

# Welcome

Report No. 2 | October 2017

## to the 2nd Update Report on the Arctic Coast Way — Norðurstrandarleið

Phase 2 of the Arctic Coast Way started in May for the Arctic Coast Way. Much has happened since the last Update report. More funding, more members in the steering committee and an increasing network around the Arctic Coast Way. The strategy for the infrastructure and the experience development has been formulated – so, GO!

First of all: Thank you! After sending out the first Update report in March 2017 we received an impressive and very motivating positive response. By emails and in personal talks, we have already collected helpful input for the further development of the Arctic Coast Way! We would now like to update you about progress since the last report. In addition, you will find a general overview about the Arctic Coast Way on the homepage of Markaðsstofa Norðurlands!

Tourist routes are popular attractions in many countries and already interest in the Arctic Coast Way is high abroad, in the main target countries. Between March and May, we have been working hard on further funding and developing the project strategy. Currently we are focusing on two main working fields: infrastructure planning and experience development along the coast.

# One out of 241 Norðurstrandarleið!

On the homepage of Markaðsstofa Norðurlands and in the newspapers, we called for suggestions for an Icelandic name and were delighted to receive more than 200 answers! With such a wide choice, it obviously took us quite a while to reach a decision. First, we excluded all names already in existence, such as street names in Iceland and we also removed names which do not show a close connection to the sea and the North. Then the final selection was discussed with experts in Icelandic language and thus we finally decided on: Norðurstrandarleið!

Special thanks to Hörður Jónasson, Helga Aðalgeirsdóttir and Bergljót Benediktsdóttir, who suggested this name!



## More funding & more helping hands

At the end of the first phase of the Arctic Coast Way we applied for further funding and we are happy and grateful for the support of:

### UPPBYGGINGARSJÓÐUR VESTRA OG EYSTRÁ

### GRASRÓTARSTYRKUR VESTRA OG EYSTRÁ

We welcome the municipalities of both Austur and Vestur Húnavatnssýsla to the task of completing the Arctic Coast Way route and we appreciate their financial contribution to the first phase of the project. In its first phase, the Arctic Coast Way started with the region from Sauðárkrúkur to Vopnafjörður. We received funding from Uppbyggingarsjóður Eystra, but not Vestra. Therefore, Skagafjörður Municipality joined in and made a financial contribution to the project. At the end of Phase One, the municipalities between Hvammstangi and Sauðárkrúkur also decided to join us and contributed the same amount per inhabitant to the project as Skagafjörður had done.

At the same time, we unfortunately lost Vopnafjörður as a starting and ending point of the Arctic Coast Way due to financial issues and the problem of having too less manpower for an increasing number of projects in Vopnafjörður.

With a growing project area and the increasing challenges of expanding operation we decided to enlarge the former steering committee and we now welcome several new members. By strengthening the steering committee, we aimed to cover the whole project area in a more balanced way and to add expertise to the project by including persons from different professional fields. As the Arctic Coast Way is a project of Markaðsstofa Norðurlands, Arnheiður Jóhannsdóttir; Framkvæmdastjóri Markaðsstofa Norðurlands, has an additional seat in the committee. Christiane Stadler is the project manager of the Arctic Coast Way in Markaðsstofa Norðurlands.

- › Sigurður Líndal Þórisson, Framkvæmdastjóri Selasetur Íslands
- › Þórdís Rúnarsdóttir, Ferðamálafulltrúa Austur-Húnavatnssýslu
- › Bryndís Lilja Hallsdóttir, Verkefnisstjóri Sveitarfélagið Skagafjörður
- › Kjartan Bollason; Lektor við Ferðamálaeild háskólans á Hólum
- › Linda Lea Bogadóttir, Markaðs- og Menningarfulltrúi, Fjallabyggðar
- › Margrét Víkingisdóttir, Upplýsingafrú, Dalvíkurbyggð
- › Selma Dögg Sigurjónsdóttir; Verkefnisstjóri Nýsköpunarmiðstöð Íslands
- › María Helena Tryggvadóttir, Verkefnastjóri Akureyrarstofu
- › Þórgnýr Dýrfjörð, Deildarstjóri Akureyrarstofu
- › Halldór Óli; Verkefnastjóri Markaðsstofa Norðurlands
- › Halla Íngólfsdóttir; Framkvæmdastjóri Arctic Trip Grímsey
- › Caroline Bjarnason; Verkefnastjóri Nonni Travel
- › Snæbjörn Sigurðarson; Verkefnastjóri Norðurþing
- › Guðmundur Ögmundsson, Þjóðgarðsvörður, Vatnajökulsþjóðgarður
- › Halldóra Gunnarsdóttir, Verkefnastjóri Norðurhjara, ferðapjónustusamtaka
- › Gréta Berggrún Jóhannsdóttir; Verkefnastjóri á Langanesbyggð



## Two strong partners

We presented the Arctic Coast Way to Stjórnstöð ferðamála and Íslandsstofa in October and we are delighted with their interested, positive feedback and offer of support.

Stjórnstöð ferðamála added tourist routes in Iceland to their agenda as this is one of the projects coming from Vegvísir and they already had a meeting with Vegagerðin about these issues. We very much appreciate having been given the opportunity to present the Arctic Coast Way as the first project which plans a tourist route in Iceland. Stjórnstöð ferðamála suggested they would take the concept and planning of the Arctic Coast Way into their working and development processes and they will be in further close contact with us as the project develops. Furthermore, they recommend that we set up a detailed investment plan for the infrastructure along the Arctic Coast Way which we can hand to Stjórnstöð ferðamála to provide them with a strong document which they can present at national political level. This opens up a promising opportunity for the Arctic Coast Way and we are delighted with this support.

Íslandsstofa also invited us to a meeting to present the Arctic Coast Way and we will work further in close cooperation with them. This provides the Arctic Coast Way with huge support in expertise and opens up a precious opportunity to promote the Arctic Coast Way on the international trade market. Íslandsstofa, therefore, will also be involved in the experience development process for the Arctic Coast Way and the entire brand development for the Arctic Coast Way will in future be promoted in close relation to the general brand of “Inspired by Iceland” to strengthening our visibility on the markets.

We are delighted with the results of these two meetings. In the past weeks we have received positive feedback and support from the mayors we already met personally and now we also have two strong partners at national level. With this solid background to support us we now discuss the Arctic Coast Way as not just an exciting project but we also see it now as a powerful tourism initiative for North Iceland!



# Infrastructure and signage planning

- a precondition to become a tourist route!

In June, we started with the infrastructure and signage planning which is one of the main working fields. Tourist routes in countries like Norway focus on infrastructure and create viewing platforms, toilets and rest areas as attractions in themselves with displays of impressive architecture. With a view to the financial situation, the Arctic Coast Way will start with the most important infrastructure like signage for orientation and basic services. The entire infrastructure development and implementation can only be optimized by adopting a long-term perspective, including financial support of further funding and close cooperation with municipalities and Vegagerðin.

**The planning process is supposed to comprise seven main steps:**

- 1. Collecting data on existing infrastructure**
- 2. Meeting with representatives from the Vegagerðin and from the municipalities concerning planning:**
- 3. Regional meetings to gather input for the “Arctic Coast Way attractions” and their infrastructure, focusing on:**
  - beach accessibility,
  - hikes
  - best spots for midnight sun observations
- 4. GIS (Geographical Information System) and mapping**
- 5. Categories, position planning and design of the road signs**
- 6. Content development and the design of information panels**
- 7. Final report and mapping on project- and regional level**

## WORKING WITH THE MUNICIPALITIES!

The support and commitment of all the municipalities is vital in order for us to reach our goals. It might be a challenge to combine 17 municipalities in one project, but we believe it also adds strength to the Arctic Coast Way to be noted and included in the national development of tourism projects. We have already arranged several

meetings with the mayors of municipalities involved to discuss the targets of the Arctic Coast Way and to collect information about infrastructure planning, in order to inform and connect them with the planning of the Arctic Coast Way. Some meetings are still missing and will be soon arranged.

Between October and December, we will have regional meetings in all areas of the Arctic Coast Way to collect important input about the main attractions of the Arctic Coast Way which need to be accompanied by infrastructure developments. The topics will include:

- which hikes should become “Arctic Coast Way hikes”?
- which beaches should be accessible to visitors to provide them with the best coastal experience?
- where are the best spots along the coast for seeing the midnight sun?

This process is about defining the coast attractions for each area and in this phase the regions take the first steps to put themselves on the map of the Arctic Coast Way. All data will be implemented in a GIS (Geographical Information System) and analysed under defined principles to conduct the planning and decision-making on a sustainable basis.

## HOW TO FIND THE WAY?

The most important first element in developing the Arctic Coast Way is setting up clear road signage for the orientation of visitors driving the Arctic Coast Way. A meeting with representatives from Vegagerðin showed us the challenges facing us when implementing road signage for the Arctic Coast Way. Unfortunately, we haven't so far found a satisfactory solution which enables us to put up road signs at each junction to direct visitors on the Arctic Coast Way. We see the signage as a crucial element to ensure proper orientation and enhance road safety. With consistent signage, we also want to avoid becoming part of the growing signage jungle along the roads.

The European brown-signage system was featured in our discussion since we see this as one suitable method of developing a common system for all tourist routes in Iceland which is also linked to a well-known international system, at least for European and American visitors. We have begun the position planning of the road signage and the layout of the signs needed in this context, and we will further work in close contact to Vegagerðin.





# Think in experiences!

– An experience route, not just a driving option!

We developed the Arctic Coast Way as a tourist route to reach our target of guiding visitors away from road No.1 to more peripheral areas. But we don't want the Arctic Coast Way to become only a driving option, but rather an experience route to ensure our targets of longer dwelling times and economic benefit for local communities. Therefore, we decided to establish a strong focus on the experience development process along the Arctic Coast Way.

Experience development extends beyond simply providing an enjoyable experience for visitors. It will combine the hundreds of individual offers, faces and voices along the Northern Coast into selected unique experiences, giving the Arctic Coast Way one face and one voice to reach visibility and a cutting edge in the competitive international market.

Two companies with expertise in the field of experience development, Earth Check from Australia and Blue Sail from UK, were pitched and we decided to go with Blue Sail.

We were in the comfortable position of having a choice between two excellent proposals and companies. Earth Check is a well-established company for destination and experience development. We selected Blue Sail, however, as their proposal focused strongly on simple and easily understood processes and results, which we believe

is crucial for the participation of providers and stakeholders and for realising the experience of the Arctic Coast Way.

Blue Sail delivers an impressive list of references on several tourist routes in Ireland and Scotland, among others on the Wild Atlantic Way. Blue Sail is a passionate destination consultancy and created the approach of the Shared Story™. Since Blue Sail set up in 2007 they've helped over 200 places and partnerships – from emerging destinations to some of the largest tourism brands. They are highly experienced in helping destinations to find their unique sense of place, through stories and experiences and to accommodate them on the international market.

Their proposal of how to work for the Arctic Coast Way is well-prepared and convincing and their tone, ideas and competence exactly match our needs! They write "you are very important to us" – a statement we take seriously and we certainly look forward to running this important process for the Arctic Coast Way with the cooperation of Blue Sail.

The next report will focus on the detailed proposal and time schedule of the experience development process for the Arctic Coast Way.



# A passport to the North Coast

After the excellent work of the marketing students at the University of Akureyri in the First Phase of the Arctic Coast Way regarding name and marketing concepts, in September the students began a new project to support the Arctic Coast Way.

The students are now working on concepts for a passport to the Arctic Coast Way. A passport offers an attractive souvenir for travellers as they can collect stamps (or something else) relating to certain locations along the Arctic Coast Way. This is a splendid opportunity for the visitors to preserve pleasant memories and establish contact with locals by collecting the official stamps of the various localities in their passports. For the Arctic Coast Way, a passport is an ideal tool to

motivate visitors to travel the entire route and spend more time in its various attractions, and the passports might also help to collect data about target groups and travel behaviour.

The idea is to develop two different passport types: one is a general passport for places along the Arctic Coast Way and the other a hiking passport for all the hikes which will run under the banner of Arctic Coast Way. When a passport is completed with all stamps, the travellers will receive an award or certificate – all depending on the students' ideas for the final design! We are already very curious and look forward to the results!





# Hand in hand with DMP

The Destination Management Program (DMP) started in May for the whole of Iceland and its regions. While the DMP is the overarching planning framework for North Iceland, the Arctic Coast Way is a The Destination Management Program (DMP) started in May for the whole of Iceland and its regions. While the DMP is the overarching powerful project for taking action and implementing processes to reach the targets for further tourism development in North Iceland, such as the distribution of visitors, strengthening peripheral areas, encouraging longer dwelling times, sustainability and relief of magnet areas.

The Arctic Coast Way is also a pilot project for the North to introduce the approach of experience development as a marketing strategy. Both project managers, Björn Hildir Reynisson (DMP) and Christiane Stadler (Arctic Coast Way) are employed by Markaðsstofa Norðurlands and work hand in hand to connect both projects closely.



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# Building up a network!

The Arctic Coast Way welcomes cooperation and partnerships, in the spirit of inclusiveness and the belief that diversity will strengthen our efforts to create a unique tourist route on the world travel map.

First start-up meeting with institutes belonging to “Norðurslóðanet Íslands” took place in June. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss options of cooperation and the involvement of science along the Arctic Coast Way. There is an impressive number of national and

international research institutes and projects in the North of Iceland which connect to the brand essences “Arctic” and “Coast”. We believe that science can make a significant contribution by raising the awareness of the national and international visitors of the wonders of the northern coast and connecting them to the unique nature, culture and history. Expanding their knowledge about the fragile nature will enhance their understanding of, and respect for, the environment. A workshop is planned in November to define further details of their cooperation.

Thanks to:



**Please note:**

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