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GROWBIZ BOOSTS RURAL ECONOMY WITH LAUNCH OF REDS RURAL GIFT CARD

Scotland's specialist Perthshire-based enterprise support organisation GrowBiz has launched the first rural gift card of its kind which can be used in outlets across Scotland.

Following on from the recent launch of the REDS directory - the first comprehensive directory of Scotland's rural and island businesses - the REDS rural gift card is designed to channel consumer spending directly into Scotland's rural and island towns and villages in a bid to support and promote the rural economy.

The REDS gift card can be purchased online at www.ruralscotlandgiftcard.scot and can be loaded with funds starting at just £5 up to £500. It works in the same way as a typical store gift card but the recipient can choose to spend the balance with a wide range of participating businesses in rural towns, villages and the countryside across Scotland, either online or in person. The funds are available to spend for twelve months from the date the card is issued.

GrowBiz CEO, Jackie Brierton, said: "Scotland's micro-enterprises form the backbone of our rural economy and the REDS card is designed to encourage consumers to think local and support the many fragile rural businesses across the country which need our help to survive and thrive. The REDS rural gift card can be spent with more than 120 rural businesses across Scotland, which means consumers have an incredible choice of how and where to spend their money, from experiences and days out to art and crafts, eating out or artisan gifts."

Scotland's rural economy is worth around £34.6 bn, which is 27% of Scotland's overall economy. Thousands of micro-enterprises¹ across rural Scotland have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the REDS rural gift card is designed to give these businesses practical support by directing consumer spend directly to where it's needed.

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¹ A micro-enterprise is defined as any business employing fewer than 10 people and/or with a turnover of less than £500k.

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Shop local campaigns have proved highly successful in recent years, by encouraging shoppers to spend in their local communities, tapping into a growing appetite for socially conscious shopping.

The REDS rural gift card is delivered in partnership with Miconex, who work with towns and cities across the UK to help support successful local economies through its Town and City Gift Card programmes. In 2015, Miconex developed the UK's first city-wide gift card programme and have subsequently gone on to help towns and cities across the 4 nations of the United Kingdom to launch their own local currencies using the Mastercard network. The programmes are designed to lock in money for participating businesses, drive footfall and stimulate additional economic activity.

Colin Munro, managing director of Miconex said the REDS rural gift card can work alongside its town and city based programmes:

“Around £650,000 has been spent through our Town and City Gift Card programmes in Scotland since we introduced our first programme in Perth. This is money which is locked into our economy, supporting businesses and jobs. By November, there will be 16 Town and City Gift Card programmes in Scotland alone. The REDS rural gift card programme is unique in its rural focus but will complement our city programmes, connecting rural communities to the shop local movement. It is fantastic to see the incredible variety of different businesses that are registering to be a part of the REDS rural gift card programme.

“The average purchase price for a Town and City Gift Card is £34.56 and recipients spend around 65% on top of this. The REDS rural gift card is a powerful tool for rural businesses to attract new customers, and gain a new revenue stream in this challenging economic climate.”

Brierton concluded; “9 out of 10 rural businesses are micro-businesses with fewer than 10 employees. This high percentage of small businesses means rural communities are dependent upon the continued success of these micro-firms to provide jobs, attract visitors and stimulate the economic activity that supports rural areas. Shopping locally has always been culturally important for rural communities but now, in the wake of the coronavirus crisis, it's critical to encourage a new drive for local buying.”

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“The REDS Card, by definition, encourages card holders to shop locally, and ensures that money is diverted to our rural businesses where there is less passing trade and typically smaller volumes of sales than their urban counterparts. Only rural enterprises can join the card scheme, meaning REDS Card holders can choose from a diverse collection of businesses to spend their card’s credit and know that whatever they choose they are supporting rural micro-businesses and social enterprises.”

Simon Yearsley, owner of The Scottish Deli in Dunkeld and a REDS rural gift card merchant said; “We see the scheme as part of a bigger promotion of businesses in Highland Perthshire. Sure it's another way for us to sell things as a business which is great but really I think it's about being a part of a bigger scheme supporting rural enterprise at a time when, quite frankly, rural enterprise needs all the help it can get.”

For details on how to become a REDS member and participate as a REDS rural gift card merchant, visit <https://www.reds.scot/>.

ENDS

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For further information on the REDS Fund and GrowBiz, contact Gaynor Simpson on 07790 104073 or email gaynor@wearevibrant.co.uk

Notes to Editors

- 2% of Scotland’s land mass (mainland + island) is small town and city urban, 98% is remote/accessible rural.
- A fifth of Scotland’s population lives in rural areas.
- 9 out of 10 rural businesses are micro-businesses with fewer than 10 employees.
- 68% of the workforce in remote rural and 54% in accessible rural Scotland work for small businesses compared to 32% in the rest of Scotland.
- GrowBiz is an independent, community-based organisation, founded in 2007 by local people in Perthshire to support rural enterprises. GrowBiz provides support to anyone starting or growing a business in rural Scotland.
- Nearly 25% of adults in rural Scotland are self-employed (more than twice the rate of urban areas).
- Rural communities and businesses face a range of challenges, including inconsistent broadband coverage, poor transport links and greater distances to food supplies and health services.
- GrowBiz is part-funded by Perth and Kinross Council, Scottish Enterprise and the Scottish Government. The Making Rural Business Digital project is supported by the Rural Perth and Kinross LEADER Programme 2014-2020: The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas. www.pkleader.org
- Since October 2016, GrowBiz has supported more than 1500 rural enterprises across all sectors