

Written 1 November 2021

## **BUSINESS NEWS NORTHERN IRELAND**

Welcome to our round up of the latest business news for our clients. Please contact us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

### **COP26 – UN Climate change conference**

The UK is hosting the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow until the 12 November 2021.

Climate change is probably the world's most pressing problem. It is widely accepted governments must take more cuts in warming gases if we are to prevent higher global temperature rises. The summit in Glasgow is where change may happen. We need to look at the promises made by the world's larger economies and whether poorer countries get help to make changes.

Decisions made at the COP26 conference will impact all of our lives in the future and most importantly, the future of our planet.



The COP26 summit brings parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Cop26 website is: [HOME - UN Climate Change Conference \(COP26\) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 \(ukcop26.org\)](https://ukcop26.org)

The COP26 Green Zone is open to the public at the Glasgow Science Centre. There are a wide range of events, including workshops, art exhibitions and installations, as well as presentations, demonstrations of technology and musical performances.

Youth groups, civil society, academia, artists, and businesses from across the UK and all over the world are taking part. With over 100 exhibitors, 200 events and 11 sponsors taking over the space, there are opportunities to listen, learn and celebrate climate action.

COP26 Green Zone events with a business focus are listed on the website listed below.

See: [Green Zone Programme of Events - UN Climate Change Conference \(COP26\) at the SEC – Glasgow 2021 \(ukcop26.org\)](https://www.ukcop26.org/green-zone-programme-of-events)

### **UK Autumn budget highlights**

Before last week's Budget we already knew that corporation tax would increase in 2023 and that there will be a 1.25% rise in National Insurance Contributions (NICs) from April 2022 paid by employers, employees, self-employed and for those with share dividend income. Personal allowances are frozen until 2026 and we are told these rises are to pay for Covid-19 measures and reform of the social care system. The tax burden as a percentage of UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is now at its highest level since the 1950's according to the Office for Budget Responsibility.



The "scarring assumption" of the pandemic, as the Treasury called it last week, hasn't been as bad as forecasts imagined so Chancellor Rishi Sunak, buoyed by a recent OBR economic report which has lifted its prediction for economic growth in 2021 to 6.5%, chose to increase government spending by £150 billion rather than reverse some of the previously announced tax increases. He did state at the end of his speech that the government would look at lowering the tax burden before the end of this parliament.

Some of the key spending measures include:

- Funding will increase by an average of £4.6bn for Scottish Government, £2.5bn for Welsh Government, and £1.6bn for Northern Ireland Executive
- £6bn of funding to help tackle NHS backlogs

- £7bn for transport projects in areas including Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and South Yorkshire
- Levelling Up Fund of £1.7bn invested in local areas across the UK
- Extra funding to clear the courts backlog
- Tax relief for museums and galleries will be extended for two years
- Core science funding to rise to £5.9bn a year by 2024-25
- Universal Credit taper rate will be cut by 8% no later than 1 December, bringing it down to 55%

Despite speculation before the budget there were no changes to pension tax relief or ISA limits, CGT rates have remained the same and the first £1 million is still taxed at 10% when you sell your business.

Some welcome measures that were announced are the 50% cut in business rates for hospitality for one year and a change in the business rates multiplier, which will lower business rates. The chancellor also announced a cut in beer duty sold on premises and wider reforms that will see alcohol taxed by alcoholic strength rather than by product category. The planned rise in fuel duty was cancelled.

The national living wage (NLW) rate for those aged 23 or over has been increased to £9.50 an hour. For an employee working a 35-hour week that would mean £17,290 a year. With the 1.25% increase in employers NIC to 15.05% on earnings over £9,100 a year would mean £1,233 on top increasing the cost to the employer of £18,523 a year before pension costs.

For the details of the Autumn budget and spending review see: [Budget and Spending Review – October 2021: What you need to know - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/budget-and-spending-review-october-2021)

### **Autumn Budget 2021 – NI Specific issues**

The Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, delivered his Autumn Budget and Spending Review statement on Wednesday 27 October 2021. NIBUSINESSINFO.CO.UK have summarised the key points from the Autumn Budget and specific issues affecting Northern Ireland businesses:

- The Northern Ireland Executive will receive an additional £1.6 billion in funding for 2021-22.
- The Northern Ireland Executive will also receive £1 billion to support farmers and land managers and £9.3 million to support fisheries.
- An additional £70 million funding for the British Business Bank to build on its existing programmes in Northern Ireland, working closely with local partners.
- A new trade and investment hub will be established in Belfast.

- The KickStart scheme will be extended in GB with the Northern Ireland Executive receiving additional funding through the Barnett formula to continue to deliver JobStart scheme.

See: [Autumn Budget 2021 \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk/news/article/autumn-budget-2021/)

### **UK Seafood Innovation Fund third call open**

The Seafood Innovation Fund (SIF) is now accepting third call applications. The SIF programme focuses on delivering longer term, cutting-edge innovation across the seafood sector, and helping to take innovative ideas from early-stage research to commercial viability.

The programme includes:

- primary producers
- onshore supply chains
- marine and diadromous fisheries
- marine and land-based aquaculture

The programme excludes:

- freshwater fishing
- recreational fishing

This call is open for feasibility studies only. The maximum funding available is £50,000 for projects with a duration of up to five months. Successful third call feasibility studies will be eligible to apply for larger R&D funding following completion of their projects.

See: [How to Apply FAQs - Seafood Innovation Fund](#)

### **Make a late Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claim**

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme ended on 30 September 2021. 14 October 2021 was the last date to make a claim for September.

For claim periods from 1 November 2020, HMRC may accept late claims or amendments if you have:

1. Taken reasonable care to try and claim on time.
2. A reasonable excuse.
3. Claimed as soon as your reasonable excuse no longer applies.

A reasonable excuse could include:

- your partner or another close relative died shortly before the claim deadline

- you had an unexpected stay in hospital that prevented you from dealing with your claim
- you had a serious or life-threatening illness, including coronavirus (COVID-19) related illnesses, which prevented you from making your claim (and no one else could claim for you)
- a period of self-isolation prevented you from making your claim (and no one else could make the claim for you)
- your computer or software failed just before or while you were preparing your online claim
- service issues with HMRC online services prevented you from making your claim
- a fire, flood or theft prevented you from making your claim
- postal delays that you could not have predicted prevented you from making your claim
- delays related to a disability you have prevented you from making your claim
- an HMRC error prevented you from making your claim

As soon as you are ready to make a late claim or amendment, you need to:

1. Check if you have a reasonable excuse.
2. Make sure you have all the information you need to process your claim.
3. Contact HMRC using the [helpline](#) to check with an advisor if you can claim.

If your reasonable excuse is accepted, the advisor will process your claim over the phone.

See: [Make a late Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme claim - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### **UK Games Fund: round 8 now open**

Round 8 of the UK Games Fund is now open. Round 8 is specifically designed to help early-stage games development companies registered at the time of application.

Successful applicants can expect to be awarded a grant of £6,000.

Funding will be provided in three £2,000 tranches over three months (January to March 2022) to support the development of an interactive digital entertainment concept and associated funding proposal.

The idea is to provide companies with a certain degree of 'breathing space' to allow for further focus on the pitch for possible future funding from the UK Games Fund and beyond. After the three-month funded development period, successful applicants will be offered networking opportunities via access to an event in 2022.

A further chance to pitch directly to the UK Games Fund will also be provided, where successful teams can secure an additional grant of up to £19,000 (subject to external funding availability). Any additional grants will be allocated from April 2022.

Due to demand for support from the UK Games Fund, the application window for Round 8 is time-constrained. Written applications have to be submitted by **12 noon on Tuesday 2 November 2021**.

An invitation to submit the video pitch part of the application will be sent to the named lead applicant as soon as possible. The deadline for the video pitch upload is Monday 8 November.

See: [Apply Now - UK Games Fund](#)

### **Global Entrepreneurship Week 2021**

Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW) is a collection of tens of thousands of events, activities and competitions each November that inspire millions to explore their potential as an entrepreneur while fostering connections with investors, researchers, policymakers and other start-up champions.

This year's takes place from 8 November to 14 November 2021.

See: [UK | Global Entrepreneurship Network \(genglobal.org\)](#)

### **Digital security by design: software ecosystem development**

UK registered organisations can apply for a share of up to £8 million for projects to work on the development of the digital security by design (DSbD) software ecosystem. This funding is from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

The aim of this competition is to fund a range of projects that work to enrich and expand the Digital Security by Design (DSbD) software ecosystem prior to the availability of commercial hardware. Projects will leverage the DSbD [Technology Hardware Prototype](#) (also known as Morello Board) to work on a focused area within a selected and specified software stack or Operating System (OS) or developer toolchain used by a digital system.

Closing date for entries is 11am on 8 December 2021.

See: [Competition overview - ISCF digital security by design - software ecosystem development - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Consultation on revising building control fees**

The Department of Finance has launched a consultation on amending building control fees charged by local councils.

The current fees charged by local councils for most building control applications for domestic buildings are set and have remained unchanged since 2013. During this time the costs

councils face in processing building control applications and carrying out inspections have increased. Local ratepayers are therefore currently subsidising their council's building control functions.

In addition to proposing amending the fees, the consultation is seeking views on revising the fee structure going forward.

See: [Consultation on Building \(Prescribed Fees\) \(Amendment\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2022 | Department of Finance \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

### **Sales conference for Fermanagh and Omagh businesses**

Part of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's Sales Academy Programme, an online sales conference 'Going for growth in a post pandemic world' is taking place on Wednesday 10 November 2021, from 09:30 to 12:30.

This free conference, which is part of Global Enterprise Week and free to all businesses within the area, will feature practical taster workshops covering vital aspects of sales growth, talks and Q&A's with successful local business people and a keynote address on the economic impact of COVID-19 and Brexit.

See: [FODC Innovating Business Growth - Sales Conference Tickets, Wed 10 Nov 2021 at 09:30 | Eventbrite](#)

### **Using the UKCA marking and placing goods on the GB and NI market – Webinar**

The UK now has its own regulatory framework for goods. Manufacturers need to start using the UKCA mark to place goods on the market in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales).

There are different rules for Northern Ireland. The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will be running dedicated events to cover the requirements for placing goods on the market in Northern Ireland. These webinars cover the new responsibilities and regulations for businesses.

The next webinar is on the 23 November at 2pm and is entitled "Adapting to your new responsibilities as an economic operator" covers changes to the roles of economic operators (importers, distributors, manufacturers, and authorised representatives) involved in the supply of goods requiring the UKCA marking to the Great British market.

See: [nibusinessinfo.co.uk Events Finder - The New UK Regime for Goods: Economic Operators, Events](#)

### **Consultation on draft Green Growth Strategy**

The public and industry are urged to review the NI Executive's draft strategy and have your say on Northern Ireland's Green Growth approach

The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive has published a consultation on the draft Green Growth Strategy.

This Green Growth Strategy sets out a vision and a framework for delivery with which all other NI government policies and strategies must align. It provides a vitally important opportunity to embed wider climate change, a green economy and environmental considerations into decision making.

See: [Consultation on draft Green Growth Strategy \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

### **Travelling from red list countries**

From 4.00 am today, there will be no countries on the red list.

Managed hotel quarantine will not be required as all countries will have moved to the non-red category. This will be reviewed regularly and is subject to change at short notice.

Therefore travellers should check this site regularly when planning, and before, booking international travel.

See: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): travelling to Northern Ireland from a red list country | nidirect](#)

### **Lateral flow tests have been introduced for fully vaccinated non-red international arrivals**

Passengers who are fully vaccinated arriving into Northern Ireland will be able to take a post-arrival lateral flow test. This was introduced on 31 October and eligible fully vaccinated passengers arriving into Northern Ireland will have the choice of taking either a lateral flow or PCR test on or before day 2 of their arrival.

Any individuals with a positive lateral flow test will be required to book a free confirmatory PCR test and isolate for 10 days. If the subsequent mandatory confirmatory PCR is negative, then the isolation period can end. Those that have already bought a PCR test do not need to buy another test. Lateral flow tests for international travel must be purchased from a private provider as NHS Test and Trace tests cannot be used for international travel. All travellers must complete their passenger locator form prior to travel, including providing a test booking reference number supplied by a testing provider.

See: [Lateral flow tests to be introduced for fully vaccinated non-red international arrivals | Department of Health \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://health-ni.gov.uk)