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Fife Tourism Digital Efficiency

Grant Criteria 2025

Purpose

To support tourism businesses in Fife to improve digital efficiency, reduce operational costs, and enhance customer engagement by adopting smarter, more sustainable digital tools and practices.

Funding provided through UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Funding) UK Government.

Background

Tourism is a cornerstone of Fife's economy, supporting a wide range of businesses from accommodation providers and visitor attractions to transport operators and activity centres. However, many of these businesses continue to rely on outdated, manual, or paper-based systems that limit their ability to operate efficiently, manage resources effectively, and respond to demand in real time.

The pressures of rising operational costs, staffing challenges, and customer expectations for fast, seamless service are making it increasingly important for tourism businesses to adopt digital tools that improve efficiency. Yet, small and medium-sized tourism enterprises across Fife often lack the resources or confidence to invest in digital upgrades such as automated booking and payment systems, cloud-based staff scheduling, digital inventory tracking, or integrated customer service platforms.

In addition to back-office improvements, digital technologies offer opportunities to increase efficiency through enhanced visitor interpretation. Attractions such as museums, heritage sites, and cultural centres can reduce reliance on printed materials and physical staffing by introducing digital interpretation tools including self-guided apps, QR codes, touchscreens, and multilingual audio guides. These solutions not only streamline operations but also improve accessibility, reduce maintenance costs, and allow attractions to serve more visitors with fewer resources. The Digital Efficiency Grant will help address these barriers by supporting businesses to implement practical, cost-saving technologies that streamline daily operations. Improving digital efficiency is not just about keeping up with technology it's about helping tourism businesses in Fife become more resilient, responsive, and financially sustainable.



Outcomes

- Improved productivity and time savings through digital systems.
- Increased online visibility and direct bookings.
- Reduced admin time via automation.
- Increased productivity
- Better use of data for marketing and business decisions.
- Lower carbon footprint via paperless and remote-friendly systems.

Eligible Activities

Digital Tools & Automation

- CRM systems for managing customer relationships.
 - For managing guest data, email campaigns, repeat visits.
- Booking engines or integration with online travel agents.
- Channel management systems for accommodation providers.
- AI Chatbots & FAQ Automation
 - For attractions or accommodation handling high query volumes.
- EPOS Systems Integration
 - Especially for multi-channel retail/ticket sales or cafe operations.
 - Stock Management

Digital Transformation for Museums, Galleries & Heritage Attractions

- Collection management systems or digital cataloguing tools.
- Interactive digital guides (e.g. QR code-based audio tours, touch-screen exhibits) that reduce staff resource needs while improving visitor experience.
- Digitisation of archives to enable staff or public access, where this improves back-office efficiency.
- Interactive touchscreens or digital kiosks that replace printed panels or reduce the need for staff-led interpretation.
- Projection or immersive audio-visual displays that offer flexible, updateable storytelling with minimal physical materials.
- QR code-triggered multimedia content, enabling visitors to access video, audio, or text via their own devices.
- Augmented Reality (AR) or Virtual Reality (VR) used to reduce the need for physical props or facilitate self-guided learning.
- Software for remote or hybrid exhibitions, helping museums reach more audiences without needing a staffed presence on site.
- Sensor-based technology (e.g. motion-activated sound or lighting) to enhance accessibility or streamline exhibit use.

Digital Tools to Improve Accessibility



Technology that helps remove barriers for disabled visitors or those with additional needs, including:

- Subtitled video/audio interpretation, British Sign Language content, or captioning tools.
- Screen reader-compatible booking or information systems.
- Mobile-friendly digital guides or web-based content that provides alternatives to printed or static displays.
- AI tools to help staff provide translated or simplified language communications (e.g., live translation chatbots, easy-read tools).
- Apps or interfaces to support self-guided access for neurodiverse visitors or those requiring sensory adaptations.

Operational & Back-Office Efficiency

- Setting up e-commerce functionality for retail/ticket sales.
- Automation of emails (pre-arrival, feedback requests, upselling).
- Data Analytics Dashboards
 - Sales, visitor flow, feedback insights using existing tools or plug-ins.
- Workflow Automation Tools
 - Linking booking data with CRM, calendar, email, etc.
 - Apps to assist with staff rotas and communication

Training & Consultancy

- Digital audits (e.g. current tools, gaps, efficiency opportunities).
- 1:1 digital consultancy or coaching.

Equipment and System Rentals

Funding can be used to support the rental or subscription costs of digital equipment or systems that improve business efficiency (e.g. EPOS, booking systems, CRM platforms, or digital signage).

Support will be available for a maximum of 6 months. Businesses must pay the costs in advance and then claim the funding retrospectively by submitting proof of payment (e.g. invoices and bank statements). Invoices must be submitted by March 1st 2026 (rental for the month of March can be included in this submission)

Please note: any ongoing costs beyond the 6-month funded period will not be covered and will be the responsibility of the business.

Examples of Technology



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Projects that may be eligible include (but are not limited to):

- Development of digital booking or ticketing platforms
- Use of data analytics to enhance visitor engagement
- Virtual or augmented reality experiences
- Digital storytelling and immersive content for attractions
- Adoption of smart tools (IoT, automation, AI, etc.)
- E-commerce solutions for tourism-related retail
- Sustainable tourism tech (e.g., carbon calculators, green travel apps)

Not Eligible for Funding

The grant is designed to support improvements in operational digital efficiency, not general digital marketing or cosmetic upgrades. The following activities are not eligible:

General Website Development

- Basic website builds or redesigns not linked to operational efficiency.
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) services (e.g. keyword ranking, backlink building).
- General branding updates (logo design, aesthetic-only changes).
- Domain name registration or routine hosting costs (unless part of a wider eligible system integration).

Social Media & Content Marketing

- Organic social media strategy or paid social media advertising.
- Photography, videography or influencer engagement.
- Content writing for blogs or brand storytelling (unless generated via AI for internal efficiency purposes).

Print or Offline Marketing Materials

- Brochures, signage, or traditional advertising formats.
- QR code signage (unless linked to a system providing measurable efficiency gains, e.g. chatbot access).

Hardware Only (Unless Tied to Eligible Software)

- Purchase of tablets, laptops, mobile phones or other devices unless integral to the use of eligible software (e.g., EPOS terminal or booking kiosk).

Generic Training

- Staff training not directly linked to the implementation of a new digital system (e.g., general customer service or sales training).

Standalone Consultancy



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- Marketing or business consultancy unless directly tied to implementing eligible digital efficiency solutions (e.g., CRM setup support or AI workflow coaching).

Grant Criteria

- Who can apply: Tourism businesses in Fife
 - Accommodation providers of more than 5 bedrooms (Hotel \ Guest House B&B) or more than 2 STL properties managed by property management company
 - Visitor Attractions
 - Activity providers
 - Tour guides
 - Restaurant's, Bars and Cafe's
- Grant size: Max £4000 per business
- Businesses can apply for up to £4,000 in grant funding. The grant will cover up to 80% of eligible costs, with the business required to contribute a minimum of 20% of the total project cost.
 - For example, if your project costs £5,000, the grant may provide £4,000 and your business would be responsible for the remaining £1,000.
- The business contribution must be made in advance, as the grant is paid retrospectively upon submission of valid evidence of payment.
- Application process: Via Expression of Interest Form and discussion with your Business Gateway Advisor. Deadline 14th September 2025.
- Demonstrate a clear digital need or opportunity with defined outcomes
- Applicants may be asked as part of the application process to obtain two quotes for any equipment, system, or service they intend to fund through the grant.
- All application quotes should to demonstrate value for money.
- Where possible, applicants are encouraged to use vetted or accredited consultants (from list provided) or suppliers to ensure quality, reliability, and best practice in delivery.
- Applicants may be asked to provide up to date financial information
- Reporting: Implementation report along with evidence will be required prior to final payment being made
- Payments to suppliers must be correctly evidenced, by either bank transfer or card payment. Cash payments **WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**. Banking documentation will be required as evidence of payment.



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- Backdating of funding is not permitted. Any costs incurred on the project before the grant is formally approved will not be eligible for reimbursement.
- Projects must be completed and final evidence submitted by 1st March 2026 to allow time for payments to be made
- Applications to be received by 14th September 2025
- Funding is limited and applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis.
- The Digital Efficiency Grant fund has a limited budget and may close early if all available funding is allocated before the advertised closing date. Early submission is strongly encouraged to avoid disappointment.
- Only applications deemed eligible will be assessed. Each application will be reviewed and agreed by two members of the Welcome to Fife team.
- All decisions on funding applications are final
- Businesses successful in the grant application may be asked to partake in case study research

Support Provided

- Workshop or webinar before applying – Tuesday 26th August 2025
 - Workshop will provide advice and potential digital solutions to issues within your business
- A list of vetted digital consultants or tools
- Previous case studies
- Contact: promoting.fife@fife.gov.uk