

**Report to Partnership Meeting 6 October 2022**

**RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY**

**SCOTTISH ISLANDS PASSPORT UPDATE**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

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



**Digital app and Website**

Since the Ministerial launch on South Ronaldsay in April this year, significant growth in app activity far exceeding projections has been recorded. The highlights are:

- over 8,000 app downloads and nearly 50,000 unique sessions as of the start of August
- stamps collected for each of the 72 islands covered by the app
- UK users make up 80% of our audience

Initial analysis on the engagement rate with app users has been carried out, comparing the Scottish Islands Passport app against a number of similar apps in the field. This indicated that the Scottish Islands Passport app is strongly outperforming others in terms of active users, despite operating in some of the most outlying and least visited territory in Scotland. App activity has been recorded on all of the islands covered by the project and our percentage of active users is 2.7 times the average for other apps in the comparison pool.

The app continues to be developed to include additional functionality to enhance the user experience and work is currently underway to start using the app to deliver targeted push notifications. These will enable specific messages and prompts to be delivered to groups of app users, facilitating targeted marketing and opportunities to influence visitor behaviour.

The website, which is designed primarily to funnel visitors to the app, is being kept up to date to reflect developments.

**Travelogues and physical stamps**

The physical travelogues, which were part of the original project scope, are pocket guides which help visitors explore Scotland's islands using themes and areas of specific interest. As well as providing inspiration for islands to visit, travellers can collect passport stamps for the islands they visit using a network of rubbing plates we have installed with the help of island communities. The travelogues also reflect a slow travel ethos and are designed to be lifelong keepsakes, with space for users to add their own notes and memories of their island journeys.

The first full version in the series of the thematic travelogues is 'Meet the Maker' and focusses on artists and makers across the islands included in the project. The travelogues are printed and ready to ship, and the final stamp points visitors can use to stamp them are being installed on the main islands featured in the travelogue.

We have partnered with Isle20.com as our official online stockist for the travelogues. We are also working with island retailers and transport providers to establish physical points of sale. There is opportunity to

promote shoulder season travel, one of the key project aims, and we will be targeting the Christmas gift market with seasonal promotion.

There have been some delays installing all the stamp points on the islands due to capacity constraints both within the team and within the partner island organisations. Despite this, we continue to receive positive feedback on the design and quality of the stamps, and interest in the physical travelogues remains high.

The next travelogue in the series, 'Shaping Our Islands' celebrates the built heritage of the islands and will be released in Spring 2023.

### **Engagement & working with Partners**

Significant engagement with island businesses and community groups has been a key element of installing the rubbing stamps. Part of this work has included checking and refreshing content held for each island with island partners, ensuring that information remains up to date and appropriate. The app also includes an in-built feedback function, enabling users to advise of recent changes or suggest new content for inclusion on an ad hoc basis.

Work is also underway to identify and connect with island-based charities who are interested in having their information included in the app, providing an opportunity for visitors to donate directly to these important organisations.

Attendance at monthly Calmac and West Coast DMO meetings continues, and a newsletter was recently shared via the mailing list and social media channels to update stakeholders on progress.

### **Marketing**

Earlier in the summer, a long-planned takeover of Inverness Airport arrivals was installed. As well as traditional large adverts on the wall spaces, the installation includes stamps from all of our islands on floor vinyls, an Instagram wall and a plane coming into land on a model island built in the middle of the luggage carousel. This builds on previous work in Inverness and other HIAL sites where we previously installed posters and promotional giveaway stations.

Work is also underway with CalMac who have agreed a package of posters and foamex boards on a number of vessels across the network, as well as a digital offering. Promotional activity is also continuing with Northlink Ferries and Citylink.

Scottish Government Tourism are creating a short video, soon to be released, which promotes the Scottish Islands Passport. This will extend the reach of the project to new audiences and provide content which can be shared on project platforms.

The project is also promoted on island, with continuous engagement with partners and island stakeholders who are well placed to support this.

As soon as project capacity allows, social media activity will be increased, including a series of promotional giveaways.

### **Funding**

The project is funded until September 2023. The launch of the physical travelogues provides an opportunity to generate unrestricted revenue.

There is also significant potential to create revenue through advertising, however this would need to be considered carefully in line with the aims of the project.

Additional funding and investment will be sought to ensure continuity of the work, and to respond to interest in expansion and further development.

### **Project Resource**

In June, Kirsten Gow (0.3 of the project's 1 FTE) handed in her notice to focus on her PhD studies. Her last day will be September 30<sup>th</sup>. Continuity will be maintained with Sarah Compton-Bishop (0.7 FTE) staying in post, however overall capacity will be reduced.

The job-share vacancy will be advertised however, at the time of writing, this has not yet gone out to advert. Interim options are being considered to support Sarah, however the overall pace of work will be impacted until a substantive replacement is appointed. Maintenance of the existing products and delivery of key milestones will be prioritised accordingly.

### **Recommendation**

Members are asked to note this report.

### **Risk Register**

#### RTS Delivery

Impact – Positive

Comment –

#### Policy

Impact – Positive

Comment –

#### Financial

Impact – Positive

Comment –

#### Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment

**Report by:** Sarah Compton-Bishop

**Designation:** Scottish Islands Passport Project Manager

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022