

Introduction

Soirbheas is a local charity that provides grants, investment and community support in Glen Urquhart and Strathglass. The Apprenticeship Grant Scheme is open to employers/business based in the Soirbheas *area, to help them to toward covering the salary cost of a Modern Apprentice (MA).

The primary aim of the Apprenticeship Grant scheme is to encourage local economic and business growth by providing training opportunities for young people aged 16 to 24. The scheme is only available to employers largely based within the Community Councils areas of Glen Urquhart and Strathglass with a maximum turnover of less than £5 million. The aim of the scheme is we hope to assist local businesses development and employment opportunities as well as encouraging the retention of young people in our communities.

Many of our young people leave the Highlands in pursuit of careers and further education. This issue is reflected in the population figures from our area and indeed across the Highlands, which show a higher population of elderly and young people (under 16) in comparison to the rest of Scotland.

Soirbheas has four key objectives that it delivers on, one of which is *Strengthening the local economy by encouraging new businesses to set up.*

The programme will support businesses that contribute to one or more of the following outcomes:

- To provide full-time training opportunities to apprentices, both in-house and external training, to encourage the young person to stay in the community.
- To stimulate new ideas and have an innovative approach to generate business growth, development and new employment.
- To strengthen and diversify the local economy through support for social enterprises and businesses, especially those that explore, test and develop activity that sensitively exploits the area's tourist potential or niche business areas.

The Soirbheas Apprenticeship Scheme will provide financial support to businesses in the form of grant (for up to 3 years). The grant will recognise the employer's input involved in the training of a young person and offset some of the costs of employing an apprentice including any special equipment required for the job role. The grant will be assessed by a panel made up of Soirbheas directors with advice from local representatives.

Who will the scheme be open to?

The scheme will be open to businesses and social enterprises who wish to develop or expand their business, provide new products or services or would like to increase their workforce by employing a modern apprentice. The scheme is aimed 16 – 24 year olds (at the start of the programme) achieving a nationally recognised/ industry standard qualification to SVQ level 3 or equivalent over the maximum of 3 years. Businesses offering an apprenticeship at SVQ level 2 (or equivalent) can apply but will not be eligible for three years funding. The grant offered will be calculated proportionally.

Priority will be given to businesses primarily based or who serve Glen Urquhart and or Strathglass and to young people who reside in either Glen Urquhart or Strathglass. Soirbheas may consider supporting young people coming to live and work in the community and young people from the community being employed as an apprentice outside the area on a case-by-case basis. Early discussion prior to submitting any application is essential.

Support from Soirbheas Apprenticeship Scheme Grant funding is in addition to that provided by any industry governing bodies such as SECTT (Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust or SNIPEF (Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers' Federation) which the applicant is asked to declare on the application form. Payments are made in monthly instalments over the apprenticeship period and will be subject to specific set of conditions which will be agreed for each apprenticeship and the submission by the employer of regular progress reports to Soirbheas. The scheme will be open to support business that can demonstrate a strong commitment to hosting a modern apprenticeship and providing a supportive pathway.

In addition, the business must have all the below in place:

- Appropriate health and safety procedures.
- Adequate equipment and skills to provide the range of training required.
- Employees and public liability insurance.
- Registration of the apprentice with the appropriate skills body (if relevant).

Soirbheas is particularly interested in supporting apprenticeships where work skills are transferred to a new generation. The Charity is also keen to support apprenticeships that will help a young person to stay in the area.

The business is expected to identify, or be in the process of identifying, candidates that are suitable for their vacancy. However, Soirbheas will be working closely with Glen Urquhart High School and may be able to help a business identify a suitable apprentice if the business has not already identified a suitable candidate already.

How much funding is available and for what?

The Soirbheas Apprenticeship Grant Scheme will help towards paying a wage, travel, accommodation (when attending college if relevant), equipment and training of an apprentice. The maximum amount of financial support to any business over the duration of an apprenticeship period is a total of £22,500 (over a maximum of 3 years). The final amount awarded will vary depending on the age of the apprentice at the start of the apprenticeship, the needs of each business, the apprenticeship being undertaken and availability of other funding. For a 3 year apprenticeship the scheme will pay a maximum of 80% in year 1, 60% in year two, 40% in year 3 towards the wage costs. For SVQ or equivalent short courses the salary support will be around 60% funded. Plus, up to £1,000 towards equipment directly for the benefit of the apprentice. VAT is not an eligible project cost unless you are unable to reclaim VAT.

The employer must pay a salary rate of at least 20% above the minimum starting wage (from 1 April 2023 the minimum starting rate is £5.28 (a minimum starting salary of £5.77) for apprenticeship under 19 or over 19 in their first year of their apprenticeship <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>).

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) or the relevant construction industry will be the first port of call for setting up the apprentice's training and will they normally cover all of the training cost if the young person is 16 – 19. If over 19 they may only pay 50% of the training. *For apprentices over 25 there is government support for some MA's in key sectors while others need to be funded by an employer who is willing to pay for the training.

This Soirbheas Apprenticeship Grant scheme is not intended to replace any existing schemes run by SDS or industry where support usually takes the form of course fees, cost of travel and accommodation when attending courses.

Application Process

In the first instance, please contact the Soirbheas Community Development Manger – Tina Morrow to discuss your application. You will then need to complete an Apprenticeship Grant Application Form and provide the supporting paperwork (detailed above and in the application form).

Your application will be reviewed within 6 weeks of the grant deadline. For deadlines, please visit the Soirbheas website.

Please send completed application forms and supporting documentation to:

Email: tinamorrow@soirbheas.org

Mobile: 0751 445 2783

Notes

Due to limited funds being available, some applications will not be successful or applicants may be offered a lower amount than requested. You will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible and within 6 weeks of the grant deadline.

* The beneficiaries of projects must be resident in the Glen Urquhart or Strathglass Community Council areas. Residency will be determined by the defined areas covered by the Glen Urquhart and Strathglass Community Councils maps of the boundaries can be found on the Highland Council website:

http://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/472/community_councils_-_boundary_maps