this aim, HITRANS, HIAL, The Highland Council and Inverness Taxis are working together with EST to ensure these charge points are installed and EV usage to & from airports is increased.

HITRANS are also in final agreements with HIAL and E Car Club to enable the installation of fast chargers at airports in the HITRANS and NPA area. Assisting E Car Club with these charge points ensures that this service is brought to remote & peripheral airports and allows further locations to be explored. Site surveys for all charging locations are scheduled next week.

HITRANS are also working with Barra Airport to implement a 3-month eBikes pilot, with applications to other airports such as Tiree and Benbecula if successful.

The use of biofuels at airports will also be explored with Trafikverket having now completed procurement for their Biofuels agenda, with Copenhagen Economics as the selected supplier to assist with the write-up.

### ***Non-Aeronautical Services***

HITRANS are working with Irish partner NWRA on progressing the Non-Aeronautical Services work package. Audits have so far been completed for Donegal Airport, Ireland West Knock Airport and Oban Airport. Pilot projects have been identified at Ireland West Knock, looking at wayfinding, signage and enhancing passenger experience. Donegal Airport are either looking at a signage project or car park project, with a decision to be made by the end of summer. HITRANS have scheduled a meeting with Oban Airport to decide which pilot project is best suited to the airport, with suggestions of signage improvements and terminal facilities, such as food & drink and retail offerings. Airports in the NPA area will also be asked to complete a Best Practice Example template of their experience of non-aeronautical activities.

### ***Technology-Driven Solutions***

The recent SPARA Conference allowed for a Roadmap workshop to be held by Trafikverket, who have produced a Roadmap to reflect developments in technology & innovation and help influence change across the industry to enhance the sustainability of airports. The Roadmap is intended for airport & policy makers to support the medium and longer term developments of the sector.

Storuman are progressing well with the setup of remote technology pilots, with Hemavan Airport (the location of our next partner conference) being used as a test site for a new X-ray machine, exploring the possibility of several airports sharing the same operational sensor to reduce staff costs. There are some technical challenges to overcome that will be addressed in the evaluation. The business case report for remote towers for small airports is also now complete, stating a saving of 30-50% operating costs.

UHI are exploring remote training needs at remote & peripheral airports and have identified themes for intervention following interviews with regional airports. A procurement process is currently ongoing to select a suitable airport for developing the training tools.

### ***Enduring Innovation Network***

Newsletters are regularly sent to over 300 contracts within the Smart Peripheral Aviation Network (SPAN) with a respectable 16% open rate. The next partner conference will have a focus on the development of SPAN long-term following the end of the SPARA project. Interested parties can sign up to SPAN newsletters and keep up-to-date on project progress on the SPARA website: <http://spara2020.eu>

### ***Social, Cultural & Economic***

RGU have now completed their report on the social and cultural importance of remote airports. Strategies have also been developed to support public & stakeholder engagement, and worksheets have been created on utilising social media and exploiting off-peak airport spaces.

Molde University College and Sydney University have developed a web-based airport benchmarking survey, and expect 65 airports to complete the survey by July. Airports will

receive a copy of the final analysis report suggesting what might impact their cost efficiency with quantifiable actions.

UHI's Economic Intelligence Unit are creating a toolkit to enable those who do not have economic background or resources to create economic impact assessments. A case study will also be developed, providing feedback to EIU on the usefulness of the toolkit, with Wick Airport as the preferred location for the case study.

## **Partner Conferences**

The most recent SPARA Partner Conference was hosted by NWRA and held in Knock, Ireland, 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> May 2017. Partners visited Knock Airport and received a thought-provoking presentation from airport management on the progress of the airport so far. Partners also visited Knock Shrine, highlighting the benefits a regional airport can bring to tourism & local landmarks. The main conference day included recent partner news on work package activities, a Roadmap workshop to discuss the key SPARA deliverable recently produced by Trafikverket, and a discussion of NPA Programme funding to-date and potential future projects.

## **RISK REGISTER**

### RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive

Comment – The SPARA 2020 project has supported a number of RTS objectives, particularly in Aviation and Low Carbon solutions.

### Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment – SPARA 2020 is supporting broader policy work including the Inverness City – Region Deal Air Access work and the Islands Transport Forum.

### Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – The project attracts a high EU intervention rate of 65% with match funding allowed for within the Research and Strategy Delivery Programme.

Comment – A significant element of the work in SPARA 2020 covers activity HITRANS would be delivering in any case meaning a significant amount of additional funding is being attracted to the Partnership.

### Equality

Impact – Neutral

Comment – No impact on Equalities from this report.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to note the report.

**Report by:** Jayne Westbrook  
**Designation:** European Project Officer  
**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017