

Coronavirus – VisitScotland fund for tour guides opens next week

VisitScotland has taken the first step in opening a £3 million fund to help support tour guides in Scotland who are affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. They are publishing information and guidance before the applications go live.

The fund is administered by the tourism organisation on behalf of The Scottish Government. The Scottish Tour Guides Association has worked with VisitScotland and other industry bodies such as Wild Scotland, Wilderness Scotland and the Cairngorms Business Partnership.

At the end of last year, the Scottish Government announced that tourism and hospitality businesses across Scotland were to benefit from a £104.3 million Scottish Government package. An additional £25 million of funding was announced by the Scottish Government on 11 February to help businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector to survive the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Applications will open on 3 March 2021 and will close at 5pm on 10 March 2021. This short window will allow any Scottish-based applicants to make an application to help their guided tours and activity businesses as long as they conduct at least 75% of their business here.

Full details on the fund, eligibility criteria and what information applicants will need to prepare for their application, can be found here: <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/tour-guide-fund>

Each applicant may apply for up to £5,000 per business.

Riddell Graham, Director of Industry & Destination Development, VisitScotland, said: “The Scottish tourism industry has been devastated by the Coronavirus pandemic. Tour guides are an important part of the visitor experience.

“It is their informed local knowledge and personal connection which feeds into visitors’ pursuit of a transformational experience, in which they seek an immersive experience while understanding the needs of locals and the environment.

“This fund will provide essential support for tour guides under severe financial strain due to the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions, and who have been unable to provide in-person visitor experiences.

“Recovery will require our collective efforts and we must act as one to ensure the best possible outcomes for the whole of the visitor economy.”

Linda Arthur, Chair of the Scottish Tourist Guides Association said: “The STGA is delighted to have worked with VisitScotland in the development of Scotland’s Tour Guides Fund announced today.

“Scottish Tourist Guides have had virtually no work for the past year and this funding will provide much-needed support. As professional guides we put the human face onto the interpretation of Scotland’s history, understanding of the landscape and what it is like to live here.

“STGA guides have an important role to play in the recovery of

tourism and we are looking forward to getting back to what we do best – providing high quality experiences that showcase Scotland and really make a difference to our visitors.”

The Scottish Tourist Guides Association was founded in 1959 and has more than 500 members whose members do a variety of work including taking visitors on walking tours, coach tours and driver guided tours. Blue Badge Guides are qualified to take people anywhere in Scotland and Green Badge guides are qualified for specific regions such as Orkney.

More information here
<https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/advice/coronavirus>