

SUPPORTING NEW & GROWING
BUSINESSES

- 661** meetings with a business adviser
- 296** existing businesses supported
- 152** new start-up businesses supported with a combined projected turnover of **£6.06m** in year 1 and creating **173** jobs.
 - 59%** are women led businesses.
 - 34%** Bute and Cowal
 - 16%** Helensburgh and Lomond
 - 20%** Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islands
 - 30%** Oban, Lorn and the Isles

“The support from Business Gateway has been invaluable to the recent development and growth of my business. Allowing the business to diversify more and assist its growth. Knowing there is support behind you at the end of a phone or quick email has been so reassuring. Thank you all.”

Kirsty Brady
A Touch of Glass Studio, Kilmichael Glassary

EXPERT HELP

550	Argyll and Bute businesses attended webinars to boost their digital and business skills
165	1 hour surgeries with an expert adviser
83	Digital
34	Marketing
32	Finance
5	Tendering and Supply Chain
4	HR
4	PR
3	Internationalisation
5	in depth digital support sessions with a digital or marketing expert (1 to 2 days)
36	Digital Reviews in progress or completed

“It was useful to speak to a neutral party about my product and brand. Getting confirmation for my idea but also receiving an outsiders perspective on how to market it.”

Nina Tanskala, House on Mull Ltd
1 hour marketing surgery

“The adviser explained everything in a language that I could understand. They took the time to talk through and show me examples, of how to improve our SEO, rank higher on Google, and improve the user experience on our website.”

Gemma MacLean, Spirited Soaps, Islay
1 hr digital surgery

“Practical advice regarding end of year accounts and how to make my business more efficient. “

Susan MacCallum, Stitch Lane, Oban
1 hr finance surgery

SUPPORT TO REFUGEES

10 enquiries received from Syrian, Ukrainian and Afghan refugees across Argyll

5 refugees met with an adviser

4 new businesses started

“I’m incredibly grateful for the support I have received from Business Gateway. Starting a new business was a long haul but, my adviser helped me along the way with any questions that I had. I’m looking forward to what’s to come in the future.”

Inna Arnautova (Ukrainian)
Green Cup Coffee Shop, Lochgilphead

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer satisfaction **94%** compared to a national average of 81%.

92% say their business will benefit

97% say they would recommend the service

“The business would not have developed any where near as quickly without this advice and a big thank you for the financial support and guidance we have received from Business Gateway over the years.”

Andy Malcolm
Antler’s Ice Cream Cafe, Jura

BUSINESS EVENTS

Argyll and Bute Council's Business Gateway ran a "How AI (Artificial Intelligence) is transforming marketing and more" workshop in seven locations across Argyll and Bute as well as offering short 1 to 1 sessions with a digital adviser or one of the Business Gateway team's business advisers.



7

in person events were run in Mull, Islay, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay, Lochgilphead and Dunoon.

68

businesses attended.

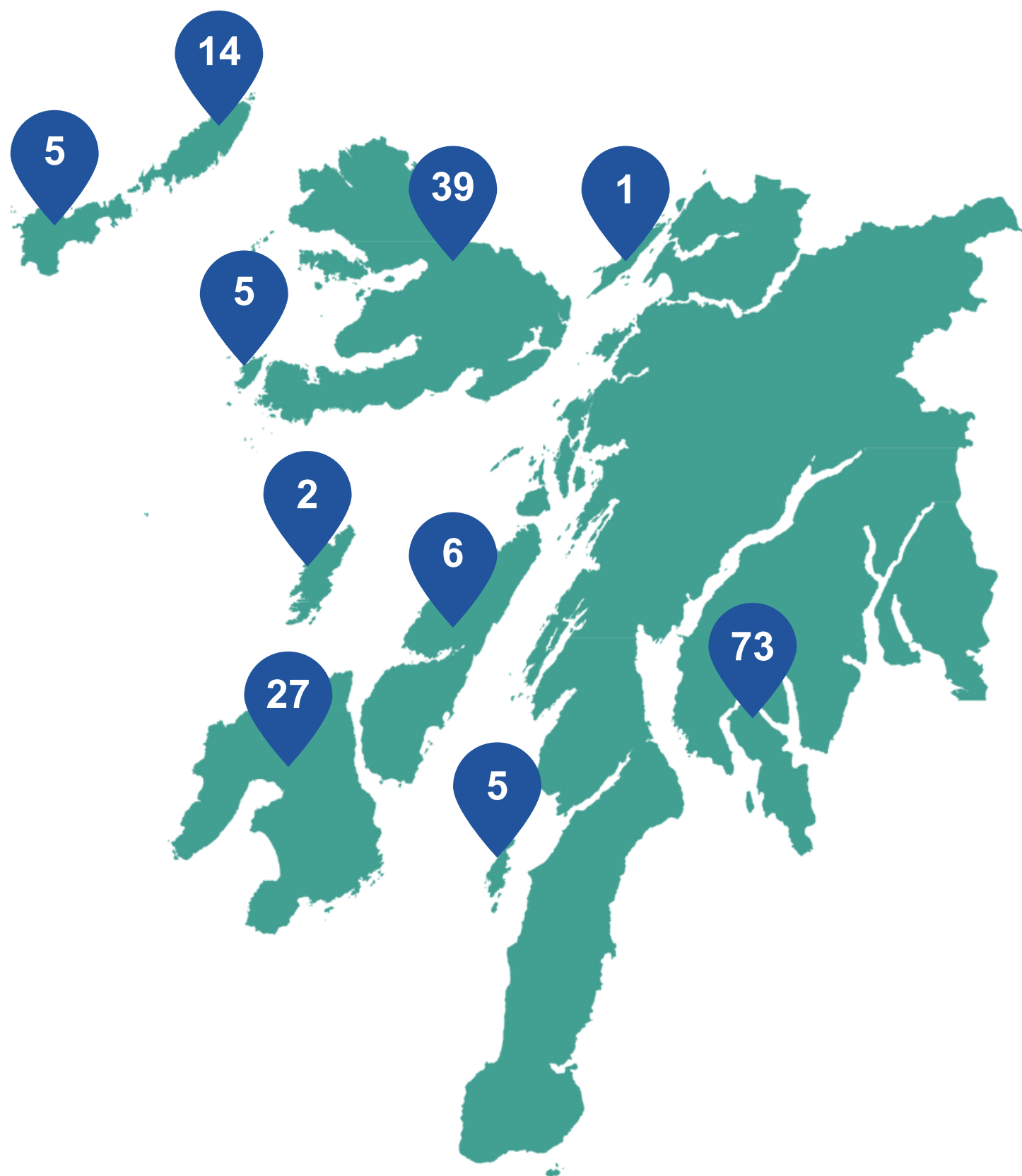
- 6 - Islay
- 11 - Mull
- 14 - Helensburgh
- 16 - Oban
- 8 - Rothesay
- 7 - Lochgilphead
- 6 - Dunoon



Participants discovered how to leverage AI tools like ChatGPT and Google Gemini to create content for social media, blogs, websites, job adverts, and more. They also learnt how Generative AI can streamline tasks like brainstorming, research, strategic planning, and creating social media calendars and that ChatGPT can even assist with basic web design, spreadsheet analysis, and competitor or customer research.

AI is transforming business, simplifying both strategic and daily tasks. This workshop offered practical, actionable advice on using free or low-cost AI tools to enhance Argyll and Bute business's efficiency and productivity.

SUPPORT ON THE ISLANDS



These figures are based on businesses who have met with a Business Gateway Adviser, attended a webinar or submitted an enquiry and received information

SECTORS SUPPORTED



These figures are based on businesses who have met with a Business Gateway Adviser or submitted an enquiry and received information

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

Between June 2023 and March 2025 Business Gateway delivered a programme of additional support worth **£516,521** fully funded through the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund.

- 165** unique businesses were supported, via:
 - 87** small business development grants
 - 75** start-up grants
 - 16** training, trade fair, accreditation or digital grants
 - 9** expert help (1 to 2 days support)
 - 6** participants in intensive business support programme

IMPACT OF UKSPF

Of the **30** clients followed up to date, turnover has increased from a combined **£5.6m** at approval to **£10.2m** 12 months after the support (**82%** increase). The number of employees has grown from **47** to **73** (**55%** increase).

Across the **165** unique businesses approved for support, turnover is predicted to grow by **32%** to **£32.8m** and FTEs to grow by **47%** to **468** within 12 months, so it is encouraging to see growth above this actually delivered from the early beneficiaries. Impact data will be mature in May 2026.

£200k has been secured for the UKSPF Transition phase, to continue grant and expert help support in 2025.

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

“The grant really helped us to improve our service and increase sales. We didn’t have all capital to invest on our own – a 50% grant really helped especially at the early stage of business.”

Small Business Development Grant
Natalia Calionchina, Ambience Cafe, Bute

“I really enjoyed the program so thank you. Trade sales up 40% so far in 2025 thanks to the support programme.”

Intensive Business Support Programme
Sally MacColl, The Tobermory Fish Company, Mull

“Business Gateway have been so much help, it’s been fantastic, obviously the grant is brilliant but all the help with the webinars and one to ones too.”

Small Business Development Grant
Mike Parr, EM Brands, Kilfinan

“We wouldn’t be here where we are now without the support of the grant. It has been life changing for us as a business and a family. Massive impact. Our life is now entirely different.”

Small Business Development Grant
Scott Felgate, Tribe Health and Fitness, Oban



Funded by
UK Government



CLIENT CASE STUDIES

The Lomond Clinic

A Helensburgh healthcare clinic has been given a boost after receiving digital support from Business Gateway in Argyll & Bute.

The Lomond Clinic supports locals through its range of healthcare services, which include medical and alternative treatment options encompassing health, beauty, massage, physiotherapy, acupuncture, counselling, exercise and nutrition.

Founder Jill Du Toit, a therapist by trade, has been devotedly supporting Helensburgh residents since 2002, when she first launched her clinic with Business Gateway start-up support. Beginning as a sole trader, Jill has since grown the business to include 17 members of staff, including a full-time physiotherapist and dedicated customer team.

Throughout her business journey, Jill has been supported by her local Business Gateway team, who has provided expert guidance and advice as she has grown and developed The Lomond Clinic.

One-to-one support from a dedicated Business Gateway adviser, Jen Smith, has helped Jill to develop her business plan to keep up with client demand. She has also received advice on routes to funding, and accessed a grant in 2022 which helped her to expand her team and secure medical diagnosis equipment to launch a new and improved clinic in 2023.

As part of recent efforts to improve The Lomond Clinic's online presence, Jill participated in a one-day digital review with Business Gateway, which gave her a clear action plan on improvements to her website and social media. This has enabled Jill to effectively reach and communicate with new customers, supporting The Lomond Clinic's continued development.

Jill Du Toit, Founder of The Lomond Clinic, said: "Business Gateway's digital review has had a huge impact on our digital presence. We now have a clear and simple 'how to' guide for using social media for our business, and know how to make better use of analytics and maximise our website design.

"Jen and the team provide superb service. The digital review report is an invaluable tool that we will continue to use and refer to as we grow the business further."



CLIENT CASE STUDIES

Loch Fyne Candles

Carolyn and Gary Cairns started Loch Fyne Candles in November 2023 after starting to make candles and wax melts during the Covid-19 lockdown. The couple, based in Tarbert began creating the products in their home, which is where they are still made. When the new store is fully refurbished, the candles will be made there.

Carolyn and Gary opened the Loch Fyne Candles store on Campbeltown Road in Tarbert on 23 November 2024, exactly a year after the business first started. The couple hopes that having a physical store will be good for growth, as candles can be hard to sell online when people can't test the scent.

The business sells hand-poured soy wax candles, wax melts and diffusers. Each candle is a fusion of premium soy wax and carefully selected fragrances inspired by Loch Fyne.



Carolyn and Gary have been working with Business Gateway since they launched and have been able to get advice on funding, as well as branding and marketing for their new business.

Business Gateway has been able to provide them with support as they launched and grew and signpost them to funding, which resulted in them being awarded a UK Shared Prosperity Fund Grant. This funding contributed towards tools,

production equipment, premises building work, signage, Point of Sale items, display items and security equipment that contributed towards the opening of the new store.

Carolyn and Gary also accessed a one-hour specialist advice surgery on branding and marketing.

Carolyn Cairns, co-founder of Loch Fyne Candles, said: "The support from Business Gateway has been fantastic. They provided some useful advice, as well as putting us in touch with a marketing expert who helped us to develop our growth plans and brand identity.

"The grant funding has helped to put our growth plans into place. We're so excited to have our own store now and meet our customers face to face, and entice new customers into the store as well. To go from a hobby to opening up our own store in just a few short years has been fantastic and we couldn't have done it without Business Gateway."