

Firstport website redevelopment brief

Firstport is seeking a web design and development partner to create a new website that improves the user experience, strengthens credibility, supports strategic ambitions, and helps communicate our impact more effectively.

1. About Firstport

Firstport is part of the Firstport Group, Scotland's leading agency for supporting social entrepreneurs, social enterprises and purpose-led businesses.

Through [Firstport](#), [Firstimpact](#) and Firstfund, we have nearly two decades of experience helping thousands of entrepreneurs develop, start and grow organisations that create positive social and environmental impact. We believe social enterprises are businesses whose time has come. They respond to an increasing desire to shape the economy in a way that meets the needs of people, place and planet.

We primarily operate in Scotland, with a growing presence in the North East of England.

Our group vision

A society in which doing business is synonymous with doing good.

Our mission

Making social enterprise accessible, achievable and aspirational.

Our proposition

The first port of call for social entrepreneurs.

What we do

We help social entrepreneurs build confidence, strengthen business skills, and access the right funding at the right time. Our services include:

- grant funding
- one-to-one business advice and support
- investment readiness support
- social investment

These services are provided free to clients. Our income comes primarily from delivering programmes on behalf of organisations including the Scottish Government, foundations, and other public-sector partners.

2. Background to the project

Why we're investing in a new website

We see our website as a key organisational asset. It is often the first interaction people have with our brand, the place to go to apply for our funding, and it plays a crucial role in helping us attract and support social entrepreneurs, develop partnerships, secure future income, and demonstrate the value we create.

Our current website was launched in 2019. Since then, Firstport has evolved significantly. We have expanded our services, introduced social investment products, refined our organisational structure, undergone a rebrand, and developed new strategic ambitions.

While the organisation has changed, the website has not kept pace. The site no longer fully represents who we are, what we do, or the range of audiences we serve.

In addition, the current CMS limits our ability to manage content efficiently, make improvements quickly, and respond to new opportunities and campaigns without developer support.

Key pain points

User journeys are unclear

The website is heavily focused on funding applications and transactional activity. Visitors are not always encouraged to explore the wider range of support available.

Analytics show that engagement is concentrated on funding-related content, while other areas experience comparatively low engagement and high bounce rates.

Our impact and expertise are not easy to discover

The website does not effectively communicate the breadth of our work, the outcomes we achieve, or our expertise across funding, business support and social investment.

Multiple audiences are not being served effectively

The current website primarily caters to individuals seeking funding. It is less effective at engaging partners, commissioners, funders and other stakeholders.

Content management is inflexible

Many improvements require technical support, which increases costs and limits our ability to make timely changes.

The website does not reflect our current organisation

The site does not adequately represent our strategic direction, expanded service offer or wider group structure.

Technical limitations

Despite recent improvements, accessibility remains an area for improvement, and some technical issues cannot be resolved in-house.

An independent audit conducted in 2025 identified weaknesses in:

- accessibility
- mobile responsiveness
- search engine optimisation (SEO)
- CMS flexibility

The digital landscape is changing

The increasing use of AI-powered search and discovery tools means our content must be easier to find, better structured and more accessible than ever before.

Why now?

Firstport has a long-standing role within Scotland's [social enterprise support ecosystem](#) and a growing profile in the North East of England. Historically, Firstport has been best known as a grant funder and business support provider. Beyond our services, we have a good reputation as a collaborative, inclusive and progressive organisation.

However, our offer has now broadened considerably and includes investment readiness and social investment services. At the same time, our organisational strategy places greater emphasis on partnership development, income diversification and long-term financial sustainability.

As a result, we need a website that speaks effectively not only to social entrepreneurs but also to current and prospective commissioners, funders, partners and stakeholders.

3. Current website

The existing website is built using WordPress and is organised around primary service areas, including:

- Funding
- Business support
- Social investment

We also maintain a range of resources, case studies, publications and articles that are currently difficult to discover and access.

Currently, the website consists of approximately 50 pages and 360 posts (i.e. news item/case studies). We expect some of this content to be migrated, some refreshed, and some removed as part of the project.

Related digital platforms

community.firstport.org.uk

A Salesforce Experience Cloud portal used for funding applications and award management.

launchpad.firstport.org.uk

A WordPress-based online learning platform supporting participants in our investment readiness programmes.

compass.firstport.org.uk

A Webflow-based business structure guidance tool that remains live but is now out of date.

Website analytics (September 2025 to August 2026)

- 9,000 active users
- 8,700 new users
- Average engagement time: 2 minutes 14 seconds
- Most visitors arrive directly
- Other significant traffic sources include LinkedIn, organic search, Facebook and ChatGPT
- Note: There is a property management company also called First Port, which drives irrelevant traffic to our website. While we have tried to make it obvious that we are in no way related, we still regularly receive enquiries through the website that are not directed at us. Therefore, the number of active users may be lower than what is outlined above.

Most visited pages

1. Homepage
2. Funding
3. Start It

4. Build It
5. About us

[Website audit results](#). This audit was conducted at the end of 2025 by a marketing agency as part of a project.

Accessibility audit results. We had an accessibility check conducted by [Passion4Social](#), who found issues in:

- keyboard and assistive technologies navigation failures
- website responsiveness
- contrast issues
- non accessible documents (PDFs)

Currently, the website is not accessible for people who have the following barriers:

- Blindness or low vision (including glasses users)
- Moto disabilities
- Colour blindness
- Neurodiversity: ADHD, dyslexia

4. Audiences

The new website should serve a wider range of audiences than the current site. Broadly speaking, we have four key audiences:

Start up social entrepreneurs

Individuals exploring or developing an early-stage idea. They are typically seeking funding opportunities, information about social enterprise, practical guidance and support. The website caters well for them and is the primary audience using it.

Growing social entrepreneurs

Established social entrepreneurs who are looking for further support, including investment readiness and social investment. Many have previously engaged with Firstport programmes; however, it is not currently obvious what the best next step in their journey is.

Funders and commissioners

Public-sector bodies, foundations and other organisations that commission programmes or invest in social enterprise support. They need evidence of our expertise, impact, delivery capability and track record. Strategically, this is the most important audience; however, at the moment, the website does not cater to them.

Partners and sector organisations

Current and prospective collaborators, referral partners and organisations operating within the wider social enterprise support ecosystem. They need to understand our expertise, areas of collaboration and organisational values.

5. Project objectives

We are looking for a new website that:

- creates clear and intuitive user journeys for different audience groups based on their stage or need
- better communicates our mission, expertise, impact and services
- increases engagement beyond funding-related content and makes it easy to feature the most recent or relevant content
- supports partnership development and lead generation
- improves discoverability through SEO, content architecture and design
- is accessible, inclusive, and user-centred
- reflects our brand values and adheres to our [brand guidelines](#)
- is flexible and user-friendly for the team, reducing reliance on external developers
- provides a scalable digital platform that can evolve with our organisation and a future template for sister brands Firstimpact and Firstfund.

We recognise that there may be multiple ways to achieve the project's objectives, and our priority is not a specific technical solution, but an improved digital experience. Therefore, we welcome recommendations from agencies on the most appropriate approach, whether that involves:

- A complete website redesign and rebuild
- A significant refresh or redevelopment of the existing website
- A phased approach combining elements of both
- Alternative solutions that deliver the intended outcomes

6. Functional and technical requirements

User experience

- Deliver clear audience-based navigation
- Support multiple user journeys

- Make key information, services and resources easy to find
- Mobile optimised

Content and CMS

- Include an intuitive and flexible CMS
- Enable non-technical staff to create and update content
- Allow content to be reused and presented in multiple formats
- Support future expansion without requiring significant redevelopment

Marketing and communications

- Support lead generation and enquiry capture
- Showcase impact through written, visual and video content
- Support search engine optimisation best practice
- Optimised for emerging AI-driven search and discovery methods

Accessibility

- Meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards
- Designed using an accessibility-first approach, supporting a range of accessibility needs and learning styles

Technical requirements

- Support API integrations
- Support large volumes of visual and video content
- Integrate with existing platforms where appropriate
- Deliver strong performance, security and reliability

7. Scope of work

We are seeking proposals covering some or all of the following:

- discovery and user research
- information architecture and sitemap development
- UX and UI design
- wireframing and prototyping
- CMS configuration
- accessibility features

- technical testing and quality assurance
- content migration
- staff training and handover
- launch support
- ongoing maintenance and support options

Agencies should clearly indicate which services are included within their proposal.

Content and editorial support

We do not require a full copywriting service, and we anticipate that most content creation, including writing new content and updating existing copy, will be undertaken in-house.

However, we are interested in support that helps us improve the effectiveness and discoverability of our content. We welcome proposals that include:

- review and feedback on a limited number of key pages
- guidance on writing for web audiences, accessibility and readability
- recommendations for optimising content for search engines and AI-driven search
- editorial guidance to ensure content aligns with our brand guidelines and tone of voice.

Internal stakeholders

The successful supplier will work closely with the Firstport comms team: Maria Ashley, Head of Communications and Digital, Craig Allan, Digital Communications Lead and Zeme Waldheim-Ross, Communications and Engagement Officer.

8. What success will look like

We'll know the new website is a success if it delivers measurable improvements in the following areas:

- higher engagement with impact, partnership and organisational content
- reduced bounce rates across priority strategic pages
- improved accessibility performance
- better SEO performance and search visibility
- improved technical performance scores
- less reliance on external developers

- increased enquiries and leads from potential partners and commissioners
- positive feedback from users and stakeholders.

9. Timescales

Ideally, we would like to work to the timescales below, but we will work with the successful provider to agree on a suitable timeline for both organisations.

- **Invitations to tender open:** 30th September 2026
- **Deadline for submission of tender proposals:** 26th October 2026
- **Interviews and contractor appointment:** w/c 2nd November
- **Project commencement:** November 2026
- **Project delivery:** November 2026 to March 2027
- **Handover and website launch:** End of March/April 2027

10. Budget

We have a budget of up to £15,000 exclusive of VAT.

11. Proposals process

We are approaching several agencies that share our values, have a relevant track record, and we think can deliver the outcomes we want from this project.

If you are interested in putting forward a proposal for this project, please submit the following details on or before the deadline:

1. An outline of your recommended approach to achieving the project objectives and the rationale behind it, including whether you believe a full rebuild, redevelopment or alternative solution would provide the best outcome
2. Your approach to accessibility
3. An overview of your organisation, alongside examples of relevant work
4. Costing of each element (showing VAT separately where applicable)
5. A breakdown of timescales
6. Any assumptions or dependencies

Fees and contractual arrangements

We ask that you set out a breakdown of the proposed fees, including a clear description of all expenses for undertaking the contract, a payment schedule and outline costs that may be add-ons or optional separately.

Closing date

Please [submit your proposal to Maria Ashley](#) by **12pm on Monday 26 October 2026**.

We will assess all submissions against the criteria below, and the two highest scoring proposals will be invited to an informal discussion with members of the Firstport team. This would be an opportunity to get clarification on aspects of the proposal or ask questions. We will contact the shortlisted organisations on or before Thursday, 29th October.

Criteria

- Quality of proposed approach in relation to the brief 60%
- Track record of relevant experience similar projects 15%
- Value for money 15%
- Ability to work to project timescales 10%

Interviews with shortlisted candidates will take place on w/c Monday 2nd November. We aim to have a contractor appointed by Friday 6th November, to enable the project to start in mid-November.

Happy to chat

For further information or to chat about the contents of this brief, contact Maria Ashley at maria@firstport.org.uk or 0131 564 0331.