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THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

Report to Partnership Meeting 2 February 2018

EUROPEAN PROJECTS

SPARA 2020 Project Report

Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2014–2020

EUROPEAN UNION
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European Regional Development Fund

SPARA 2020

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update on the SPARA 2020 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 (SPARA) is a 3 year, €2.4 million Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme Project designed to address the challenges facing remote & peripheral 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 remote & peripheral 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 remote and peripheral communities on the northern margins of Europe to develop their economic, social and environmental potential. SPARA 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.

Project Partnership

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

Project Update

Low Carbon Solutions

To support the introduction of electric taxis at Inverness Airport, HITRANS are installing rapid charge points at Inverness Airport and in Inverness City Centre to increase the uptake of EVs in the area and reduce carbon emissions from airport transport services. The project is progressing well with a supplier having been chosen and installations due to commence later this month.

HITRANS are also working with Home Energy Scotland to facilitate test drives of electric vehicles to encourage more operators in the area to move to EVs. Charge points for electric car clubs are also expected in February, with E-Car Club having already witnessed strong demand at Inverness Airport and the charge points will enable fully electric cars to be used for this service. HITRANS are keeping in regular contact with E-Car Club to ensure this service is brought to remote airports after some initial technical setbacks. With the recent confirmation of a SPARA extension, HITRANS can also now progress with an electric bikes pilot to operate between Spring-Summer 2018. Tender documents are currently being drawn up and are due to go out in February.

SPARA Roadmap

Following the November 2017 SPARA Partner Conference in Hemavan, Sweden, Trafikverket are producing their final version of the SPARA Roadmap to be published in February. The roadmap acts as a future scoping exercise looking at the sustainability of remote airports across different milestones to 2050. A session was held at the conference to obtain feedback from partners, with Trafikverket having already consulted various experts from industry and academia to produce their report. The final report will be made available on the SPARA website.

Technology-Driven Solutions

The recent Partner Conference provided an opportunity for SPARA's Swedish partners to showcase their work on developing technology-driven solutions for remote and peripheral airports. SENSEC and LFV presented their work on remote screening and security at airports, particularly focusing on the possibility for remote luggage screening to improve synergy between staff training and provide economic benefit to the airports. A more thorough economic analysis and investigation into existing rules and regulations, possibilities/liabilities, and a live-trial exercise at Hemavan will provide further recommendations for implementation at remote and peripheral airports. SAAB presented their ongoing remote tower projects across Sweden, Ireland and the UK, with a remote tower pilot planned for Hemavan in Spring 2018. Cameras will be implemented at Hemavan Airport with the centre based in Sundsvall. The business case to support this project will be published in March 2018.

Social, Cultural & Economic

RGU have completed their report on the social and cultural importance of remote & peripheral airports and the report is now available to view on the SPARA website. Published copies were brought to the recent SPARA Conference to distribute amongst project partners. RGU have also developed strategies to support public and stakeholder engagement, and worksheets on how to utilise social media, exploit off-peak airport spaces and exploit social and cultural capital. Completed versions of all worksheets and templates are now available on the SPARA website.

Molde University College and Sydney University are conducting their final phase of data collection for their benchmarking activity of remote and peripheral airports, having already obtained more than 60 airport responses. The activity will inform a final analysis report for airports suggesting what might impact their cost efficiency with quantifiable actions.

UHI's Economic Intelligence Unit are progressing well with their economic impact assessment of Wick John O'Groats Airport (WJOA), having conducted a two-month passenger survey and interviews with local businesses. The results of the case study will inform the creation of a methodological toolkit to enable those who do not have economic background or resources to conduct economic impact assessments.

Partner Conferences / Project Management

SPARA Partners recently met in Hemavan, Sweden, for a two-day conference focusing on technology-driven solutions, including remote air traffic control and remote security functions. The next SPARA Conference will be the final gathering of project partners, and a large dissemination event of project results will be organised by hosts UHI with support from HITRANS. The intention is to hold the event on the Isle of Skye in June 2018.

SPARA has recently been granted a three-month project extension with a new end date of 31st August 2018. HITRANS will be attending a meeting with the Joint Secretariat in February to discuss the extension and finalise a work plan within the remaining time.

Newsletters are regularly sent to over 300 contacts within the Smart Peripheral Aviation Network (SPAN). Interested parties can sign up to SPAN newsletters and keep up-to-date on project progress on the SPARA website: http://spara2020.eu.

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery
Impact – Positive

Comment – The SPARA 2020 project has supported several 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: 23rd January 2018