

Written 20 June 2022

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!

Making Tax Digital for VAT – New penalties for non-compliance

HMRC have issued guidance for VAT-registered business and their agents on how to avoid penalties for non-compliance with the Making Tax Digital for VAT (MTD) rules.

In particular, there is a new £400 per return penalty if you file a return but do not use functional compatible software.



There are additional penalties if the business does not keep its records digitally. HMRC may charge you a penalty of between £5 to £15 for every day on which the business does not meet that requirement.

Key extracts from HMRC guidance include:

You must file your VAT return using functional compatible software

Functional compatible software means a software program, or set of software programs, products or applications (apps) that can:

- record and store digital records.
- provide HMRC with information and VAT returns from the data held in those digital records.
- receive information from HMRC.

You must keep records digitally

You must keep some records digitally within your functional compatible software. This is known as your 'electronic account'. Your electronic account must contain:

- your business name, address and VAT registration number.
- any adjustments from calculations you make outside your functional compatible software for any VAT accounting schemes you use.
- the VAT on goods and services you supplied, meaning everything you sold, leased, rented or hired (supplies made).
- the VAT on goods and services you received, meaning everything you bought, leased, rented or hired (supplies received).
- any adjustments you make to a return.
- the 'time of supply' and 'value of supply' (value excluding VAT) for everything you bought and sold.
- the rate of VAT you charged on goods and services.
- your reverse charge transactions, where you record the VAT on the sale price and the purchase price of the goods and services you buy.
- copies of documents that cover multiple transactions made on behalf of your business, like those made by volunteers for charity fundraising, a third-party business or employees for expenses in petty cash.

All transactions must be contained in your electronic account, but you do not need to scan paper records like invoices and receipts.

Please contact us if you need assistance in complying with MTD.

See: [Compliance checks: How to avoid penalties for Making Tax Digital for VAT – CC/FS69 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/compliance-checks-how-to-avoid-penalties-for-making-tax-digital-for-vat-cc/fs69)

Mental health at work – Podcast series

The newest partner of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Working Minds campaign, Make UK, has launched a podcast series on the importance of mental health.

Across six episodes, former BBC Business Editor Jonty Bloom interviews companies and experts – from large companies to SMEs.

They include:

- Chloe Smith MP, Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work

- Andrew Ward, Make UK's Health, Safety and Sustainability Director
- Rachel Newman, Head of People, Policy and Support, The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)
- Dr Shaun Lundy, Director for Strategy and Innovation, Tetra Consultancy

You can access the podcast series by using the following link: [The Importance of Mental Health Podcasts | Make UK](#)

The [Working Minds campaign](#) provides employers and workers with easy-to-implement advice to prevent work-related stress and encourage good mental health.

National Minimum Wage rate reminder for employers: Summer staff

All workers are legally entitled to be paid the National Minimum Wage (NMW). This includes temporary seasonal staff, who often work short-term contracts in bars, hotels, shops and warehouses over the summer.

The National Minimum Wage hourly rates from 1 April 2022 are:

- £9.50 - age 23 or over (National Living Wage)
- £9.18 - age 21 to 22
- £6.83 - age 18 to 20
- £4.81 - age under 18
- £4.81 - apprentice

Employers can contact the [Acas](#) helpline for free help and advice.

Please contact us if you need help with your payroll.

See: [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates](#)

Travelling time and the National Minimum Wage

HMRC have recently updated their guidance to employers on travelling time with reference to National Minimum Wage calculations. Travelling for the purpose of working (i.e. in connection with the employment) which does not fall under a daily average agreement is counted as working time.

This includes the time a worker spends travelling between "assignments" which need to be carried out at different places, to which the worker is obliged to travel. An example here would be a care worker visiting several clients in their own homes.

Travelling between a worker's place of residence (including temporary residence) and the place of their work is not considered as travelling for the purposes of work. Any time spent on such "home to work" travelling is not considered as working time.

For more details see: [NMWM08490 - Working time: unmeasured work: travelling time - HMRC internal manual - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The Accident Book: an important document for your business

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Accident Book is a valuable document that organisations can use to record accident information.

The [Accident Book](#) can be used to record details of all work-related accidents including injuries that employers must report under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 ([RIDDOR](#)).

The book contains 50 perforated accident record forms and is designed to support users in being GDPR compliant.

See: [HSE: Information about health and safety at work](#)

Companies House webinars available as recordings

Companies House have recordings of webinar presentations that you can watch whenever suits your schedule. The webinars cover a range of topics, including:

- starting a limited company and your responsibilities to Companies House and HMRC.
- how intellectual property such as patents, trademarks and copyrights can affect your business.
- guidance on starting a community interest company (CIC).
- how to register company mortgages and other charges at Companies House.
- how to restore a company to the register.

See: [Companies House webinars - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

The "Bring It Back Fund"

Hubbub and Starbucks have launched a £1 million fund to support innovation in the food and drink packaging industry in the UK.

They are looking for innovators with pioneering approaches to challenge single-use packaging in the food and drink sector. The fund is looking to support consumer-facing reuse systems in the UK in both 'return from home' and 'return on the go' models. If you feel you have a solution to support reuse systems and remove barriers for users and businesses, they want to hear about it.

The fund is open to the following types of organisations:

- Charities

- Academic bodies
- Community Interest Companies
- Social enterprises
- Registered companies

The fund will provide grants between £150,000 to £300,000 and fund up to 5 different projects based in the UK. Applications close at 5pm on 24 June 2022.

See: [Bring It Back Fund — Home](#)

Free webinars from the British Library Business & IP Centre

The British Library's Business & IP Centre (BIPC) has relaunched its 'Reset. Restart' programme of free webinars and support sessions, designed to help businesses overcome obstacles and thrive in the current climate.

The programme began during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim to support small businesses to adapt and weather the storm. Even though the set of challenges business owners are facing today are different, help is just as necessary now as it was then.

The monthly 'Reset. Restart' webinars will offer practical, jargon-free training and advice from marketing to sales, current trends and funding. You can join the following webinars in June:

- [The steps to sell with confidence](#) - Tue 21 Jun 2022, 10:00 - 11:30
- [New sustainability trends for your business](#) - Thu 23 Jun 2022, 10:00 - 11:00
- [How to use tech for your business](#) - Mon 27 Jun 2022, 10:00 - 11:30
- [How to raise the money you need, now](#) - Wed 29 Jun 2022, 15:00 - 16:30

These events will also offer an opportunity to meet and network with other like-minded small business owners.

See: [Reset. Restart - The British Library \(bl.uk\)](#)

'Plug-in grant' for cars ends as the focus moves to improving electric vehicle charging

The UK government has closed the plug-in car grant scheme to new orders. This follows a [public evaluation report](#) highlighting that while the grant was vital in building the early market for electric vehicles, it has since been having less of an effect on demand. Other existing price incentives, such as company car tax, continue to have an important impact. The report also found the plug-in van market will benefit

from grant incentives more to support businesses and their fleets in making the switch.

To continue the UK government's drive towards net zero, £300 million in grant funding will now be refocused towards extending plug-in grants to boost sales of plug-in [taxis](#), [vans and trucks](#), [motorcycles](#) and [wheelchair accessible vehicles](#), as announced in the autumn statement.

See: [Plug-in grant for cars to end as focus moves to improving electric vehicle charging - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Innovation Loans Future Economy competition - round 4

Businesses registered in the UK can apply for loans for innovative projects with strong commercial potential to significantly improve the UK economy.

Innovate UK is offering up to £25 million in loans to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Loans are for highly innovative late-stage research and development (R&D) projects with the best potential for the future. There should be a clear route to commercialisation and economic impact.

Your project must lead to new products, processes or services that are significantly ahead of others currently available or propose an innovative use of existing products, processes or services. It can also involve a new or innovative business model.

Innovate UK are particularly interested in projects that focus on the future economy areas included in the [Innovate UK plan for action](#).

You must be able to show that you:

- need public funding.
- can cover interest payments.
- will be able to repay the loan on time.

You can apply for a loan of between £100,000 and £2 million to fund your project's eligible costs. Projects can last up to 5 years, including both the R&D and commercialisation phases. Projects are expected to start by 24 October 2022.

The funding available will be allocated across a series of competitions with the next round opening on the day the previous round closes. This is round 4, the final round in the current series. The deadline for applications to this final round is 13 July 2022 at 11:00.

See: [Competition overview - Innovation Loans Future Economy Competition – Round 4 - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Enniskillen Place Shaping Plan 2035 business survey

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is preparing a Place Shaping Plan for Enniskillen and wishes to hear from the business community.

Place Shaping looks at how we can make our communities stronger and more resilient in the future through understanding what exists in terms of assets, for example, buildings, green spaces, brownfield sites, skills and knowledge, community groups and public services. The plan aims to build on history, the strategic geographic and economic location and the tourism potential to secure a sustainable social, economic, and physical regeneration.

The council wishes to hear from the business community on the strengths and opportunities for Enniskillen town, and suggestions for what Enniskillen needs to make it a thriving place to work, live and prosper.

Your participation in this survey will help inform and guide the development of the Enniskillen Place Shaping Plan to 2035 and the key actions and outcomes arising from it. The survey is expected to take no more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

See: [Enniskillen Place Shaping Plan 2035 - Business Survey \(surveymonkey.com\)](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/enniskillen-place-shaping-plan-2035-business-survey)

UK Government introduces bill to change the Northern Ireland Protocol

The UK Government introduced legislation last week to change parts of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, according to the UK government, addresses practical problems the Protocol has created in Northern Ireland in 4 key areas:

- onerous customs processes
- inflexible regulation
- tax and spend discrepancies
- democratic governance issues

The UK Government states “These problems include disruption and diversion of trade and significant costs and bureaucracy for business. They are undermining all 3 strands of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement and have led to the collapse of the power-sharing arrangements at Stormont. The UK Government is committed to seeing these institutions back up and running so that they can deliver for the people of Northern Ireland”.

Following 18 months of discussions with the EU, the UK Government say their preference remains for a negotiated solution to fix these problems which are baked into the Protocol. They state: “But the EU must be willing to change the Protocol itself. Ministers believe that the serious situation in Northern Ireland means they cannot afford to delay”.

The EU has announced new legal action against the UK Government over its plans to change parts of the post-Brexit deal for Northern Ireland. Ministers outlined a bill

on Monday aimed at unilaterally changing trade, tax and governance arrangements in the 2019 deal. The EU says overriding parts of the deal would break international law.

European Commission vice-president Maros Sefcovic said there was "no legal or political justification whatsoever for unilaterally changing an international agreement".

No doubt, we will be hearing a lot more on this key matter over the coming weeks.

See: [Government introduces bill to fix the Northern Ireland Protocol - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-introduces-bill-to-fix-the-northern-ireland-protocol)

Causeway Coast and Glens Small Settlements Restore and Reactivate Grant Programme

This programme will support capital works on derelict or vacant commercial properties

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has launched a new Small Settlements Restore and Reactivate Grant Programme in collaboration with the Department for Communities.

The programme is open to owners or leaseholders of eligible vacant or derelict commercial properties in the small settlements of Armoy, Ballykelly, Bushmills, Castlerock, Cloughmills, Cushendall, Dungiven, Dunloy, Garvagh, Greysteel, Kilrea and Rasharkin and will support capital works on these properties.

Programme details

The scheme will provide funding at 75% of the total works costs up to a maximum grant of £50,000. Only one application per property will be considered and an applicant may only apply for funding for one property/address in a settlement.

The scheme will support the restoration of vacant commercial properties for the following uses:

- retail (engaged in the retail sale of goods)
- coffee shops, bars and restaurants
- hair and beauty businesses
- health and fitness-related businesses
- service providers such as estate agencies, financial advisors
- mortgage and insurance providers
- residential accommodation
- community use

Eligible properties must have been vacant since at least Monday 1 March 2021.

The application process is open until Thursday 30 June 2022.

See: [Causeway Coast and Glens Small Settlements Restore and Reactivate Grant Programme \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk/causeway-coast-and-glens-small-settlements-restore-and-reactivate-grant-programme)

Training Needs Analysis events 2022

Invest Northern Ireland's Training Needs Analysis events are designed to help you identify the skills within your organisation to strengthen your business.

These events will give you an insight into the tools and techniques used by learning and development professionals to analyse training needs. This will enable you to increase productivity and improve the skills of your people through targeted training going forward.

The interactive sessions will cover:

- what a training needs analysis is.
- the three levels of training analysis.

There are a number of Training Needs Analysis sessions taking place in various locations throughout Northern Ireland from June to November 2022.

See: [Training Needs Analysis events 2022 \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk/training-needs-analysis-events-2022)