

Written by 27 February 2023

Business News Scotland

Welcome to our round up of the latest business news for our clients. In this week's special edition, we summarise a range of grants and supports available to Scottish businesses. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these could help your business. We are here to support you!

Is the UK going to swerve a recession?

Better than anticipated purchasing managers' index (PMI) data for February indicate encouraging resilience of the economy in the face of headwinds which include rising interest rates, the ongoing cost of living crisis, labour shortages and strikes.



While many companies continue to report tough operating conditions, especially in the manufacturing sector, the broader business mood has been lifted by signs of inflation peaking, supply chains improving, and recession risks easing. The stress created by last autumn's mini budget is also continuing to work its way out of the financial system.

However, while the data suggest that near-term recession odds have fallen considerably, elevated inflation pressures clearly remain a concern, especially in the service sector. As such, the resilience of the economy and the stickiness of the survey's inflation gauges add to the likelihood of the Bank of England tightening policy further, which may dampen future growth expectations and suggests that the possibility of recession later in the year should not be ruled out.

UK business activity grew back into life in February, according to the flash PMI survey data compiled by S&P Global and sponsored by The Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS), displaying improved growth after six months of continual decline.

The latest reading is consistent with GDP growing at a quarterly rate of 0.3% after a 0.3% rate of contraction had been indicated for January. That leaves the signal for the first two months of the year flat on average, though momentum is clearly improving to suggest that the economy could return to growth in the first quarter as a whole after having stalled in the fourth quarter of last year and having contracted in the third quarter.

See: [UK recession risks ebb as flash UK PMI signals resurgent economic growth in February | S&P Global \(spglobal.com\)](https://www.spglobal.com/economics/news/2020/02/04/uk-recession-risks-ebb-as-flash-uk-pmi-signals-resurgent-economic-growth-in-february)

Age-Friendly Employer Pledge

The Age-Friendly Employer Pledge is an initiative run by the Centre for Ageing Better to help promote age-inclusive working practices.



The programme encourages employers to commit to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s and helps them take the necessary action to help older workers flourish in a multigenerational workforce.

More people are working later in life, but older workers often face prejudice and are overlooked. However, multigenerational workforces drive productivity and innovation.

The Age-Friendly Employer Pledge is a nationwide programme for employers who:

- recognise the importance and value of older workers;
- are committed to improving work for people in their 50s and 60s (and beyond); and

- are prepared to take action to help them flourish in a multigenerational workforce.

Signing up for the Age-Friendly Employer Pledge shows your commitment to older workers.

See: [Age-friendly Employer Pledge | Centre for Ageing Better \(ageing-better.org.uk\)](https://ageing-better.org.uk)

Coping with the rising cost-of-living

The recent rise in the cost-of-living has presented many of us with unexpected challenges. New research suggests that over 12 million people are now borrowing money for food or essential bills and half of them are doing so for the first time in their lives.

The results come as the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) launches a campaign to reach people who are struggling with cost-of-living pressures, which will run alongside the UK Government's Help for Households.

It focuses on MaPS' MoneyHelper service, which provides free money guidance from an expert in a range of different formats, such as online, webchat, WhatsApp and telephone.

If you're already struggling, or worried things are heading that way, it can feel like there's no way forward. However, the first step to solving money problems is knowing where to turn.

See: [Free and impartial help with money, backed by the government | MoneyHelper](https://moneyhelper.org.uk)

HMRC see an increase in fraudulent claims for R&D tax relief

HMRC state that they have seen an increase in fraudulent claims for Research & Development (R&D) tax relief. They believe companies in certain sectors are being deliberately targeted by third parties to make inaccurate R&D claims as an amendment to their Company Tax Returns. As a result of this, they are increasing their compliance enforcement activity.

As part of a "One to Many" letter campaign, HMRC have sent letters to company directors whose companies have made R&D claims in the past. The letter asks them to review their previous claims using a checklist to make sure that the information they have provided about their claim is complete and correct and, if there is an error, to make amendments as necessary.

Directors are prompted to review their R&D claims by using the following checklist:

- Have you read and understood the [HMRC guidance on R&D?](#)
- Have you considered the conditions for making an R&D claim? Are you happy that the project is seeking an advance in the field of science and technology?

- Do you understand what you're claiming for?
- Who has helped with the supporting R&D report and are they qualified to do so?
- Have you read the R&D report, and do you agree with its contents?
- If you're working with a third party to make a claim, have they answered your questions satisfactorily?
- Does this claim seem to be too good to be true?

See: [Research and Development Tax Relief - HMRC One to Many letter](#)

Does your company have a shareholders agreement?

For limited companies, when it comes to making decisions, Company Law states shareholders who own more than 50% can pass a motion at a company meeting regardless of the views of other shareholders and if a shareholder(s) owns 75% or more of the shares they control the company outright and can veto the decisions of all other shareholders.

This may not suit all business situations, especially where you have two or more founders holding equal share capital or a group of owners with varying amounts of capital, some of whom are directors and some who are not, but who are all working together for the company's success.

A shareholders' agreement is entered into between all or some of the shareholders in a company. It regulates the relationship between the shareholders, the management of the company, ownership of the shares and the protection of the shareholders. They also govern the way in which the company is run.

A shareholders' agreement can help define how a business makes decisions to the benefit of all owners and is recommended where:

- A small number of owners want to reach collective and fair decisions for the benefit of all;
- Some owners may want to be able to influence decisions that are particularly relevant to them; or
- Some shareholders may not be directors and cannot influence operations on a day to day basis.

Typically it is seeking to deal with the three "D's" of death, disability and disagreement. It may also cover a variety of other significant areas for example, retirement and buy back of shares.

Our view is that a shareholders' agreement is an essential document for any limited company and an equitably drafted agreement should provide comfort to all parties to the agreement.

Please talk to us if you need help in planning for an agreement, especially where there are several shareholders, a new company is being formed, a shareholder wants to sell their shares or pass them to their children, someone is nearing retirement, or the company has borrowed money from a shareholder. We can help with share and company valuations and putting the shareholders wishes into an agreement with a local solicitor.

Fairtrade Fortnight 2023

Fairtrade Fortnight 2023 has begun today, 27 February and lasts until 12 March and the theme this year is food. This means you could focus on any aspect of Fairtrade and food to celebrate Fairtrade Fortnight 2023. This could be, climate change and food production, Fairtrade procurement, or food security to name but a few.

Each year Fairtrade Fortnight gives people across the UK the opportunity to celebrate Fairtrade achievements and learn more about the difference that Fairtrade makes.

See: [Fairtrade Fortnight - Fairtrade Foundation](#)

The International Trade Committee (ITC) launch investigation into export opportunities for UK businesses

The ITC is a cross-party Committee of MPs, and they are calling for written evidence submissions which examine the current situation for exporters, the support offered by the UK Government, and how easily exporters can access it.

Over the course of its inquiry, the Committee will investigate the key barriers preventing businesses from exporting, how these can be addressed, and whether the UK Government could provide additional support. Experts, stakeholders, and interested parties are encouraged to submit evidence to the inquiry.

The Committee is asking for initial written evidence to be submitted through the Committee's [web portal](#) by 12pm on Friday 24 March 2023.

It is recommended that all submitters familiarise themselves with [the Guidance on giving evidence to a Select Committee of the House of Commons](#), which outlines particulars of word count, format, document size, and content restrictions.

See: [MPs launch investigation into export opportunities for UK businesses - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

Innovation Loans Future Economy Competition: round 8

Innovate UK is offering up to £2 million in loans to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Loans are for highly innovative late-stage research and development (R&D) projects with the best potential for the future. There should be a clear route to commercialisation and economic impact.

Your project must lead to new products, processes, or services that are significantly ahead of others currently available or propose an innovative use of existing products, processes, or services. It can also involve a new or innovative business model.

You must be able to show that you:

- need public funding,
- can cover interest payments, and
- will be able to repay the loan on time.

The closing date to apply is 8 March 2023.

See: [Innovation Loans Future Economy Competition: Round 8 - Innovate UK KTN \(ktn-uk.org\)](https://ktn-uk.org)

HMRC Employer Bulletin: February 2023

HMRC publishes the Employer Bulletin 6 times a year, giving employers and agents the latest information on topics and issues that may affect them.

The February edition of Employer Bulletin has articles on:

- reporting advances of salary;
- changes to Basic PAYE Tools and PAYE Desktop Viewer;
- student and postgraduate loan thresholds from April 2023;
- how to help employees with income tax relief for employment expenses;
- getting ready for the National Minimum Wage rate increase; and
- Martyn's Law - public venue operator requirements.

See: [Employer Bulletin: February 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Innovate UK Transformative Technologies

Innovate UK is offering up to £20 million in grants to small and micro businesses in the UK that have ambitious, innovative ideas that could transform the future of our society and economy.

The competition is open specifically to businesses that have never before been funded by Innovate UK, and that have ambitious, innovative ideas within one of the six challenge themes:

- Semiconductors,
- future telecoms,
- artificial intelligence,
- engineering biology,
- quantum, and
- sustainable manufacturing.

See: [Competition overview - Innovate UK Transformative Technologies - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition-overview)

The City of Edinburgh Council Expert Help Programme

The Expert Help Programme offers businesses expert help in the form of workshops and one-to-one support to help them grow their business and trade internationally. It is funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Several types of support are offered through the programme:

Expert Help light sessions

Clients can engage with a specialist consultant for a short 90-minute session. These short sessions are designed to help if there is a specific issue you would like to discuss or gain some knowledge or ideas to help grow your business. Topics covered include social media, digital, PR and marketing, HR and exporting.

The sessions typically take place over Zoom. You will need to be referred by a Business Gateway adviser.

Expert Help consultancy

If your business is growing and you feel you could benefit from longer-term specialist support, you can benefit from up to 3 days of consultancy to help realise your growth ambitions. Specialist advice is available in the areas of digital strategy, marketing and communications strategy, HR consultancy, business strategy, and international trade support.

See: [Edinburgh - Local Support | Business Gateway | Business Gateway \(bgateway.com\)](https://www.businessgateway.com/edinburgh-local-support)

Edinburgh Council Gateway to Investment

The Gateway to Investment Programme informs and supports businesses based in the City of Edinburgh Council area that are seeking equity investment to help their growth and expansion.

At the end of the programme, participants will have the opportunity to pitch their business to a panel of investors from several of Scotland's most active investment groups.

The programme consists of 4 workshops run over a 4-week period. Each workshop is 3 hours long.

This is a free service.

See: [Edinburgh - Local Support | Business Gateway | Business Gateway \(bgateway.com\)](https://www.bgateway.com)

Clackmannanshire Council Employability support - job broker service and Employer Recruitment Incentive

Clackmannanshire Works is Clackmannanshire Council's employability service, designed to help Clackmannanshire residents who want to get into work, as well as to assist businesses to develop and support local employees with jobs and training.

Clackmannanshire Works offers a free vacancy matching and job brokerage service, to help your business source, pre-screen, and arrange interviews with potential candidates for jobs, work placements, and apprenticeships.

The service can also provide advice and funding for training and upskilling of eligible staff, as well as a Fair Work Incentive for employers to support the costs of recruiting eligible candidates.

The Clackmannanshire Works team can be contacted at any time. One of the team will get in touch to discuss your recruitment and training needs, and to provide information on the Fair Work Incentive and other ways they can help.

See: [Clackmannanshire Works \(clacks.gov.uk\)](https://www.clacks.gov.uk)

Perth and Kinross Council Micro Enterprise Fund

Through the Micro Enterprise Fund, Perth and Kinross council offer funding of up to £1,000 to small businesses or individuals looking to expand their operations or start up in the Perth and Kinross area. Each eligible business or individual can receive a one-off grant of up to £1,000 to cover up to 90% of the eligible costs for viable projects.

The grant will not be awarded upfront immediately after approval – instead you will receive payment after you make your purchases and submit receipts or invoices.

This means that you must be able to afford the project's full cost initially until you are refunded.

See: [Micro enterprise fund - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](https://www.pkc.gov.uk/micro-enterprise-fund)

Perth and Kinross Council Green Recovery Capital Development Grant

Has your business been negatively affected by COVID-19? Do you plan to grow your business through significant capital investment? If so, this grant is for you.

Through the Green Recovery Capital Development Grant, Perth and Kinross Council has made funding of up to £25,000 available for businesses that were financially affected by COVID-19 and now want to make capital investments in the Perth and Kinross area.

This fund offers grants of up to £25,000 to cover up to 50% of eligible costs. Projects must involve a minimum spend of £10,000, which means that businesses must match the funding with at least £5,000. Preference will be given to projects that involve green initiatives which will reduce your business's carbon footprint.

The grant will not be awarded upfront immediately after approval – instead, you will receive payment after you make your purchases and submit receipts or invoices. This means that initially you must be able to afford the project's full cost until you are refunded.

See: [Green Recovery Capital Development Grant - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](https://www.pkc.gov.uk/green-recovery-capital-development-grant)

Grants and support in Renfrewshire

Below is a summary of some of the support available to businesses in Renfrewshire.

Business Property Search

If you are planning to relocate your business to Renfrewshire, or you're already in Renfrewshire but looking for more suitable business premises in the area, Renfrewshire Council can help. Advisers will conduct a free property search to help find premises that meet your specific size and location requirements, and you'll receive detailed property listings.

See: [Renfrewshire Council Business Property Search \(findbusinesssupport.gov.scot\)](https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/renfrewshire-council-business-property-search)

Business Resilience Grant

The Business Resilience Grant can provide up to 50% match funding to help small and medium-sized businesses in Renfrewshire recover and grow. Grants of £1,000 up to £10,000 are available.

The grant can be used for:

- new equipment and machinery,

- property expansion or improvements,
- exhibiting at a national trade show, or
- the costs of developing new products or processes.

This grant is for new spend that your business has yet to incur. It can't be used for items already purchased.

Your project must not have started before you apply.

The grant will be paid when the project has been completed and the supplier has been paid. This means that initially you must be able to afford the project's full cost until you are refunded.

Business Training Support Grant

The Renfrewshire Business Training Support Grant can provide up to £2,000 towards a broad range of employer/employee training that's required as part of a specific business development project.

The grant is available to small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) based in Renfrewshire that are involved in manufacturing or business-to-business services.

Eligible training should be delivered by an appropriate external training provider. Legislation compliance training and training considered to be routine are not eligible.

To apply, you should have a clear idea of how the training will benefit your business and be able to identify exactly what the problem or opportunity is that has led you to apply for training. You should also be able to show how you expect the training to affect business performance.

Net Zero Grant

The Net Zero Grant offers local businesses in Renfrewshire funding of up to £10,000 to cover up to 50% of eligible costs to allow them to make changes to their business premises and operations to reduce their carbon footprint. This might include:

- changing to a low carbon heating system;
- installation of low and zero carbon generating technologies, such as solar PV, biomass, or micro-wind;
- building fabric upgrades such as insulation, energy efficient lighting, and draught-proofing; or
- purchase of equipment to allow new operating processes, such as a move to digital services, optimisation of resources, or enhanced waste management.

The grant will be paid when the project has been completed and the supplier has been paid. This means that initially you must be able to afford the project's full cost until you are refunded.

Business Restart Loan

The Business Restart Loan offers interest-free loans to help small and start-up businesses in Renfrewshire with their short-term cashflow. Loans of between £1,000 and £5,000 are available, with a repayment period of up to 3 years.

The loans aim to encourage the creation and growth of small businesses based in Renfrewshire.

Applicants must demonstrate that the loan is financially needed and will only be used to provide an economic benefit to the business. For example, the loan can be used for:

- start-up costs, including the purchase of existing businesses,
- provision of working capital,
- the purchase of assets, or
- the purchase of commercial property, or property extensions or alterations.

The Restart Loan cannot be used to pay an existing debt.

The loans are provided in partnership with Right Way Credit Union.

See: [Browse Services - Find Business Support](#)

Grants and support in West Lothian

Below is a summary of some of the support available to businesses in West Lothian.

Job Creation Fund

This wage subsidy programme is aimed at small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in West Lothian and supports the creation of sustainable employment opportunities in the local area.

Businesses can get support through 2 strands: the Volume Job Grant and the StepsN2Work programme.

The Volume Job Grant is a one-off payment of £3,500.

The StepsN2Work programme provides funding to cover:

- 50% of the national minimum wage for employees aged 16 to 17 years, for 52 weeks; and
- 50% of the Real Living Wage for employees aged 18 to 24 years, for 26 weeks.

The fund is managed by the West Lothian Council Economic Development Team.

Training Grant

This Training Grant helps businesses invest in accredited training and upskilling for their employees. Grants of £10,000 to £50,000 will be awarded for approved training and productivity goals.

A Business Gateway adviser can support your funding application with a training needs analysis. This process will help you map out your organisation's skill set to identify gaps and training needs.

Growth Assistance Project Funding

The Growth Assistance Project (GAP) offers grant awards to West Lothian businesses to help them undertake strategic growth projects.

West Lothian Council GAP funding will support projects that:

- improve business competitiveness,
- create high value jobs in a sustainable and inclusive way, and
- have a total cost of more than £100,000.

Skills for Business

The Skills for Business programme is for young entrepreneurs who are unemployed but have a passion for future business success. The programme helps candidates create and implement a business plan and provides specialist advice, training, and funding support.

Applicants will work with a dedicated mentor before they start up their business and for the first 12 months of trading.

This programme is aimed at young people who are:

- aged between 16 and 24, and
- currently unemployed or underemployed, about to leave school, or at risk of redundancy.

Digital Development Fund

The Digital Development Grant is for West Lothian-based businesses that want to introduce new digital capabilities into their workplace or processes, in order to:

- reduce (non-staff) operational costs,
- improve market share,
- increase revenue,
- improve cyber security, or
- move the business online.

See: [Browse Services - Find Business Support](#)

East Lothian Council New Business Support Grant

East Lothian Council recognises the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local businesses, so will provide grant funding in 2022 to 2023 to support business growth and sustainability.

The New Business Support Grant offers up to £1,000 per company. A grant of either £250 or £500 may be awarded. Once approved, your grant will be paid in full.

The fund aims to promote local economic recovery and reduce the impact of cost of living on low-income households by supporting:

- interventions that support local economic recovery and help businesses move on from surviving the period of trading restrictions toward recovery, growth, adaptation and building resilience;
- projects that can rebuild consumer confidence and stimulate demand and economic activity; and
- low-income households that are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis to become more economically active.

Priority will be given to applicants who can demonstrate need and the benefit of funding to starting up their business.

This fund forms part of the Scottish Government's Local Authority COVID-19 Economic Recovery Fund (LACER) 2022/23. As such this funding will not be available after the current year.

See: [Funding for Business | Coronavirus | East Lothian Council](#)

North Ayrshire Council Business Support Fund

Flexible grant and consultancy funding is available to help new and existing businesses in North Ayrshire to survive and grow.

Business advisers will:

- provide advisory support,
- work in partnership with businesses to develop a sustainability or growth plan, and
- establish what financial support can be provided through grants and specialist consultancy.

All support will be assessed on a case by case basis, in line with North Ayrshire Council's Community Wealth Building aspirations.

See: [Grow in North Ayrshire – This Is North Ayrshire](#)

Grants and support in the Orkney islands

Below is a summary of some of the support available to businesses in the Orkney islands.

New Business Start-Up Grant

The New Business Start-Up Grant is a discretionary grant of between £500 and £1,500. It is available to new businesses based in Orkney that have been trading for less than 6 months.

The grant has been designed as a sustainable business development support for start-up projects that will help grow the rural economy.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate a need for funding and show there will be no negative effect on other Orkney businesses as a result of the funding.

Small Business Training Grant

Delivered by Orkney Islands Council and administered by Business Gateway Orkney, the Small Business Training Grant helps small businesses in Orkney to develop their workforce's skills. It will cover up to 90% of your training costs, up to a maximum of £1,000 per business.

The grant has been designed as a sustainable business development mechanism to encourage skills enhancement that will help grow Orkney's economy.

The grant can help with the cost of:

- external training fees (face-to-face or by distance learning),
- visiting trainer fees, and
- associated travel and accommodation costs.

Graduate and Post-Graduate Placement Scheme

The scheme offers 2 strands of grant support:

Graduate placements

To be eligible, a graduate must be qualified to HND level or above and the employment offered must be their first related to their qualification since graduation. The placement should take place within 2 years of graduation. The post should be for a minimum of 1 year and should be included in your business growth plan.

The grant will cover up to 50% of the graduate's total wage and national insurance costs, up to a maximum of £15,000, subject to 50% being the maximum funding made available by all funders. The grant will only cover the first year of the post.

Post-graduate placements

To be eligible, a post-graduate must be aiming to qualify at postgraduate diploma (PgDip) level or above. Applications should clearly demonstrate how the research undertaken will have realistic economic benefits for Orkney.

The grant will cover up to 30% of the post-graduate's total wage and national insurance costs, up to a maximum of £10,000, subject to 50% being the maximum funding made available by all funders.

See: [Browse Services - Find Business Support](#)

Grants and support in West Dunbartonshire

Below is a summary of some of the support available to businesses in West Dunbartonshire.

Business Digital Investment Grant

This grant helps existing West Dunbartonshire businesses that are more than 12 months old to develop and implement new digital systems. This can include purchasing software or hardware, upgrading digital connectivity or broadband, building e-commerce websites, and app development costs.

The grant will pay 30% of the costs, up to a maximum of £3,000.

Social Enterprise Growth Grant

This grant provides support to established and growing West Dunbartonshire social enterprises to help them implement their growth plans more efficiently and become more sustainable in the long term. The grant will cover up to 50% of the enterprise's project expenditure, up to a maximum of £2,000.

The funding is designed to support the further development and implementation of growth activity. Examples of eligible activity include capital expenditure, digital transformation projects, property improvement costs, innovative projects, and staff costs.

Business training grant

The Skills and Business Growth Programme will support 50% of your business's training fees up to a maximum of £3,000. The aim of this grant is to improve business competitiveness and provide employees with transferable skills and knowledge.

Business Capital grant

This grant covers 30% of the costs, up to a maximum of £3,000, to help existing West Dunbartonshire businesses that are over 12 months old to purchase essential equipment or machinery. This can include adaptations, alterations, or upgrades to existing equipment.

See: [Browse Services - Find Business Support](#)

Grants and support in Glasgow

Below is a summary of some of the support available to businesses in Glasgow.

Community Business Boost programme

This grant is designed to stimulate business activity in low-income neighbourhoods in Glasgow where few businesses operate, by providing grant funding towards the lease of a business property.

The aim is to encourage new or existing businesses to locate in these areas, to help improve the quality of life for local communities and:

- increase local job opportunities,
- improve local access to goods and services, and
- stimulate local economic activity.

Funding of up to a maximum of £15,000 is available over a 2-year period. The grant will cover a maximum of 50% of the annual business rental cost.

Green Business Grant

The Glasgow City Council Green Business Grant will help businesses in Glasgow address both the cost of living and climate crises through measures such as energy efficiency, renewables, active travel, and waste management.

The Green Business Grant is a non-repayable grant of up to £10,000, which will cover up to 50% of the total cost of a project. Projects can include anything that helps businesses reduce their energy bills and make progress towards achieving net zero carbon emissions.

Tech Smart Rent Subsidy

The Tech Smart Rent Subsidy grant is designed to help Glasgow tech businesses cover the rental costs of co-working space in the city.

The subsidy will pay 50% of the annual rent for your co-working space, up to a maximum of £5,000 per year for 2 years. Any rent-free period offered by your landlord will be deducted from the value of your grant award.

Businesses that receive the grant must also deliver or organise 2 events in their sector. Businesses can also apply for Glasgow City Council's Tech Smart Meetup Subsidy, which provides a grant of up to £1,000 to help fund these events.

Step Up to Net Zero

Step Up to Net Zero is an initiative to encourage businesses in the Glasgow area to adopt circular economy practices. It is delivered by the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce in partnership with Glasgow City Council.

Through the programme, eligible businesses will be assessed and helped to develop an action plan to adopt circular principles and decarbonise.

The action plan will provide businesses with recommendations for:

- carbon reduction,
- circularity, and
- improved waste management.

An individual will be placed in each business for 4 months to help the business achieve its goals. This individual will be given industry-specific training and support. The placement will be fully funded.

The programme will run for one year from September 2022 to September 2023. The 4-month placement for each business will begin by the end of February 2023.

See: [Browse Services - Find Business Support](#)

Grants and support in the Western Isles

Below is a summary of some of the support available to businesses in the Western Isles.

Micro business loan

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar provides commercial finance to new and growing businesses in the Outer Hebrides. The purpose of the service is to ensure that good, commercially viable proposals do not fail because they lack access to finance.

These interest-free micro loans encourage the creation and growth of small businesses in the Outer Hebrides that can contribute new jobs to the local economy. The loans can also help income-generating community enterprises develop projects that will enhance their opportunities for long-term sustainability and/or stimulate the local economy.

Loans of up to £2,000 are available from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar through its Business Gateway service. The funding can be used for general start-up costs, marketing (including trade fair attendance), e-commerce enablement, and other business activities.

Applications will be assessed against key eligibility criteria. Proposals must demonstrate that they will contribute to, and strengthen, the local economy in terms of jobs, growth and other benefits.

Business loan

Interest-bearing business loans of up to £50,000 are available to encourage businesses to start up, and also to enable business and community development in the Outer Hebrides.

The loans will help new and growing businesses and income-generating community enterprises to develop projects that will enhance their opportunities for long-term sustainability, as well as economic activity and employment.

The loans can be used for general start-up costs, new or used plant and equipment, working capital, marketing, e-commerce enablement, and upgrading business facilities.

Applications will be assessed against key eligibility criteria. Your proposal must demonstrate that it will contribute to, and strengthen, the local economy in terms of jobs, growth, and other benefits.

Fisheries Investment Scheme loan

The Fisheries Investment Scheme (FIS) is a council-funded scheme, supported by the Western Isles Fishermen's Association, which aims to create and retain employment opportunities in the Outer Hebrides by encouraging business development in the fisheries sector.

Loans are available for the purchase of fishing vessels that are less than 24 metres in overall length, equipped to go fishing at sea and up to 30 years old. The loans will cover up to 40% of the cost, up to a maximum of £100,000.

It is expected that the remainder of the purchase will be financed from a commercial loan from the applicant's own bank and their own funds.

A marine mortgage must be provided as security for any Fisheries Investment Scheme loan and all Comhairle legal costs involved in its registration must be met by the applicant.

Each application will be judged on its own merits. The main factors taken into account in assessing applications will include economic viability, assessed risk and need, employment implications, creation of additional demand for products and services and impact on local competition.

A condition of any loan funding from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is that any product landed must be offered initially to processors based in the Outer Hebrides at the prevailing market price.

See: [Browse Services - Find Business Support](#)

Grants and support in the Highlands

Below are two schemes available to businesses in the Highlands.

Growing Business Growth Fund

Businesses looking for financial support for their growth plans could be eligible for a Growing Business Growth Fund grant of up to £10,000. Applicants can potentially access 50% of the costs of their growth project.

If your project costs are higher and you would need to identify additional support to help achieve your expansion, Business Gateway Highland can help identify potential solutions to make your growth plans achievable.

The Business Growth Fund can be used to help your business grow or diversify in various ways, such as:

- introduction of new innovative technology products or services that improve performance - these do not need to be unique, but new to your business;
- premises improvement or expansion related to business development, new products or services;
- acquiring capital equipment to enable a more technical or efficiency/productivity enhanced approach;
- increasing staffing to meet market needs through the Highland Council HERO scheme;
- introduction of flexible working or new practices for staff, or enhancing customer services; or
- investment in new systems or processes for operations.

As part of the process, you will need to submit a business growth plan with your application. For support with this, contact the local Business Gateway office in Highland.

Business start-up grant for individuals

If you have started a business since 1 September 2021, or are planning to start a business in the next 3 months, you could be eligible for a Business Gateway Highland start-up grant of £1,000.

All business sectors and commercial types can be considered, including sole traders, partnerships, limited companies, and social enterprises.

Business Gateway Highland is delivering the grant on behalf of The Highland Council alongside its usual one-to-one support, local workshops, and specialist advice.

See: [Browse Services - Find Business Support](#)