



Fife Tourism Digital Efficiency

Grant Criteria 2026 \ 2027 (Round 2)

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 will be provided through Fife Council.

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 However, many of these businesses continue to rely on outdated, manual, or paper-based systems that limit their ability to operate efficiently, manage resources effectively, and respond to demand in real time.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 5 months (due to funding timescales Oct-March). 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 within the advised timescale.

Please note: any ongoing costs beyond March 2027 will not be funded due to the criteria of the funding programme.

Examples of Technology

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)

See Tay Cities Tourism Technology Toolkit for hints and tips. [TOOLKIT](#)

Tay Cities Evaluation Report also available to view [HERE](#).

Projects 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

- 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** - Business in the following geographical areas can apply
 - Dunfermline and South West Fife
 - Kirkcaldy
 - Glenrothes
 - Cowdenbeath
 - Levenmouth
- Business in North Fife will have the opportunity to apply for similar funding through Tay Cities Programme (Digitay) from November 2027
- Business with a minimum 1 years accounts available and future business plan \ projections
- Any businesses who may have received tourism digital efficiency funding between April 2025 and September 2026 may not apply.
- **Types of business who can apply:**
 - 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 £3200 (ex VAT) per business
- Businesses can apply for up to £3,200 (ex VAT) in grant funding. The grant may 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 £4,000, the grant may provide £3,200 (ex Vat) and your business would be responsible for the remaining £800.
- **Pre-Approval Purchases:** Do not purchase any items until your funding is approved.
- **Post-Approval Purchases:** Once approved, you can purchase the items listed in your application form.
- **Invoice Deadline:** Invoices should be submitted through Business Gateway \ Business Gateway Advisor, by 1st February 2027, should you have any issues meeting this deadline please advise as soon as possible. Any submissions post Monday 1st February 2027 may not be accepted. Please note this is a hard deadline due Fife Council funding criteria.

- **Proof of Purchase:** Submit proof of purchase (receipts and bank statement) for the approved items. VAT on purchased items are not reimbursable. Cash payments **WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**.
- **Invoice Submission:** Provide an invoice to Business Gateway for the amount spent (excluding VAT). Include your bank account name, account number, and sort code for reimbursement.
- **Charitable Organisations** – Please note VAT is not included
- **Payment Processing:** Reimbursement payments may take up to 5 working days to process.
- Backdating of funding is not permitted. Any costs incurred on the project before the grant is formally approved will not be eligible for reimbursement.
- Funding is limited and applications will be considered via an the expression of interest form. Successful applicants will then be asked to complete a full application within 10 working days of offer.
- Application process: Via Expression of Interest Form and discussion with your Business Gateway Advisor.
 - **EOI Closing Date – Friday 18th September 2026**
 - **Full application closing date if invited including quotes – 2nd October 2026**
 - The Digital Efficiency Grant fund has a limited budget and may close early if all available funding is allocated before the advertised EOI closing date. Early submission is strongly encouraged to avoid disappointment.
- Applicants will 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.
- Demonstrate a clear digital need or opportunity with defined outcomes
- All application quotes should demonstrate value for money.
- Where possible, applicants are encouraged to use vetted or accredited consultants, or suppliers to ensure quality, reliability, and best practice in delivery.
- Applicants will be asked to provide up to date financial \ accounts information
- Reporting: Implementation report along with evidence will be required prior to final payment being made

- Projects must be completed and final evidence submitted by 1st February 2027 to allow time for payments to be made
- 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

- Previous case studies
- Contact: promoting.fife@fife.gov.uk