

Written by 23 October 2023

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!

Inflation holds steady at 6.7%

UK inflation unexpectedly held stable in September at 6.7% as rising fuel costs offset the first monthly fall in food prices for two years to maintain pressure on households during the cost of living crisis.



The largest downward contributions to the monthly change came from food and non-alcoholic beverages, where prices fell on the month for the first time since September 2021, and furniture and household goods, where prices rose by less than they did a year ago.

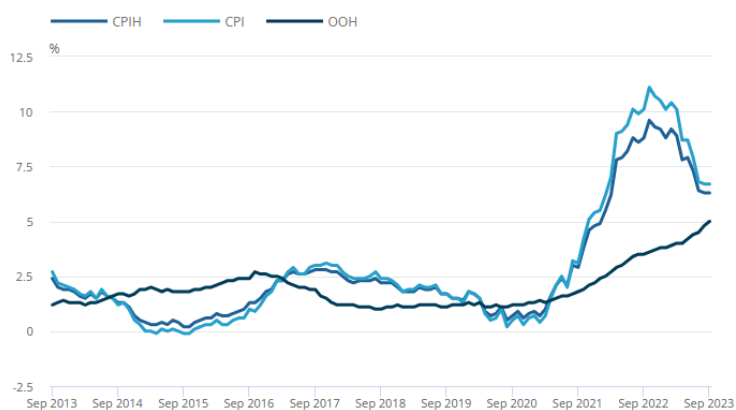
The Consumer Prices Index including owner-occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) rose by 6.3% in the 12 months to September 2023, the same rate as in August.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the annual inflation rate as measured by the consumer prices index (CPI) remained unchanged from August's reading, already raising questions by experts over the Bank of England's next decision on interest rates due in November. City economists had forecast a modest fall to 6.6%.

Occupiers' Housing Costs (OOH) increased by 5% in the twelve months to September 2023.

Figure 1: Annual CPIH and CPI inflation rates increased at the same rate as in August 2023

CPIH, OOH component and CPI annual inflation rates for the last 10 years, UK, September 2013 to September 2023



Source: Office for National Statistics.

So what actions can a business take now to remain resilient to any changes in the economy?

Here are a few suggestions to help you think about your business:

- Review your Budgets and set realistic and achievable targets for 2024.
- Review your debtors list and chase up overdue invoices (if appropriate).
- Assign responsibility to one individual for invoicing and collections.
- Put extra effort into making sure your relationships with your better customers are solid.
- Review and flow chart the main processes in your business (e.g. Sales processing, order fulfilment, shipping etc) and challenge the need for each step.
- Encourage team members to suggest ways to streamline and simplify processes (e.g. sit down and brainstorm about efficiencies and cost reduction).
- Review your staffing needs over the next few months.
- Review your list of products and services and eliminate those that are unprofitable or not core products/services.

Talk to us about your business, we have many clients who have changed the way they do things and some really innovative stories to share with you!

Do you have a side income?

If you do then you are probably aware of the requirement to disclose this on your Self-Assessment tax return. It is important to record any side income accurately and HMRC is going to be able to see exactly how much income you receive when using a digital platform from 1 January 2024.



HMRC have new powers which means that anyone in the UK who makes money selling goods or services online will have their incomes recorded on the digital platform that they use and HMRC will have direct access to this.

Digital platforms include apps and websites which facilitate the provision of goods and services such as the provision of taxi and private hire services, food delivery services, freelance work, and the letting of short-term accommodation.

HMRC will have access to the digital records of businesses such as Airbnb, Fiverr, Upwork, Uber, Deliveroo, Etsy and other online businesses. The change is part of a wider plan for HMRC to keep a more accurate eye on people adding to their existing income through side profits or freelancing and they will be checking tax returns to ensure the figures tally with the records from the platforms themselves.

The power to enable these regulations to be made was introduced under section 349 of the Finance (No.2) Act 2023.

From 1 January 2025, certain UK digital platforms will be required to report information to HMRC about the income of sellers of goods and services on their platform. HMRC will then exchange the information with the other participating tax authorities for the jurisdictions where the sellers are tax resident.

Under the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) rules, digital platforms in participating jurisdictions will be required to provide a copy of the information to the taxpayer to help them comply with their tax obligations.

The legislation, 'The Platform Operators (Due Diligence and Reporting Requirements) Regulations 2023', as issued in July 2023, can be seen here: [The Platform Operators \(Due Diligence and Reporting Requirements\) Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukreg/2023/1000/1) and the reporting rules for digital platforms can be seen here: [Reporting rules for digital platforms - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-rules-for-digital-platforms)

If you are not currently filing a tax return then you can check how to register for Self-Assessment here: [Check how to register for Self Assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-how-to-register-for-self-assessment)

Please talk to us if you have any questions about a side income and how to declare this on your tax return, we have considerable experience in helping our clients comply with the complex HMRC disclosure requirements.

Latest HMRC tax 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 - social functions and parties](#)

Wed 1 Nov at 11:45am

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

Tue 31 Oct at 1:45pm

[Statutory Maternity and Paternity Pay](#)

Fri 27 Oct at 9:45am

Tue 14 Nov at 11:45am

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

Thu 2 Nov at 1:45pm

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

Tue 7 Nov at 1:45pm

Wed 8 Nov at 1:45pm

[Statutory Sick Pay](#)

Thu 9 Nov at 11:45am

[Getting payroll information right](#)

Mon 27 Nov at 9:45am

Please talk to us if you have any payroll queries; we have extensive experience in helping our clients comply with HMRC regulations.

The new UK supply chain directory

The High Value Manufacturing (HVM) Catapult could make it easier for domestic manufacturers to connect with a new, free to use, UK Supply Chain Directory.

The platform harnesses the power of machine learning to provide up-to-date information on UK manufacturers. It combines publicly accessible data with web scraping to create the single most data-rich source of UK's manufacturers and suppliers. It also allows companies to put up their company profile to update and enrich their content.



HVM keep Companies House as a reference and it joins information coming from companies' websites, CreditSafe, and Dealroom.

This new tool is bringing together hundreds of thousands of businesses across UK industry in one online resource.

The tool is free to sign up for and access, and businesses can use it to:

- find new suppliers and customers; and
- map the UK's capability in their sector or area.

Users can search the directory according to company size, location, and specialist areas, with a wide range of other filters. Using data-driven classification, users can also find suppliers or supply chains based on manufacturing capability.

See: uksupplychaindirectory.com

Exporting - Rules of origin to South Korea extended

The UK has secured a two-year extension to rules which help British companies to access lower or zero tariffs when selling goods to South Korea.

The extension has been secured under the UK-South Korea free trade agreement and comes as welcome news for businesses who can continue to avoid the high tariffs imposed by South Korea on products entering the country.

It also comes ahead of the launch of negotiations on a new, modernised trade deal between the UK and South Korea which will cover new sectors like digital, expected before the end of the year.

South Korea is the 13th largest economy in the world and set to grow rapidly and its import market is expected to grow 45% by 2035. The UK's trade with Korea has more than doubled since the original FTA was negotiated.

Goods make up the majority of UK exports to South Korea, with £7.3 billion worth exported last year. A broad range of British manufacturing sectors are expected to benefit from the extension, including food and drink and automotive, which is the second largest British export to South Korea.

See: [British businesses celebrate as rules of origin to South Korea extended - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-businesses-celebrate-as-rules-of-origin-to-south-korea-extended)

Innovate UK Smart Grants: September 2023

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, is investing up to £25 million in the best game-changing and world-leading ideas.

Ideas need to be designed for swift, successful commercialisation and be genuinely new and novel, not just disruptive within their sector.

All proposals must be business-focused, with deliverable, realistic, adequately resourced plans to achieve return on investment, growth and market share following project completion.

Applications can come from any area of technology and be applied to any part of the economy, such as, but not exclusively:

- net-zero,
- the arts, and
- design and media.

To be in scope, your proposal must demonstrate (among other things):

- a game-changing, innovative, and disruptive idea that will lead to new products, processes or services;
- an idea that is significantly ahead of others in the field, set for rapid commercialisation; and
- clear potential to positively impact the UK's position, productivity and competitiveness within the global economy.

Innovate UK will fund feasibility projects, industrial research projects and experimental development projects, as defined in the [guidance on categories of research](#).

Your application must include at least one [micro, small or medium-sized enterprise](#) (SME) as the lead or a collaborative grant claiming partner.

Read the [full eligibility criteria and scope for Innovate UK Smart Grants](#).

The competition closes at 11am on Wednesday 17 January 2024.

New wine industry reforms

Following a [public consultation, Wine: reforms to retained EU law](#), the UK government has set out reforms for the wine sector which will begin in 2024.

Feedback from the wine industry has shown that certain regulations within the current 400-page rulebook have been stifling innovation and preventing the introduction of more efficient and sustainable practices.

Changes will include removing some packaging requirements – such as ending the mandatory requirement that certain sparkling wines must have foil caps and mushroom-shaped stoppers. This will reduce unnecessary waste and packaging costs for businesses. Outdated rules around bottle shapes will also be scrapped, freeing up producers to use different types.



The government will also remove the requirement for imported wines to have an importer address on the label - the Food Business Operator (FBO) responsible for ensuring all legal requirements are met will still need to be identified on the label, as is the standard requirement for food products. This will create more frictionless trade and reduce administrative burdens.

Further reforms will also give producers more freedom to use hybrid varieties of grapes. This will enable growers to choose the variety that works best for them and reduce vine loss due to disease or climate change, while also providing greater choice to consumers.

See: [New wine reforms to boost investment and ease burdens on industry - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-wine-reforms-to-boost-investment-and-ease-burdens-on-industry)

Mindset: Extended reality for digital mental health

Funding is available for immersive digital mental health therapeutic solutions.

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, will invest up to £4.5 million in innovation projects across the two strands of the Mindset XR competition.

The aim of this competition is to develop digital therapeutic extended reality (XR) solutions to provide improved delivery of mental health and wellbeing services.

This competition is split into two strands:

- [strand 1 - for feasibility studies](#)
- [strand 2 - for industrial research](#)

Your project must undertake feasibility studies or industrial research in the application of XR to provide mental health care solutions. Your proposal must specifically explore how digital therapeutic content can provide positive mental health applications and outcomes for young adults (aged 13 and above) or older adults. Your project must also demonstrate that the solution could be applied, trialled and ultimately adopted at scale, to provide a broad benefit to the UK mental health sector.

The deadline for applications to both strands of this competition is 11am on Wednesday 6 December 2023. To find out more about the competition, potential applicants are invited to [register for an online briefing and applicant workshop](#), taking place on Thursday 12 October 2023.

Business Gateway - Useful guides and articles about websites



Listed below are several guides and articles from Business Gateway about building and maintaining a website.

Designing and building a sustainable website

This article explains the things you'll need to think about if you're building a new website and want to reduce its emissions.

See: [Designing & building a sustainable website \(bgateway.com\)](https://www.businessgateway.com/designing-and-building-a-sustainable-website)

Popular web builder tools

Web builder software can be a good choice for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to create a professional website without the need for a developer. In this guide, Business Gateway lists the pros and cons of some of the most popular website builder software out there to help you decide which is right for your business.

See: [Popular Website Building Tools \(bgateway.com\)](https://www.businessgateway.com/popular-website-building-tools)

Build your own website

This guide covers the essential steps you need to consider when building your own website for your business.

Topics include:

- getting started - choosing web tools or developers;
- domain names;
- security certificates;
- what content to include;
- linking to social channels; and
- dos and don'ts to keep in mind.

See: [Build your Own Website \(bgateway.com\)](https://www.businessgateway.com/build-your-own-website)

Digital tools and techniques to identify consumer trends

In this guide, Business Gateway outlines some digital tools and techniques that can help you identify consumer trends in your sector.

Keeping an eye on customer trends can help inspire innovation, identify growth markets and emerging products and even spot untapped demand.

Topics include:

- how to find out what people are searching for;
- how to identify what's trending on social media;
- market research and reports; and
- reviews.

See: [Digital tools and techniques to identify consumer trends | Business Gateway | Business Gateway \(bgateway.com\)](#)

Business Gateway have also produced articles and guides on the following and other areas:

- An introduction to digital business models for your new business idea;
- Managing and optimising your Google My Business profile;
- Keeping your SEO and PPC up to date;
- Next steps once you have started selling online;
- Action plan for managing your new online platform; and
- Selecting the right platforms to run online classes.

See: [Online Resources | Business Gateway | Business Gateway \(bgateway.com\)](#)

Falkirk Council Digital Clinic

Digital Clinic is a free service that offers businesses in the Falkirk area one-to-one appointments with a digital specialist.

Topics covered include:

- Websites,
- digital marketing and social media,
- IT infrastructure, and
- Ecommerce.

See: [Falkirk - Local Support | Business Gateway | Business Gateway \(bgateway.com\)](#)

Cycling Infrastructure Fund - South of Scotland Enterprise

The Cycling Infrastructure Fund provides grants to help tourism businesses, social enterprises and community groups that own visitor-facing assets to invest in cycling infrastructure.

This will help improve facilities for cyclists using the Kirkpatrick Coast to Coast route or riding at the 7Stanes trail centres.



The minimum grant amount is £3,000 and the maximum is £25,000. Grants can cover up to 100% of your total eligible project costs.

The funding can be used for the purchase and installation of cycling infrastructure at premises owned by the applicant.

Examples of eligible infrastructure include:

- secure bike storage;
- bike racks;
- external electrical sockets to be used as charging facilities by cycle tourers;
- secure bike locks for customer use;
- a bike wash;
- drying equipment for drying clothes, rucksacks, panniers, and footwear;
- clothes washing facilities for visitors; and
- bike maintenance facilities, such as repair stations.

The list is not exhaustive - all grant assistance from South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) is discretionary.

See: [South of Scotland Cycling Infrastructure Fund \(southofscotlandenterprise.com\)](https://southofscotlandenterprise.com)