

# **SCOTTISH PILGRIM ROUTES FORUM**

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2021**

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## **1. OUR 5 YEAR VISION**

- 1.1 The early progress made by the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum (SPRF) over the past four years convinces us that we are providing an important service that enables our member organisations to promote off-road pilgrimage travel amongst a much wider community across Scotland. To take this forward, this Plan aims to provide a coherent framework for SPRF to develop a co-ordinated national network of dedicated pilgrim routes for walkers and, where possible, cyclists and horse riders.
- 1.2 In practical terms, this Plan envisages that by 2021 the existing St Cuthbert's and Borders Abbeys Ways will be joined by four other long distance pilgrim routes – the Fife Pilgrim Way, the Iona – St Andrews coast-to-coast Pilgrim Way, the Whithorn Way and the Forth to Farne Way. These will add a combined total of 340 miles of walking routes connecting three of Scotland's historic centres of Christian pilgrimage which were of major international significance in pre-Reformation Europe. SPRF will strengthen the work of the volunteer Steering Groups which are actively working on these new routes. In the longer term, the development process SPRF adopts in reaching this goal will be applied in other parts of Scotland, particularly in the north-east and across the Highlands and Islands.
- 1.3 On a wider level, the Plan recognises an important need to develop the infrastructure that these and other, more local, routes will require if they are to become well used and popular among all sections of Scottish society. To that end, SPRF aims to develop a new accreditation scheme to recognise and encourage a high standard of route definition and signage, pilgrimage heritage interpretation support services and promotion. We aim to do this in partnership with others, and by 2021 we expect all of our four new priority routes will have joined the network of branded 'Scotland's Great Trails'.
- 1.4 Our vision will only be achievable if we sustain our core enabling role as a Forum through our membership services, principally expressed through our regular meetings and the development of online information and publicity. SPRF therefore seeks new financial and other resources to guarantee a minimum level of professional support that will provide administrative and technical input to our Steering Groups, expand the membership network, and publicise the collective efforts of the Forum to a wider audience.
- 1.5 SPRF recognises that its constituency of supporters must continue to include individuals seeking a spiritual dimension to the lives through the experience of outdoor pilgrimage travel. We strongly encourage local churches of all Christian denominations to play a key role as part of the infrastructure of the new walking routes, enhancing the historic role of churches as community hubs, while also recognising that people of all faiths and none can be pilgrims.