

Northern Georoutes: Geoparks develop North Atlantic tourism brand

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Magma Geopark in Norway is leading a tourism-based project funded by the Nordic Atlantic Cooperation Program (NORA) in partnership with Geopark Shetland (Scotland), Katla Geopark (Iceland) and Stonehammer Geopark (Canada). The partners are working with a range of stakeholders, to develop a holiday booking system to connect tourist routes in this area. They aim to: (1). promote the North Atlantic Region as the 'destination of choice' for a niche tourist market through development and promotion of a distinct brand; (2). support local businesses in each Geopark through coordination of tourism activities; and (3). contribute to sustainable and affordable global tourism.

The project is capitalizing on the unique landscapes and natural assets in the Geoparks to stimulate geo-tourism by developing tour packages that can be promoted and sold online. Tours will be enhanced by innovative new tourism products, including app based guides and games developed by Icelandic software developer Locatify.

The first phase of the project involved a questionnaire to potential stakeholders, such as accommodation and hospitality providers, tour operators, transport businesses and marketing organisations. It aimed to gauge interest in the project, discover what stakeholders could bring to the project, and find out what they would hope to gain from participation. The information was used to develop a 3-day themed tour package for each Geopark. The 'Northern Georoutes' brand was established – logo, website, tour search engine and Facebook page – to promote the packages <www.northerngeoroutes.com>.

This year an online booking system is being implemented, in accordance with relevant legal requirements, along with the development of associated tourism products.

Phase three will involve development of further packages and dissemination of project results to a wider audience – specifically members of the Global Geoparks Network. Potentially the Northern Georoutes project could be a precursor to a wider 'Global Georoutes' brand involving Geoparks from around the world.

Presented in Theme 2