

Support for business

Coronavirus: support for Highland businesses

23 March 2020

Highland Council appreciate that this is a very difficult time for your business and we are here to support you as much as we can.

This webpage seeks to give a clear guide to the range of support announced for business, their employees and the self employed by the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Council. The advice from both governments is evolving and we will continue to update this page as further information becomes available.

Wage Support

Business will be able to secure a subsidy towards the salary costs of their employees who otherwise would have been laid off. Called the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) employers will be able to secure up to 80% of the cost of an employee's cost up to a maximum of £2500 per month per employee until end May 2020.

HMRC will deliver this wage subsidy. No detailed arrangements are yet available on how to apply.

Loans

If your business needs short term cash flow support a loan scheme is to be set up to support primarily small and medium-sized businesses to access bank lending and overdrafts. Called the [Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme](#), the scheme will provide lenders with a guarantee of 80% of a loan and businesses will be able to secure 12 months interest free repayments.

The [British Business Bank](#) will deliver this loan scheme. You should talk to your bank or finance provider (not the British Business Bank) as soon as possible and discuss your business plan with them. The scheme will be available from the week commencing 23 March 2020.

VAT

[VAT payments](#) have been deferred for three months from 20 March until end June 2020 and no VAT payments are needed during this period. Taxpayers will be given until the 5 April 2021 to pay any VAT liabilities that have accumulated during the deferral period. VAT refunds and reclaims will be paid by the government as normal.

This is an automatic support and businesses do not need to apply.

Sick Pay

Small-and medium-sized businesses and employers will be able to reclaim [Statutory Sick Pay](#) (SSP) paid for sickness absence due to COVID-19. They will be able to reclaim 2 weeks' SSP per eligible employee. There will be no need to provide a Doctors Fit Note but employers need to maintain records of staff absences and payments of SSP.

No detailed arrangements are yet available on how the repayment mechanism will work and how to apply.

Self Employed

The self employed [income tax payments](#) due on the 31 July 2020 will be deferred without penalty or late payment interest until the 31 January 2021.

This is an automatic support and businesses do not need to apply.

If you are self-employed or earning below the Lower Earnings Limit of £118 per week - and you have COVID-19 or are advised to stay at home, you can make a claim for [Universal Credit](#) or new style [Employment and Support Allowance](#). If you are eligible for new style Employment and Support Allowance, it will now be payable from day 1 of sickness, rather than day 8, if you have COVID-19 or are advised to stay at home.

If required you can access advance payments upfront without needing to attend a jobcentre, nor is there a need to attend a jobcentre to demonstrate gainful self-employment.

Outstanding Tax

If businesses and individuals who are in temporary financial distress as a result of Covid-19 and have existing outstanding tax liabilities, they are encouraged to contact HMRC as they may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through HMRC's [Time To Pay](#) service.

Non Domestic Rates: Rates Relief

All [non-domestic properties](#) in Scotland will get a 1.6% rates relief. You do not need to apply for this relief and it will be applied to your bill.

Retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will get 100% rates relief. To get this relief, a property has to be occupied.

If you're struggling to pay your non-domestic rates bill you should contact the [Council's Non Domestic Rates team](#) and ask them about your payment options. Please note however, there is no requirement to make a payment toward your business rates account until 30 September 2020, this is without any penalty, interest or charge.

Grants

Retail, hospitality and leisure businesses with a rateable value between £18,001 and up to and including £51,000 will be able to apply for a [one-off grant](#) of £25,000 if operating in that sector as at 17 March 2020.

Businesses operating in an eligible premises that was in receipt of the Small Business Bonus Scheme and Rural Relief as at 17 March 2020, can apply for a [one-off grant](#) of £10,000. If you applied for Nursery Relief or Disabled Relief but are eligible for the Small Business Bonus Scheme you can also get this grant.

Businesses that may qualify for both awards may make request for only the £25,000 grant.

Please Note: NOT all types of retail, hospitality and leisure businesses will qualify for these grants. Please refer to the Scottish Government's [website pages](#) to establish if your business is eligible or not.

The Scottish Government has asked the Council to administer these grants. At the current time the Scottish Government is working with the Council and others to finalise a common approach to the application process.

Advice

The Council's Business Gateway service has set up a dedicated page at <https://www.bgateway.com/resources/coronavirus-support> This includes a range of guidance and information online about business continuity planning, and a number of additional related articles, including webinars and tutorials to support you at www.bgateway.com

The Business Gateway Highland team can be contacted on **01463 896791**.

Please Note: To manage calls during the current COVID-19 emergency the team will operate a call back service.

The Scottish Government have set up a business support helpline (**0300 303 0660**) for all business support enquiries in Scotland there is also further information available on <https://www.mygov.scot/non-domestic-rates-coronavirus/>

The UK Government has set out guidance for employees, employers and businesses in providing advice about COVID-19 on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>