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BUSINESS NEWS SCOTLAND

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://www.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)

Christmas 2021 – Latest Recommended Posting Dates

Allow plenty of time for posting and post items and gifts for Christmas early, particularly for **International** deliveries:

- Friday 17 December 2021 – Royal Mail Bulk Mail Economy
- Saturday 18 December 2021 – 2nd Class, 2nd Class Signed For, Royal Mail 48
- Tuesday 21 December 2021 – 1st Class, 1st Class Signed For, Royal Mail 24, Royal Mail Tracked 48
- Wednesday 22 December 2021 – Royal Mail Tracked 24
- Thursday 23 December 2021 – Special Delivery Guaranteed

See: [Get ready for Christmas 2021 | Royal Mail Group Ltd](https://www.royalmail.com/uk/Christmas-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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/make-a-late-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-claim)

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 \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Final countries taken off the red list

The final seven countries have been removed from the international travel red list, meaning travellers to the UK from those destinations will no longer have to stay in hotel quarantine for 10 days on arrival.

The decision was made on a four nation basis and took effect at 4.00 am today. It affects arrivals from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Panama, Peru and Venezuela.

In addition vaccine certificates from a further 35 countries and territories will be recognised to allow quarantine-free travel to Scotland. Going forward this list will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Despite no countries remaining on the red list from 1 November, the policy is continuing, and some managed quarantine capacity will stay in place in Scotland in order to react to any change in risk assessment that would see a country added to the red list.

See: [Final countries taken off the red list - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Information/Scotland/Current/2021/11/2021-11-15-final-countries-taken-off-the-red-list)

Scotland on Tour

Scotland on Tour is a new initiative funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Active Events to bring new and additional concerts to towns and villages across Scotland in 2022.

Funding is available for artists and for venues/promoters.

Artists can apply for funding that covers touring costs such as vehicle hire, production, crew, accommodation and subsistence. The level of funding available will be between £100 and £3000 for each concert.

Venues and promoters can apply to the fund to cover costs such as venue hire, stewarding and marketing. Venues and promoters are also asked to provide dates so that artists can be matched up with new concerts. The level of funding available will be between £100 and £5000 for each concert.

Festivals can apply for activity such as an additional stage or new venue to add to existing venues. Festivals should contact info@scotlandontour.com to discuss this in more detail.

The deadline to apply is 6pm on Monday 22 November 2021.

See: [Home - Scotland On Tour](#)

The Scottish Food and Drink Net Zero Challenge Fund

This fund aims to help companies working in or with the food and drink supply chain in Scotland to reduce their environmental impact. To do this, it will pay for companies to make use of the expertise offered by Scotland's higher education institutions and colleges in many disciplines, including agri-tech, IT, data, manufacturing, engineering, food science, chemistry, biology, environmental and consumer sciences.

Funding of up to £10,000 will be available for businesses to partner with and fund Scottish academia on projects that contribute to sustainability and net zero goals.

Projects are welcome from across the industry, including primary production, manufacturing, food service, supply chains, retail, and technology. To be successful, your application must demonstrate how you plan to reduce environmental impacts in the food and drink industry in Scotland.

Environmental sustainability is unique to each business, organisation or subsector, so, priorities will vary. Interface will accept applications that cover a range of issues, such as

food waste, waste valorisation, water usage, sustainable ingredients, packaging, resource and energy efficiency.

Ideas may have emerged through engagement with support services available to businesses, such as the Circular Economy Business Support Service or Food and Drink Waste Reduction Business Support, which enabled your business to pilot concepts or embed knowledge with the support of academia.

The fund has been launched by Interface and the Scotland Food and Drink Partnership as part of the Recovery Plan funded by the Scottish Government.

See: [The Scottish Food and Drink Net Zero Challenge Fund | Interface Knowledge Connection \(interface-online.org.uk\)](https://interface-online.org.uk)

Four Nations International Fund

This pilot fund is designed to encourage in-person, digital and hybrid collaboration between artists, creative practitioners and organisations from the 4 nations across the UK and their counterparts from Europe and beyond.

This fund invites artists, cultural professionals and organisations to consider how their collaboration could be enhanced by closer working between England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The Four Nations International Fund is a pilot fund with co-investment from Arts Council England, Arts Council Northern Ireland, Arts Council Wales/Wales Arts International and Creative Scotland.

The budget for this initial pilot round is £100,000, which is anticipated to cover 20 to 30 awards in total across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

See: [Four Nations International Fund | Creative Scotland](https://www.creative-scotland.com/funding/four-nations-international-fund)

Energy efficiency funding for Scottish industry

The second window of the Scottish Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (SIETF) is now open. It offers an opportunity for industrial sites with high energy use to develop their proposals into applications for match-funded government grants to support their transition to a low-carbon future.

The SIETF currently consists of 2 competitions, with funding from 2021 to 2026. These are as follows:

Competition 1 – Deployment

To support the use of readily available energy efficiency technologies that improve/benefit the energy efficiency of industrial processes and reduce energy demand; and/or to support the decarbonisation of industrial processes, for example through fuel switching.

Competition 2 – Studies

To support feasibility and engineering studies on energy efficiency or deeper decarbonisation, such as through fuel switching.

The Deadline for applications is 17 December 2021.

See: [Scottish Industrial Energy Transformation Fund - 2nd call: guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Scottish Technology Ecosystem Fund

The purpose of the Ecosystem Fund is to support organisations and activities that create the best possible environment for Scottish technology startups to succeed.

The fund aims to expand and improve the quality of the community, networking and peer learning dimensions of the Scottish technology ecosystem. This is phase 1 of the fund, which will specifically focus on supporting Scottish tech meet-ups, education and networking events.

The fund's ambition is to elevate the social infrastructure of the Scottish tech ecosystem to a world-class level. This includes turning Scotland's ecosystem outwards and learning from international practice. Supported projects should provide a diverse audience with greater access to a variety of experiences and broader opportunities - for example, by inviting an international speaker to what would otherwise be a local event.

See: [Scottish technology ecosystem: review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Creative Scotland - Go See Share Fund

Go See Share is a small fund to help individuals, organisations and creative businesses explore new ways to expand their business activity and become more financially sustainable.

The fund will help recipients undertake trips or remote meetings to gain knowledge and insight and build relationships at events or other types of visits, then to share this knowledge back in Scotland.

Examples of the types of visits that are eligible for support include:

- local, national and international visits to see examples of best practice or new business models in operation
- remote meetings or visits which help you to research best practice or new business models
- interesting event, festival, and professional development opportunities focused on business development, business practices or business sustainability
- visits to a person, organisation or business to explore interesting new ways of working

See: [Login - Creative Scotland](#)