

Written 31 October 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!

### **New UK Prime Minister and cabinet – tough decisions ahead!**

A new period of this government begins for us all, again! We have a new Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak and a new cabinet facing the toughest economic conditions in decades.



### So what actions can we expect from the government in the next few weeks?

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt will outline the UK's tax and spending programme on the 17 November as a full Autumn Statement. This has been delayed for further economic forecasts to be prepared. Mr Hunt has stated that this new government will set out to ensure UK borrowing falls over the medium term. The “upgrade” to a full Autumn statement also suggests wider spending and taxation policies will be announced. Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, has warned of “difficult decisions” to be taken to ensure economic stability and confidence. We will keep you fully informed of any changes in taxation as they occur.

## Faced with uncertainty, what actions should a business owner take right now ?

Take some time to look at your business's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and get a clear understanding of its position in the marketplace, the competition, the systems and the way things are done and the improvements that could be made. Focus on what the business is to look like when it is "complete" or running profitably and successfully. Then you can determine priorities – the big issues that need to be focussed on – then you can make a plan.

It is also a good idea to plan for a range of scenarios "good and bad" so that you can be flexible about the direction your business should take.

Please talk to us about your plans, we can assist with cashflow planning and "what if" scenarios.

## **New supply chain cyber security guidance**

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has published new guidance to help organisations effectively assess and gain confidence in the cyber security of their supply chains.



The guidance follows a significant increase in cyber-attacks resulting from vulnerabilities within supply chains in recent years, including high-profile incidents such as the SolarWinds attack.

These attacks can result in long-term, costly ramifications for affected organisations and their customers, yet the [latest government data](#) shows just over one in ten

businesses review the risks posed by their immediate suppliers. The proportion for the wider supply chain is just 7%.

This guidance aims to help cyber security professionals, risk managers and procurement specialists put into practice the NCSC's [12 supply chain security principles](#) to ensure that mitigations are in place for vulnerabilities associated with working with suppliers.

More specifically, this guidance:

- describes typical supplier relationships and potential weaknesses that might expose their supply chain to attacks
- defines the expected outcomes
- sets out key steps that can help organisations assess their supply chain's security

Read the [NCSC's new guidance on supply chain cyber security](#).

In addition to guidance focused on improving supply chain cyber resilience, the NCSC has published a range of advice to help organisations improve their own cyber security.

This includes the [10 Steps to Cyber Security guidance](#), aimed at larger organisations, and the [Small Business Guide](#) for smaller organisations.

## **The Menopause taboo**

The menopause is a natural stage of life and yet it remains a taboo subject in many workplaces. People experiencing menopausal symptoms require the same support and understanding from their employer as anyone experiencing any ongoing health condition.

Employers need to break the stigma and taboo surrounding the menopause at work and create an inclusive working environment where employees and managers feel confident to discuss any practical adjustments that may be needed.

The Chartered Institute for Personal Development (CIPD) have support materials, guides, webinars and podcasts for professionals and people managers.

You can also get up to date with the key cases on menopause in the workplace and the implications for employers.

See: [Let's talk menopause | CIPD Guidance](#)

## **Support with employee health and disability**

The UK Government has been building and testing a new online service for employers which provides advice and guidance on managing health and disability in the workplace.

The service explains your legal obligations and good practice - it may be particularly helpful for smaller businesses without in-house HR support or access to an occupational health service.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is supporting the development of this service and would like your help to test it.

By taking part, you'll receive free information and guidance on disability and health-related employment issues. You could use it to help manage a current case, or simply look around the site to see what's useful and identify improvements.

However you choose to take part, please take the time to provide feedback. Your views will be vital in supporting the continued development of the service.

See: [Support with employee health and disability – GOV.UK \(dwp.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/support-with-employee-health-and-disability)

## **Digital Manufacturing Week 2022**

The national festival of advanced manufacturing takes place in Liverpool from 14 to 18 November 2022 and will welcome thousands of industry leaders and digitally minded manufacturers.

Every aspect of the week celebrates excellence: expert speakers, industry-shaping influencers, delegates from the best manufacturers and the brightest emerging talent.

See: [Home - Digital Manufacturing Week \(digital-manufacturing-week.com\)](https://digital-manufacturing-week.com)

## **Energy Bills Support Factsheet**

The UK Government have updated their Energy Bills Support Factsheet and has set out action to support people and businesses with their energy bills and tackle the root causes of the issues in the UK energy market through increased supply.

Contents include:

- [Support for households](#)
- [Support for businesses and non-domestic properties](#)
- [Reform to address long-term issues in the UK's energy sector](#)
- [Other help](#)

See: [Energy bills support factsheet - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bills-support-factsheet)

## **The Importance of Wellbeing for SME Business Owners**

Wellbeing has always been very important for SME business owners. With almost four in ten (39%) SME business owners saying that rising costs are affecting their



emotional wellbeing, according to new research by Three Business, it's more important than ever.

Almost half (45%) of SME business owners say that mental health support is just as valuable to their business, as financial and technological aid.

Find out more about what the research findings are telling us about the challenges facing SME business owners at the following online webinar 2 November 2022.

See: [The Importance of Wellbeing for SME Business Owners Tickets, Wed 2 Nov 2022 at 14:00 | Eventbrite](#)

### **Global Incubator Programme: Ocean Scaleup Accelerator**

Innovate UK and Innovate UK EDGE have opened for applications a new accelerator programme for innovative companies in the ocean sector.

The tailored five-month incubation programme will be delivered in partnership with COVE, a global innovation centre for ocean technology located in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The programme includes participation at Canada's premier event for the ocean technology sector, the H2O Conference, including the opportunity for companies to demonstrate their technology offering to industry experts and prospective customers at COVE Demo Day.

To apply for this programme, you must:

- be a UK-based company
- be a business with fewer than 500 employees
- have a focus on the ocean sector

This programme is particularly relevant for businesses in the areas of:

- aquaculture
- fisheries
- marine energy
- marine environmental monitoring
- marine net zero
- marine observations
- marine robotics
- marine transportation
- ocean plastics

See: [Global Incubator Programme Agri-Tech Gateway to Australia \(ukri.org\)](#)

## **The Rural Start-Up Fund**

The Prince's Countryside Fund and Forest Holidays have teamed up to create The Rural Start-Up Fund, an exciting opportunity for rural businesses to receive financial support as they embark on a new business venture.

One of the biggest barriers to setting up a new business is the initial financial demand, and this, coupled with the challenges of working rurally, is why the fund is striving to support new entrepreneurs across the United Kingdom.

A total of £5,000 is available in the Rural Start-Up Fund in 2022 to be awarded to one winning business or shared between a number of rural start-ups. In addition, as part of the Rural Start-Up Fund, the successful applicant(s) will receive mentoring support from a relevant expert in the Forest Holidays team to further guide and support them.

See: [Rural Start Up Fund - The Prince's Countryside Fund \(princescountrysidefund.org.uk\)](https://princescountrysidefund.org.uk)

## **Innovation loans future economy competition: round 6**

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.

You must be able to show that you:

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

The closing date to apply is 9 November 2022.

See: [Competition overview - Innovation Loans Future Economy Competition – Round 6 - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](https://apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk)

## **Causeway Coast and Glens Town Centre Experience Fund**

The Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Town Centre Experience Fund provides funding to support local retail businesses and organisations to create experiences to assist in the creation of vibrant and sustainable town centres.

The fund is for businesses and organisations in the 12 towns and villages of Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Ballykelly, Bushmills, Coleraine, Cushendall, Dungiven,

Garvagh, Kilrea, Limavady, Portrush and Portstewart. Organisations must also be actively trading commercially or a constituted organisation.

Through the fund, groups of traders/town centre stakeholders are encouraged to work together to introduce new experiences, initiatives, activities, marketing or event development for their respective town centre and encouraging them to target times of the year outside the usual peak times.

#### Grant details

The Town Centre Experience Fund can provide funding of up to 100% costs up to a maximum of £2,000. Match funding is not a requirement.

Applicant businesses/organisations must be in a position to pay for items and claim the money retrospectively.

All projects must be completed, paid in full, cleared the business bank account and claimed before Friday 31 March 2023.

See: [TOWN CENTRE EXPERIENCE FUND - Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council \(causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk\)](https://www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

### **NI Apprenticeship Awards 2023**

The Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Awards 2023 will recognise and reward excellence in apprenticeships from apprentices, employers and training providers. The awards are about showcasing the very best within the Department of the Economy's (DfE) apprenticeship programmes and the opportunities available.

#### Award categories

Applications are now open for the five award categories:

- Apprentice Award (Levels 2-3)
- Higher Level Apprentice Award (Level 4+)
- Large Employer in partnership with their Training Provider Award (employers with 250 employees and over)
- Small and Medium Enterprise in partnership with their Training Provider Award (employers with fewer than 250 employees)
- Outstanding Mentor Award

Applications are now open. Apprentices, employers and training providers are encouraged to enter the awards.

See: [Northern Ireland Apprenticeship Awards 2023 | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk)

## **Lisburn and Castlereagh Job Fair**

Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council is hosting a job fair, supported by the Department for Communities, on Thursday 24 November 2022, from 10am to 3pm at the Lagan Valley Island Centre in Lisburn.

Whether you are looking to change job or progress in your chosen profession, Lisburn and Castlereagh Labour Market Partnership will host a range of opportunities on offer by local employers. With competitive salaries, excellent benefits, opportunities for promotion and an extensive learning and development programme, you will find the best path suited for you. Just turn up between 10am and 3pm and have a chat.

See: [Lisburn and Castlereagh Job Fair \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

## **10X Reasons for Good Employment Relations Conference**

There are many reasons for ensuring good employment relations, not least because they are key to organisational success. Above all, if employers get this right, it will help lead to the inclusive and thriving 10X economy that is the economic vision for Northern Ireland.

This major stakeholder conference brings together employers, HR professionals, trade unionists and others to explore how to create a framework of best practice that will help turn the vision for a 10X economy into a reality through good employment relations

Speakers include leading thinkers on employment issues from government, academia, business, HR and the trade union movement. Further details of the conference programme will be released in November 2022.

Date: Thursday 23 February 2023

Time: 8:45am to 3:30pm

Venue: Titanic, Belfast

Cost: Free

See: [10X REASONS \(AND MORE\) FOR GOOD EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS – A CONFERENCE Tickets, Thu 23 Feb 2023 at 09:30 | Eventbrite](#)

## **Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme launches**

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has launched a £500,000 capital grant scheme to aid established rural social enterprises to increase their capacity, potential profitability and sustainability.

The Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme aims to improve rural social enterprise sustainability to:

- strengthen rural communities



- improve the economic circumstances of rural communities
- work in partnership with others

Grants of between £50,000 to £100,000 are available to social enterprises who meet the scheme qualifying criteria and are successful in a competitive process. The grants will fund up to 80 per cent of eligible costs (subject to the maximum £100,000).

The scheme will target established rural social enterprises which have been trading for more than two years, and the project must be located in a rural area.

An initial expression of interest will be used to determine organisations and proposed projects which are eligible and will be invited to submit a full application.

See: [Rural Social Enterprise Investment Scheme pilot - phase 2 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(daera-ni.gov.uk\)](https://daera-ni.gov.uk/rural-social-enterprise-investment-scheme-pilot-phase-2)

### **Ambition To Grow competition**

Invest NI is looking for 40 of Northern Ireland's most innovative and ambitious businesses to take part in a new Ambition to Grow competition where you could receive up to £45,000 in funding, and ultimately become part of Invest Northern Ireland's client portfolio.

Invest NI will provide support to create great jobs and to sell your innovative products or services outside Northern Ireland. They are looking for businesses that:

- have the ambition to grow
- are ambitious, innovative businesses with the ambition to grow sales to £1 million
- have a product or service with a strong USP to take to markets outside Northern Ireland
- are a start-up or an established company that has not worked with Invest NI before
- need government support to create great jobs and to sell innovative products or services outside Northern Ireland

Ambition to Grow is designed specifically to help micro, small and medium local enterprises to create jobs and grow exports. To make sure they reach as many businesses as possible, the Invest NI Regional Offices have teamed up with local council partners to host information events in cities and towns in all 11 council areas.

### **Financial support**

Funding will be awarded to applicants on a competitive basis. Applications will be assessed and scored, with the highest scoring companies in each region awarded funding following a successful validation interview.

A maximum of £45,000 is available for each successful application as follows:

- £5,000 per new job (a minimum of 3 jobs must be created) over and above existing employment levels within the business (to a maximum of £30,000)
- £10,000 towards business development activities, where the amount of support provided shall be no more than 50% of the cost of eligible activities listed in the application
- £5,000 on the completion of an export health check and development of an export growth plan, to the satisfaction of Invest NI by 1 March 2023

Financial support payments are not up-front and are dependent on the execution of specific activities as outlined in any offer of support such as job creation or exporting.

This programme is only available to businesses that are not currently Invest NI clients.

This is a two-part application process, with the top ranking online applications being invited for a face to face interview to validate the information provided in the application.

Ambition to Grow has been developed as a digital application to support businesses across the Invest NI Regional Office areas.

See: [Ambition To Grow competition \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

### **Help to Grow: Management course in Northern Ireland**

This 12-week executive development programme is 90 per cent subsidised by the UK government. It aims to support managers and leaders of small and medium sized businesses to boost business performance, resilience, and long-term growth.

In addition to the subsidy, participants benefit from:

- one-to-one support from a business mentor
- access to a network of like-minded business leaders
- a bespoke growth plan to help the business reach its full potential

The Help to Grow leadership and management programme is delivered through a combination of online webinars and face-to-face workshops. In Northern Ireland, the course is delivered by Ulster University Business School and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) Management School.

The next available course starts on 7 December 2022 with Ulster University's Business School. Apply for a place at the upcoming [Help to Grow Management course in Coleraine](#).

Both QUB and Ulster University have further courses scheduled to start in January 2023. See availability for the [Help to Grow Management course at QUB](#)

See: [Help to Grow: Management course in Northern Ireland \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](#)

### **Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Help for non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland**

This scheme will provide energy bill relief for non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland. Discounts will be applied to energy usage initially between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023.

The scheme will be available to everyone on a non-domestic contract including:

- businesses
- voluntary sector organisations, such as charities
- public sector organisations such as schools, hospitals and leisure centres

who are:

- on existing fixed price contracts that were agreed on or after 1 December 2021
- signing new fixed price contracts
- on variable 'day ahead' tariffs
- on deemed/out of contract or standard variable tariffs
- on flexible purchase contracts

For the full details see: [Energy Bill Relief Scheme: Help for non-domestic customers in Northern Ireland \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](#)