

Employer Profile:

The Mountain Café

Open since 2004, The Mountain Café in Aviemore has earned a fantastic reputation for its food, friendly service and an amazing view of the Cairngorm Mountains. At the Scottish Food Awards in 2017 they picked up Best Café in Scotland.

Owner Kirsten Gilmour is an award-winning chef from New Zealand who prides herself in delivering locally sourced, fresh, home cooked food with a Kiwi twist. The café offers seating on a first come first served basis and to help manage customer demand, a new buzzer system has been introduced.

“I wanted to create a little piece of New Zealand in Scotland: that means high quality food and coffee in a laid back, friendly environment. For us, food should be tasty, healthy and fresh, but should also have an element of luxury at the same time.”

Kirsten Gilmour, Owner

The buzzer system has a good signal-range – and customers are buzzed 10 minutes before their table is ready. This means the café retains a relaxed atmosphere, and the customers are happier. The surrounding retailers also benefit as this process encourages Mountain Café customers to become their customers too and Kirsten believes this has added to more money being spent locally.

“It can be difficult to recruit in hospitality and there is a lack of available and affordable accommodation in Aviemore.”

Lisa McInnes, Bookkeeper



Kirsten felt it was the right time to adjust the business model and decided to implement the real Living Wage in January 2019 as part of a drive on recruitment. In February 2019, a month after implementing the higher rate, the café decided to join the growing number of accredited hospitality employers in seeking Living Wage accreditation to receive recognition of their commitment and to attract new talent.

“I feel our prices are fair and our customers are willing to pay a little more, knowing that we offer good service, source from local suppliers, choose the best ingredients for our recipes, cook and bake everything in-house and that our staff are rewarded with a fair wage.”

Kirsten Gilmour, Owner

The management team have also worked hard to ensure that the outcome of their decisions worked to the benefit of the customer. While they understood that offering the real Living Wage would result in a higher wage bill, they managed this by making adjustments without reducing the quality of the café.





Mountain Café team members who have benefited from their employer's decision to implement the real Living Wage were keen to voice their approval and explain just how important the real Living Wage is and what a difference it makes to them.

"It makes a difference because I am able to save towards my wedding at the end of this year when I have never been able to save in the past on a hospitality income."

Kieran, Head Pastry Chef

"We noticed a boost in morale amongst the staff team when we became an accredited Living Wage employer. It's also helped us get off on the right foot with the new staff that have joined: they expect us to treat them fairly, and in return, we expect them to deliver the high standards our customers expect"

Claire, Front of House Manager

New to the team, Megan Hughes is a Front of House Server who has been working at the café for 6 months. Megan was happy to tell us how being paid the real Living Wage had made a difference to her.

"I feel appreciated and my hard work is worth it and I can start to save up for the possibility of getting my own place to live."

Megan, Front of House Server

Join the movement today

The real Living Wage makes a real and immediate difference to the lives of workers and at the same time, has proven social and business benefits. Living Wage accreditation is widely recognised as a mark of a responsible employer. The accreditation process is straightforward and there is a team of trained accreditation officers who can provide support and guidance. The real Living Wage is calculated annually according to the real cost of living in the UK and London.

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