



VIBES 2024 – Application Guidance

General Information

The VIBES Scottish Environment Business Awards rewards, recognises and promotes environmental best practice that brings benefits to business and the wider community.

We are looking for entries from businesses who are taking the lead in the transition to a net zero emissions economy or are successfully tackling other environmental challenges.

There are 11 award categories which are explained in Appendix 1.

Should you have any accessibility issues, please contact us via email to vibes@sepa.org.uk.

Guidance on the Application Form

1. Candidate Profile

Most of the questions in section 1 of the form are self-explanatory. However, the following notes may be useful in clarifying the purpose of some of the questions:

- Business/organisation name – please provide the name you wish to be referred to in any promotional materials or on a certificate of good practice.
- Business description - this text may be used to describe the business in any VIBES communications and promotional materials/activities.
- SME (Small Medium Enterprise) – the definition of an SME is a business with fewer than 250 employees, and a turnover of less than €50 million. If the applicant is part of a larger group, the number of employees and turnover relates to the whole group.
- Contact terms – One of the many benefits of VIBES is that we can introduce applicants to support and other services provided by VIBES partners and supporters. Some questions have been included in this section to give us the

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appropriate data protection consents to share your contact details with these partners and supporters. A list of VIBES partners and supporters is provided in section 5.

2. Submission details

The information provided in section 2 to section 9 of the form will enable a panel of judges to assess your application. Each section contains 6 criteria. Each box is equally weighted and will be given a score out of 5. The information you provide should focus on work completed over the last year but can include information for the past 3-year period. Your responses in section 2 should show why you think you are worthy of a VIBES award, backed up with important facts and figures relating to your actions:

- Be clear, concise and engaging e.g., bullet points might be helpful.
- It is essential to stick to the maximum word count for each question. This helps to ensure a fair and consistent approach and reduces the burden on both applicants and judges.
- If using technical terms, please explain this clearly for the judges, particularly when using acronyms.
- Provide any relevant quantitative data per unit if possible, to enable an objective assessment to be made. E.g. Litre of water used per product / bed night.

When providing information on the environmental benefits, you should check your green claims against the [Green Claims Code](#).

3. Press and media

In order to maximise the impact of VIBES, we will undertake a range of media activities. Some of these activities will be undertaken by VIBES partners' marketing and communications staff, and some may be by a PR contractor.

4. Terms and Conditions

Full details of the terms and conditions can be found in Appendix 2.

5. Further information

We hope that this guidance note helps in the completion of your form. Please note that by sending us your submission you agree to share the information you provide with the partner organisations for the purpose of judging.

The partner organisations are:

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- Energy Saving Trust
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- NatureScot
- South of Scotland Enterprise
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Scottish Government
- Scottish Water
- Zero Waste Scotland.

We may ask the partner organisations for additional information. This information will only be used to help assess your suitability to be recognised by VIBES Scottish Environment Business Awards. We may also contact you for additional information on your submission.

Case studies will be prepared of the finalist's submissions. If a case study is prepared from your application, we will ask you to approve content before it is used to promote good practice more widely.

Contact us if you have any queries or would like any advice, support or assistance with the application form.

Thank you for your interest in VIBES and good luck with your application!

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Appendix 1

Award Categories

1. Vision in Business Scotland Award (four awards)

The Vision in Business Scotland Award recognises organisations that best demonstrate that “what’s good for the environment is also good for business”. Applicants should set out clearly that they have the strategic vision, people policies and management systems that enable them to continuously improve sustainability and their contribution to Scotland’s net zero carbon ambition.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have:

- developed and implemented strategies and operating plans that improve sustainability and provide a pathway to net zero – e.g. environmental policy, management systems, targets and indicators for monitoring and reporting performance, green team, lines of communication with stakeholders for feedback that can influence decisions, etc.;
- improved environmental performance and reduced carbon emissions - e.g. through resource efficiency measures, staff and supply chain engagement, climate risk management through adaptation and/or mitigation measures etc.
- generated associated economic and social benefits - such as cost savings, local employment opportunities, staff development, and staff conditions aligned with Fair Work principles, nature enhancing initiatives, and engagement with local schools, colleges, community groups, charities, etc.

Your application should show that your organisation is taking, or has taken, critical steps to transform its business model in line with a clean, resilient and just future.

Organisations should be able to communicate a firm commitment to achieving net zero for example by setting science-based targets, publishing/setting a net zero strategy, and be able to demonstrate a tangible transition to achieving this goal.

The winner of this award will have an exceptional environmental, social and economic performance. They will most likely be addressing all areas of sustainability to advance the green economy. The winner will be able to demonstrate that it is an exemplar within its sector and the wider economy which others will be inspired to follow by going beyond what is normal business practice and regulatory requirements.

Example of a previous winner: (The Vision in Business Award replaces, but includes aspects of, the Leadership Award)

Bruichladdich Distillery Co Ltd are a whisky and gin distiller based on the Isle of Islay. A certified ‘B Corp’ who assess and monitor their environmental impacts across all aspects of their business, including Full Lifecycle Assessments on every product. They aim to decarbonise distillation by 2025 (scope 1&2) and be Net Zero by 2050.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2022/bruichladdich-distillery-co-ltd/>

Please note: the category is sub-divided in 4 categories:

- Best Large Business, for organisations of more than 250 employees and turnover \leq € 50 m
- Best Medium Business, for organisations of between 50 and 250 employees and turnover \leq € 10 m
- Best Small Business, for organisations of less than 50 employees and turnover \leq € 10 m
- Best New Business, for organisations registered with Companies House and trading for less than 3 years

2. Product Scotland Award

The Product Scotland Award recognises businesses that have developed a product that delivers significant environmental and business benefits. At the time of application, the product must have been developed and already in the marketplace.

We are looking for entries from products that serve an environmental purpose. This may be in relation to adaptation for climate change, supporting Scotland's Hydro Nation strategy or any other purpose that improves sustainability.

Applicants will need to make clear:

- what environmental benefits arise from the use of the product, be it positive environmental improvements and/or reduction in any negative environmental impacts.
- what the innovative aspects of the product are. The application can be about an entirely new product, a modified design of an existing product, or an innovative application of an existing product.
- any benefits for the users of the product.
- the benefits the product brings to the business. There could also be business benefits to staff, such as, for example, improved staff knowledge and skills, and increased staff satisfaction associated with the product.
- any pro-sustainability strategies, policies and/or management systems that have been put in place, and procedures and practices that are followed, to improve the sustainability of the product and business.

Applicants are expected to show that the business or organisation has taken into consideration the environmental impacts associated with the whole lifecycle of the product, i.e. material extraction, production, distribution, use and disposal.

Example of a previous winner

Headquartered in Glasgow, IES (Integrated Environmental Solutions) is a leading

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innovator in sustainable analytics for the built environment. Having built a solid reputation over the past 25 years, IES recently launched their Intelligent Communities Lifecycle (ICL) technology. This integrated suite of tools creates a digital twin of any community or group of buildings to simulate environmental performance over their lifecycle and plan solutions.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2019/ies/>

3. Service Scotland Award

The Service Scotland Award recognises businesses that have developed a service that brings environmental and business benefits. At the time of the application the service must have been developed and in the marketplace.

We are looking for entries from services that serve an environmental purpose. This may be in relation to adaptation for climate change, supporting Scotland's Hydro Nation strategy or any other purpose that improves sustainability.

Applicants will need to make clear:

- the environmental benefits arising from the delivery of the service, be it positive environmental benefits and/or reduction in any negative environmental impacts.
- what the innovative aspects of the service are. The application can be about an entirely new service, a modified version of an existing service, or a novel application of an existing service.
- any benefits for the users of the service.
- the benefits the service brings to the business.
- what strategies, policies and/or management systems have been put in place, and what procedures and practices are followed, to improve the sustainability of the service and business.

Applicants are expected to show that the business or organisation has taken into consideration the environmental impacts associated with the whole lifecycle of the service, and what that means in terms of resources extraction, use and disposal.

Please provide high level quantified evidence associated with your service and specify the timescale over which these benefits have been achieved.

Example of a previous winner

ThermaFY Eco, based in Kelso, are a thermal analysis software and data company. ThermaFY identify ways to maximise the energy efficiency of homes, reducing carbon emissions and excessive use of energy. Around 20% of the UK's carbon emissions come from homes and yet 80% of heating systems are working inefficiently. ThermaFY aims to address this challenge by establishing long-term relationships with customers and provide

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impartial advice, on how to take impactful action on reducing energy costs and carbon emissions at home.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2022/thermafy-eco/>

4. Circular Scotland Award

This category recognises businesses that can demonstrate a strong commitment to implementing the principles of a circular economy. Ensuring materials are retained within productive use, in a high value state, for as long as possible. This could be either through adopting explicit circular models, such as sustainable design and closed material loops, for example, within their own business processes or via their contribution to wider systemic change, perhaps through partnerships or collaboration in high value materials reprocessing or through the development and implementation of enabling technologies or services.

Applicants should demonstrate how their activities contribute towards the development of a circular economy and should highlight the processes they have developed, as well as providing information about the types of materials involved.

This might involve:

- circular product design and innovation;
- product re-use, repair and remanufacturing;
- innovative circular business models;
- appropriate substitution of materials;
- effective supply chain and cross-sectoral collaboration;
- re-use and/or adding value to waste, heat and energy;
- designing processes that avoid waste and utilise reclaimed materials or parts.

We are keen to have applications from businesses where the commitment to circularity is built into their activities and can demonstrate how applications of the principles of circularity can be financially beneficial. High level facts and figures are encouraged as part of this application, please be aware that if you make it through to a judging visit you may be asked to provide more detail.

Example of previous winners:

Kenoteq, based in Edinburgh, are a supplier of low carbon closed loop circular building materials. They have created the K-briq® which contains over 90% recycled construction and demolition waste, uses 1/10 of the energy in its production compared to a traditional brick and has a 90% lower carbon footprint, and are now targeting becoming a net carbon neutral business. Kenoteq is reducing the reliance on the energy intensive and environment scarring extraction of new aggregates, as well as reducing

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the need to use high carbon clay and cement-based bricks in construction, therefore diverting waste from landfill.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2022/kenoteq/>

5. Just Transition Scotland Award

A 'just transition' is about delivering our social, economic and climate goals across all sectors of the economy, to build a better, more resilient, and more equal Scotland. This category recognises businesses taking fair and inclusive action towards net zero.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have:

- set a net zero emissions target for their organisation, and have a plan in place to achieve that target;
- taken steps to ensure their actions are fair and inclusive - such as adoption of Fair Work First criteria, inclusive training content, company or site policies and communication plans;
- put in place effective arrangements to engage meaningfully with employees and/or externally with customers, local communities, supply chains or other stakeholders; and that this engagement has led to increased knowledge and changed behaviours and attitudes towards the environment, helping to drive actions to achieve net zero goals and go beyond;
- improved environmental performance, resilience and reduced carbon emissions - e.g. carbon saving through staff and supply chain engagement, climate risk management through adaptation and/or mitigation measures, etc;
- generated economic, social and wider benefits – such as cost savings, higher levels of customer satisfaction, staff retention rates, improved reputation, feedback from staff or strengthened competitive advantage.

In some cases, the engagement will involve a “green team” or a dedicated task force, which channel ideas and energy into delivering just, environmentally sustainable changes within an organisation, supply chain or the wider community.

In other cases, it will involve a partnership agreement or project plan, which clarifies roles and communication routes. It could also be the key element of a service delivered by an organisation which has an environmental/sustainable development objective as its core mission.

Example of previous winner:

Recyke-a-bike, based in Stirling, are a cycling and training charity focused on repairing bikes and selling them. Through promoting cycling, they aim to relieve poverty within their community, also supporting improvements in health, education and the environment. Recyke-a-bike undertake a wide range of community programmes such as Bike Buddies, Doctor Bike, Cycling UK repair scheme.

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Recyke-a-bike is an organisation focused on helping people, going beyond simply repairing old bikes and selling them. They also support a wide range of community programmes - social benefits are a key theme for Recyke-a-bike.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2022/recyke-a-bike/>

Sustainable Transport Scotland Award

The Sustainable Transport Scotland award recognises businesses who have set out clear objectives to engage with and adopt sustainable travel and transport measures and activities, both internally and externally, and can demonstrate ambitious and successful implementation.

We are interested in hearing from businesses whose environmental impacts have reduced significantly because of the introduction of active travel and sustainable transport activities. This could be through:

- adopting technology and practices that reduce the need to travel, such as virtual meeting space and conference call systems;
- promoting access to a cycle to work scheme, and providing pool bikes / electric bikes;
- encouraging flexible hours or a location to facilitate walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport use;
- encouraging visitors to use sustainable and active travel;
- introducing walking meetings;
- introducing cycling mileage reimbursement;
- providing facilities to support active travel to the workplace, e.g., cycle parking, shower, and changing and drying facilities;
- encouraging or using ultra-low / zero emission vehicles and carpooling.

The Award will also consider businesses, in the transport sector, who have reduced carbon emissions and other environmental impacts by measures such as:

- using electric vehicles or alternative fuels, to decarbonise their transport fleet;
- improved logistics, optimisation of loads and efficient driving behaviours;
- use of alternatives to road transport, where possible, e.g., freight on trains;
- trialling new technologies to decarbonise transport.

Please specify the timescale and provide some high-level facts and figures where appropriate.

Example of previous winner:

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Arran Dairies are reducing food miles through the utilisation of already established delivery networks on both Arran and the mainland to various wholesalers, developing a unique haulage relationship that enables off-island export of products without the need for separate haulage contracts. This uses returning delivery vehicles (delivering to the island) to transport goods from Arran. The goods are transported around Arran by the vans delivering milk, and collections of products going off island are also carried by these vehicles. This significantly reduces the miles travelled and vehicles on the road, and optimises transport routes and driver habits.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2022/arran-dairies-taste-of-arran/>

6. Energy Transition Scotland Award

The Energy Transition Scotland Award recognises organisations who have set out clear objectives to engage with and adopt energy saving measures, installations, and activities both internally and externally.

This award recognises organisations who have successfully reduced energy-related carbon emissions through transitioning from fossil fuel to renewable energy sources, decarbonising their energy use, reducing energy demand, developing partnerships with communities to deliver resilient, affordable, local energy systems and/or applying circular economy principles to decommissioning projects.

We are encouraging entries from businesses who:

- have transitioned from fossil fuel energy sources to clean, renewable sources, building in energy resilience to their business;
- have decarbonised their energy use through carbon capture and storage, and/or low carbon technologies/practices, or who are working towards becoming largely decarbonised by 2030;
- have reduced their energy demand, e.g. by improving efficiency in buildings and processes;
- have developed partnerships with communities to enable them to benefit from Scotland's ambition for a net zero energy economy, e.g. shared ownership/benefit of energy infrastructure, green skills and jobs or local investment;
- are involved in the decommissioning of oil and gas, in a way that promotes the principles of a circular economy – the re-use of materials, over recycling and disposal;
- have ensured that their energy transition does not negatively impact nature.

Please provide high-level, quantified evidence associated with your service and specify the timescale over which these benefits have been achieved. If your application goes through to the judging visit you can demonstrate more facts and figures then.

Example of previous winner:

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Multiplex Construction Europe, with regional offices in Glasgow and Edinburgh, is an international construction company who recently completed construction on the Advanced Research Centre for the University of Glasgow: the creative and collaborative heart of research at the University of Glasgow. The £116m building will help bridge the boundaries between research, cross subject collaboration and true societal impact. They launched their Net Zero strategy “One Decade to Act” in 2021 which addresses Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions and have set complementary social equity goals to support the transition to a low-carbon economy.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2022/multiplex-construction-europe/>

7. Nature Rich Scotland Award

The Nature Rich Scotland Award recognises organisations who have taken action to improve nature and adopted nature-based solutions to tackle environmental and social challenges. We are looking for examples of organisations who have protected, restored and enhanced nature, improved biodiversity and reduced carbon emissions, whilst delivering social and economic benefits.

Nature-based solutions use nature and natural functions to tackle some of the most challenging issues faced today, including both mitigating and adapting to climate change. Some of the benefits associated with nature-based solutions include:

- reducing net emissions
- expanding carbon storage
- providing habitats for biodiversity
- benefits to human health and well-being
- helping our society and economy adapt to climate change
- making more resilient and better places to live and work

We are encouraging entries from organisations who have, for example:

- implemented a wildlife or biodiversity action plan covering your sites, identifying opportunities to enhance nature, such as creating new habitats and providing for pollinators;
- adopted nature-based solutions on a site that enhances nature alongside other benefits, e.g. green roofs, providing for wildlife and managing building temperature;
- promoted biodiversity as part of their offering; for example, the development of nature trails as part of a visitor attraction;
- worked with their supply chain to mitigate impacts and enhance nature; for example, a food/drink manufacturer working with farmers to promote biodiversity

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on and around the farms, or a furniture maker working with a land manager to promote native timber;

- provided opportunities for employees to better understand and get involved with nature.
- ensured sustainable use of natural resources that preserve the health of the ecosystem.

Example of previous winner:

SRUC Elmwood Golf, based in Stratheden, is an 18-hole golf course and golf education centre which aims to use innovative greenkeeping practices to create a high-quality golf course which is also rich in biodiversity. They have four primary objectives to achieve their sustainability goals: zero waste on site; zero pesticide use onsite; increased biodiversity onsite; improved sustainability of the restaurant.

<https://www.vibes.org.uk/case-studies/2022/sruc-elmwood-golf/>

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Appendix 2

Terms and conditions

1. Entries for the 2024 awards will open on **28 February 2024**. The closing date for entries is 5 pm on **12 April 2024**. Late entries will only be considered in special circumstances at the discretion of the judges.
2. Entries are open to all Scottish-based businesses* including private sector businesses, social enterprises and community businesses but excluding VIBES partners, supporters and current sponsors. If the entry focuses on a collaboration or partnership approach, the application must be made by a private sector business, social enterprise or community business involved. Other partners can include public sector organisations and charities.
3. Applicants must have sufficient authority within their organisation to enter their business into the awards.
4. Applicants are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information contained within their applications. If any information is subsequently found to be inaccurate, VIBES may exclude the application from further assessment.
5. All applicants will receive feedback which highlights the judges' opinions of strengths and opportunities for improvement based on the information provided.
6. A panel of judges from VIBES partner organisations will assess the applications and produce a shortlist of finalists to be considered for the different award categories. The VIBES Judges reserve the right to put applications forward into a different award category than applied for, where appropriate, based on the information submitted. All businesses, successful or unsuccessful, will be notified by email.
7. Finalists must be prepared to provide some additional information during June or July for further assessment. This may involve a site visit or carried out remotely via a virtual interview.
6. Award winners will be decided by a final judging panel, made up of senior representatives from VIBES partner organisations. Winners will be announced at a VIBES event/ceremony in Autumn 2024. Applicants will be sent more information on the date and format of the event as soon as final decisions have been made.
7. VIBES reserves the right not to give an award, if in the opinion of the judges, no application has reached the required standard.
8. Winners will be included in various promotion and publicity activities associated with VIBES 2024.
9. Case studies will be produced of all awards recipients. The case studies will be shared with applicants to ensure they are happy with content before publishing.
10. Applicants, or their licensors, will continue to own the copyright associated with the information contained within the applications. VIBES will own the copyright of any case studies, videos or other promotional materials which are produced by VIBES as part of VIBES 2024.
11. VIBES will not be liable for any costs incurred by applicants as part of the application or judging process.
12. Should an applicant wish to withdraw, they must notify VIBES by emailing vibes@sepa.org.uk

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13. VIBES reserve the right to alter the dates associated with the scheme should this become necessary.

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