

# Scotland Loves Local goes digital

## A scheme aimed at boosting trade in town and city centres in Scotland is going digital.

Scotland Loves Local (SLL) gift cards can be loaded with credit and used in shops and businesses which are part of the scheme within the user's local council area.

The Scottish Government is investing £250,000 to enable the cards to operate digitally through devices such as mobile phones.

This means that the cards can be used by businesses to reward loyal customers and encourage repeat custom. The new system may also be made compatible with transport providers' ticketing systems, allowing relatives or businesses to gift train and bus fares into town centres for shopping trips.

Cards are currently used by more than 20 councils – including six which have used them to distribute more than £13 million of Scottish Government Covid-19 economic recovery funding to lower income households.

Community Wealth Minister Tom Arthur said: "Going digital is an important step forward for the SLL gift card. The scheme has already delivered millions of pounds of extra spending to help businesses recover from the pandemic and by increasing their useability I am sure even more people will be encouraged to shop locally.

"The cards have made a real difference in places like Glasgow, where thousands of cards have been used to access Scottish

Government funding for economic recovery.

“They represent a step towards the creation of local currencies to be invested and retained within areas. Digitalisation will accelerate that process and help support fairer and more prosperous local economies.”

Scotland’s Towns Partnership (STP) delivers the SLL initiative – which includes the gift card – encouraging people to support their communities by spending locally.

Interim Chief Officer Kimberley Guthrie said: “The Scotland Loves Local campaign is a force for good – galvanising communities to support local people and businesses at times when they have never needed that more.

“The need for us all to think, choose and spend locally is critical, not only in our ongoing recovery from the impact of Covid-19 on businesses, but in helping us all through the cost of living crisis and in responding to the climate emergency.

“Continued support from the Scottish Government allows businesses and communities to innovate, invest and embrace opportunity, building better, stronger places.”



Fawns Reid of Fabhatrix

## IN EDINBURGH

**The Edinburgh Gift Card can be spent with over 140 businesses in the city, including Fabhatrix situated in Edinburgh's Grassmarket. Owner and milliner Fawns Reid said:**

"Fabhatrix has been in Edinburgh for over 20 years now. Our hats are handmade using Scottish Harris Tweed and other quality materials to create unique items, including women's and men's hats to suit any occasion from the races to a wedding, a festival to meeting the Queen. One of the benefits of making our own stock is that we can keep our shelves replenished. Of course, there have been far fewer special occasions of late, and less tourists to the city but we've been fortunate that we also have good local trade for our regular hats. A good warm winter hat will see you through the Edinburgh winter!

"When our ability to shop in person was taken away, people

realised how much they valued it. If you buy online, you're just buying a nice photo. When you shop in person, particularly for Scottish textiles, you really need to see it in person, to feel the quality, to see the weather protection and the lining. The provenance of an item is more important too, people want to know where their products came from and are ready to invest in an authentic Scottish handmade hat, trilby or fascinator. This interest has helped us to reach a whole new demographic.

"I encourage all employers to think local with their staff rewards. Local businesses in Edinburgh are well stocked, on your doorstep and often have more space and time to help customers. The Edinburgh Gift Card is a very worthy initiative and we're happy to be a part of the programme as we all work together to keep Edinburgh vibrant."

