

Item:
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Report to Partnership Board Friday 25th April 2025

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

SCOTTISH ISLANDS PASSPORT UPDATE



PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Members with an update on the Scottish Islands Passport Project.

Travelogues, sales and physical stamps

Our full set of 4 travelogues have launched and are for sale, covering all 72 islands at least once. Each travelogue features 20 islands and are based on different themes. Islands included in each are spread across the regions rather than being grouped geographically to encourage visitors to explore other islands and therefore support balanced and sustainable tourism.

The travelogues have a dedicated space for each island for visitors to collect the brass rubbing of the stamp that is hosted with an island business or organisation wherever possible, encouraging visitors to explore these community businesses while collecting their stamp rubbings.

We focused our efforts on getting physical stamps installed to match islands featured in the travelogues as they were released so that visitors could collect those brass stamp rubbings. Now that we have featured each of the islands, we are very near completion of the brass stamp network with 65 completed, a handful we are waiting for confirmation with before adding the live locations to the app.

Scottish Island Gifts is our official online retailer for the travelogues. We are also building a network of on-island retailers. We focused our efforts on offering businesses featured in the travelogues the opportunity to become retailers to begin with, we are now expanding that offering to more island organisations. The travelogues are now for sale on 8 CalMac ferries.

Digital app and Website

Since our last update, continued growth in app activity has been recorded:

- Over 43,115 app downloads and 249,144 unique sessions at the end of March (up from 22k and 154k respectively for March 2024).
- Stamps collected for each of the 72 islands covered by the app: 43,864 stamp unlocks to date with 29,718 people using the manual unlock option showing that the app is providing inspiration for island visits.

- We now have data to compare across more than 3 years which shows a continual increase in monthly in location unlocks:

Active usage continues at a high level, outperforming comparable apps in the sector.

Since launching in December 2023, we have seen 2,182 travel stamps collected, these are only available when users are in the islands. Walking stamp collection has the highest proportion at 83% of collections. The new AI technology is working well within the app with minimal failsafe thresholds being reached.

We now have over 1,100 experiences and travel experiences in the app with the majority of the main development work now completed. There is always scope for further development however the focus now switches to expanding our reach and userbase. Geofences have now been updated for the stamps to ensure as much of the islands are covered as possible to minimise issues and enhance the user experience.

We are just waiting on confirmation from developers of live data for accessibility overview to be included in the app for each island, this links with our wheel travel category as we aim to improve accessibility information available for our islands. We worked in partnership with travel writers with lived experience of physical disabilities to source this data.

Our website, www.islands.scot, is designed primarily to funnel visitors to the app and provide additional information to compliment the travelogues.

Engagement & working with Partners

We continue to engage with island businesses and community groups for the final stamp installations, check and refresh content held for each island and as we seek island retailers interested in stocking the travelogues. We also continue to see members of the public make good use of the built-in feedback loop in the app, allowing them to make suggestions on both content and functionality.

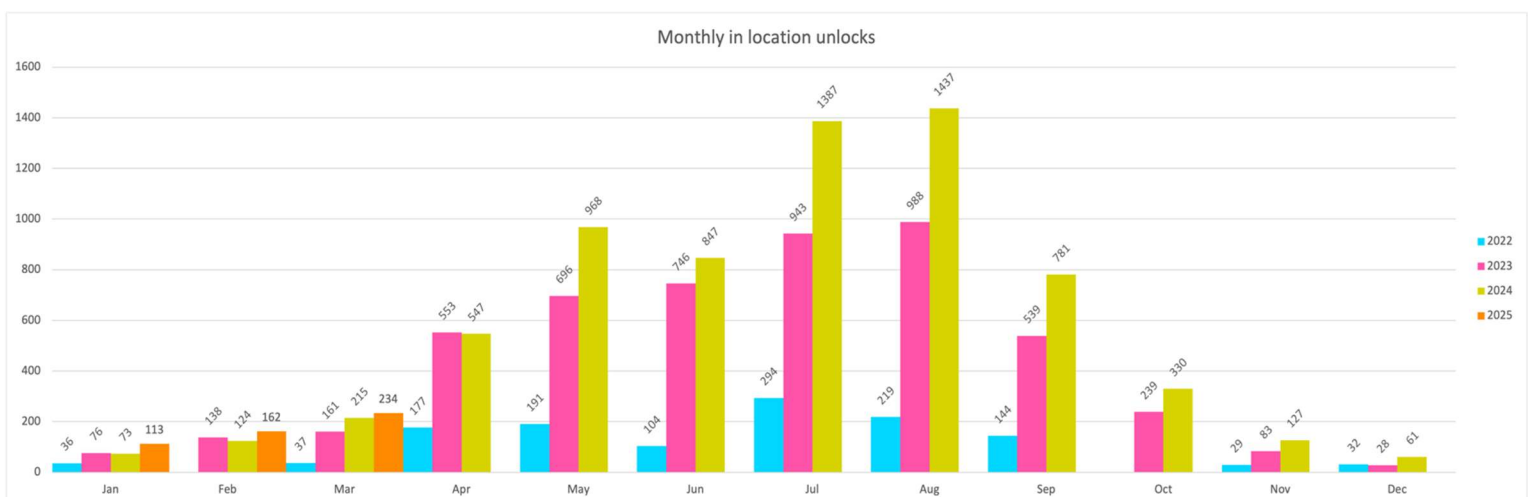
We are currently looking for partners to analyse the data we are gathering which looks at behaviours of our app users when they are in the islands and their travel methods. There is a huge amount of data but we currently don't have the resource to analyse all of it.

Marketing

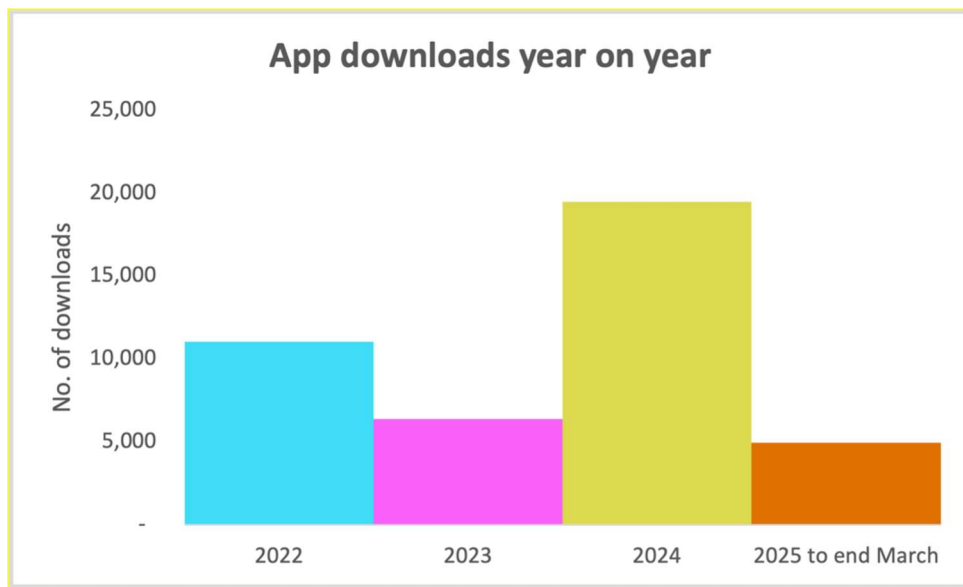
We featured in the CalMac Scottish Island Adventures podcast in mid-February to link up with travelogues launching onboard CalMac ferries. The topic for the episode was the Isle of Gigha so although we were not able to mention named connected islands as such, we were able to include island businesses, events and communities along the topic of sustainable tourism as well as our accessibility overview feature.

- A number of marketing displays are now out of contract although will remain until providers find replacements including Inverness Airport, Glasgow Airport, CalMac ferries and Oban Ferry Terminal.
- We have continual marketing on screens onboard Northlink ferries.
- We are included on new HITRANS printed bus timetables.
- At the end of March we started a campaign on new digital screens at Stornoway airport for 1 year.

Our annual download numbers can be seen below, including the effect of scaled back marketing in 2023.



Period	Downloads
2022	11,023
2023	6,374
2024	19,474
2025 to end March	4,960



We continue with our social media posts across 5 platforms to promote the project, islands, island businesses and events as well as our travel stamps and travelogues.

We have created and promote generic posters for each island with a finalised stamp location which is offered to island businesses for on-island promotion. We engage with island businesses on social media to cross-promote with featured businesses, stamp hosts and stockists with branded assets available to them.

Funding & Resource

The RURALITES project continues and allows continuity to March 2026 with the project manager's contract extended to that date.

We were unsuccessful in our application to The National Lottery and their Climate Action Fund.

We are currently looking for new funding opportunities however what would facilitate these applications is financial support from our partner local authorities. In 2024/25 we received support from the Western isles and ZetTrans in Shetland. This support could be aligned with local strategic aims around tourism and/or active and sustainable travel. Support could also take the form of promotion of the Scottish Islands Passport app across social media channels or websites for example. We are open to discussions around how we could work together to promote the islands in your area to enable increased data capture for mutual benefit.

The project continues to be sustained and achieves development milestones across the 72 islands with less than 1 FTE, demonstrating the principles of Best Value. The project works to deliver against outcomes in active and sustainable travel, balanced and sustainable tourism and thriving island communities.

We have started to look at the data for each Local Authority area in terms of in location unlocks across 2023, 2024 and 2025 to date. A sample of each area's monthly unlocks in the islands is included in the appendix at the end of this report showing some very different trends. With support from each local authority to promote and widen the reach of the app, we could be gathering much more data about what users are doing along with active travel information when travel stamps are collected.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note this report.

Risk Register

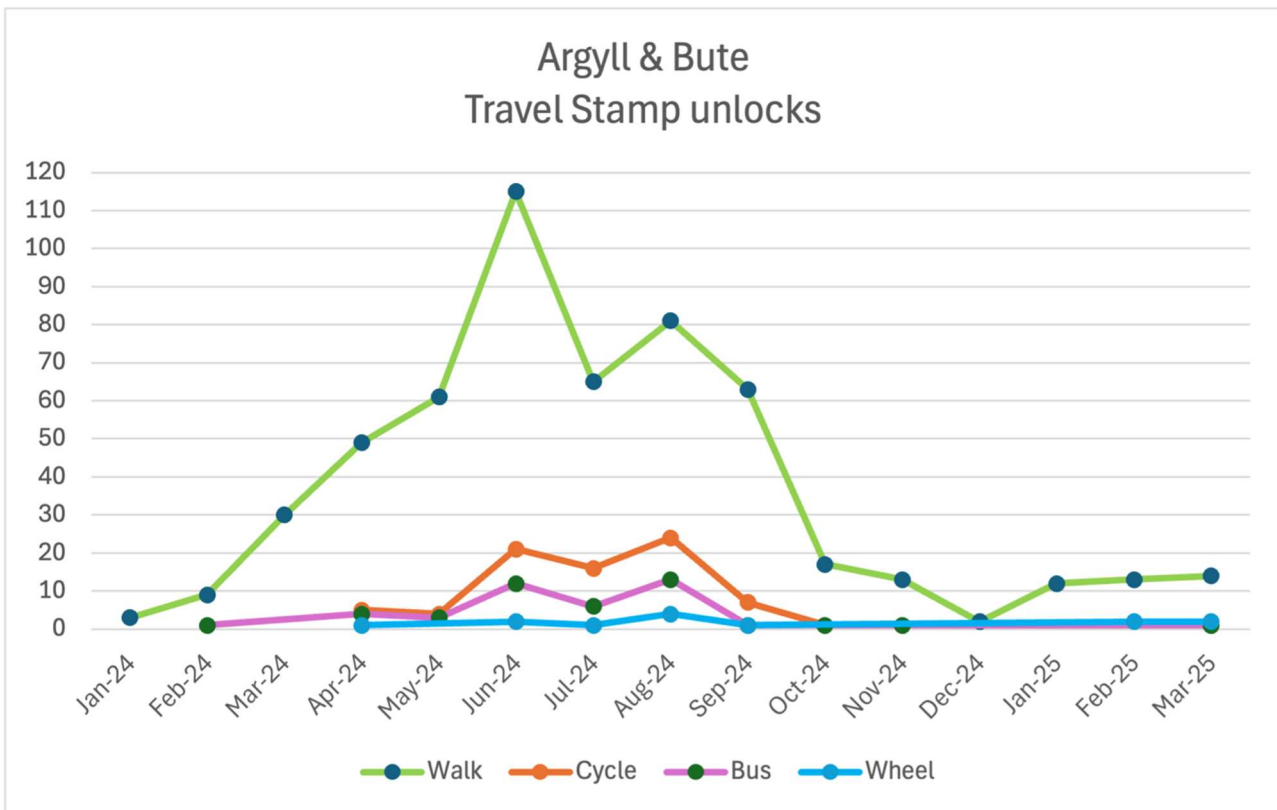
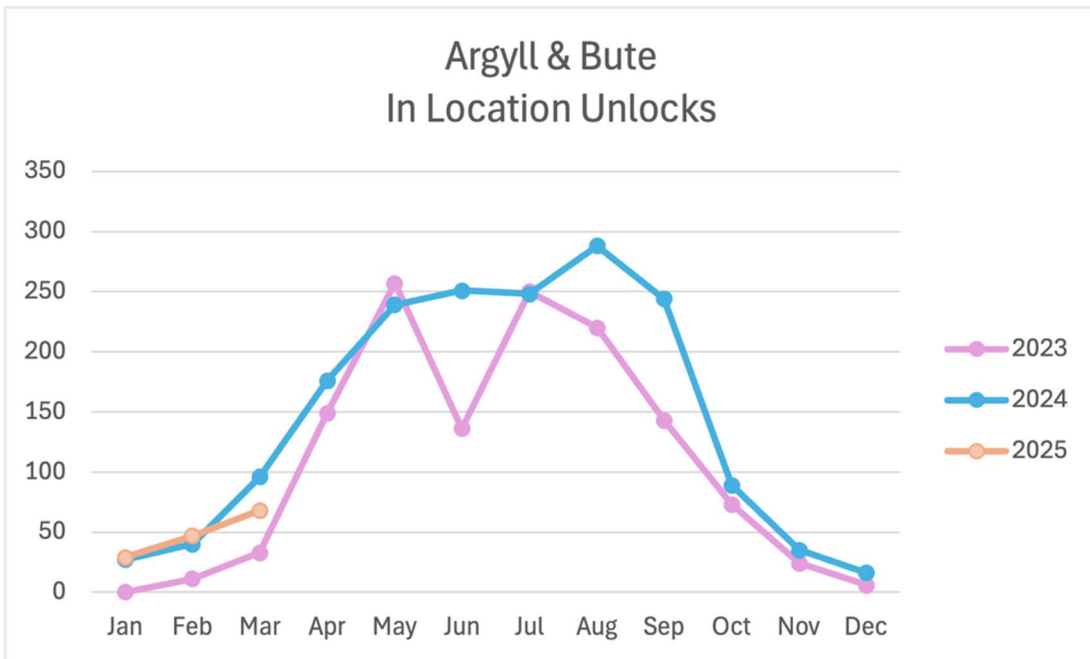
RTS delivery
Impact - Positive
Policy
Impact - Positive

Equality
Impact - Positive
Financial
Impact - Positive

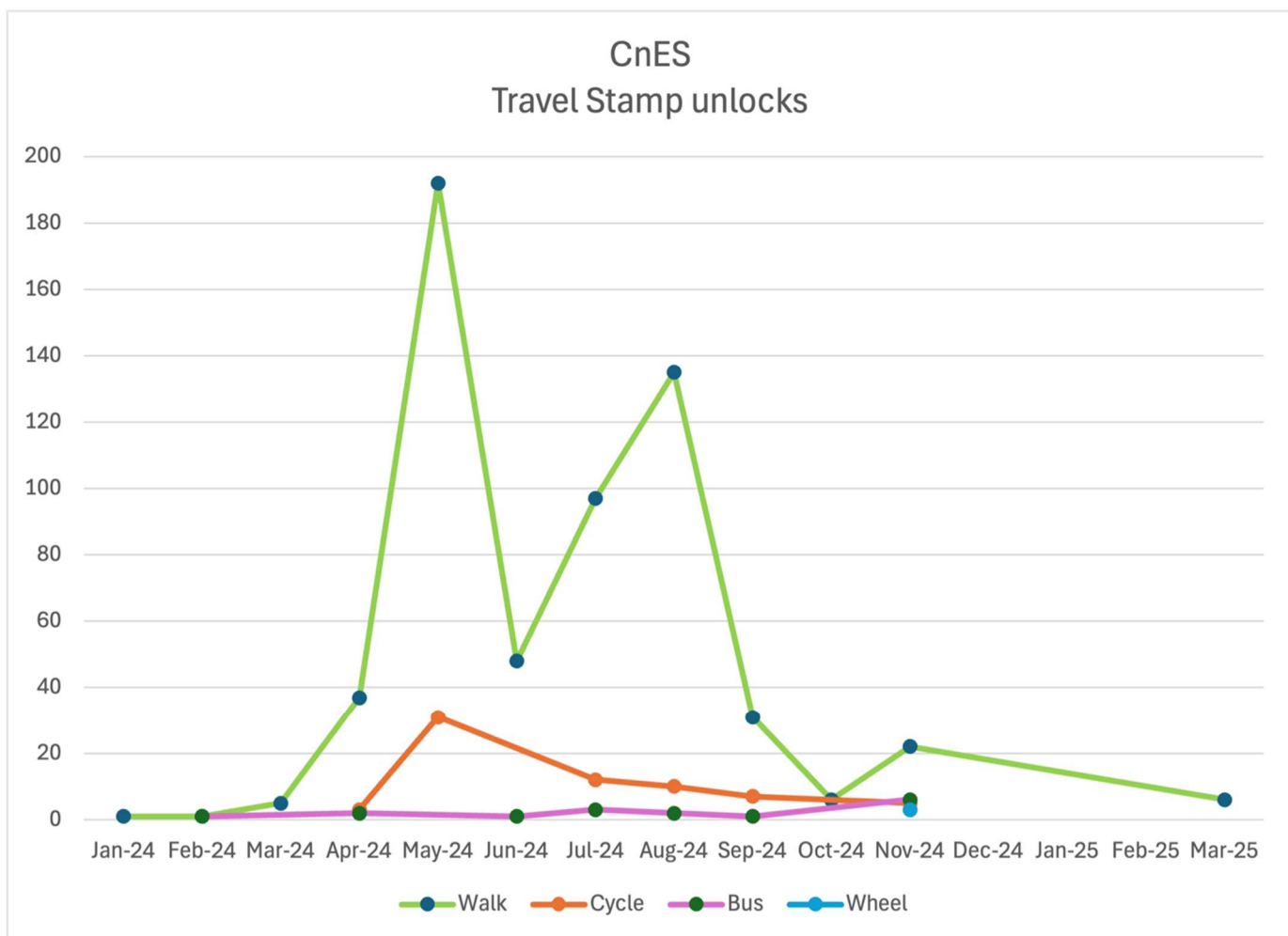
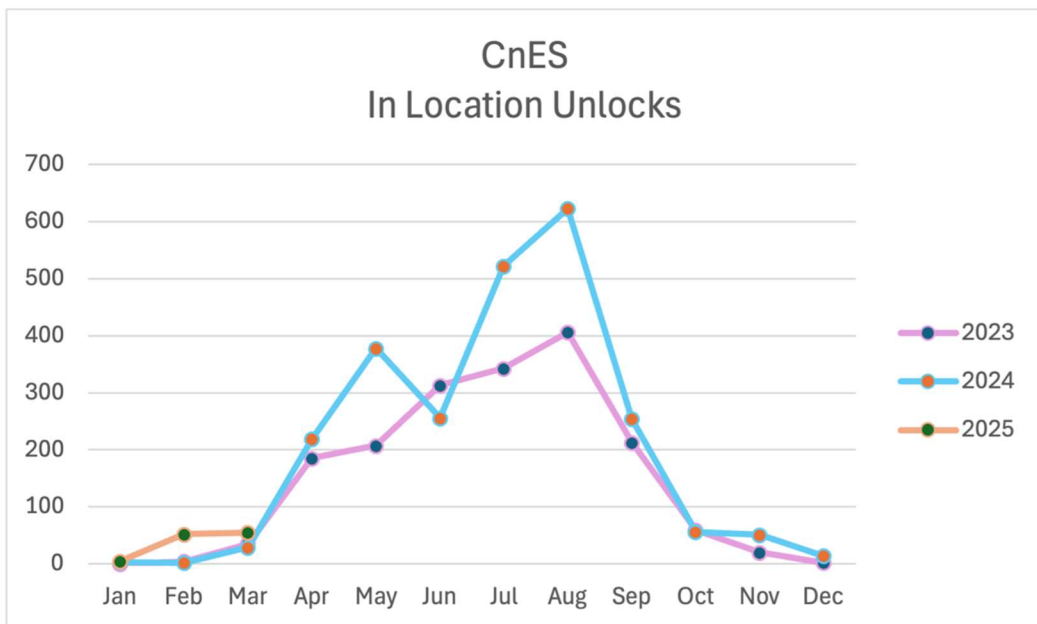
Report by: Katy Beasley
Designation: Scottish Islands Passport Project Manager
Date: April 2025

Appendix 1: Sample Local Authority data

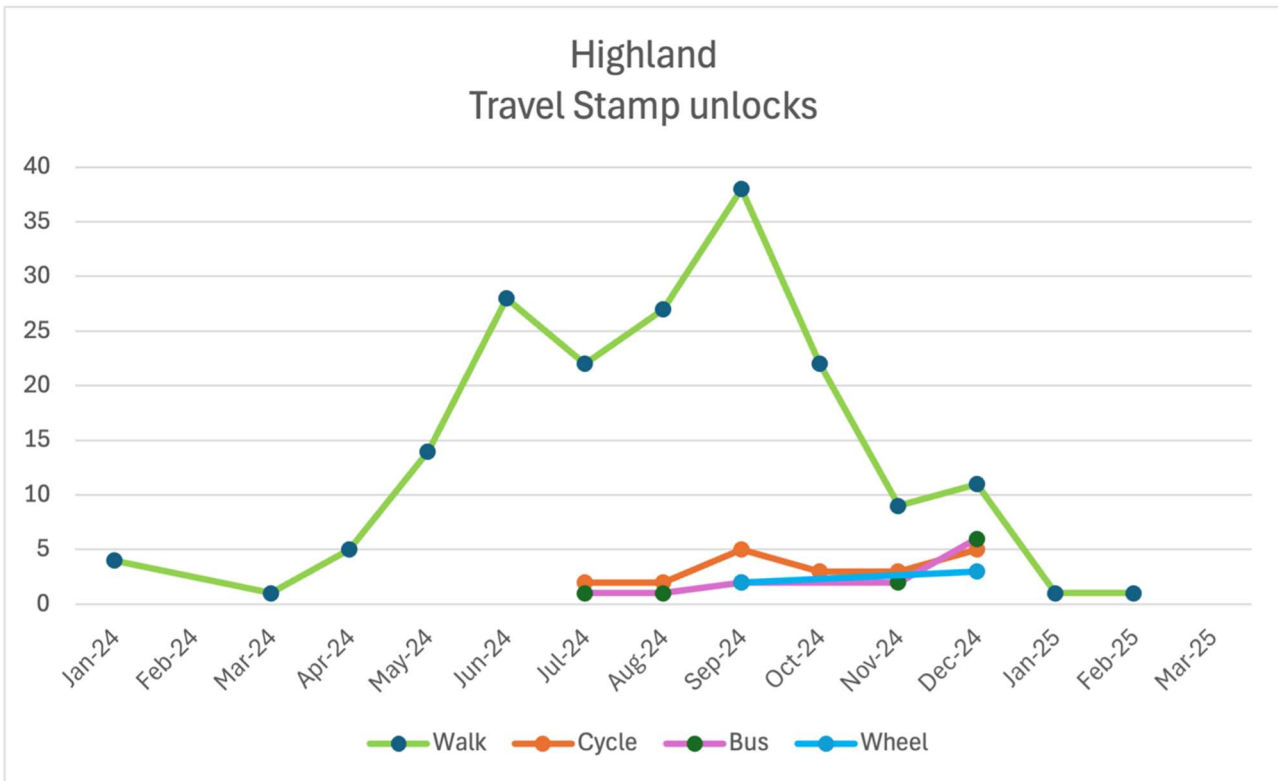
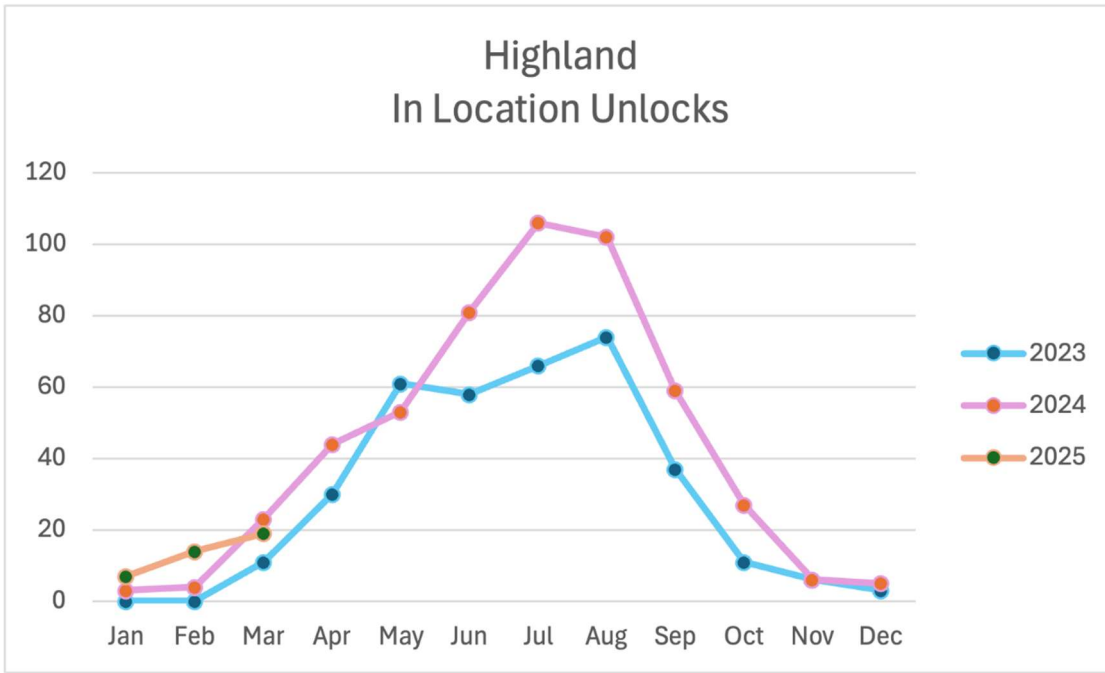
Argyll & Bute – 16 islands



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar – 15 islands



Highland – 7 islands



Orkney – 17 islands

