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THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

Report to Partnership Meeting 5 February 2021

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Scottish Islands Passport Project Update

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Members with an update on Scottish Islands Passport Project

SCOTTISH ISLANDS PASSPORT

App development

Following an extensive content-gathering exercise, we undertook a complex content processing task to refine and tag content relating to island experiences, amenities and travel hub. This has enabled us to create a powerful and flexible database of island information which we will draw on to create adaptable digital resources. This content also forms the basis of the physical passports.

The app functionality is now fully developed and allows users to:

- input their interests and find recommendations of islands which have experiences that match these;
- view the range of activities available on each island;
- view general information about each island including tips from islanders and information on amenities;
- view basic information on getting to / around each island with links to more local and national transport providers and timetables;
- save their favourite islands for future reference and see a list of their saved islands;
- collect virtual passport 'stamps' for islands they visit and see the stamps they have already collected;
- explore islands by geographic area and search for them by name.

Functionality to allow users to save and pictures of their island travels is in the final stages of development and will be added to the app before full release.

App user testing

Although we were unable to fully launch the app across all islands in 2020 due to covid, at the suggestion of the Shetland DMO, we worked with partners in Shetland to release a limited-time test version for Shetland in the autumn. Our core audience for this test was people already in Shetland, but the app was also tested by those planning trips to Shetland post-covid and industry stakeholders.

The feedback from the test was overwhelmingly positive. Feedback included:

- 73% of participants saying they were 'very likely' to use the app to explore their own and other islands, and a further 10% indicating they were 'likely' to do so.
- 94% of all participants rating the information provided by the app as 'very useful' or 'useful' (with no user rating this 'poor').
- 76% of islanders rating the description of their own island 'good' or 'very good' (with no islander assessing it as 'poor').

The testing highlighted the need for minor technical adjustments to the geofence which triggers automatic stamp download on one island. It also allowed us to sense check the island information with islanders and small adjustments have been made to the content as a result.

Website

Our branded website was launched in 2020 containing general project information and an integrated social media wall. Functionality to allow people to download the app, search for islands based on their interests, and allow app users to log in to their accounts is in place ready for launching when appropriate.

Physical passport
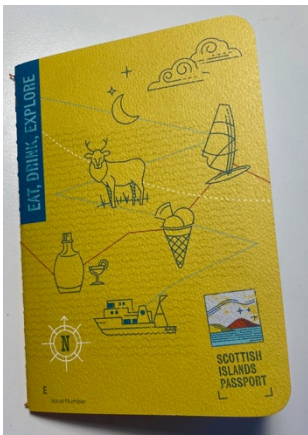
We have identified and mapped themes for the first ten physical passports which will be based on interest areas. Following a strategy to prioritise the promotion of island businesses within the passport themes, the first two physical passports will be 'Eat, Drink, Explore' and 'Meet the Makers'. The passports will provide information on a range of 'featured' islands to give passport holders a starting point for their explorations, with additional islands featured in the 'more to explore' section and the ability for holders to 'stamp' their passports on-island.

The design and content work for the *Eat, Drink, Explore* passport was completed in late 2020 and printed in January. A proportion of the initial print run of 350 passports will be used for marketing and promotional purposes with reserves ready to be made available to the public when appropriate.

Community and stakeholder engagement

We have continued a programme of community and stakeholder engagement including:

- working with regional and national partners on the app user testing, including Promote Shetland, Shetland Islands Council, ZetTrans, Northlink and Loganair;
- working with IsleDevelop and the Scottish Islands Federation to develop networks and identify opportunities for collaboration;
- holding meetings with DMO reps, Visit Scotland reps, and ferry stakeholder groups, plus the facilitation of a live stakeholder webinar with Q&A session;
- proactively working with individuals on islands to develop the tools and resources to deliver the project;
- working with individual islanders to deliver the #IslandOfThe week campaign on social media.

Marketing and brand building

We have continued to refine our brand as new resources have been developed and used this to create marketing tools, including those used to promote the app user testing.

With a view to the mid- to long-term, we engaged a highly experienced tourism marketing expert to identify a strategy and practical recommendations for delivering the resources to market. This has also resulted in further strengthening of relationships with key stakeholders such as transport providers.

We are carrying out a social media review to establish the effectiveness of our engagement over the life of the project so far and develop a strategy for moving forward, including identifying how best to use these channels to increase engagement with potential customers whilst travel restrictions remain in place.

We have built an extensive photo library of over 1,000 original island images covering all of our project islands. These images were submitted by individual photographers who are paid a licencing fee if and when we choose to use them in our work. The images which reflect our island-centred ethos which includes portraying a range of aspects of island life – including human habitation.

Recommendation
Members are asked to note this report

Risk Register
<u>RTS Delivery</u>
Impact – Positive
Comment – Scottish Islands Passport supports the delivery of the RTS with embedded functionality that will link users to transport providers and influence positive and desirable user behaviour.

<u>Policy</u>
Impact – Positive
Comment – Scottish Islands Passport aligns with and supports HITRANS policies.

<u>Financial</u>
Impact – Positive
Comment – Despite the challenges of the covid pandemic, Scottish Islands Passsport has successfully delivered against objectives and utilised funding opportunities, adding to a positive reputation with funders. Work is underway to secure further investment.

<u>Equality</u>
Impact – Positive
Comment – Scottish islands passport will include accessibility information for ferry ports and airports on and linking to the islands. Digital assets have been developed in line with current accessibility standards. The project approach ensures equitable engagement with all island communities.

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