

Title: **Year of Coasts and Waters Update**

Date: 3 February 2021

Purpose:	Information
How does this link with our corporate priorities of improving biodiversity or delivering nature-based solutions to climate change	The Year of Coasts and Waters is relevant to all four of our outcomes, with a focus on celebrating the best of Scotland's coasts, seas and freshwaters. It continues to provide a platform for us to promote our work relating to improving coastal, freshwater and marine biodiversity, including through e.g. managing National Nature Reserves, and grant-funding community-based organisations to help connect people and nature.
Summary:	This paper provides the Board with an update on delivery of the key Year of Coasts and Waters projects delivered in 2020 including Plunge In!, Message in a Bottle, In Tune with Nature and the NatureScot 2021 Calendar. It provides an update on planning for 2021, outlining plans for completing work that it was not possible to deliver in 2020, and promotion of NatureScot work relating to coasts, seas and freshwaters.
Actions	Board is asked to note progress to date and planning for 2021.
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Purpose

1. This paper has been produced to provide Board with a brief update on work to date that has been delivered as part of NatureScot's contribution to Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters.

Background

2. The Year of Coasts and Waters (YCW) is the latest in the series of Scotland's themed years aimed at celebrating the very best of Scotland and its people. Although YCW was originally intended to run throughout 2020, due to the impact of Covid restrictions, YCW has now officially been extended into 2021. The next themed year, the Year of Storytelling, is still expected to go ahead in 2022. Note that there is a desire from stakeholders for there to be a gap between the two themed years. We therefore expect YCW to end at some point in early autumn.
3. We are represented on the VisitScotland Steering and Working Groups, with work in NatureScot overseen by a small planning group. VisitScotland value our contribution to the themed years, particularly as many have a strong link to nature. From our perspective, they provide us with good opportunities to promote the organisation and our priorities, and help demonstrate the importance of nature to this critically important sector of the economy.

Overview of NatureScot contribution

4. The table below provides an update on progress with delivering projects previously seen by Board in January 2020.

Project	Progress
<p><u>Plunge In!</u> – a £150k challenge fund focussed on local communities and organisations, aimed at supporting small projects with the potential to connect people to their local coasts, seas and freshwaters.</p>	<p><u>Delivery to date:</u> We received huge interest in the fund with more than 250 applications and awarded funding to 25 projects – see the Plunge In! storymap for details. These ranged from Sonic Outreach working with teenagers to record sea soundscapes in Shetland to Out of the Blue supporting adults in recovery in Dumbarton. One community arts project based in Cromarty, The Sea Inside, has already completed. Although school travel grants to nature reserves were intended to be part of the project, this was not progressed due to Covid.</p> <p><u>Plan for 2021:</u> A small number of projects were deferred in the first lockdown and will be delivered in 2021. We'll also be highlighting and celebrating the successes of the projects on our social media channels.</p>

Project	Progress
<p><u>Message in a Bottle</u> – a music and animation commission led by well-known traditional musician Ingrid Henderson.</p>	<p><u>Delivery to date:</u> Message in a Bottle was launched at Celtic Connections in January 2020. The accompanying animation was released on our Facebook (15.2K users) and YouTube channels (3500 views). The piece was scheduled to be performed at a range of festivals (e.g. HebCelt, Fèis an Eilein on Skye etc), and as part of the Blas festival via a concert in Great Glen House. Although the in-person performances were put on hold, a Facebook live concert was attended by approx 250 people, and the video performance reaching a further 12,000 Facebook users. Another event as part of the Orkney International Science Festival took place over the summer, followed in November by an in-person performance, filmed and screened as part of the Blas Festival.</p> <p><u>Plan for 2021:</u> An album, with expanded sleeve notes, will be recorded and released in 2021, providing significant comms opportunities. At this stage, the events proposed for 2020 are currently rescheduled for the same dates in 2021 but note that these plans may also need to be revised.</p>
<p><u>In Tune with Nature and other NNR initiatives</u> – a music composition competition focussed around 10 NNRs run in conjunction with Feis Rois, and related promotion of NNRs.</p>	<p><u>Delivery to date:</u> Competition launched in the first half of 2020, with 12 winners selected. The prize included collaborating with a professional film maker to make a short video to accompany the composition – see the Final Cuts. Further work with Feis Rois developed as a direct result, with two of the competition winners being employed to work as mentors for younger composers. Less formally, there have been virtual performances and mini-festivals arranged local to some of the NNRs, in which the winning pieces were played. A series of wild swimming videos made by Calum Maclean were also produced – see this adventure at Taynish NNR.</p> <p><u>Plan for 2021:</u> Further wild swimming videos will be released to cover other parts of Scotland.</p>
<p><u>Tourism familiarisation training</u> – training events for tourism-related business to increase awareness of local nature relevant to YCW.</p>	<p><u>Delivery to date:</u> Two events planned in March 2020 were both cancelled due to the 1st lockdown.</p> <p><u>Plan for 2021:</u> No plans due to current restrictions.</p>
<p>NatureScot YCW-themed calendar</p>	<p><u>Delivery to date:</u> The aim of the calendar was to provide a bridge between the two themed years, with photos of coasts, seas and freshwaters, accompanied by the stories behind the images. Photos were selected following a public</p>

Project	Progress
	competition in which more than 700 entries were received. So far approx. 500 copies have been distributed to the public, staff and stakeholders with more than £600 raised for our chosen charity the Scottish Seabird Centre.

5. With the move to online delivery, there was an even greater focus on our communications, including social media to promote NatureScot’s work and encourage people to connect with their local nature. In addition to the media associated with the projects above, there were a number of other successful stories. A few highlights include:
- A [BBC exclusive](#) on the world first of a flapper skate egg cared for and hatched in captivity for the first time. The video showing the [flapper skate hatching from its egg case](#) was hugely successful on our social media channels, reaching 17K Facebook users and achieving 18K Twitter impressions.
 - An update on our basking shark tagging project in the summer was picked up widely in the media including by [BBC](#) and [STV](#) News and national print media, while the accompanying social media reached almost 11K Facebook users.
 - Meanwhile celebratory social media to mark the designation in December of new Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) achieved more than 56K impressions on Twitter.
 - Throughout the year we celebrated the work of staff with our popular [Day in the Life](#) series of blogs, and highlighted a wide range of species and habitats through monthly “species of the month” and “marine habitat of the month” features on our social media channels.
6. In addition to work already delivered, the table above highlights some of the work planned for 2021. Following a review of communications in 2020, the NatureScot planning group has agreed the need to focus more on promoting our work relating to climate change, freshwater and tourism. Work is currently underway to refresh the comms plan and identify potential opportunities, and we expect this to link into other high-profile work in NatureScot, for example through projects that are supposed as part of the Biodiversity Challenge Fund. The only additional work planned for 2021 is an online way of bringing together and celebrating the various NatureScot projects associated with YCW.

Recommendations

7. Board is asked to note the range of work delivered in 2020 and planning that is now underway for activity in 2021, within the constraints arising from the pandemic.