

Item:

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Report to Partnership Meeting of 4 December 2009

RAIL

European Joint Working Sustainable Transport in Rural Tourism (STIR)

1. HITRANS and HIE officers have been looking into the opportunity to be gained by joining a consortium to bid for funds from the ERDF Interreg 1VB Northern Periphery Programme (NPP).
2. STIR is currently a NPP Preparatory Project with partners in Sweden and Iceland. The application for the main project must be submitted by Feb 2010, and project would then run from June 2010 for 3 years.
3. The project aims to support the development of new or improved transport services in tourism areas. These could include busy tourist destinations or areas that are trying to encourage more tourism. Transport services could be targeted at tourists, but also benefit residents working in the industry. In addition actions and interventions that makes a tourist destination more attractive, for example by removing congestion, could be considered.
4. Interventions might include 'hard' measures such as new long-distance or local coach/bus services or improvements in integration between these, or 'soft' measures such as improved transport information for tourists, encouraging packaging of transport with other tourism goods such as accommodation.
5. If successful, the NPP will potentially provide 60% of project funding, and HIE may be able to add additional value through participation in promoting this important economic sector in the Highlands and Islands. Whilst 'new' project ideas are welcome, funding could be used to add additional value to initiatives currently being promoted through Councils for planned investment in transport that would have significant benefits for tourism in the area. The total project value could be up to 1.5m euro over 3 years across all partner countries, with a proportion of this funding coming to each partner area.
6. Constituent Councils have been involved in development of this project and officers are currently evaluating potential opportunities for co-funding of initiatives across the region and within their individual areas. Formal commitment to participate in the bid is not required until February. A further report will be provided to the Board seeking a decision as to whether to participate in the Bid, once further details of the nature of any bid as it might benefit our area are available.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note this position and agree for further work to be undertaken to establish the viability and benefits from participating in the bid for funding of the STIR Project.

Report by: Frank Roach
Designation: Partnership Manager

Date:

22nd November 2009