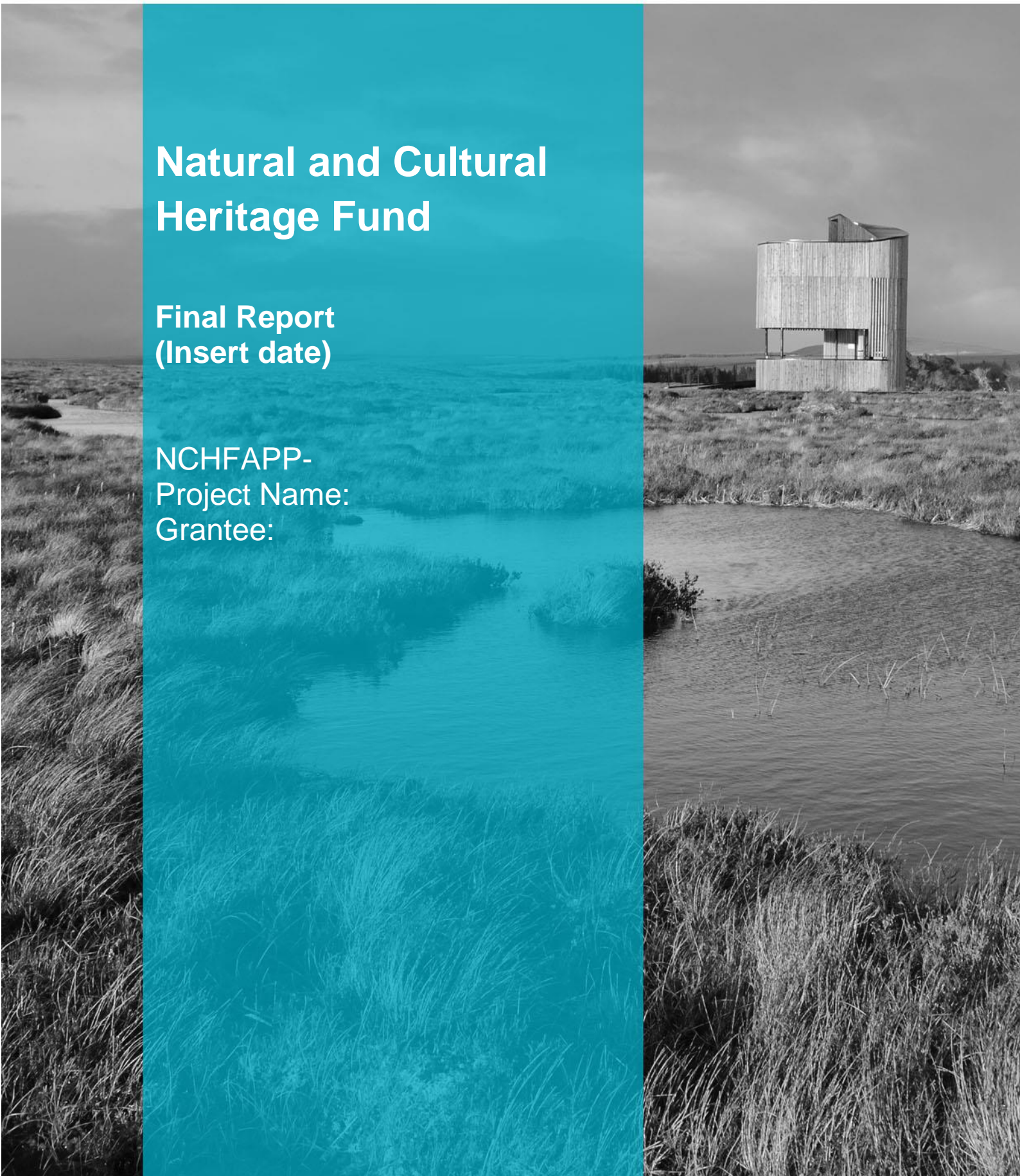


# Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund

**Final Report  
(Insert date)**

**NCHFAPP-  
Project Name:  
Grantee:**



## Version Control

Date	Issue	Status	Author	Authorised by
11/01/2019	V1	Draft	EM	
04/03/2020	V2	Draft	EM	
16/09/2020	V3	Final	LC	EM
23/3/23	V4	Updated final	KM	KM
	V5			
	V6			
	V7			

## Lead Partner Details

Lead Partner Details	
Strategic Intervention Title	Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund
Strategic Intervention Lead Partner	NatureScot
Name of SI Manager that the Project will report to	Arthur Keller

## Grantee Details

Grantee Details	
Grantee Organisation Name	Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland
Project Manager Name	Dougie Baird
Project Manager Address	Unit 4, Fountain Mews, Bridge of Allan, Stirling, FK9 4EN
Project Manager Email Address	dougie@outdooraccesstrustforscotland.org.uk
Project Manager Telephone Number	0782 455 5161

## Introduction

This Final Report is a key component of the Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and it is a condition of the Delivery Contract that this is completed.

The Final Report aims to summarise the impact the project has had to date and will enable the lead partner to comprehensively report to the Managing Authority. This report must be completed within 3 months of project completion and submitted no later than 13 October 2023.

Grantees must be able to keep detailed records, suitable for local, national and EU audits, up to 31 December 2030 or as otherwise directed.

The Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund final report will include a summary of the monitoring of the project and includes both qualitative and quantitative information gathered from monitoring activities and achievement of milestones. The report will also outline the final outputs and describe how they contribute to the Outcomes and Horizontal Themes of the Fund.

The purpose of the Final Report is to obtain an overview and understanding of the impact the project has had to date. This will be achieved by;

- Confirming the final outputs deliver against the Horizontal Themes and Outcomes
- Reviewing the evidence gathered for the agreed Outcome Measures laid out in Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. This includes quantitative (counts, survey results) and qualitative information (photos, videos, testimonies).

Please refer to the Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance in your share file.

The Final Report and supporting documents will be subject to audit from bodies ranging from the European Commission and European Court of Auditors to the Scottish Government Audit Authority and Managing Authority.

The Final Report and Associated Annexes are structured as follows:

Document	Name	Source
Final Report	Final Report	Template provided by NatureScot.
Annex 1	Photographic records	Grantee Document(s).
Annex 2	Data sheet	Grantee Document(s).
Annex 3	Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	Grantee Document(s).
Annex 4	Case study	Grantee Document(s).
Annex 5	Video	Grantee Document (s)

When uploading files through Objective Connect, please use the following file naming convention:

**NCHFAPP-xxx – Grantee Name – Project Name – Calendar Year – Document name or Annex No – Annex Name – Date [format xx full month full year]**

Examples as follows for a series of files for the same reporting period:

NCHFAPP-076-02 - Grantee Name - Project Name - 2023 - Final Report – 30 September 2023

NCHFAPP-076-02 - Grantee Name - Project Name – 2023 - Final Report - Annex 1 - Data sheet – 30 September 2023

NCHFAPP-076-02 - Grantee Name - Project Name - 2023 - Final Report - Annex 2 – Monitoring and Evaluation plan – 30 September 2023

NCHFAPP-076-02 - Grantee Name - Project Name - 2023 - Final Report - Annex 3 - Case study – 30 September 2023

Reporting files should be uploaded onto Objective Connect. Participant Guidance link below:

[\*eRDMS Participants Guide\*](#)

# Final Report

## 1. Project Impact Summary

**Highlights / Milestones Achieved** - Summarise the main impacts of your project, in relation to agreed outputs, milestones and outcomes. Use **annex** to demonstrate before/after impact.

The Skye Iconic Sites Project has delivered a massive **impact** to Skye via a vast range of multi-faceted actions that will all be sustained, built on and continue to deliver significant visitor experience, environmental and local economic benefits.

Before the infrastructure upgrades Skye had a growing international reputation as a negative tourist experience due to a lack of basic visitor infrastructure at major destinations. At this final evaluation period we have recorded the following highlight **impacts** via this grant funding.

The **impact** of the projects' interventions has had on visitors to the 3 sites:

- On average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of 10 which means 'extremely good'.
- The propensity to recommend the 3 sites to friends and family was 'very likely' with an average rating of 9.3 out of 10 across all sites.
- 88% of respondents said that their experience motivated them to visit more destinations on Skye now or in future.
- 76% said that they would like to stay longer on Skye next time.

The **impact** of the communications plan was massive with the following achieved;

- 4.2M total online coverage views about the SISP project
- 99 pieces of TV coverage
- 43 pieces of print coverage
- 968,500 total print coverage circulation
- 56 pieces of online coverage
- 69 was average domain authority
- 8100 total social engagements
- 303 facebook shares

The **impact** of the SISP project on the lives of local communities in the project areas:

-An average rating of 8.9 out of 10 (maximum) was given by local people in terms of their agreement with the fact that 'the upgraded visitor infrastructure at the Storr, Quiraing and Fairy Pools has enhanced the 'quality of experience' for visitors. This reflects a very strong agreement that visitor experience has been enhanced.

-An average agreement rating of 8.4 out of 10 was given by local people to the query about whether consulting with the local community about the content for the interpretation boards has enabled local people to contribute to decisions and promote the identity of the area. This is a strong endorsement that as a community OATS consulting on the interpretation board content was very valuable.



-An average 8.8 out of 10 (very high) believe that upgrading the visitor infrastructure at the 3 sites has brought benefits to local people including reduced roadside parking congestion, roadway littering, toileting (Storr and Fairy Pools) and site erosion.

-An average 8.9 out of 10 agreed that upgrading the visitor facilities at the 3 sites has attracted the less mobile and young to enjoy the sites (more fully) via the accessible paths, viewpoints and bridges (where applicable).

-An average 8.3 out of 10 agreed that the improved visitor facilities are likely to attract users to make longer visits to the 3 sites and visit Skye for longer overall.

-An average 8.6 out of 10 agreed that the improved visitor infrastructure at the 3 sites is contributing to lengthening the tourist season on Skye.

-An average 8.4 out of 10 agreed that the sites interpretation itself is likely to motivate visitors to visit other heritage locations and centres whilst on Skye.

#### Visitor growth **impact** from the 3 x visitor sites and implications for local economy and employment:

\*It is non-advisable to include the COVID years due to global lockdowns, although full lockdown period people and parking count data is in Annex 2.

-A record of footfall comparing the sites (Storr and Fairy Pools) for 2019 and 2023 saw a 31% increase in averaged site footfall via the people counters. This corresponds to a 31% growth in tourism island wide equating to a direct 31% growth in bed nights and usage of local services meaning a 31% increase in local employment through hospitality and visitor services (eg. food, fuel, garages, pharmacy, specialist guides, etc). It's also worth noting the tourism growth impact on the Kyle of Lochalsh services economy and arial transport hubs facilitating these tourists such as Inverness and rural surrounds. In fact visitor growth to the Quiraing was 3.5 times that of 2015 levels but there are no comparisons with 2019 because there was no calibrated people counter in place. However, this 3.5 multiplier does suggest at least a 31% year on year like for like visitor growth at the Quiraing also.

Further supporting this tourism growth evidence, we recorded across the recently built extensive parking infrastructure at all 3 sites that the 'like for like' tourism growth comparison between 2022 and 2023 (months-Feb/March/April) was an incredible 34%.

-The SISP project employed as many local contractors as possible. Site contractors (local and mainland based) delivered infrastructure and ecological works with some localized clerk of works for the long-term. The project employed local haulage contractors, and utilised local quarry materials (wherever possible where materials suited). More is reported on this in the HORIZONTAL THEMES section 4.

#### The **impact** of the SISP project interpretation:

The Annex 4 Case Study was prepared as this community project output was felt to be such a success story showing the communities' passion for their surroundings and local cultural history. The interpretation element involved genuinely consulting local communities (with 2 x village hall events and 1 x primary schools' session) on what they felt were the stories and local identity associations that should be developed as interpretation themes.

#### **These are the major milestones the SISP programme has achieved:**

- Changed Skyes growing international reputation as a negative tourist experience due to a lack of basic visitor infrastructure at major destinations (the Quiraing/Storr/Fairy Pools)
- Facilitated a wider variety of visitor audiences to more fully experience iconic locations via; accessible paths, main path upgrades, viewpoints, bridges and safe movement.
- Undertook sustainable habitat restoration actions on areas heavily eroded due to footfall.

- Created new interpretation boards that fully capture the cultural and historical identity of the area through an exemplary community and specialist planning process.
- Improved visitor orientation at all three sites.
- Contributed to visitor management planning on Skye through responsive visitor demand systems to encourage visitor dispersal to alternative locations on Skye.
- Has grown the local visitor and services economy, providing contractors and long-term site-based employment. Has also helped grow the surrounding economy by marketing other heritage themed destinations through the interpretation and MySkyeTime App.

**Below are the practical outputs we delivered which drove the **impacts** as reported above:**

- Main path upgrades and new main path additions at the Fairy Pools, the Quiraing and the Storr.
- Creation of all ability's paths at all 3 sites.
- Two new bridges at the Fairy Pools.
- All abilities access and viewpoint at the Quiraing.
- Linked spur viewpoint paths by pools locations at the Fairy Pools, for richer enjoyment of pools.
- Better viewpoint options near to car parks to accommodate those with less mobility and alternative site-based aspirations. This has enabled a wider user segment, including; the less mobile, young families, photographers' and outdoor event usage (picnics, weddings & celebrations, discussion groups, art, generic event space, retail etc).
- 13 new or updated interpretation panels plus site map and orientation boards with SOAC messaging onto existing structures. Activated via procurement of interpretation consultant with public consultation through to panel completion.
- Installation of people counters.
- Sustainable ecological restoration at all three sites involving experimental local provenance seed re-establishment, ground establishment, and replacement turf establishment over 2-3 years to geojute decomposition.
- Employment provided via the project works with long-term f/t staff employed year-round and ongoing monitoring works planned.
- Promoting equal opportunities for work contract competition and volunteering and good compliance with procurement processes.

*Please note that the above outputs listed fall within a suite of visitor infrastructure improvements at the 3 x visitor sites achieved by the SISP, which includes; a ranger service, public information, toilets, new car parking, safer promoted crossing points and people shelters.*

#### **The overriding 'legacy' impact of the SISP project**

An excellent 'can do' partnership working team fixed on a shared vision of success made this a very successful project. For years to come the SISP partnership will continue to deliver visitor experience benefits on Skye with positive impact to the local economy, per and visitors alike.

#### **Supporting documents required:**

- N/A No annex supplied.

## **2. Project Outputs**

**Progress on Outputs** – Please report on the delivery of your project outputs (as stated in the most up to date version of your activity plan) and state any changes to original outputs. If you have already included this information in your last progress report, please copy and paste.

Activity / Deliverable	Start Date	End Date	Outputs	Final Output
1a. Procure interpretation consultant	June 2021	June 2021	Secured a highly experienced interpretation consultant to help with the project. This involved designing the project and approach, objectives, local consultation (1b) and interpretation plan framework document (with all consultative and specialist input rudiments) through to final output design and delivery on-site.	13 interpretation panels and 2 x orientation and SOAC panels delivered in full over project period. Fabrication and erection completed by separate sub-contractor in March 2023. Concrete foundation settings erected by local contractor in Dec 2022.
1b. Public consultation on SISP interpretation	Sept 2021	Dec 2021	This element was very sensibly supported by a very knowledgeable and experienced local sub-contractor who was wired into the local communities (of the visitor sites) and schools. He raised awareness and engaged the community and integrated the communities ideas.	The 'output' was a thoroughly engaging consultation process, generating themes and ideas from the local community that harnessed the cultural landscape of Skye. Stories of the land fronted the consultation approach with associated visual props, maps and sensory devices.
1c. Installation of People Counters	May 2022	Ongoing (to and beyond 2030 monitoring period)	Real time data on numbers of users and visiting dates to the 3 x sites. Data for future platforms to inform use of the sites.	Delivered in full over project period.
1d. Interpretation Panels	Jan 2023	March 2023	Public information and high quality visitor experience.	13 interpretation panels and 2 x orientation and SOAC panels delivered in full over project period.
1e. Interpretation Infrastructure (end delivery)	June 2021	May 2023	Evaluating if better quality visitor interpretation infrastructure has been achieved.	The local community surveys undertaken showed an average agreement rating of 8.4 out of 10 when asked about whether consulting with the local community <i>about the content for the interpretation boards has enabled local people to contribute to decisions and promote the identity of the area</i> . 8.4 is a strong endorsement rating from the community about the interpretation planning process and final infrastructure.
1f.	March 2023	March 2023	Projects evaluation and Legacy.	Delivered in full during SISP review meeting in March 2023 where the positive benefits of the OATS programme were reviewed. This included a celebration of the partnership and a full partners commitment to keep the SISP partnership going and do more of the same positive visitor



				infrastructure works at other high pressure visitor sites on Skye. Other programme delivery plans are already afoot.
Phase 1 2a. Viewpoints 2b. Quiraing All Abilities path	Jan 2022	Jan 2022	Improved access to Quiraing for a wider spectrum of visitors. Path designer and clerk of works were key to delivery.	Better quality and new access infrastructure delivered in full over project period. Plus on average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of 10 which means 'extremely good'.
Phase 2 2c. Quiraing Path Build Main Path upgrade	Oct 2021	March 2023	Improved access to Quiraing for a wider spectrum of visitors. Path designer and clerk of works were key to delivery.	Better quality and new access infrastructure delivered in full over project period. Plus on average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.7 (specific to Quiraing) out of 10 which means 'extremely good'. Worth bearing in mind that Quiraing still has no toilet block!
2e. Fairy Pools Bridges	Oct 2021	May 2022	Improved access to Fairy Pools for a wider range of users and for more days. Path designer and clerk of works were key to delivery.	Massive growth in visitors to the Fairy Pools by all age groups and better access for less mobile. 2 new bridges for crossing the water courses, providing access to more and a wider diversity of users. On average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of 10 (specific to Fairy Pools) which means 'extremely good'. Visitor count figures up 43% on like for like months (Feb/March/April) last year. Delivered in full over project period.
Phase 1 2f. Viewpoints 2g. Fairy Pools descent Path	Oct 2021	Jan 2023	Improved access to Fairy Pools. Better quality visitor experience.	Better quality and new access infrastructure. Better quality experience for visitor overall. Delivered in full over project period. On average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of 10 (specific to Fairy Pools) which means 'extremely good'.
Phase 2 2h. Fairy Pools Path Build Flats Path	Jan 2022	Dec 2023	Improved access to Fairy Pools for a wider range of users and for more days.	Better quality and new access infrastructure. Better quality visitor experience. On average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of 10 (specific to Fairy Pools) which means 'extremely good'.
Sites Ecological restoration: Review of techniques	April 2021	April 2021	Brief to investigate the best habitat restoration techniques to inform habitat restoration actions for each of the 3 sites	Refined habitat restoration brief achieved. Use and evaluation of previous techniques and development of new ones.

and brief for first phase works.			which have suffered erosion from footfall.	
3a. Quiraing Habitat Restoration	Oct 2021	March 2023	Regeneration of protected habitats. Improved visitor experience.	Ground prepared for natural regeneration. Ongoing clerk of works with monitoring overview plus post project habitat survey repeated over 5 years.
3b. Fairy Pools Habitat Restoration	June 2022	March 2023	Regeneration of protected habitats. Improved visitor experience.	Ground prepared for natural regeneration. Ongoing clerk of works with monitoring overview plus post project habitat survey repeated over 5 years.
3c. Storr Habitat Restoration	Sept 2021	March 2023	Regeneration of protected habitats. Improved visitor experience.	Ground prepared for natural regeneration. Ongoing clerk of works with monitoring overview plus post project habitat survey repeated over 5 years.
Integrated press release articles covering the works over the 3 x sites over the period of the project	May 2021	March 2023	Whilst the project was undertaken in practical phases (as described as activities 1 to 3 in this table) to create enough content for news stories press releases have led with the key 'action' (eg. Fairy Pools Bridges) but have always filled out the article with the full story behind the SISP project mission across the 3 x sites and for the benefit of Skye, visitors and its residents.	Media coverage: -4.2M total online coverage views about the SISP project -99 pieces of TV coverage -43 pieces of print coverage -968,500 total print coverage circulation - 56 pieces of online coverage -69 was average domain authority -8100 total social engagements -303 facebook shares
Generic: Administration project management tasks undergone	Complete project period	Complete project period and monitoring until 2030	Full process measures undergone during project period. Ongoing monitoring planned until 2030.	The project has fulfilled the project administrative requirements relating to <b>Annex 4 – Process Measure Definitions NCHF- Round 1 – Monitoring and Evaluation Framework Guidance</b>
<b>Supporting documents required:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Annex 1 – Photographic records</li> </ul>				

### 3. Project Outcomes

**Project Impact on Outcomes** – Describe the evidence gathered for each Outcome Measure, as stated in your Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Please provide proof of data collection in the annex.

1. **Heritage assets are more accessible and better promoted:**

A whole plethora of actions that have strongly increased the accessibility at the 3 x iconic visitor sites on Skye have been undertaken. The heritage assets are now far more accessible with viewpoints very near to car park areas and directly linked to short distance accessible paths.

The dedicated viewpoint spaces are carefully designed to provide 360 degree panoramic views of the mountain areas and beyond. They have brought the sites closer to those with mobility issues. They extend the scope of experience to that of passive single sensory view from a windscreen to instead a fully active sensory experience in these wild feeling environments.

Often people put themselves into a bracket of what they can and cannot do and we've strongly influenced the concept of self-constraint and limitation. We've even linked the more accessible paths from the viewpoint to lure the less mobile along the main path link (prioritising culvert systems to reduce flooding of paths) improving path condition to optimise all abilities visitor flow within the first 400m – just something for people to try, something where people can push themselves a little further and feel fully alive in the energy of the mountain environment.

In discussion with those with mobility issues at the Quiraing visitors felt very pleased that they got further and experienced a lot more than they initially thought possible. Young families with pushchairs were delighted that they pushed their 2 year old a long way off from the carpark.

However, the latent visitor needs to know that a more accessible offer is on offer at the 3 sites so we've addressed this through our marketing dissemination on the site descriptions and the improved 'mobility' offer. We have taken account of the NS/PFA **Outdoor Accessibility Guidance** and ensured that our communications plan (run in parallel with project delivery) has communicated the upgraded fully accessible options available from each site carpark.

An evaluation from trip advisor reviews shows that over the last 6 months visitors have been impressed with the new visitor infrastructure particularly the easy walk paths and toilets. It is very positive to read this change of perception from fore-bidding yet stunning mountain walks (in the case of the Storr) to it now being positioned (by recent visitors) as a destination for all peoples and age groups.

Skye has had an explosion of visitors from overseas and for the 3 x visitor sites this continues to be the case, with an average 77% of the sites visitors being from overseas with 19% from other UK, 5% from elsewhere in Scotland and <1% local. It would be wrong to attribute any growth in overseas visitors due to this project directly but it is possible that our media work with messaging about upgraded visitor infrastructure has influenced this.

Trip advisor ratings for all 3 sites are consistently high and there is a definite recognition of the upgrades within the more recent reviews (in the last 6 months). For example references are made to the 'new toilet block, 'ample parking', 'well made path', 'easy'. This very encouraging drip feeding of endorsements in growing number will carry-on putting the positive positioning messages across for all 3 x sites.

The myskyetime app launched by the SISP partnership in association with this project has just over 800 adopters, via App store + Google play. Launched late March this year (2023) it is promoted via [www.MySkyetime.com](http://www.MySkyetime.com) with printed promotion in "The Visitor" Magazine, "The Skye" magazine, A5 flyers distributed across Skye, I Centre in Inverness and Edinburgh. The SISP partnership are currently negotiating with Transport Scotland to get promote via the Electronic sign board on the Skye Bridge.

**Measure 2:** Visitor experiences and perceptions are positive.

Our visitor surveys averaged across the 3 x sites tell us that on average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of maximum 10 which means 'extremely good'. The propensity to recommend the 3 sites to friends and family was 'very likely' with an average rating of 9.3 out of 10 across all sites. Both these statistics reflect very positive visitor experience perception across the broad range of users surveyed.

We also feel that the one to one discussions play a strong and insightful element of the evaluation. What we learnt from these was that:

-They had been quite surprised at how good the paths were at the Storr and the Fairy Pools with walking in trainers very easy and with plenty room to pass.

**Measure 3:** Increase in attendance at heritage events or places of culture or nature.

A record of footfall comparing the sites (Storr and Fairy Pools) for 2019 and 2023 saw a 31% increase in averaged site footfall via the people counters. This corresponds to a 31% growth in tourism island wide equating to a direct 31% growth in bed nights and usage of local services meaning a 31% increase in local employment through hospitality and visitor services (eg. food, fuel, garages, pharmacy, specialist guides, etc). It's also worth noting the tourism growth impact on the Kyle of Lochalsh services economy and arial transport hubs facilitating these tourists such as Inverness and rural surrounds.

Visitor growth to the Quiraing site was 3.5 times that of 2015 levels but there are no comparisons with 2019 because there was no calibrated people counter in place. However, this 350% increase suggests enormous growth!

The levels of visitors remains high all year round and on Skye has no low season.

Visitors surveys showed that:-

- On average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of 10 which means 'extremely good'.
- The propensity to recommend the 3 sites to friends and family was 'very likely' with an average rating of 9.3 out of 10 across all sites.
- 88% of respondents said that their experience motivated them to visit more destinations on Skye now or in future.
- 76% said that they would like to stay longer on Skye next time.

**Measure 7:** Improved perceptions of local people – benefits perceived by local people who live in your projects area such as: the percentage of who rate that it is a very good place to live and/or has been

The impact of the SISP project on the lives of local communities in the project areas is recorded below:-

-An average rating of 8.9 out of 10 (maximum) was given by local people in terms of their agreement with the fact that 'the upgraded visitor infrastructure at the Storr, Quiraing and Fairy Pools has enhanced the 'quality of experience' for visitors. This reflects a very strong agreement and preception that visitor experience has been enhanced.

<p>improved by your project and the extent to which they have been able to contribute to local decisions.</p>	<p>-An average agreement rating of 8.4 out of 10 was given by local people to the query about whether consulting with the local community about the content for the interpretation boards has enabled local people to contribute to decisions and promote the identity of the area. This is a strong endorsement that as a community OATS consulting on the interpretation board content was very valuable.</p> <p>-An average 8.8 out of 10 (very high) believe that upgrading the visitor infrastructure at the 3 sites has brought benefits to local people including reduced roadside parking congestion, roadway littering, toileting (Storr and Fairy Pools) and site erosion.</p> <p>-An average 8.9 out of 10 agreed that upgrading the visitor facilities at the 3 sites has attracted the less mobile and young to enjoy the sites (more fully) via the accessible paths, viewpoints and bridges (where applicable).</p> <p>-An average 8.3 out of 10 agreed that the improved visitor facilities are likely to attract users to make longer visits to the 3 sites and visit Skye for longer overall.</p> <p>-An average 8.6 out of 10 agreed that the improved visitor infrastructure at the 3 sites is contributing to lengthening the tourist season on Skye.</p> <p>-An average 8.4 out of 10 agreed that the sites interpretation itself is likely to motivate visitors to visit other heritage locations and centres whilst on Skye.</p> <p>One to one discussions provided insightful element to the evaluation. What we learnt from local people was the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The amount of cars parked edging right into the main roads at the 3 x sites meant it was getting dangerous for other road users.</li> <li>○ The sentiment was that from a health and safety point of view something really did have to be done at the 3 x sites because the toileting situation was concerning.</li> <li>○ That some tourists were starting to treat Skye like a national wildlife park, just stopping their cars on the road and looking out with binoculars with no care of it being a main road.</li> </ul> <p>In summary, the measure shows that local perceptions of the 3 sites have improved a lot and they felt engaged in decision making.</p>
<p><b>2. The quality of visitor experience to the heritage assets is enhanced:</b></p> <p><b>Measure 2:</b> Visitor experiences and perceptions are positive.</p>	<p>As well as the accessibility element (as fully reported above) the orientation and interpretation element has played a strong part also. Quality is also about what people go home with in terms of memory and follow-up as well as the direct experience itself. This is the enhancement factor.</p> <p>The interpretation is designed to inspire and encourage visitors to learn and experience more about Skye through sowing the seed of intrigue.</p> <p>Our visitor surveys averaged across the 3 x sites tell us that average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of maximum 10 which means 'extremely good'. The propensity to recommend the 3 sites to friends and family was 'very likely' with an average rating of 9.3 out of 10 across all sites. Both these statistics reflect very positive visitor experience perception across the broad range of users surveyed.</p>

**Measure 3:** Increase in attendance at heritage events or places of culture or nature.

In discussion with visitors we found that most were surprised at the quality of the paths and visitor infrastructure. They were surprised to be able to walk up the Storr in trainers because the path was so good. More can be gleaned from the qualitative comments responses in the Visitor Surveys on the Annex 2 Data sheet.

A record of footfall comparing the sites (Storr and Fairy Pools) for 2019 and 2023 saw a 31% increase in averaged site footfall via the people counters. This corresponds to a 31% growth in tourism island wide equating to a direct 31% growth in bed nights and usage of local services meaning a 31% increase in local employment through hospitality and visitor services (eg. food, fuel, garages, pharmacy, specialist guides, etc). It's also worth noting the tourism growth impact on the Kyle of Lochalsh services economy and arial transport hubs facilitating these tourists such as Inverness and rural surrounds.

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The levels of visitors remains high all year round and on Skye has no low season.

Visitors surveys showed that:-

- On average visitors rated the quality of the infrastructure as 8.9 out of 10 which means 'extremely good'.
- The propensity to recommend the 3 sites to friends and family was 'very likely' with an average rating of 9.3 out of 10 across all sites.
- 88% of respondents said that their experience motivated them to visit more destinations on Skye now or in future.
- 76% said that they would like to stay longer on Skye next time.

**Measure 7:** Improved perceptions of local people – benefits perceived by local people who live in your projects area such as: the percentage of who rate that it is a very good place to live and/or has been improved by your project and the extent to which they have been able to contribute to local decisions.

The impact of the SISP project on the lives of local communities in the project areas has been good so far as shown by the survey statistics below but there are far more benefits to come as the project outcomes bed in further over time.

Beyond the extremely significant visitor infrastructure interventions, on quality elements there has also been:-

- a. The **SISP project partnership work with the Interface programme** from Edinburgh University. The interface defined system is a robust on- road vehicle count system that transfers the live time levels of use to the mysyketime app which enables visitors to check how busy one of the 3 x sites. The aim is that it effectively encourages to influence the visitor to go somewhere alternative (there are destination highlight suggestions listed on the app) to reduce the traffic to a particular site. For locals this means that there is the potential deflection of traffic off the main roads to these sites and instead over to a slightly quieter part of the island. The Interface system is in the very early stages but promises to enable a wider data capture further back from the visitor sites (and to more visitor sites) to have a higher impact on a wider amount of public road routes, particularly those that are busiest.



- b. **The community voice has been really involved with the development of the interpretation outputs.** As documented in the case study (annex 4) local people were involved from the start. Initially the communities of Staffin and surrounds and secondly the Mingnish and Glen Brittle areas were invited to interpretation planning sessions that really did focus on the communities opinions and asking them to re-count stories of the areas people, landscape and culture. This resulted in the selection of key themes for the interpretation products for the 3 sites. Given approximately 4 interpretation boards per site the scope for including a range of themes has been significant.
- c. **The local people were invited to volunteering opportunities** at the Storr to undertake habitat restoration work involving the moving of turfs to re-seeding sites before placing jute netting to take the process through establishment phase.

The local community survey at project end has told us that;-

-An average rating of 8.9 out of 10 (maximum) was given by local people in terms of their agreement with the fact that 'the upgraded visitor infrastructure at the Storr, Quiraing and Fairy Pools has enhanced the 'quality of experience' for visitors. This reflects a very strong agreement that visitor experience has been enhanced.

-An average agreement rating of 8.4 out of 10 was given by local people to the query about whether consulting with the local community about the content for the interpretation boards has enabled local people to contribute to decisions and promote the identity of the area. This is a strong endorsement that as a community OATS consulting on the interpretation board content was very valuable.

-An average 8.8 out of 10 (very high) believe that upgrading the visitor infrastructure at the 3 sites has brought benefits to local people including reduced roadside parking congestion, roadway littering, toileting (Storr and Fairy Pools) and site erosion.

-An average 8.9 out of 10 agreed that upgrading the visitor facilities at the 3 sites has attracted the less mobile and young to enjoy the sites (more fully) via the accessible paths, viewpoints and bridges (where applicable).

-An average 8.3 out of 10 agreed that the improved visitor facilities are likely to attract users to make longer visits to the 3 sites and visit Skye for longer overall.

-An average 8.6 out of 10 agreed that the improved visitor infrastructure at the 3 sites is contributing to lengthening the tourist season on Skye.

-An average 8.4 out of 10 agreed that the sites interpretation itself is likely to motivate visitors to visit other heritage locations and centres whilst on Skye.

We also feel that the one to one discussions with local people and businesses have played a strong and insightful role. What we learnt from local people at the start of the project was the following:-

- o The amount of cars parked edging right into the main roads at the 3 x sites meant it was getting dangerous for other road users.
- o The sentiment was that from a health and safety point of view something really had to be done at the 3 x sites because the toileting situation was concerning.
- o That tourists were starting to treat Skye like a national wildlife park, just stopping their cars on the road and looking out with binoculars with no care of it being a main road.

	<p>There is no doubt that the visitor infrastructure is alleviating these pressures above. For a minority of visitors they will do what they want but the prevalence of SOAC messaging dedicated to the sensitive use of the sites and Skye generally should help put a strong and assertive message across to those who consume but show little respect to the landscape and others using it.</p>
<p><b>3. New products, services and jobs based on heritage assets are sustained and/or created.</b></p> <p><b>Measure 1:</b> Employment generation</p>	<p>Increasing and sustaining jobs is a priority for this NCHF funding. Over time this project will increase jobs even more in the tourism sector and the spin-off demand on other local services. Local accommodation businesses and SkyeConnect have said that Skye is now a year-round visitor destination. What will eventually happen is that tourism business owners will generate enough cashflow to set up other land-based industries and retail to thus expand the employment market beyond that of just tourism. Even at this point Skye has 1200 businesses currently operating.</p> <p>The agreed measure was to consider whether people were likely to stay longer on Skye as a result of their experience at one of the three upgraded visitor sites and thus increasing the demand on local hospitality, leisure services and subsequent employment generation. Question 6 of the visitor survey showed that on average across all 3 sites 76% of people would plan to stay longer on Skye next time (see annex 2 Visitor Survey Results and Analysis) with a significant 9.3 out of 10 average rating for the propensity to recommend the sites to friends and family, which equates to 'very likely'.</p> <p>There are a number of ways that the SISP project has driven new jobs in the heritage assets sector on Skye. These include:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Direct employment via the direct project outputs.</b> These include path builders (some local and the rest highlands based), materials from 2 local quarries on Skye, haulage contractors, concrete foundation for signs, ecological clerk of works, path building clerk of works, machinery hire. Plus upskilling of local knowledge so more skilled employment can be sustained on Skye itself year round.</li> <li><b>2. The ongoing sustainable management of the 3 visitor sites</b> overseen by one f/t ranger at Storr and 2 x p/t rangers, plus 2 x f/t visitor information and parking staff at Fairy Pools, very p/t ecological clerk of works, mobile coffee and snack vans.</li> <li><b>3. The economic impact of the upgrade on visitor growth</b> through positive message marketing about Skye through third parties globally is enormous given 4.2M person reach. This is also helped through tour companies who are offering Skye as a holiday option, Visit Scotland marketing, Trip Advisor, Instagram, other social media etc. All these marketing actions increase tourism growth to Skye and jobs therefore. Here is a re-cap of the SISP communications plan key messages:</li> </ol> <p><b>KEY MESSAGES</b></p> <p>Skye Iconic Sites Project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>will help to address the chronic lack of tourist infrastructure and co-ordinated interpretation on the Isle of Skye by providing improvements at three Iconic Sites - the Old Man of Storr, the Quiraing and the Fairy Pools (A1 - A4).</li> </ul> <p>The programme of improvements at all three sites include:</p>

- access infrastructure (path building and restoration / bridge building) to help a wider and more diverse range of people, including the less able and confident, access the sites (A1).
  - habitat restoration and rehabilitation to reverse the current process of environmental degradation (A2):
    - to ensure sustainability of the heritage assets.
    - to create robust iconic landscape destinations to enhance and sustain the current tourist “offer”.
  - development of a co-ordinated and iterative interpretative plan to help visitors get the most out of their visit through improved information, interpretation and promotion at each of the sites, all tailored to a more diverse range of visitors whilst taking cognisance of their languages, of which Gaelic will be an essential element (A3).
  - will provide for sustainable and increasing tourism on the island by future proofing the three sites with facilities to enable visitors to access them more readily and to help them get more out of the experience (A4);
    - encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore other areas of the island, increasing the levels of spend.
    - ensuring that the reputation of the island is maintained / improved as a visitor destination for the future.
    - consolidating tourism and addressing the growing negativity from both media and visitors regarding Skye being ‘full’ and a poor visitor experience.
  - will provide a template that can be learned from and used elsewhere, so that sustainable tourism development can be achieved in remote and fragile locations throughout the Highlands and Islands, Scotland and further afield.
  - will help provide a quality visitor experience at the trailheads for each site complementing the development of car parks and toilets at Fairy Pools, Storr and the Quiraing, and via other initiatives in sync with this project. Sustainability will be provided via new income streams generated direct from the visitor for car parking at each of the sites (A1 & A4).
4. **The three sites are open to retail opportunities** (potentially) and local businesses are able to take advantage of this. Currently a managing plan is being prepared for the Storr site by Highland Council and commercial usage may be considered further.
  5. **Has grown the local visitor and services economy**, providing contractors and long-term site-based employment. Has also helped grow the surrounding economy by marketing other heritage themed destinations through the interpretation and MySkyeTime App.
  6. **Peripheral locality marketing through shared** themes and explicit heritage offers elsewhere via the app and the interpretation plus alternative visits locations are promoted at the visitor information hub points which have large wall notice boards promoting ‘places to go in Skye’.

### **In Summary:**

A record of footfall comparing the sites (Storr and Fairy Pools) for 2019 and 2023 saw a 31% increase in averaged site footfall via the people counters. This corresponds to a 31% growth in tourism island wide equating to a direct 31% growth in bed nights and usage of local services meaning a 31% increase in local employment through hospitality and visitor services (eg. food, fuel, garages, pharmacy, specialist guides, etc). It’s also worth noting the tourism growth impact on the Kyle of Lochalsh services economy and arial transport hubs facilitating these tourists such as Inverness and rural surrounds. In fact visitor growth to the Quiraing was 3.5 times that of 2015 levels but there are no comparisons with 2019

because there was no calibrated people counter in place. However, this 3.5 multiplier does suggest at least a 31% year on year like for like visitor growth at the Quiraing also.

Further supporting this tourism growth evidence, we recorded across the recently built extensive parking infrastructure at all 3 sites that the 'like for like' tourism growth comparison between 2022 and 2023 (months-Feb/March/April) was an incredible 34%.

#### Supporting Documents Required:

Annex 2 – Data sheet - evidence of impact (quantitative data, graphs, tables, qualitative data)

Note: The purpose of the data sheet is for the grantee to collate all data gathered for the project in one document. The data should be summarised and presented by outcome in the document (preferably in an Excel spreadsheet).

## 4. Horizontal Themes

**Project Impact on Horizontal Themes – Referring back to your original application form, please outline how your project has addressed the themes below.**

	Outcome	Impact
1	Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ For the Quiraing and Fairy Pools path works OATS sourced materials from a local Skye quarry, reducing the requirement to transport materials from further afield. A camber (1:30 on the flatter sections of path and 1:20 on the steeper slopes) was designed to assist the drainage of rain water off the paths.</li> <li>➤ Department of Transport (DOT) specified quarry materials are being used to make the integrity and binding qualities of the path as strong as possible to reduce wear and increase the longevity of the surface; these measures have been introduced for climate change mitigation and adaption, disaster resilience and risk prevention and management.</li> <li>➤ Contractors worked/will work along the 2m path width within areas already damaged by footfall. The new paths and upgraded surfaces will 'sign post' where people should walk assisting larger areas of habitat damage to recover.</li> <li>➤ Contractors stayed/will stay close to the work sites to avoid lengthy commutes to work, reducing the carbon footprint. As did the contractors for the Fairy Pools bridges.</li> <li>➤ Where possible the Access Projects Manager used public transport to travel across Scotland between Aberdeen and Kyle of Lochalsh. For Habitat restoration at the Old Man of Storr locally sourced seed has been used in a trial to restore areas damaged by footfall, hand cutting and collection verses machine cutting and collection has been assessed at the site.</li> <li>➤ Biodegradable sustainably sourced jute netting has been used to stabilise eroding slopes and create an environment for seed growth. Under Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) opportunities have been given for local consultants and contractors to submit a tender, again if successful reducing the travel and Co2 to site.</li> <li>➤ The cessation of peat erosion from footfall and the restoration of previously damaged peatland areas will contribute to retain peatland and therefore reducing the level of Co2 to the atmosphere.</li> <li>➤ Remote meetings via computer are used out with the requirement for a site visit reducing travel and Co2 emissions.</li> </ul>

2	Equal Opportunities and non-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Under Public Contracts Scotland (PCS) opportunities have been given for local consultants and contractors to submit a tender. This has been a fundamental to Sky Iconic Partnerships approach to advertising work in the area, recognising the social problem of retaining people on the Isle of Skye, something which work through the local economy can help to sustain.</li> <li>➤ One key focus of the project has been improving the paths at the Quiraing and Fairy Pools to make them 'more accessible'; particularly by improving the surface rather than people being mired in wet peat or stumbling over rough cobbled surfaces. While these improvements will be of benefit to all they will help less-abled people access the sites, complimenting the initial ease of access via respective car parks.</li> <li>➤ At the Quiraing a purpose built all-abilities path now takes people to an excellent viewpoint.</li> </ul>
3	Equality between Men and Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Unfortunately in path construction no Women path contractors are known to have registered on PCS and therefore the project probably does little to reduce gender stereotyping when it comes to path construction work. Unfortunately of the 11no. invitees to the Skye Iconic Sites Partnership only 3no. are Women. Currently the balance for SISP through the PCS process is 4no. Women (Comms. and Interpretation) and 13no. Men (Path, Bridge, Habitat Restoration and Interpretation Contracts).</li> <li>➤ Whilst not scientifically analysed the integration of the gender perspective appears to cross the objectives of the path work, habitat restoration and interpretation; interpretation surveys were conducted at the 3no. car park sites interviewing both Men and Women to obtain ideas and a perspective for themes on interpretation panels.</li> </ul>

## 5. Lessons Learned

**Visitor and Local Engagement / Communications / Outputs** – Please detail lessons learnt during the project and include what happened and why, why it is important, and what improvements or alternative solutions could be made in the future.

The biggest lesson learned was just how popular Skye is at a global level and the amount of interest in the island. It was a surprise to find that the total online project coverage was 4.2 million with news desks throughout the UK and regionally (as south as Guernsey) picking up the press releases for weekend print.

From this engagement though, the even bigger and concerning message is just how much will need to be spent on the visitor infrastructure on Skye to cope with the extreme visitor pressures. One very educated local who'd spent 40 years in Staffin said " people flock to Skye to see the Fairy Pools yet none of us locals had ever heard of them". This says it all! – tourism to Skye is driven by film location romance and Instagram images. Whilst Skye has (for decades) been one of the top 4 famous destinations to see in Scotland there has never been a time like now in terms of the growing visitor pressures it is under. If the SISP can help alleviate these visitor pressures that impact on the lives of Skyes people then this is a great thing. The concept of an island destination management organisation has proven its worth.

The learning is:

1. There is potential with careful planning to give everyday people and those with low mobility a fully sensory experience in Scotland's Mountain landscapes and wilder places. We learnt that viewpoints with panoramic views and short full abilities paths give alot back to those who assumed the Quiraing not being somewhere they'd actively experience. One older lady with low mobility said how much she'd enjoyed walking well beyond the all abilities path that connects to the main path – linking the two welcomes all users to go further if intrigue prevails.
2. Communities are very keen to work with projects if they know it's going to make life better for them. Tangibility is a really important factor in project delivery – positive outcomes are essential. We found this with the interpretation programme element.

3. OATS found it quite difficult to work within a detailed activity plan timeframe because there were uncontrollable variables that affected ability to deliver within the timeframe slots. Sourcing path contractors (Skye is seen as an expensive place to work and there are long distances) is often difficult. An initial trawl of local contractors was undergone but there were not many with the required skills and/or availability.
- The sudden and extreme weather caused 'down-tools' for days and even weeks. The impact of this was having to re-jig delivery schedules (materials included) and sometimes having to get other works done first to optimise outputs and then pay for these works. The impact is that Trusts and small businesses do not always have sufficient funds to pay large invoices upfront before a grant is paid out. This is a traditional problem but one which OATS experienced through this project. However, having a more local clerk of works for the path works ended up being an asset and to a degree alleviated these pressures. A great positive is that local path contractor skills were developed.

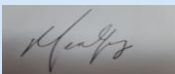
## 6. Ongoing Monitoring

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan – Please could you include your future plans for monitoring, evaluating and reporting against outcomes (up to 2030) e.g. any updates to your original Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Insert more rows if required	
Habitat restoration works across all 3 x sites	Post project habitat survey repeated annually over the 5 years. The survey will monitor the ecological interventions undertaken through this project.
People counter data at all 3 x sites	Continue collecting and reviewing people counter data.
Parking data counts	Continue to monitor visitor parking data from the Fairy Pools. Also carry on receiving visitor parking data for the Quiraing and the Storr.
Monitoring visitors behaviours in terms of keeping on paths where rope and rail temporary fencing has been put in place (to keep people off sensitive habitat and reduce path fringe erosion and braiding effect). This also tests the effectiveness of the awareness and warning signs on site that encourage site use sensitivity.	Ongoing observation by Ranger team (overall sites) and by f/t staff at Fairy Pools.
Attend SISP committee meetings regularly	Ensure to be circulated minutes where not able to attend and continue behaviours of identifying priority projects to improve visitor infrastructure quality at high pressure sites on Skye. As much, ensure there is a 360 degree feedback system from the SISP committee on any visitor management issues arising at the 3 x sites.
Agree the range of monitoring requirements with Highland Council	Liaise with several parking management, visitor site maintenance and ranger staff to agree a monitoring programme over the next 7 years until 2030.
Supporting documents required:	
- Annex 3 – Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	

## 7. Grantee Declaration



Please confirm if the information you have supplied on this form including the supporting documentation is regarded as commercial in confidence.	No
Please confirm that you have read and understood the ERDF National Rules and Natural & Cultural Heritage Fund Guidance before submitting this Final Report.	Yes
Please confirm that your project continues to not constitute State Aid. For further information on the 4 key tests see: <a href="http://www.gov.scot/publications/state-aid-guidance/pages/determining-whether-it-is-state-aid/">www.gov.scot/publications/state-aid-guidance/pages/determining-whether-it-is-state-aid/</a>	Yes

<b>Name</b>	Meriel Young
<b>Position</b>	Contractor on behalf of OATS
<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	15/06/2023

### Checklist of Supporting Documents

Annex 1	Photographic records	Y
Annex 2	Data sheet	Y
Annex 3	Monitoring and Evaluation Plan	Y
Annex 4	Case study – <i>please refer to Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance Document for more information</i>	Y
Annex 5	Video – <i>please refer to Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance Document for more information</i>	Y



# NatureScot

Scotland's Nature Agency  
Buidheann Nàdair na h-Alba

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NatureScot

Great Glen House

Leachkin Road

Inverness IV3 8NW

01463 725000

**[www.nature.scot](http://www.nature.scot)**

