

Item:
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Report to Partnership Meeting 26 April 2019

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Scottish Islands Passport

Purpose of Report

To update Members on progress being made to develop a Scottish Islands Passport and seek approval for the appointment of a fixed term Project Manager to develop and implement the project subject to the approval of an application for EU LEADER funding to develop the proposal.

Background

At the HITRANS Partnership Meeting in April 2018, Members approved a recommendation for officers to develop a detailed proposal for a Scottish Islands Passport and investigate means of funding its implementation.

In the intervening 12 months, HITRANS Officers have subsequently engaged with partners at local authorities, the Scottish Government, VisitScotland, other RTPs and various third sector stakeholders to understand the appetite for the project to be developed and the mechanisms available to take it forward as a collective effort.

Following a positive response from the Cabinet Secretary and subsequent engagement with the Scottish Government's Directorate for Culture, Tourism and Major Events, the Government made the welcome commitment to "develop an Islands passport scheme as a marketing initiative to encourage people to visit more of Scotland's 80 inhabited islands" within their Programme for 2018/19.

HITRANS have continued to work with the Scottish Government and a report to the November 2018 Partnership Meeting recommended that Officers submit a cooperative LEADER application (across the 5 LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) programme areas with Islands) as a means of securing the necessary funding to implement the Passport proposal.

EU LEADER Application

Summary

The Highland Council LEADER team has kindly agreed to support the submission of the EU LEADER application based on a proposal to develop "a Scottish Island Passport to help promote all of Scotland's offshore islands which are accessible by regular transport and is so doing help encourage more people to visit more of these Islands." The proposal is based on adapting similar marketing initiatives that have been deployed successfully elsewhere in both the UK and beyond.

In developing the proposal, HITRANS has already undertaken significant consultation with a wide range of key stakeholders to help establish both the merit of the proposal and agree the core aims and objectives which the Passport will seek to deliver. These include: increased visitor numbers; encouraging greater dispersal of visitors within the Islands so that those with less profile or more remote can also benefit; and helping to support sustainable economic development and inclusive growth. At its simplest level, the Passport will offer an excellent vehicle to help promote all of Scotland's Islands and raise visibility and awareness of what they offer both domestically and internationally.

The Passport project will see the recruitment of an Island based project manager who will be responsible for implementing a detailed project plan that will include the development of both a physical and online App based versions of a Scottish Island Passport that is capable of appealing to different markets and demographics.

The work undertaken will be overseen by a project steering group consisting of several key stakeholders including those who have shown their commitment to the project by providing the match funding to support the application.

The intention is to develop the Scottish Island Passport to coincide with Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters in 2020.

While public funding is being sought to develop this innovative proposal, a key element of the project will be to establish a sustainable revenue model that will enable the Passport to thrive and develop beyond the timeframe of the LEADER project.

Project Aims and Objectives

The project will seek to deliver against a number of core aims and objectives outlined below:

- Encourage more people to visit more of Scotland's Islands in particular those which have a lower profile or are more remote
- Help support sustainable economic development in our island communities
- Use the Passport as a means to help encourage more people to access the Islands by public transport
- Use the Passport as a means of raising the profile of all Scotlands Islands
- Use the Passport as a means to encourage more people to visit the Islands throughout the year
- Ensure that the content developed to support the Passport adds value to the existing information and campaigns
- Identify and implement a sustainable revenue model for maintaining the Passport and associated marketing materials beyond the timeframe of the LEADER project

Project Funding

In developing the LEADER application, a budget of £280,000 has been identified to support the development of the project including the recruitment of a dedicated Project Manager to implement the proposal. The funding will also provide for the following elements:

- Public and stakeholder engagement
- Develop ITT for website and app development

- Procurement of Website and App development
- Implementation and maintenance of online platforms
- Design and Printing of physical Passports
- Development & distribution of stamps for physical Passport
- Marketing and promotion of Passport

Subject to the application being successful, match funding contributions for the project include £12,000 from HITRANS, £25,000 from the Scottish Government and £3000 from Zetrans.

Project Manager

A Gantt chart outlining the key project activities and their timelines for delivery is included within the LEADER application. If the application is successful, HITRANS will look to recruit a Project Manager on a 2 year fixed term contract at the earliest opportunity.

This project officer will be responsible for all the day to day development of the Passport proposal and its implementation. The Project Officer will report to a Project Steering Group which will include representation from HITRANS, the Scottish Government, VisitScotland and Direct Marketing Organisations within the project area.

An early task of the Project Manager will be to review the Project Plan with the assistance of the Project Steering Group. Other key tasks will include the following:

- Establishing LEADER financial claims procedure
- Undertaking appraisal of each element of the Passport proposal through key stakeholder consultation and market research including target markets, branding and how best to complement existing marketing initiatives
- Developing detailed specifications for all elements of the Passport proposal which cannot be undertaken by the Project Manager or partners. e.g website / App development. Design of Passport and stamps
- Procurement of core online and physical marketing materials including:
 - Website/pages and App development with capacity for GPS based stamp collection for each island across IOS, Windows and Android
 - Design of physical Passport, stamps for Island partner agents or alternative, printing and distribution of passport
- In parallel the Project Manager will be expected to develop an implementation and marketing plan for the launch of the Passport and its ongoing promotion. This should be aligned with the opportunities presented by the Year of Coasts and Water in 2020.
- Procure / manage implementation of the marketing plan and launch of the Passport proposal. Initial market research has highlighted that a majority of even those local to the Highlands and Islands are unable to name more than a quarter of the 80 inhabited islands off Scotlands coast. There is an opportunity for the officer to work in partnership with VisitScotland, island Direct Marketing Organisation and other bodies to develop an extended campaign to promote a different island each week for the Year of Coasts and Water.
- Undertake an option appraisal of sustainable revenue model for maintaining the Passport and associated marketing materials beyond the timeframe of the LEADER project

Recommendation

Members are invited to;

1. Note the report
2. Approve the recruitment of a Project Manager (2 year fixed term contract) that will be responsible for the refinement of the Scottish Island Passport proposal and its implementation subject to the approval of HITRANS EU LEADER application.

Risk Register

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 – An indicative budget of £6,000 in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 has been identified to support a LEADER application.

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – This project seeks to encourage more people to visit all of Scotland's inhabited islands that are accessible by regular public transport.

Report by: Neil MacRae
Designation: Partnership Manager
Date: 16th April 2019