

Written by 27 March 2023

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!

Are you buying or trading Crypto?

If you are thinking about buying cryptoassets (“crypto”) you need to know the basics and understand the risks before jumping in. And remember, if you decide to invest in crypto then you should be prepared to lose all the money you have invested.



The range and accessibility of crypto have grown rapidly in the last few years, accompanied by a surge in speculative trading – which means people trading just because they have heard it may rise in value, rather than seeing evidence to support a potential rise. A number of people invest simply for fun!

Crypto can be thought of as ‘digital representations of value or rights’ that are secured by encryption and typically use some type of ‘distributed ledger technology’ (DLT). DLT allows data to be recorded and stored across a network of participants. This keeps the data secure and means there is no one single central data storage point or one central authority that grants participants permission to access and participate in the network.

The way some cryptoassets are created and operated makes them very different from what some people would class as ‘tangible’ assets (meaning things that you can physically see and touch) like gold or cash. So called ‘unbacked’ crypto have no

tangible assets that sit behind them. Their price can increase or decrease depending on whether other people are willing to buy them. If people stop buying, the price could fall dramatically.

Whereas central banks – like the Bank of England – issue and oversee the money we use daily (fiat currencies), cryptoassets are developed and run by groups, individuals, or companies. Publicly available information about some of these groups/individuals can be vague, and as crypto activity is not regulated yet in the UK, there is no safety net if things go wrong.

Currently, using crypto as a means of payment is very limited – they're accepted by certain IT and travel companies, for example, but you probably won't be doing your weekly shop or paying your 5-a-side football subs with crypto. The reason for this is that cryptoassets tend to be very volatile, so it's hard to pinpoint their value from one day to the next, which makes them unreliable as a payment method. However crypto that are linked to fiat currency can be less volatile and more stable and have the potential to provide faster, cheaper and more efficient payments in the future. Some investors take the view that crypto could possibly one day be accepted in everyday transactions but this is some way off.

Investing in crypto comes with all kinds of risks, some of which you might not even have thought of. For example, converting crypto to fiat currency can prove challenging and holders must keep a record of their digital keys. Capital gains tax can apply to exchanges and other disposals of crypto, even if fiat currency has not been realised. In 2022, crypto lender, Celsius, filed for bankruptcy and owed its users \$4.7 billion, meaning many investors could not get their money out and did not get anything back.

Following the surge in people's interest in crypto over the last few years, scammers have been increasingly active in targeting potential investors. Remember - if something sounds too good to be true then it probably is. Find out how to protect yourself and others from investment scams on the [ScamSmart site](#).

If you are trading in crypto be aware HMRC expects you to keep detailed and accurate records of your purchases and sales. In 2021 they published their internal Cryptoassets Manual which outlines how they measure any profit or loss on trading and details the records required. You can see this here: [Cryptoassets Manual - HMRC internal manual - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). It has just been announced in Budget 2023 that new boxes will appear on the self-assessment tax return to prompt crypto disclosures next year.

Anyone trading in Crypto needs to be aware of their tax obligations and when transactions need to be included in their tax return. Please make sure you tell us about any transactions (even if fiat currency has not been received) so that we can assist and include the appropriate amounts in your self-assessment tax return, as required.

See: [Crypto: The basics | FCA](#)

Employer duties for the change in the tax year

As an employer running payroll, you need to report to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on the previous tax year (which ends on 5 April 2023), give your employees a P60, and prepare for the new tax year, which starts on 6 April.

<u>What you need to do</u>	<u>When</u>
Send your final payroll report of the year	On or before your employees' payday
Update employee payroll records	From 6 April
Update payroll software	From 6 April
Give your employees a P60	By 31 May
Report employee expenses and benefits	By 6 July

HMRC have published important information for employers on GOV.UK, which includes help with [finishing the tax year 2022 to 2023](#).

Please talk to us about our payroll services; we offer a secure payroll service that not only saves you time and money but can eliminate the risk of getting something wrong.

New 'Help to Grow' website for businesses

The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) has unveiled a new centralised website, targeted at helping the UK's 5.5 million businesses.

The new 'Help to Grow' site from DBT is aimed at upskilling both big and small businesses across the country by helping them to:

- learn new skills,
- reach more customers, and
- boost business profits.

See: [Homepage - Help to Grow](#)

Collecting flexible plastic packaging waste at home: Competition

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will invest up to £250,000 from the Smart Sustainable Plastic Packaging Programme to fund projects that will develop innovative ideas to help with the collection of flexible plastic packaging waste from households.



The ultimate goal of this competition is the reduction of the amount of waste ending up in landfill or in the environment. The selected projects will have the opportunity to develop their concept, and then present and prototype their idea as part of a nationwide trial to collect flexible plastic packaging waste from UK households.

Your project must:

- develop an idea and propose a design for containing or collecting household flexible plastic packaging waste that is easy to store in the home and easy to carry or transport; or
- encourage householders to collect flexible plastic packaging waste as a separate waste stream for kerbside collection or for transporting to collection points in supermarkets.

To be eligible, your project must:

- have a grant funding request between £25,000 and £50,000,
- start by 1 September 2023,
- end by 29 February 2024,
- last between three and six months,
- carry out its project work in the UK, and
- intend to exploit the results from or in the UK.

See: [Competition overview - ISCF SSPP Collecting flexible plastic packaging waste at home - Innovation Funding Service \(apply-for-innovation-funding.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.innovation-funding.service.gov.uk/competition-overview-iscf-sspp-collecting-flexible-plastic-packaging-waste-at-home)

Spring Budget 2023 – GAD’s analysis

Experts at the Government Actuary’s Department (GAD) have focused on pensions taxation, pension fund investment and retirement planning in their analysis of the [Spring Budget](#).

The Chancellor set out plans to deliver on 3 of the Prime Minister’s 5 key priorities: to halve inflation, grow the economy and get debt falling.

Pensions tax reform

GAD’s latest Technical Bulletin examines the government’s announcements on pensions tax reform. The Spring Budget aimed to increase the labour supply and support people to move into employment. There is a particular emphasis on encouraging workers aged over 50 to extend their working lives.

Reforms were announced to the total tax-relieved pension savings an individual can make each year and over their lifetime. These affect the lifetime allowance (LTA), annual allowance (AA), and money purchase annual allowance (MPAA), as well as other tax limits.

Pension fund investment

GAD’s Technical Bulletin also looks at the government’s plans to support high growth sectors of the economy. This will include encouraging investment and smarter regulation.

The Spring Budget set out some initial measures, while the government will work closely with industry and regulators to bring forward a package of measures by the autumn.

Retirement planning

There will be more focus on retirement planning. People in their 40s, 50s and 60s will be encouraged to make more active planning in key areas of work, wellbeing, and money. In the Spring Budget 2023, the government announced it will work with employers and pension providers to encourage people to [undertake midlife MOTs](#).

See: [Spring Budget 2023: a GAD technical bulletin - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Religious festivals, holy days and observances

In the UK there is a wide range of different religions that both employers and employees may need to have some understanding of and how they may occasionally affect the workplace.

One of the holiest months of the Islamic calendar, Ramadan, which began on Wednesday 22 March and will end on the evening of Friday 21 April. This means Eid al-Fitr 2023 will be celebrated on Friday 21 April. As the commencement of Ramadan is confirmed by moon sighting, these dates may vary by one day.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community.

Many workplaces have employees from different religious and non-religious backgrounds.

Other examples include:

- Diwali (Hindu),
- Guru Nanak (Sikh),
- Lent (Christian),
- Pesach/Passover (Jewish), and
- Vesak (Buddhist).

Encouraging greater awareness and understanding of these backgrounds can be rewarding, particularly in terms of team building. It can also help to reduce the chance of misunderstanding resulting in complaints or disciplinary action.

See: [Acas guide on religion or belief discrimination | Acas](#)

See: [Religion or belief: a guide to the law | Equality and Human Rights Commission \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

Fast Growth 50 2023

Fast growth firms - which are normally defined as achieving 20% growth per annum - make up less than 1% of the UK business population but represent 50% of the total SME turnover output.

The UK Fast Growth 50 project will undertake a data-driven approach to identifying the fastest growing firms in each nation and region of the UK. It will research, develop, and publish lists that identify the 50 fastest growing companies in eight UK nations and regions, namely the East of England, London, the Midlands, North of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South of England, and Wales.

See: [The UK Fast Growth 50 | Ideas Forums Ltd \(freshbusinessstinking.com\)](#)

Plans to make UK an international technology superpower launched

The UK government has published a roadmap for reaching tech superpower status by 2030 through a new International Technology Strategy.

The Foreign Secretary and the Science, Innovation and Technology Secretary set out at the launch in London how the UK will build on the strength of our tech sector, which is already the largest in Europe and the third highest valued in the world after the USA and China.

The UK government will work closely with governments, academia, and industry to leverage the UK's strengths in technology through international partnerships with established and emerging science and technology powerhouse nations.

See: [Plans to make UK an international technology superpower launched - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-to-make-uk-an-international-technology-superpower-launched)

Latest HMRC tax webinars – for the self employed

Webinars from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) are intended to help the self-employed understand tax issues that affect them. Listed below are a number of upcoming live HMRC webinars.

The webinars are free and last around an hour.

[Business expenses for the self-employed](#)

Tue 11 Apr at 1:45pm

[Car expenses for the self-employed](#)

Wed 12 Apr at 1:45pm

[Residential property income for individuals - an introduction](#)

Tue 18 Apr at 11:45am

Tue 25 Apr at 9:45am

[Residential property income for individuals - expenses and deductions](#)

Thu 20 Apr at 1:45pm

Thu 27 Apr at 11:45am

[Record keeping for the self-employed](#)

Fri 21 Apr at 11:45am

[Capital Allowances for the self-employed](#)

Tue 25 Apr at 1:45pm

[How to apply the VAT reverse charge for construction services](#)

Thu 27 Apr at 9:45am

Latest HMRC tax webinars for employers

Webinars from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) are intended to help employers and businesses understand tax issues that affect them. Listed below are a number of upcoming live HMRC webinars.

[How to make sure you are paying the new minimum wage rates correctly](#)

Wed 29 Mar at 1pm

[Getting payroll information right](#)

Thu 23 Mar at 11:45am

Fri 19 May at 9:45am

[Employer filing obligations](#)

Mon 22 May at 11:45am

[Statutory Sick Pay](#)

Wed 12 Apr at 9:45am

Thu 4 May at 9:45am

[Statutory Maternity and Paternity Pay](#)

Mon 17 Apr at 11:45am

Wed 3 May at 11:45am

[Expenses and benefits for your employees - travel](#)

Wed 19 Apr at 9:45am

Thu 11 May at 11:45am

[Expenses and benefits for your employees – phones, internet and homeworking](#)

Fri 21 Apr at 9:45am

Wed 10 May at 9:45am

[Expenses and benefits for your employees - company cars, vans and fuel](#)

Mon 24 Apr at 9:45am

Tue 16 May at 11:45am

[Expenses and benefits for your employees - social functions and parties](#)

Wed 26 Apr at 11:45am

Wed 17 May at 9:45am

[Expenses and benefits for your employees - trivial benefits](#)

Fri 28 Apr at 9:45am

Wed 17 May at 11:45am

Social Enterprise NI: upcoming events



Social Enterprise NI is running a range of events for social enterprises or people interested in social entrepreneurship, including:

[Social Entrepreneurs Ireland](#) - Do you have an innovative idea to solve a social problem? Are you ambitious, entrepreneurial, and passionate about social change? Find out about The Ideas Academy and The Impact Programme, how to receive peer support and access to networking opportunities to help build your confidence and

network.

Date: Wednesday 19 April 2023

[Social Enterprise NI: Dragons Den Event](#) - Annual Dragons Den Event in partnership Newry & Mourne Enterprise Agency & Community Finance Ireland (CFI).

Date: Thursday 30 March 2023

[Maximise your CRM](#) - Maximise your organisation with a CRM and increase productivity and performance with ProAptivity.

Date: Tuesday 9 May 2023

See: [Events | Social Enterprise NI | Northern Ireland](#)

New limits for unfair dismissal and redundancy payments from 6 April 2023

The increased limits, announced by the Department for the Economy (DfE), relate to a range of employment rights including:

- statutory redundancy payments;
- the basic and compensatory awards for unfair dismissal;
- the limit on guarantee payments made when employees are not provided with work; and
- the minimum basic award for unfair dismissal in health and safety and certain other cases.

New rates from 6 April 2023

- The limit on the compensatory award for unfair dismissal rises from £94,063 to £105,915.
- The maximum amount of 'a week's pay' for the purpose of calculating redundancy payments rises from £594 to £669.

Legislation adjusting limits relating to a range of employment rights is made annually to reflect changes in the rate of inflation as measured by the Retail Prices Index (RPI). The figures are different to those in Great Britain.

See: [New limits for unfair dismissal and redundancy payments from 6 April 2023 \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](#)

Planning fees to increase from 6 April

The Department for Infrastructure has announced that an inflationary increase in planning fees will come into effect from Thursday 6 April 2023.



The increase of approximately 12.3% will be applied across all planning application categories and is necessary to assist councils and the Department to cover the cost of processing the applications. This is in line with the recent Public Accounts Committee's recommendation that the planning system needs to be made financially sustainable and is part of the plans to improve the planning service to support sustainable development across Northern Ireland.

When applied, for example, the planning application fee to extend a home will increase from £291 to £327; the fee to build a single house will rise from £868 to £975; whilst the fee for a developer building 50 houses will increase by £2,285.

See: [Planning fees to increase from 6 April | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/planning-fees-to-increase-from-6-april)

Economic output statistics

The economic output statistics were published by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) last week.

- Output in the services sector increased by 1.0% in real terms over the fourth quarter of 2022 and by 1.8% over the year.
- NI services output is at a series high.
- Production sector output decreased by 0.6% over the fourth quarter of 2022 and by 1.0% over the year.
- Retail output in NI saw an increase of 2.2% in Quarter 4 2022 and a decrease of 2.3% over the year.
- When comparing current output with the pre-Coronavirus pandemic levels seen in Quarter 4 2019, Northern Ireland production output is 4.5% above its pre-pandemic level and Northern Ireland service output is 6.2% above its pre-pandemic level. In contrast, Northern Ireland Retail output remains 4.5% below its pre-pandemic level seen in Quarter 4 2019.

See: [Economic output statistics | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/economic-output-statistics)

Scaling the Edge 10X programme

Funded by the Department for the Economy (DfE), Innovate UK, and Queen's University Belfast, Scaling the Edge 10X is an intensive, 8-week programme to support innovation driven businesses in Northern Ireland.

Encouraging rapid business strategy development, experts work closely with participants using Strategyzer's Lean methodology to define clear value propositions, winning business models, and use modern digital testing methodologies.

This approach helps gather rapid and accurate market feedback on the likely success of a business idea. It also de-risks the chances of market failure, increases speed to market and clearly identifies key target markets.

Who can apply?

NI-based SMEs and early-stage start-ups from all sectors can apply for a chance to:

- learn from seasoned innovation and commercialisation experts,
- adopt lean innovation concepts,
- get up to £5,000 for market testing and idea validation, and
- develop invincible business models and value propositions.

Applications from under-represented groups (including companies with female-led project teams and companies located outside of the greater Belfast area) are particularly welcome.

See: [Scaling the Edge](#)

Proof of Concept grant competition for North West founders

Applicants with innovative business ideas can apply for a grant of up to £10,000 to help kickstart their business. The grant is directed towards exploring the viability and commercial potential of innovative business ideas. Eligible activities for support include but are not limited to:

- concept/prototype development,
- market research,
- market validation,
- market testing activities,
- assessment of uniqueness of intellectual property, e.g. a patent search, and
- employment costs where a clear output will be delivered.

To be eligible, applicants must be resident or have a company registered in one of the following Northern Ireland postcode areas:

- BT47,

- BT48,
- BT49,
- BT81, or
- BT82.

Applicants must be a sole trader, partnership, or limited company. Applications from community interest companies and social enterprises will not be considered.

See: [PoC grant competition for North West founders \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk/poc-grant-competition-for-north-west-founders)

Call for entries to NI's 2023 Women in Tech Awards

The Women in Tech Awards will celebrate women from across Northern Ireland's rapidly growing tech industry who innovate, challenge, and embrace technology and serve as an opportunity to recognise inspirational individuals who are changing the sector for the better.

Categories include:

- Outstanding Woman in Tech,
- Digital Transformation Leader of the Year,
- Entrepreneur of the Year,
- Tech Team of the Year,
- C Level Woman of the Year,
- Green Impact Award,
- Male Advocate of the Year,
- Returner of the Year,
- Tech Advocate of the Year, and
- One to Watch in the Future.

The deadline for applications is Monday 3 April 2023.

See: [Women in Tech Awards | 2023 | Women in Business NI](https://womenintechawards.com/2023/)