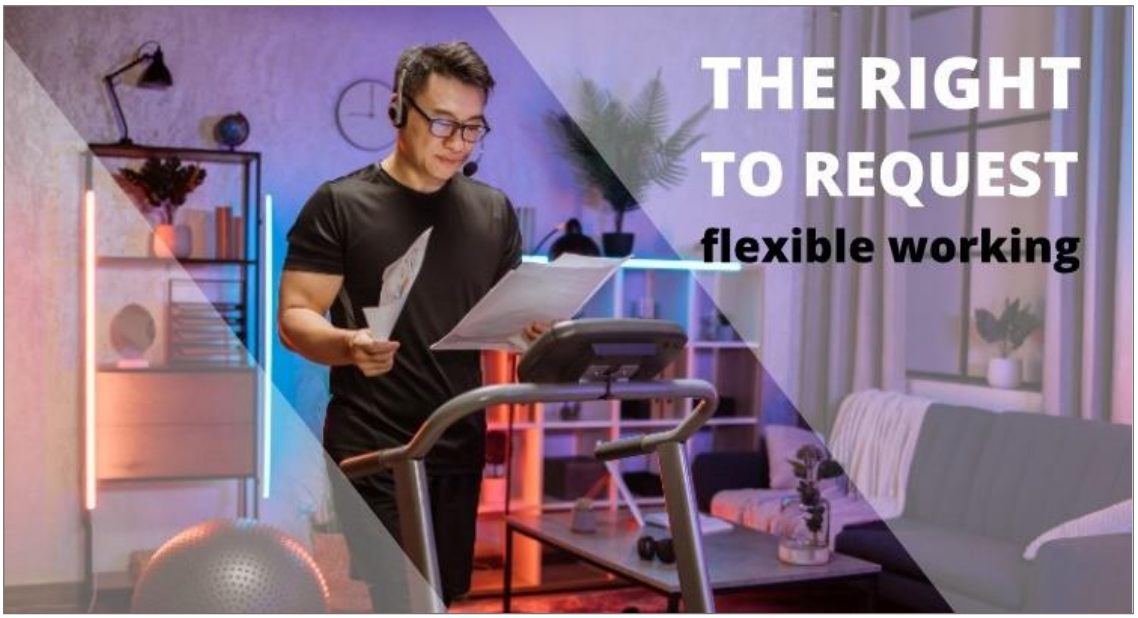
Written 20 November 2023

BUSINESS NEWS - ENGLAND

Welcome to our round up of the latest business news for our clients. Please do contact Cognitor Accountancy if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

Flexible working will become the "default" for employees



Following a recent UK Government consultation and Royal Assent of the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023, flexible working will become the default for millions of employees who will be able to request flexible working from day one of their employment in 2024. Flexible working doesn't just mean a combination of working from home and in the office – it can mean employees making use of job-sharing, flexitime, and working compressed, annualised, or staggered hours.

The UK government states that the new measures will give employees greater access to flexibility over where, when, and how they work, and the government hopes it will lead to happier, more productive staff. Flexible working has been found to help employees balance their work and home life, especially supporting those who have commitments or responsibilities such as caring for children or vulnerable people.

Some experts have argued the legislation leaves employers open to grievances if they do not follow proper procedures and that this is yet another layer of administration. All employers are advised to take steps to prepare an updated flexible-working policy which can be released from the date the changes come into force.

The right to request flexible working legislation currently supports all employees with 26 weeks continuous service to make applications to change their work location, working hours and/or working pattern.

The new legislation means the following measures are adopted:

- make the right to request flexible working a day one right;
- introduce a new requirement for employees to consult with the employee when they intend to reject their flexible working request;
- allow 2 statutory requests in any 12-month period (rather than the current one);
- require a decision period of 2 months in respect of a statutory flexible working request (rather than the current three); and
- remove the existing requirement that the employee must explain what effect, if any, the change applied for would have on the employer and how that effect might be dealt with.

See: Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill 2022-23: Progress of the Bill - House of Commons Library (parliament.uk)

Inflation is down but managing your cash flow is essential right now!



UK inflation fell to 4.6% in October, due mainly to a fall in energy prices, but in general, supplier prices remain volatile. High interest rates and a stagnant economy mean managing your business's cash and understanding the flow are now vital tools in maintaining resilience and being able to adopt flexible strategies for success.

Cash flows are a reflection of all the cash that is flowing in and out of a business. Owners can look at the direction of the cash flows for insights about the health of specific products or services and overall market patterns.

Some types of business are more likely to run into cash flow problems, while other types appear to be more resilient. If you are a business owner, you might be wondering which category your business falls into. No matter how inventive or simple your business model is, you can still have problems with cash flow. Here are our thoughts on managing the flow of cash in your business:

The first stage of understanding and predicting how funds flow is to perform a health check on your accounts. Look at your latest profit and loss statement and check that your income is sufficient to cover your expenses. If your profit is falling behind your expenses and cash flow is slowing down, you might need to take action. Prepare a cash flow statement so you know where the money goes.

Next, create a yearly budget, look where cash could become tight, and identify months where you can save to cover off the quieter times. Look at those quieter months and think about flexible work scheduling, new products or services, or other activities to tide you over.

Finally make sure you collect your money from those who owe you quickly. Reward customer loyalty by offering early bird discounts, set credit limits and payment terms to ensure customers follow the rules. If you take on new customers make credit checks. Penalise late payers and request up front deposits or payment.

Please talk to us about preparing a cash flow statement and annual budget so that you can work on your business for maximum success!

Volunteering: guidance for employers on how to manage the risks

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has guidance on how to manage the risks to volunteers.



The guidance explains how health and safety law applies to volunteering.

There is also information on:

- when to report incidents involving volunteers; and
- including volunteers in your risk assessments.

The pages provide some specific advice for volunteers who manage non-domestic premises such as village and community halls, as well as guidance on charity retail and fundraising.

See: Volunteering: How to manage the risks - HSE

Latest HMRC tax webinars

Listed below are a number of live HMRC webinars that will give the self-employed an understanding of key taxes that affect them and also help employers with payroll. The webinars are free and last around an hour.

Webinars for the self-employed

Capital expenditure and revenue repairs (IFP1)
Tue 28 Nov at 1:45pm

Cash basis and property income allowance (IFP3)
Thu 30 Nov at 11:45am

VAT - the basics and the VAT return
Tue 12 Dec at 9:45am

Finance costs and travel expenses (IFP2)
Wed 29 Nov at 9:45am

VAT accounting schemes
Fri 1 Dec at 1:45pm
Mon 18 Dec at 9:45am

Car expenses for the self-employed
Wed 13 Dec at 9:45am

Capital allowances and vehicles
Wed 13 Dec at 11:45am

Business expenses for the self-employed
Thu 14 Dec at 11:45am

Employer webinars

Company directors - payroll and you
Tue 21 Nov at 1:45pm

Getting payroll information right
Mon 27 Nov at 9:45am

Expenses and benefits for your employees - travel
Tue 5 Dec at 11:45am

Expenses and benefits for your employees - company cars, vans, and fuel
Thu 7 Dec at 9:45am

Employer filing obligations
Wed 13 Dec at 1:45pm

Taxing employees' benefits and expenses through your payroll
Thu 14 Dec at 9:45am

Find a grant service

Find a grant is a UK government service that allows businesses to search all UK government-funded grants. Businesses can use the website to browse or search for available grants, check if they are eligible and find out how to apply for each grant.

Anyone can use the UK government Find a grant service to find and apply for grant funding. Each funding opportunity has its own eligibility criteria and scope. There is no cost to use this service and you can also sign up to get updates about new grants.

See: Home - Find a grant (find-government-grants.service.gov.uk)

UK and Florida sign pact to boost trade



The UK and Florida sign the 7th UK-US state level Memorandum of Understanding to boost trade and investment. Business and Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to boost trade and investment between the UK and Florida.

Florida has a GDP of over £1.1tn – the fourth biggest of any US state and roughly the same size as Spain. The MoU is designed to help make it quicker, easier, and cheaper for UK and Florida firms to do business and is targeted at sectors in which the UK and Florida have particular strengths such as space, fintech, AI, and legal services.

The MoU is the first the UK has signed which focuses on the space sector. Florida is home to the NASA Kennedy Space Centre and has world-leading capabilities in launch infrastructure, manufacturing, and satellite development, presenting huge opportunities for the UK's growing space industry – now with an income worth over £17.5 billion and employing nearly 50,000 people.

The UK now has MoUs with seven US states – Indiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah, Washington, and Florida – with a combined\AQ GDP of £3.3tn, just under the GDP of Germany. The UK is also actively engaging with further states including Texas, California, Colorado, and Illinois.

See: UK and Florida sign pact to boost trade - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

USA Export toolkit for smaller businesses

The Department for Business and Trade has launched a toolkit to help small businesses export to the USA.

The toolkit designed for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) looking to trade between the two countries. It helps SMEs find support in the UK from the Department for Business and Trade and other sources to help their business grow and export, particularly to the USA.

See: Export advice for SMEs doing business in the UK and overseas - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)



Heat Pump Ready Programme Stream 2 Wave 2 competition

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) Heat Pump Ready (HPR) Programme Stream 2 Wave 2 competition will support applied research and development projects, focused on driving down the lifetime costs of domestic heat pump deployment, and improving the domestic consumer experience and acceptability of heat pumps through technology, tools, business model, and process innovation.

It aims to develop solutions that:

- improve the ease of heat pump deployment in homes that are 'complex to decarbonise' by addressing physical, material, locational, technological, regulatory, or social challenges;
- develop innovative solutions to enable heat pumps to be deployed in 'distress purchase' situations when a new home heating system is required urgently;
- improve performance and/or reduce costs of domestic heat pumps with low global warming potential (GWP) refrigerants (below 150 GWP), while ensuring safety; and
- reduce the lifetime costs or improve the overall lifetime performance of domestic heat pumps or improve the domestic consumer experience of using and living with a heat pump.



The HPR Programme is funding the development of technology and tools which are expected to be nearing commercialisation by the end of their projects. The solutions supported in Stream 2 Wave 2 must be:

- hardware at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 5/6/7 at the start of a funded project, with the expectation that technology developed through the competition projects will reach TRL 7/8/9 by the end of the project; and
- software at Discovery/Alpha phases at the start of the project but should not be at Beta or Live phase - software is expected to reach Live phase by project completion.

Up to £10 million of grant funding is available in total through the competition. The maximum possible grant funding for a single project is £1.5 million and successful project teams will be required to provide private sector funding alongside the grant funding provided from the HPR Programme.

Applications are open until Monday 8 January 2024.

See: Apply for Heat Pump Ready Programme: Stream 2 – Wave 2 opportunities - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Creative Catalyst Challenge Fund

Creative UK is accepting applications for the Creative Catalyst Challenge Fund, offering businesses an opportunity to access grant funding of up to £250,000.

Supported by Innovate UK, this fund is designed to empower creative minds to channel their innovation towards addressing specific climate challenges within the industry.

The focus of this grant is to support research and development that:

- combats waste;
- promotes decarbonisation; and
- minimizes the creative industry's impact on the environment.

The deadline for applications is midday, Monday 27 November 2023.

See: Creative Catalyst Challenge Fund - Creative UK (wearecreative.uk)

Call for input on new trade negotiations with Turkey

The Department for Business and Trade has launched a call for input on an updated free trade agreement (FTA) with Turkey.

The deal would replace the existing UK-Turkey FTA, which was rolled over from when the UK left the European Union but doesn't cover key areas of the UK economy like services, digital, and data.

The consultation seeks input on:

- what you think about the UK's current trading arrangements with Turkey;
- where the UK could make changes or improvements; and
- where you are facing challenges or constraints when attempting to trade with Turkey.

This is an opportunity for businesses, organisations and individuals to help shape and refine the UK's negotiating aims ahead of the talks.

The UK government will use this information to help inform their approach for starting negotiations on a new FTA with Turkey in the future. This call closes at 11:45pm on 5 January 2024.

See: Trade with Turkey: call for input - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

British goods remain eligible for reduced or zero tariffs to Mexico



The UK has secured an extension to arrangements that were due to expire, helping British manufacturers access lower or zero tariffs when selling their products to Mexico.

The arrangement will come into effect from 1 January 2024 and will remain in place until a new UK-Mexico Free Trade Agreement enters into force.

The deal will provide welcome certainty for UK businesses, helping them to continue avoiding high tariffs imposed by Mexico and maintain their competitive edge in the market. The announcement is particularly welcome news for the automotive and food and drink sectors, with road vehicles accounting for almost £300 million in exports to Mexico, almost 20% of all goods exported.

Mexico is the 14th largest economy in the world and second largest in Latin America, and its demand for imports is forecast to grow by 42% between 2021 and 2035 as its economy continues to grow. With a population of over 130 million people, its market is larger than France and Italy combined.

See: British businesses avoid tariff cliff edge with Mexico - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Innovate UK agri-food accelerator



Innovate UK is looking for UK-based innovators from underrepresented groups or who have struggled to access funding in the past and who would want to fast-track their agri-food innovation ideas.

This opportunity is open to people who identify with a community considered underrepresented by Innovate UK in the innovation ecosystem. This includes:

- disabled, including, and not limited to mental health conditions, learning disabilities, neurodiversity, and physical disabilities;
- ethnic minority groups;
- LGBTQIA+;
- non-binary and all marginalised genders;
- people with primary caring responsibilities;
- people from low socioeconomic backgrounds;
- people from non-traditional educational routes into innovation;
- women; and
- younger (aged 18-30) and older (aged 60+) people.

A cohort of up to ten participants will be selected to take part in six training sessions. Some sessions will run in person and online, and others online only, so everyone can access them.

The training sessions will help you:

- understand the agri-food innovation sector better;
- learn how to get support when applying for funding through Innovate UK and beyond;
- improve your access to partners and markets; and
- expand your business.

Each session will be facilitated by a member of the Innovate UK Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN) agri-food team, and/or a member of the Innovate UK Transforming Food Production team.

Some topics covered during the training sessions will be tailored to the needs of the cohort. The programme will be finalised when participants have been selected.

The deadline for applications is 24 November 2023.

See: Innovate UK AgriFood Accelerator - Innovate UK KTN (ktn-uk.org)

New programme helps British SMEs lead the way on net zero air travel



Cutting-edge British aerospace companies are set to benefit from a new multi-million pound SME Programme that will secure high-skilled jobs and help the UK lead the way on greener air travel.

The Aerospace Technology Institute (ATI) SME Programme will offer UK-based small and medium-sized firms the chance to bid for a share of £10 million total funding per year towards their innovative research projects.

The Programme was announced by Industry Minister Nusrat Ghani at the ATI's 2023 Conference in Birmingham. It will be delivered in partnership with the ATI and Innovate UK.

The new Programme will open to applications in February 2024 and aims to give SMEs the best opportunities possible to apply for funding to develop innovative technologies supporting the Government's commitment to Jet Zero.

This is the plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions for commercial aircraft by 2050, while also keeping the UK's aerospace industry competitive in the sustainable design, manufacture, assembly and operation of future aircraft.

The Programme will allow SMEs in the UK aerospace sector to bid for grants of up to £1.5 million each, helping to boost high-skilled jobs in the industry across the UK.

It also builds on the Government's commitment to backing UK aerospace R&D to succeed, as demonstrated by the ATI Programme, for which government provided £685 million in 2022.

Support for organisations engaging with the SME Programme will be delivered by the ATI Hub. This will include sessions with ATI technologists, themed innovation workshops and guidance on preparing for a pitch-panel presentation.

The ATI Hub can also generate new connections between start-ups, SMEs, bigger and tier one organisations which could become consortia applications to the SME Programme.

See: [New multi-million pound Programme helps British SMEs lead the way on net zero air travel - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)]

BAE Systems sees a £10 billion rise in orders as global conflict continues

BAE Systems has reported a £10bn rise in orders since the end of June. The defence giant, which has bases across the UK, said in its latest trading update it is on track for a double-digit jump in annual earnings as countries increase military spending amid the conflict in Gaza and Russia's war in Ukraine.

The group, upped its earnings guidance in August after orders soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, forecasting earnings per share would grow by 10% to 12% in 2023 and that sales would rise by between 5% and 7%.

See: BAE Systems sees a £10 billion rise in orders as global conflict continues - Business Live (business-live.co.uk)

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