



## Local Enterprise Companies

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### **What are LECs and Where Do You Find Out About Them?**

The Scottish Enterprise Network has twelve local enterprise companies or LECs located across the southern half of Scotland, from the Grampians right down to the Borders. These organisations are one of the main ways to access the range of services provided by Scottish Enterprise and its partners. These include advice and support on management and financial planning, staff training, innovation, IT and premises. The best access point is through the Business Gateway centres which provide a one-stop shop service.

### **Highlands and Islands Enterprise**

In the Highland area, a similar network is provided under the Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) umbrella. HIE accepts that museums act as a focus for local pride and interest in their heritage, assisting the development of individual skills through direct involvement and through education and lifelong learning. HIE regards museums as having an important contribution to the cultural and economic well-being of some of the area's most remote and fragile communities.

The key priorities of support for heritage are:

- to strengthen museums as a sector in the Highlands and Islands
- to encourage networking amongst museum groups
- to develop the skills of those involved in the sector (both professional and voluntary)
- to strengthen links and develop partnerships between museums, their local communities, other organisations (such as national agencies), and other social and cultural sectors.

A Heritage Development Officer is in post until April 2005, tasked with improving knowledge of grant aid for cultural and natural heritage projects. After this date there is likely to be a replacement posting with a more strategic view of the independent museum sector.

### **Eligibility for Support**

Business support and advice through the Business Gateway network is aimed specifically at “social enterprises” that have either already developed a degree of commercial trading (e.g. through a shop, café or mail order business) OR show real potential to trade commercially. Initial contact should be made through your local BG (contact details are on the website).

There are no set rules about minimum levels of turnover. The business advisor will be looking for ways in which the current levels of trading can be grown and diversified.

### **Sustainability and Growth**

The Scottish Enterprise website contains a number of useful downloadable factsheets which could be used by museums and galleries management making allowance for the less market-driven environment of the sector. These are short and contain useful references for wider research.

One area to start might be in their Existing Businesses section where useful pointers are provided on keeping your current business at a sustainable level whilst looking out for growth opportunities.

Sustainability is all about

- looking out for early warning signs
- getting help wherever you can
- getting into good practices
- listening
- keeping your eye on the bigger picture

- attending to the details
- always striving to be as efficient as possible
- protecting your market share
- looking after your customers.

Growth is all about

- keeping your business fresh
- always looking for new ways to win customers
- seeking out opportunities
- learning all the time
- knowing when to take risks
- being entrepreneurial
- taking a strategic approach
- staying one step ahead.

### **Further Information**

Business Gateway: [www.bgateway.com/](http://www.bgateway.com/)

Tel: 0845 609 6611

Scottish Enterprise services to business webpage

[www.scottish-enterprise.com/sedotcom\\_home/services-to-business.htm?siblingtoggle=1](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/sedotcom_home/services-to-business.htm?siblingtoggle=1)

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) [www.hie.co.uk/contactinfo.htm](http://www.hie.co.uk/contactinfo.htm)

HIE Contacts:

Hi-Arts (Cultural Heritage) 01463 717091 John Burns

Natural Heritage (Museums) 01463 244230 Christine Madej

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