

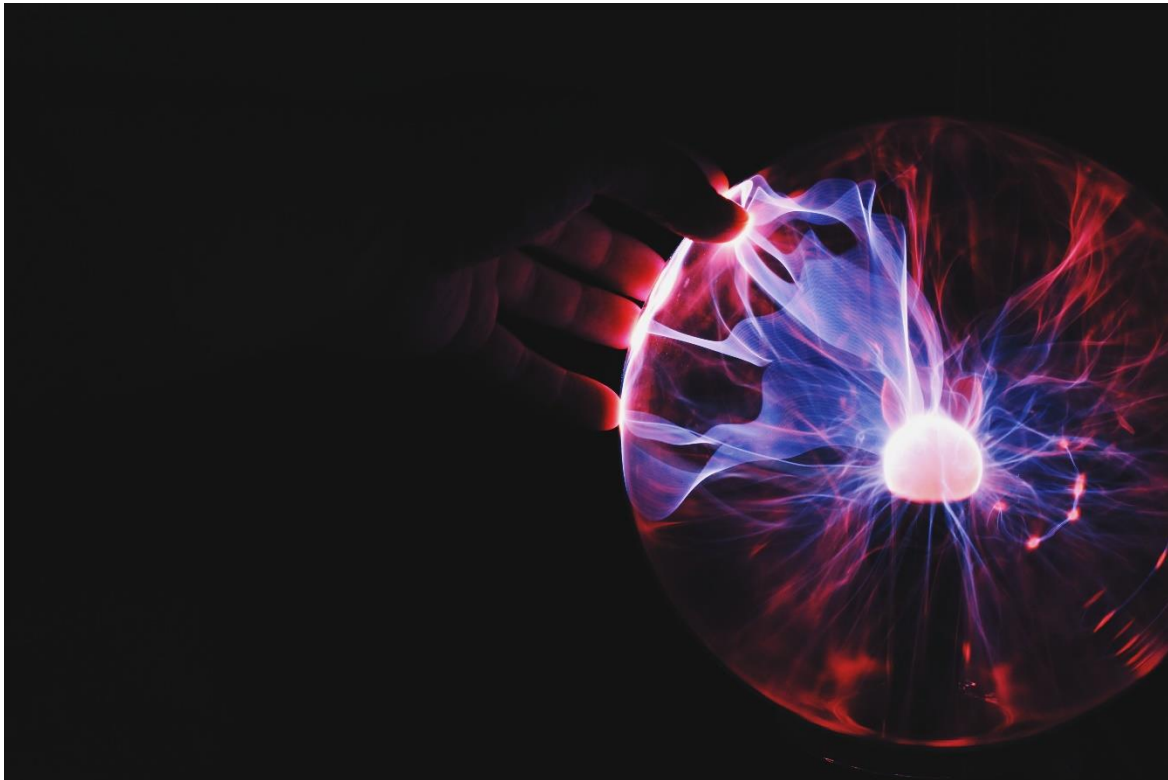
Written by 25 September 2023

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!

Creating value through innovation

Innovation has generally been recognised as essential for value creation, both for individual companies and for the UK economy as a whole. The development of new ideas, processes, and technologies and their flow across different sectors is a significant driver of economic growth and productivity. Recently, innovation has also been identified as crucial to the transition of the economy away from fossil fuels and carbon-intensive business activities.



There are many factors that affect whether and how businesses innovate, for example the availability of skills and capital and government policy measures such as tax incentives.

However, none are more important than the company's own culture, capabilities and internal systems – all of which are aspects of its governance. Unless companies are governed in a way that is conducive to innovation, they are unlikely to be in a position to take advantage of new opportunities.

Our most innovative clients share some key characteristics:

- They invest in activities with uncertain outcomes for which the likely commercial return is difficult to quantify and the risk of failure is higher than normal;
- They benefit from the availability of company-specific skills, which may be highly specialised;
- They have a culture which encourages flexibility, experimentation, and a high level of individual decision making; and
- They require a longer-term time investment horizon than many other kinds of business activity.

Research and Development (R & D) is the process of taking an idea and transforming it into a fully-fledged product or procedure. R & D tax credits are a government incentive designed to encourage innovation across multiple industries. This is an opportunity for you to reduce your corporation tax bill or receive a refund from HMRC based upon the number of working hours and relevant costs your business dedicates to Research & Development. Under the scheme, SME's can claim back up to 33% of the costs associated with R & D.

If you are looking for long term finance to support innovation then you will need to ensure your management accounts are up to date, you make available current detailed lists of debtors and creditors, and you might need up to date projections before an expert will consider your application.

Please talk to us about R & D tax credits and long-term finance, our independent experts have many years of experience and success in advising business across a wide range of sectors.

UK Manufacturing Climbs to 8th in World Rankings

The UK's manufacturing sector has climbed one place to eighth in the world rankings, overtaking France in the process, according to analysis of the latest official data published by Make UK.



The figures are contained in the latest annual 'Manufacturing – The Facts' which contains a wide variety of data about the contribution of manufacturing to the economy, including [exports](#), sectoral breakdown, how the UK compares to other nations and salary levels.

The data shows that in 2021 (the latest year for which global comparisons are available), UK manufacturing output was worth some \$272bn, compared to \$262bn for France, but behind Italy (\$314bn). To put this data in context, China is the largest

manufacturing nation worth \$4.9tn, followed by the United States \$2.5tn and Japan \$995bn. Germany, the fourth highest, remains the largest European manufacturing country at \$803bn.

According to Make UK, while the climb up the rankings is encouraging, it is strongly cautioned that it is only the third time since 2002 that the UK has ranked above France and cannot be attributed to any post Brexit bounce or other specific factor.

Separate data for 2022 from the ONS places UK manufacturing output at £224bn and Make UK believes that, if the Government commits to its call for a manufacturing target of 15% of GDP, (which Make UK estimates would add £142bn to the UK economy) then the sector could aim to match seventh-ranked Italy. With many competitor nations having their own versions of an Industrial Strategy, Make UK has also repeated its calls for a long-term, modern, and robust Strategy which could help turn the 15% ambition into a reality.

The analysis by Make UK also shows that, contrary to popular opinion, manufacturing jobs are better paid than both services and the economy overall. According to official data the average salary in manufacturing in 2022 was £36,488, which compares to £33,402 for the economy overall and £32,676 for services.

The North West remains the biggest manufacturing area of the UK, worth £28.2bn in output and employing 314,000 people. The sector accounts for almost 15% of North West economic output and 8% of regional employment.

See: [UK-Manufacturing-The-Facts-2023 | Make UK](#)

New fire safety legislation

From 1st October 2023 new fire safety legislation comes into effect. This will mean that many businesses and building owners need to check if and how this affects them to ensure they are complying with the regulations. The main changes are:

- All businesses will need to record a fire risk assessment and fire safety arrangements in full – regardless of the number of employees, and size or type of business;
- There are increased requirements for cooperation and coordination between Responsible Persons in multi occupied buildings or those where the occupier and owner are not the same person; and
- In residential buildings with two or more domestic premises, residents must be provided with information on the risks from fire and the fire safety measures provided to keep them safe.

See: [New fire safety guidance comes into force on 1 October 2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Start-up loans for new businesses

Start Up Loans are personal loans designed to help new businesses begin trading. They were created to support would-be business owners who have struggled to secure finance from traditional lenders.

To date, over 100,000 small firms have received loans, designed to help scale up activities. Delivered through the state-owned British Business Bank, the Start Up Loan scheme was developed and launched by the government in 2012 to help new and early-stage UK businesses without sufficient personal funds or support from friends and family to access affordable finance and mentoring support.



Through this combined access to finance, more small businesses can develop and reach their potential, delivering economic growth and a boost to local communities.

Start Up Loans differ from small-business bank loans in that they are personal loans for business purposes. They are also unsecured, which means you don't have to use your house or any other asset as security to receive the money.

Start Up Loans are provided by [the Start Up Loans Company](#), which is funded by the UK Government. You can borrow between £500 and £25,000, payable over one to five years, at a fixed interest rate of 6% per annum.

When you apply, you're paired with a dedicated business adviser, who supports you with completing your application form. If your application is successful, your loan comes with the option of 12 months of [free mentoring](#).

To qualify for a Start Up Loan, you must meet the following criteria:

- You are aged 18 or over;
- You live in the UK;
- You are starting a new business, or your business is less than three years old;
- Your business is/will be based in the UK; and
- You have the right to work in the UK.

See: [Start Up Loans - British Business Bank \(british-business-bank.co.uk\)](https://www.british-business-bank.co.uk/start-up-loans)

Small Business Saturday – “The Tour 2023”

The iconic Small Business Saturday UK Tour is back again this November.

The countdown to Small Business Saturday is officially on, as ‘The Tour’ returns to spotlight and supports small businesses all over the country.



Once again supported by [BT Skills for Tomorrow](#), 'The Tour' will call at twenty three different towns and cities across the UK throughout November, visiting small businesses and shining a light on their contribution to the UK economy and local communities.

It will also offer a jam-packed free daily programme of online events - including workshops, webinars, mentoring and inspiring entrepreneurial stories - open to all small businesses.

Kicking off on Monday 30th October, The Tour will travel across the UK for five weeks and make use of electric vehicles – including a state-of-the-art eco-friendly electric bike from Stirling Eco – to limit emissions and reflect the sustainable switches many small business owners are making as part of their vital role in the race to net zero.

See: [Small Business Saturday UK | Another year making a Big Difference!](#)

AI solutions to improve productivity in key sectors

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will invest up to £32 million in innovation projects to support the development and adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) solutions in the priority sectors of:

- Transport,
- Construction,
- Agriculture, and
- creative industries.

Your project can focus on one or more of the following:

- data driven decision making,
- automation of administrative tasks,
- project management optimization,
- supply chain optimisation and forecast models,
- waste management,
- intellectual property (IP) management, and
- design.

The competition is split into two strands, offering support to:

- single entities, and
- collaborative R&D projects.

For both strands, Innovate UK will fund industrial research projects and experimental development projects, as defined in the guidance on categories of research.

In terms of project sizes, the total grant funding request for single entities must be up to £100,000. If you're applying for collaborative R&D funding, your project's total grant funding request must be between £700,000 and £1.2 million.

This competition opens on Wednesday 27 September. The deadline for applications to both strands is 11am on Wednesday 8 November 2023.

Potential applicants can join Innovate UK's briefing event on Friday 29 September 2023 to find out more about eligibility, the application process, and securing funding for impactful AI initiatives.

See: [BridgeAI Briefing Event: Collaborative AI Solutions to improve productivity in key sectors - Innovate UK KTN \(ktn-uk.org\)](#)

Latest HMRC Employer webinars



Listed below are a number of live HMRC webinars that will help employers with payroll. The webinars are free and last around an hour.

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

Tue 31 Oct at 1:45pm

[Salaried hours work and the National Minimum Wage](#)

Tue 26 Sep at 1:00pm

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

Tue 10 Oct at 11:45am

[Expenses and benefits for your employees - if your employees have more than one workplace](#)

Thu 12 Oct at 9:45am

[Taxing employees' benefits and expenses through your payroll](#)

Mon 16 Oct at 11:45am

[Employer filing obligations](#)

Tue 17 Oct at 9:45am

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

Mon 23 Oct at 11:45am

Wed 1 Nov at 11:45am

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

Thu 2 Nov at 11:45am

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

Wed 8 Nov at 1:45pm

[Getting payroll information right](#)

Mon 27 Nov at 9:45am

Latest UK Export Academy webinars

Listed below are upcoming UK Export Academy webinars to help business owners and entrepreneurs across Northern Ireland boost their exporting skills and sell their goods and services to new markets worldwide.



The UK Export Academy is delivered in various stages depending on your skill level. These include essentials modules, masterclasses, market events and sector-specific masterclasses.

Essentials

Build your knowledge and confidence if you're relatively new to selling internationally or interested in learning how to start. These webinars offer a step-by-step guide to becoming an exporter.

[26 Sep - Understanding Export Controls](#)

[28 Sep - How to Sell your Services Overseas \(Part 1 of 2\)](#)

[29 Sep - How to Sell your Services Overseas \(Part 2 of 2\)](#)

Masterclasses

Already have a good understanding of the export basics? Attend these masterclasses to broaden your knowledge.

[27 Sep - Intellectual Property: How to resolve infringement disputes and ensure your online protection](#)

See: [Find UK Export Academy webinars in our Events Finder.](#)

Innovation Vouchers: September 2023 call

Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI) Innovation Vouchers allow you to access the skills and expertise of universities, colleges, or Institutes of Technology in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Typical projects supported through Innovation Vouchers include:

- helping to create or improve products, services or processes;
- access to specialist expertise on new materials; and
- tapping into research and scientific expertise.

You can use vouchers to resolve a specific business issue, particularly if you don't have the expertise, technology or facilities to deal with it.

See: [Innovation Vouchers: September 2023 call \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](#)

Antrim and Newtownabbey Job Fair employer opportunity

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is hosting a Job Fair supported by the Department for Communities. The event is taking place at the Antrim Forum from 11am to 3pm on Thursday 9 November 2023 and the closing date for applications is Friday 6 October 2023.

See: [Antrim and Newtownabbey Job Fair employer opportunity \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](#)

All Age Apprenticeships launched

The Department for the Economy (DfE) has announced the introduction of All Age Apprenticeships, which provide opportunities for more people to embark on a career of their choice.

DfE will now fully fund the off-the-job training element of an apprenticeship under the ApprenticeshipsNI programme, regardless of age or sector. This means more careers options for people of all ages, supporting inclusion and a culture of lifelong learning. All Age Apprenticeships will increase the labour pool available to employers across the economy and, in doing so, also increase opportunities for a greater range of people.

Employers are encouraged to consider how apprenticeships can be central to developing your future talent pipeline, which is essential to long-term growth.

See: [All Age Apprenticeships launched \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk)

Work Well Live Well programme for workplaces

Work Well Live Well is a free workplace health and wellbeing support programme funded by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and delivered by Northern Ireland Chest Heart & Stroke (NICHS).

The aim of Work Well Live Well is to help local workplaces to improve the health and wellbeing of their employees through personalised support.

The programme begins by supporting businesses to carry out a health and wellbeing survey in the workplace, analysing the results to determine health priorities and subsequently developing a bespoke, three-year health action plan.

See: [NICHS | Work Well Live Well](#)

Smart Manufacturing Accelerator programme

Led by Digital Catapult in collaboration with GEMX North West, the accelerator will provide an opportunity for manufacturers to learn about and experiment with emerging technologies, in a bid to improve efficiency and drive sustainable sectoral growth.

Up to 10 manufacturing companies will get a chance to participate in the programme to leverage the smart technologies, tools and techniques of Industry 4.0.

The accelerator will run during October and November 2023 and will consist of:

- four in-person workshops, including talks and demonstrations; and
- self-paced learning, remote support, and consultation.

This holistic approach will enable participants to investigate targeted and actionable solutions to their specific business challenges, drawing on cutting-edge technologies including:

- photonics,
- internet of things (IoT),
- future networks (including 5G),
- immersive technologies (augmented and virtual reality), and
- artificial intelligence and data science.

GEMX has worked alongside Digital Catapult to tailor the programme to suit the needs of companies from Northern Ireland.

Applications close on Sunday 24 September 2023.

See: [FutureScope Smart Nano Acceleration Programme \(digicatapult.org.uk\)](https://digicatapult.org.uk)

Landlord allowance date

Land & Property Services (LPS) is reminding landlords that their rate bill must be paid in full by Friday 29 September 2023 to secure an allowance on this year's rates.

If you are responsible for paying the rates on one or more properties that you rent out, you may be entitled to a 10 per cent allowance on the current year's rates for those properties.

The allowance only applies to rented properties. It does not apply to the rates due on a landlord's home address or any second home or personal holiday home that they own. This allowance is only available if the bill is paid in full by 29 September.

See: [Landlord allowance date approaching \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk/news/landlord-allowance-date-approaching)

Women at Work Conference 2023

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, in partnership with PricewaterhouseCoopers, is hosting the Women at Work Conference. The conference aims to give employers, managers, and HR practitioners:

- a useful overview of sex equality in the Northern Ireland economy in 2023;
- key learning from recent sex equality case law and settlements; and
- advice on how to stay on the right side of the law and promote good practice in relation to sex equality.

The conference will be held on Monday 16 October 2023, 10am to 12:30pm at PricewaterhouseCoopers, Belfast and the conference is free to attend.

See: [Women at Work Conference 2023 \(nibusinessinfo.co.uk\)](https://nibusinessinfo.co.uk/news/women-at-work-conference-2023)