

Report to Partnership Meeting 23 April 2021

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Scottish Islands Passport

Purpose of Report

To update Members on the development of a Scottish Islands Passport

Funding

Since the February Partnership meeting there has been a number of welcome developments in relation to funding support for the ongoing development of the Passport including the following:

- The original LEADER funding extended until the end of October 2021.
- An additional £98,000 of LEADER funding is potentially available over this same period. We are working with The Highland Council to confirm this.
- New funding of £175,000 from Scottish Government – £150,000 from Tourism and £25,000 from the Islands team
- £10,000k of additional funding from HITRANS plus continued in-kind support.

This combination of funds gives the project security until at least the end of March 2023.

Launches

As the islands re-open we intend to create local soft-launches of the app similar to those we used for the user testing in Shetland. This will involve advertising the app in key locations on-island (e.g. transport hubs and accommodation providers) and to those already booking / travelling to the islands. This approach will allow us to adjust the timescales for launching in each area based on the varying capacity / readiness to welcome tourists back.

Soft launches will also help us sense check and refine content with local communities, including what businesses and experiences are still operational. This has been largely impossible until now due to on-island capacity.

Physical Passport

We have begun distributing the prototype of a themed physical passport to key stakeholders as a means of gaining feedback and promoting the project. Discussion has taken place with the project steering group on the wider range of physical passports including coverage of island groups and all island Passport within the range.

Future Development

Alongside developing further physical passports we continue to have multiple requests from stakeholders, transport providers, DMOs and communities to further develop the app in order to widen appeal and develop further collaboration.

This includes, but is not limited to, looking at the potential for rewarding active and sustainable travel; integrated ticketing; developing further functionality to support island businesses; creation of content for the year of Scotland's Stories 2022; carbon offsetting; mapping heritage areas; and wildlife education. Development will be dependent on resourcing.

Resourcing

Following the confirmation of funding support, officers are now undertaking a review of resourcing options that will help deliver most value against the proposal objectives.

Our project planning indicates the project will struggle to meet its current baseline goals from around July onwards with the current level of resourcing and the steering group are in agreement that, with new funding in place, the project needs to look at options to provide additional resource in addition to the current 1FTE post. This is likely to largely involve the commissioning of consultancy support from the freelance sector for specific tasks although the potential for Intern support will be looked at for more general project support. There are also synergies with work being led by other members of the HITRANS team where the needs of the Scottish Islands Passport can be picked up within those workstreams.

Recommendation

Members are invited to;

1. note this update
2. welcome the additional funding for the Passport which has secured support for its development and resourcing through to March 2023

Risk Register

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – Passport has the potential to help support lifeline transport services to the most remote and fragile islands.

Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment – This work seeks to support economic development in each of Scotland's inhabited islands

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – Funding secured until March 2023 as set out in report on the basis of HITRANS contributing £10,000 and continued in-kind support

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.

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Scottish Islands Passport

Designation: Project Manager (Scottish Islands Passport)

Date: 14 April 2021