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## Scottish Country Sports Tourism Restart Fund

### Background

On 4 February 2021, the Scottish Government announced a **Scottish Country Sports Tourism Restart Fund** (the “Fund”) to help the Scottish country sports tourism sector survive the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is estimated that the value of country sports tourism to the Scottish economy is £200 million per year, with 8,800 full-time equivalent jobs being supported by the sector. The highly rural nature of this employment is of significance, important to some of our more fragile communities.

Country sports tourism has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the loss of the majority of tourists from both the UK and the international community. Restrictions have resulted in significantly reduced activity for those who have been able to participate in country sports locally. This included a blanket cessation in activity across Scotland for much of the game shooting season. In addition, much of the sector has been unable to furlough staff due to animal welfare obligations, and this has further exacerbated the financial enormity of the situation.

The Fund aims to help those within the country sports tourism sector while restrictions on opening and travel are still in place, and to support them to prepare for reopening in 2021 when restrictions are lifted.

Businesses can only be successful and receive a grant award from one of the funds announced by the Scottish Government on or since 15 December 2020 to help the tourism and events industries to survive the impacts of COVID-19, regardless of the body who is administering the fund. The tourism announcement was made by the Scottish Government on 21 December 2020. This does not mean that businesses cannot apply to multiple funds if they meet the relevant eligibility requirements. However, you must withdraw your application from all other funds and reject any other grant offers if you have accepted a grant award. After 31 March 2021, some applications may be chosen at random to be audited. Any applicants who have been found to have provided incorrect information or received multiple awards will be expected to return their awarded grant.

### The Fund

#### What is the purpose of this Fund?

The purpose of this Fund is to provide country sports tourism businesses with support in order to survive the ongoing restrictions and prepare for the forthcoming season. The fund is not intended to compensate for historical losses however we expect that applicants will have seen a significant fall in revenue following the impact of COVID-19.

## What is the budget for this Fund?

The total budget for this Fund is £1 million. The Fund is being delivered on behalf of the Scottish Government by VisitScotland, with development input from the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group (SCSTG) and The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC). VisitScotland is the awarding body for this Fund.

## What is the process and timeline for the Fund?

1. Businesses that meet all the eligibility criteria will be able to submit an application form from 12pm on Wednesday 24 February 2021 until 5pm on Wednesday 3 March 2021 via the form available on <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/country-sports-restart-fund/apply>

Any applications received after this period will not be considered. Applications **will not** be assessed on a first come, first served basis.

2. Following the assessment of all the applications, a panel consisting of VisitScotland staff will make the final decisions on those who are eligible to receive funding. Applications will also be reviewed by Chiene + Tait, an accountancy firm procured by VisitScotland, who will review and assess the financial evidence submitted with the application.
3. If your application is rejected, you can appeal this decision. Any appeals should be submitted in writing to [CountrySportsFundAppeals@visitscotland.com](mailto:CountrySportsFundAppeals@visitscotland.com) together with a justification for the appeal. Appeals will be reviewed by VisitScotland and a representative from the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group and The British Association for Shooting and Conservation.

## Eligible Business Types

This Fund aims to assist a diversity of country sports tourism businesses. Eligible businesses are required to be entirely commercial in purpose and directly involved in facilitating country sports tourism activity.

This is not an exhaustive list of eligible businesses. Businesses that span multiple business types should identify as the business type that drives the majority of their output.

- **Sporting Agencies:** Sporting agencies bring tourists to Scotland to participate in country sports. Agencies will facilitate and arrange the various key elements of the sporting holiday, which includes but is not limited to sporting activity, accommodation, equipment provision, food and drink, etc.
- **Guided Sporting Services:** Sporting guides also bring tourists to Scotland to participate in country sports. Guides tend to take a more practical approach by being in the field or on the water with customers while they conduct sporting activity. Guided sporting activities include but are not limited to game shooting, deer stalking, falconry, wildfowling, ferreting, gun dog training, target shooting, fly fishing, coarse angling and sea angling.
- **Land-Based Sporting Businesses:** Land-based sporting businesses that manage land for country sports tourism. Activities include but are not limited to shooting, deer stalking and fishing.

- **Fishing Charter Operators:** Boats run for the primary purpose of guided recreational fishing charters, i.e. where additional activities such as diving or nature watching trips are less than 25% of total turnover.

## Eligibility Criteria

As part of the application form, businesses will be asked to provide information which confirms that they meet **all** of the following eligibility criteria:

- Must meet at least one of the business types defined in the eligible business types detailed above;
- Must have a minimum turnover of over £10,000 (as set out in your latest filed accounts which represent pre-COVID-19 activity);
- Confirmation that at least 75% of your annual turnover must be accounted for from country sport tourism activities, undertaken and delivered within Scotland;
- Confirmation that your country sports tourism activities serve wholly or mainly a market that is not local;
- Must have a permanent place of business in Scotland (registered business address or premises);
- Must have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 which has resulted in revenue decreasing by at least 50% in the comparative period following the submission of your pre-COVID-19 accounts. (In arriving at the 2020 figures, adjustments should be made where there is a formal obligation to defer or repay deposits received as a result of COVID-19. We may ask for additional evidence to support this statement as part of the application review process.)
- Must intend to operate your business in 2021;
- The business must not have been in financial difficulty as of 31 December 2019 if you are a SME or Large organisation – please see the Subsidy Control section in the Guidance for more information;

The fund is **not** intended to support the following business types, as there are alternative funding streams in place for other sectors and business types:

- Mixed estates which accrue less than 75% of their annual turnover from country sports tourism <sup>1</sup>
- Businesses serving, wholly or mainly, a local market where the sporting offering is provided <sup>2</sup>
- Game dealers <sup>3</sup>
- Game farms <sup>3</sup>
- Commercial fishing
- Boat hire
- Boat charters for nature watching or sightseeing
- Boat charters for diving or snorkelling
- Retail outlets

- Equipment/hire rental
- Outdoor education centres
- Riding schools for lessons
- Domestic and farm animal/agri-tourism experiences
- Indoor and outdoor sports activities, e.g. football, golf, tennis, netball etc.
- Guided nature and wildlife watching experiences and holidays
- Guided pony treks and holidays as a tourism activity
- Guided water and coastal activities (not including fishing)
- Guided 4x4 off-road driving and quad biking activities
- Online Travel Agents
- Retail Travel Agents
- Third Party resellers
- Event planning companies and organisers
- Exhibition companies
- Production companies
- Marketing, PR & communication groups
- Land management or consultancy services
- Individual service providers/suppliers to country sports tourism businesses such as: transport companies, accommodations, restaurants, gunshops etc.
- Clubs, syndicates, associations or other entities whose primary purpose is not the realisation of profit

(Please note this list is not exhaustive, and we reserve the right to add further ineligible business types during the assessment process for the purposes of clarity)

*Please see Annex 1 for additional information on ineligible business types marked with numbers 1-3.*

## Additional Information

In addition to the eligibility criteria, businesses will be asked to provide the following additional information and supporting documentation in their application:

- Name of applicant organisation
- Trading name if different
- Address (inc. postcode)
- Local authority
- One of the following:
  - » National VAT Number
  - » Company Registration Number
  - » HMRC Unique Tax Reference Number
  - » Charity Registration Number
- Size of organisation
- NACE Code
- Confirmation of any COVID-19 related aid/support already approved/received in 2020 under the Temporary Framework, including the amount of each
- Confirmation of whether you intend to apply for or have applied for any of the other funding support announced by the Scottish Government since 15 December 2020
- Name of person completing application form
- Position within organisation
- Email address
- Mobile contact number
- Organisation website/web presence
- Confirmation that you meet the eligibility criteria set out earlier in this guidance document
- Name of bank
- Name on bank account (it is not a requirement to have a business bank account)
- Sort Code
- Account Number

## Supporting Documentation

- Summary of business activity including the main country sports tourism activities delivered.
- Annual accounts for 2019/20 year which have been audited/verified by an accountant **or** copy of filed tax return for 2019/20. Note: this must clearly state the turnover figure for the business. Businesses with a year end after 31 December 2019 can submit for the previous year if these are their latest set of accounts;
- Bank statement for December 2020 (redacted statements will be accepted provided bank name, sort code and account number are clearly shown).
- Copy of current annual insurance document to cover third party liability and/or commercial liability insurance and/or employers' liability insurance (if you have cancelled or allowed your liability policy to lapse because you have been unable to operate in the current circumstances, we will accept your most recent insurance policy) or other suitable evidence of business trading.

## How much can my business expect to receive under this Fund?

The Scottish Government has allocated a set amount for this Fund and it is anticipated that demand will be high across the industry. In determining eligibility for grant support regard will be given to the above criteria and the supporting information provided. In the interest of fairness, the final amount awarded to a successful applicant will be determined once all applications are received and vetted.

We expect a range of award amounts to be awarded under this Fund, up to a maximum of up to £15,000 per business/company depending on the level of turnover (as set out below) and will be limited to one application per business. We expect that this Fund may be oversubscribed - please note that any award amount indications set out in this document are for guidance only, are expressed as "up to" a certain amount, and are dependent on the number of successful applications to this Fund. We reserve the right to award an amount significantly lower than the indications provided in this document.

The grant award will be based on the turnover figure included in the last set of annual accounts (which represent pre-COVID-19 activity) submitted as part of your application. There are three grant levels and final awards will be dependent on the number of successful applications received:

Turnover band	Maximum award
Band 1 - From £10,001 to £120,000	Up to £5,000
Band 2 - From £120,001 to £250,000	Up to £10,000
Band 3 - In excess of £250,001	Up to £15,000

In the event that there are unallocated funds within the Fund budget once all applications have been received and assessed, the unallocated funds will be award on a pro rata basis across all successful applicants.

## Accessibility, Terms and Conditions and Freedom of Information

If you are successful, you must sign and return the grant award letter and accept the terms and conditions before the funds will be paid into the organisation's bank account. Successful applicants will be required to provide a report within six months of the grant award being made to assess the value of the grant and the impact of the funding on their organisation. If you receive grant funding from this Fund and it is subsequently determined that you have provided false or inaccurate information as part of your application, VisitScotland will seek to recover, with costs, all sums awarded to you from this Fund.

VisitScotland is subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 and may be obliged to release information about your application or grant award in response to any requests received. Information on all grant awards will be published in the UK subsidy control transparency database and will be made available to other Scottish public sector bodies.

If you require the forms to be made available to you in another format for accessibility reasons, please contact [CountrySportsFundEnquiries@visitscotland.com](mailto:CountrySportsFundEnquiries@visitscotland.com).

## Data Protection

We will use the data provided by you in the application form and supporting documentation to assess your application for grant funding and contact you regarding your application. Your data will be shared with the Scottish Government, relevant local authorities and/or other Scottish public sector bodies for verification and reporting purposes and with Chiene + Tait Chartered Accountants (an accountancy firm procured by VisitScotland) to complete the finance checks, and in case of appeals with industry representatives such as the SCSTG and BASC (who will form part of the appeals panel). If you want to find out more about what we do with your data, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

## Completing the digital forms

Please ensure that you have all information and supporting documentation ready so you can complete and submit the relevant form in one sitting as, once you start to complete the form, you will be unable to save it and return to it later. Supporting documentation must be submitted in pdf, word, excel, png or jpeg formats. The maximum file size for each document is 10MB.

All the mandatory fields within the form must be completed before the application form can be submitted. Should you miss any mandatory information or enter any information incorrectly, you will not be able to submit the form. The field(s) requiring attention will be highlighted and you will be required to complete/correct these before you are able to submit. You will also be required to upload your supporting documentation to the form again.

Supported browsers for these forms are up to date versions of Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge, and Internet Explorer 11. We cannot guarantee successful operation/submission on older browser versions.

You may also find it easier to complete from a device with a larger screen, such as a desktop computer or laptop, rather than a mobile device. If you still have issues or require a different format for accessibility reasons, please contact [CountrySportsFundEnquiries@visitscotland.com](mailto:CountrySportsFundEnquiries@visitscotland.com).

## Subsidy Control

### Confirmation of subsidies received and Undertaking in Difficulty Status

Following the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020, a new Subsidy Control regime came into effect in the UK at 11pm on 31 December. The Temporary Framework under which COVID-19 related funding was issued in 2020 no longer applies. VisitScotland is currently awaiting guidance from the Scottish Government as to the basis under which the funding under this Fund will be awarded. It is intended that the award will be made under similar terms to COVID-19 schemes in operation before the 1 January 2021 and, if necessary, additional information will be provided to successful applicants in the award letter and terms and conditions.

In your application you will be asked to declare any aid already approved/received under the Temporary Framework in 2020.

You may need to declare any amount received under this Fund to any other aid awarding body who requests information from you on how much aid you have received. You must retain the award letter for four years from the date of the letter and produce it on any request from the UK public authorities or the European Commission.

A subsidy may be granted to undertakings (SME/Large undertakings) that were not in difficulty, but that faced difficulties or entered in difficulty thereafter as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The subsidy is in addition to any aid that you may have received under the De Minimis regulation allowing aid of up to €200,000 to any one organisation over a three fiscal year period (i.e. your current fiscal year and previous two fiscal years). If you are a micro or small undertaking you may be granted aid even if you would fall under the category of undertaking in financial difficulty on 31 December 2019, provided that you are not subject to collective insolvency procedure under national law and that you have not received rescue aid (which has not been repaid) or restructuring aid (and are still subject to a restricting plan).

- A micro or small organisation is an undertaking that has less than 50 employees and less than 10 million euros of annual turnover and/or balance sheet.
- A SME organisation is an undertaking that has 50 or more employees and 10 million euros or more of annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet
- A large organisation is an undertaking that has 250 or more employees and 50 million euros or more of annual turnover and/or 43 million euro annual balance sheet.

## Undertakings in Difficulty Assessment

In your application you will be asked to declare that on 31 December 2019, you did not meet any of the criteria to be considered an undertaking in difficulty.

'Undertaking in difficulty' is defined for the purposes of this scheme as an undertaking in respect of which at least one of the following circumstances occurs:

(a) In the case of a limited liability company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than three years or, for the purposes of eligibility for risk finance aid, an SME within seven years from its first commercial sale that qualifies for risk finance investments following due diligence by the selected financial intermediary), where more than half of its subscribed share capital has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses. This is the case when deduction of accumulated losses from reserves (and all other elements generally considered as part of the own funds of the company) leads to a negative cumulative amount that exceeds half of the subscribed share capital.

or

(b) In the case of a company where at least some members have unlimited liability for the debt of the company (other than an SME that has been in existence for less than three years or, for the purposes of eligibility for risk finance aid, an SME within seven years from its first commercial sale that qualifies for risk finance investments following due diligence by the selected financial intermediary), where more than half of its capital as shown in the company accounts has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses.

and

(c) Where the undertaking is subject to collective insolvency proceedings or fulfils the criteria under its domestic law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors.

and

(d) Where the undertaking has received rescue aid and has not yet reimbursed the loan or terminated the guarantee or has received restructuring aid and is still subject to a restructuring plan.

## Annex 1 - Additional information on ineligible business types

### <sup>1</sup> **Mixed Estates**

This Fund aims to provide lifeline support only, and it is anticipated that demand will be high for this Fund. In light of this we have had to be sensitive to the fact that many estates, unlike other country sports businesses, may have multiple income streams, many of which are not significantly impacted by COVID-19. The 75% threshold will ensure that only those commercially run estates whose business is primarily country sports tourism will be eligible for this Fund. In calculating country sports income, this can include property hire and ancillary hospitality services where specific bookings are integral to the underlying country sports tourism provision. Income that relates to sales at non-commercial rates or terms, or to family members or associated entities must be excluded. In calculating the proportion of country sports income, total income must include all income of land-based enterprises or entities that have shared ownership or beneficiary.

### <sup>2</sup> **Businesses serving a wholly or mainly local market**

The Fund's aims are exclusively tourism related. Many legitimate country sports businesses serve an ostensibly local market and do not bring the additionality of primary tourism spend. An example may be a small stocked trout fishery where the majority of its turnover is generated from its local authority and immediate surrounding areas. These businesses provide a useful leisure amenity, and it is intended they be supported by alternative funding mechanisms. Where applicants state they are not serving a wholly or mainly local market, they may be required to demonstrate this point.

### <sup>3</sup> **Game dealers and game farms**

This Fund can only provide support to those businesses who explicitly provide tourism activity. Although it is recognised that game dealers and game farms make an important contribution to country sports, this fund by definition cannot support those businesses which are not the explicit providers of tourism activity. The expectation is that these businesses will be eligible for alternative funding streams.