

## Economic Development Grant: Tourism Scheme

Orkney has a well-deserved reputation for creating unique and welcoming visitor experiences, which reinforce our reputation as a desirable destination. But this is a very competitive market, so this grant scheme exists to help strengthen Orkney's vibrant tourism sector and support the wider local economy. It does this by supporting development projects that:

- enhance the quality and appeal of Orkney's tourism offer
- help to extend the tourist season by attracting more visitors across more months of the year; and
- encourage word-of-mouth recommendations and repeat visits through projects which will help deliver a high level of customer service to visitors.

### What can be funded?

The aim of the grant is to encourage repeat business or improve existing room occupancy rates or extend the accommodation opening period. Projects that improve the overall quality and appeal of accommodation or add new guest facilities have the potential to increase occupancy levels or extend the season by attracting visitors for more months of the year.

### Eligibility

**Upgrades or New Facilities at Existing Accommodation:** grants are available to existing providers of overnight tourist accommodation in Orkney which have been in operation for at least two seasons and employ at least one full-time staff member (this can include the business owner). Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they hold an ongoing legal right to undertake the proposed project at the property.

There may be some areas of a project that will not be eligible for grant funding and you should discuss your project with an Economic Development Officer in the first instance. Ineligible project items include:

- Projects that do not fit with the Council's principles and objectives.
- Projects that will increase the available number of bed spaces.
- Replacement items for general wear and tear, maintenance, or like-for-like replacements.
- 'Back of house' facilities that are not directly accessible or visible to customers.
- Facilities designed to attract non-resident guests.
- Bars/alcohol service.

**New or Improved Visitor Attractions:** Applications for support towards the development of new or upgraded attractions or other facilities (but not bars or accommodation) primarily aimed at visitors will be considered on their own merits, with reference to the Council's principles and objectives as detailed at sections 2 and 3 in the full Economic Development Grant Scheme Guidelines.

## Project examples

Activity type	Upgrades to existing accommodation	New facilities at existing accommodation	New or improved visitor attractions
Available grant	£3,000 - £55,000	£3,000 - £20,000	£ 3,000 - £55,000
Rate	Up to 30% of eligible costs	Up to 30% of eligible costs	Up to 30% of eligible costs
Examples of eligible activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addition of en-suite bathrooms to existing bedrooms.</li> <li>• Demonstrable quality improvement via capital refurbishment: can include upgraded furnishings, floor coverings and linen.</li> <li>• Installation or improvements to disabled access, eg ramps, wider doorways, accessible bathrooms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor or outdoor spaces to improve shoulder month or off-season stays, eg guest lounge, games room, drying room.</li> <li>• Electric vehicle or bike charging points.</li> <li>• Secure storage for outdoor activity equipment, such as bikes, fishing gear, or surfboards.</li> <li>• Wellness facilities, eg sauna, hot tub, or fitness suite.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to space/layout to improve visitor experience or accessibility.</li> <li>• New or upgraded interpretation, including digital solutions.</li> <li>• New events, especially to attract wider market/audience and disburse visitors.</li> <li>• Lighting, display equipment.</li> <li>• Improved disabled access, e.g. ramps, wider doorways, accessible bathrooms.</li> <li>• Additional toilets (as part of a wider project).</li> <li>• Improved car parks, footpaths and landscaping.</li> <li>• Bike parking.</li> <li>• Electric vehicle charging.</li> </ul>

\* Please note the above list is neither exhaustive or a guarantee of grant funding and all applicants must seek guidance in discussion with an Economic Development Officer.

### How to apply

If you're interested in applying for a Tourism grant, the first step is to speak to one of our Economic Development Officers about your proposal. They'll help you understand what's involved, ensure your application is eligible and highlight any other funding that may be open to you. You'll then need to complete an application form and submit accompanying evidence (eg proof of necessary operating licenses, business plan, accounts and quotes for works/equipment)

Your application should clearly demonstrate how any grant awarded will achieve the aims of the scheme and have a positive economic impact, for example through:

- improved competitiveness in the market
- sustained or increased employment
- potential to extend the visitor season
- improved customer satisfaction and/or unique visitor experiences.

Each application will be evaluated by an Economic Development Officer who will assess it relative to individual business' operating context and in terms of its alignment to the scheme's objectives and the [Orkney Sustainable Tourism Strategy](http://www.Orkney.com) which can be found on [www.Orkney.com](http://www.Orkney.com)

Applications should be supported by a business development plan that provides sufficient detail for the proposal to be assessed by officers.

### **Conditions of funding**

Grants are made upon terms and conditions to ensure the ongoing success and positive economic impact of the funded projects. Example conditions include:

- To demonstrate a commitment to staff development
- To demonstrate commitment to responding to customer feedback
- To participate in industry-wide initiatives including occupancy level or other data surveys

Please note that funding cannot be applied for retrospectively. Any costs incurred before the grant offer has been made will not be eligible for funding.

Tourism Grants that are awarded will be subject to an obligation period to be discussed with an Economic Development Officer. This will generally require a legal undertaking to be agreed for capital projects depending on the level of the grant offered and the nature of the activity being supported broadly as follows:

- Grants of between £3,000 and £20,000 will have a 5-year grant obligation period.
- Grants of £20,001 and above will have a 10-year obligation period.

Applicants will need to abide by various conditions during any grant obligation period, including seeking the Council's permission to discontinue or change the nature of the business, or to dispose of any part of the business, or its buildings/equipment. A pro-rata portion of the grant will become repayable.

During the period of the undertaking the applicant must also:

- respond promptly and effectively to customer feedback
- maintain demonstrably high standards of quality and service
- acknowledge Council funding in any relevant press releases or promotional materials

For further information email [economic.development@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:economic.development@orkney.gov.uk) or call 01856 873535