

PROSPERO

Accountancy to help grow your business

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BUSINESS NEWS SCOTLAND

Welcome to our round-up of the latest business news for our clients.

Please get in touch with us if you want to talk about how these updates affect your business. We are here to support you!

TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR BUSINESS

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine creating additional fiscal uncertainty in the UK and around the globe, economic growth slowed in February and, according to the Office for National Statistics, the UK economy is now only 1.5% above the pre-pandemic level in February 2020.

The pandemic put many businesses off-track in the short and medium-term, but our most successful clients think long term and have a clear plan to get to where they want to be.

It is easier to get to your destination with a plan. We all know this simple truth. If you are driving from A to B, it helps to know where B is and the directions you need to take.

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If you have a vision of what you want your business to look like when it is 'complete', then you are in a position to drive your business towards the vision and you can monitor how you are doing as you go along. If you do not have a strategic plan then you could get blown around like flotsam in the sea, 'this way and that way without any control.

If we agree it is hard to accomplish anything without a plan, let's start thinking about putting one in place. A strategic plan looks at all the things a business could do and narrows it down to the things it is actually good at doing. A strategic plan also helps you determine where to spend time, resources and money. So how do you do a strategic plan?

1. Take time to review your own personal objectives – the business is there to provide you with what you want from life, do not forget this.
2. Look at where you are now, your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Take external advice so you have a clear understanding of your position in the marketplace, the competition, your systems and the way you do things and what you are good at and what you are not.
3. Focus on where you want to be in (say) 5 years, what you want your business to look like when it is "complete" or running profitably and successfully. Then you can determine your priorities – the big issues that you need to focus on. This is the strategic plan!
4. Write down your vision and define what you must achieve and the actions you need to take. Monitor how you are doing towards your vision each month, what actions have been completed and what needs to be done to keep you moving towards your plan. grow and succeed!

5. Allocate responsibility for taking the actions.
6. Monitor, review and adjust your regular activities to keep you on track with your plan.

We have some useful tools and checklists to help you analyse where you are now, set a strategy, agree actions and monitor them. Please talk to us about how we can help you achieve your goals – we have helped many other businesses grow and succeed!

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT FOR ENERGY TECHNOLOGIES OF THE FUTURE

The government has launched a wide-ranging £375 million package of support for innovative energy technologies with the aim of powering British homes and businesses for decades to come and strengthening the nation's energy security.

This includes £240 million to support the production of hydrogen as clean, low-cost energy technology, £2.5 million of funding to develop next-generation nuclear technology and a further £5 million towards research into carbon capture.

The investment will support the research, development and deployment of these cutting-edge technologies and give the country the energy independence it needs, reducing reliance on expensive fossil fuels. From nuclear reactors to hydrogen for industry, power, transport and potentially heating, the government is changing the way the UK gets its energy across a range of technologies.

The British energy security strategy sets out how Great Britain will accelerate the deployment of wind, new nuclear, solar and hydrogen, whilst supporting the production of domestic oil and gas in the nearer term – which could see 95% of electricity being low carbon by 2030.

See: [Government unveils investment for energy technologies of the future - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-investment-for-energy-technologies-of-the-future).

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UK SEAFOOD FUND: INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME

The UK Seafood Fund Infrastructure Scheme is now open for applications from those involved in fishing, processing or aquaculture, subject to certain criteria being met.

Successful applicants will be awarded a minimum of £250,000 and a maximum of £5 million to invest in capability, renewable energy and social and economic welfare.

Round one will be open for applications until 24 May 2022.

Find out more about the Scheme and how to apply:

[Apply for the UK Seafood Fund: Infrastructure Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGES ORGANISATIONS TO BE VIGILANT OF CYBER THREATS

Businesses and charities are being urged to strengthen their cyber security practices as new figures show the frequency of cyber-attacks is increasing.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has issued a [note](#) declaring it is not aware of any current specific cyber threats to UK organisations in relation to events around Ukraine but is encouraging organisations to follow [simple steps in its guidance](#) to reduce the risk of falling victim to an attack.

Small businesses should adopt the [Cyber Essentials](#) scheme to protect against the most common cyber threats such as phishing attacks and use the [Small Business Guide](#) to improve cyber security practices.

Larger organisations should use the [Board Toolkit](#) to get company executives to act on cyber resilience and charities should follow the [Small Charity Guide](#) to boost cyber security operations.

HMRC REMINDS BUSINESSES TO GET READY TO MOVE TO CUSTOMS IT PLATFORM OVER THE SUMMER

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is writing to businesses to tell them about a change to the UK's customs systems. The letter includes information about the work underway to move to a single UK customs platform - the Customs Declaration Service (CDS) - and outlines what businesses need to do to prepare for the change, and what help and guidance is available to support them through the process. TCDS will become the UK's single customs platform after 31 March 2023, replacing the Customs Handling Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system. Ahead of the complete closure, the import declaration function will be withdrawn on 30 September this year.

To help businesses and agents prepare for the CDS, HMRC has published some [key steps traders can follow](#).

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ALLOW UP TO TEN WEEKS TO APPLY FOR A BRITISH PASSPORT

People are being urged not to leave their application for a British passport to the last minute, with demand at an all-time high. Since April 2021, HM Passport Office has been advising people to allow up to ten weeks when applying for their passport. This remains the case.

Due to COVID-19, HM Passport Office saw a significant drop in the number of people applying for passports, with over 5 million people delaying their applications throughout 2020 and 2021.

But with international travel returning to normal, more and more people are applying for a new passport.

While there are urgent services for people who need their passports more quickly, appointment availability is limited. People are therefore strongly advised to apply early and help ensure that their business or holiday plans go smoothly.

See: [Allow up to ten weeks to apply for a British passport - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/allow-up-to-ten-weeks-to-apply-for-a-british-passport)

AGREEMENT WITH MAJOR DEVELOPERS TO FUND BUILDING SAFETY REPAIRS IN TALL BUILDINGS

The government has revealed a wide-ranging agreement that will see industry contribute £5 billion to address the building safety scandal.

Under the new agreement, which will become legally enforceable, over 35 of the UK's biggest homebuilders have pledged to fix all buildings 11 metres and higher that they have played a role in developing in the last 30 years.

For the companies yet to make the pledge, the Secretary of State has also confirmed that there is little time left for them to sign up and that those who continue to refuse will face consequences if they fail to do so.

The new scheme will be funded through an extension to the Building Safety Levy that will be chargeable on all new residential buildings in England. This is expected to raise up to an additional estimated £3 billion over ten years from developers and ensure no leaseholder in medium-rise buildings faces crippling bills, even when their developer cannot be traced.

New proposed laws, announced in February under the Building Safety Bill, will ensure qualifying leaseholders are protected from the costs of historical building safety defects, including total protection against cladding costs.

See: [Agreement with major developers to fund building safety repairs - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/agreement-with-major-developers-to-fund-building-safety-repairs)

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GOVERNMENT COMPETITION FOR RAIL INNOVATION

The government has made £7.6 million available for cutting-edge technology to help transform rail travel.

In partnership with Innovate UK, this year's competition will award up to £7.6 million to projects creating cutting-edge ideas that are striving towards transforming rail travel for passengers and decarbonising the network.

The competition officially opens to applicants on 20 April 2022 and closes on 8 June 2022, with bids welcome from organisations of all sizes for projects creating a greener, more cost-effective and passenger-focused railway. The year's competition is focusing on technologies that improve the industry's cost efficiency and network performance to support a more reliable railway for passengers and improve rail freight.

See: [Government pledges £7.6 million for rail innovation - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-pledges-7-6-million-for-rail-innovation)

NATIONAL INSURANCE RELIEF WHEN HIRING VETERANS

Under a new scheme, businesses hiring military veterans can save thousands of pounds in employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs). From 6 April 2022, employers do not have to pay NICs for veterans in their first year of civilian employment after leaving the armed forces.

Businesses are also able to claim this relief retrospectively for any qualifying employees whom they employed in the last 12 months.

The relief is available to all employers of veterans, regardless of when the veteran left the regular armed forces, providing that they have not been employed in a civilian capacity since leaving service. The relief will be available to all qualifying veterans each time they leave HM Armed Forces.

See: [Government urges businesses to take advantage of National Insurance relief when hiring veterans - GOV.UK \(\[www.gov.uk\]\(http://www.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-urges-businesses-to-take-advantage-of-national-insurance-relief-when-hiring-veterans)

HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE (HSE) SAFETY CLIMATE TOOL

The HSE's Safety Climate Tool has been carefully designed by scientists to assess the attitudes of individuals within an organisation towards health and safety issues.

The Safety Climate Tool delivers an objective measure of an organisation's safety culture - the 'way things are done in an organisation when it comes to health and safety. This is a significant starting point for any organisation to continually improve and raise standards.

Businesses can use a simple online questionnaire to explore employees' attitudes and perceptions in key areas of health and safety while guaranteeing anonymity.

Once the survey has been completed, it generates a comprehensive report and provides guidance that will help improve the organisation's safety culture.

See: [Safety Climate Tool \(SCT\) \(\[hse.gov.uk\]\(http://hse.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/safetyclimate/)

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AMAZON LAUNCHPAD INNOVATION AWARDS

Small to medium-sized start-ups selling an innovative physical product to consumers, can apply for the Amazon Launchpad Innovation Awards for a chance to win €100,000 and more.

Eligible businesses are:

- Registered in an EEA (European Economic Area) country, the UK or Switzerland.
- Selling a physical product to consumers, not to other businesses.
- The brand owner of the product entered.
- Small or medium-sized - employing fewer than 250 employees and having a total annual turnover of less than €50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding €43 million at the time of entry.

The closing date to apply is 29 May 2022.

Their judging panel will pick one overall winner and the top twenty highly commended brands as finalists. The best start-up will also be announced from each of the countries with the most entries.

See: [Amazon Launchpad Innovation Awards](#)

DIGITAL GROWTH GRANT

The government has launched a new competition to boost the growth of innovative tech start-ups and scale-ups across the country.

The £12.09 million Digital Growth Grant will focus on opening up access to skills training and advice and providing support services to the digital and tech sector over two years.

A key focus of the funding will be improving regional support networks for start-ups, which the government hopes will spread the benefits of the country's world-leading tech industry across the UK. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) will run the competition this summer and the successful bidder will receive funding from 1 April 2023.

See: [Digital Growth Grant - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

BUSINESS RATES RELIEF

The Scottish Government has introduced business rates relief to help owners of non-domestic properties, including businesses, deal with the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19).

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From April 2022:

- the Basic Property Rate (poundage) changed from 49 pence to 49.8 pence
- 50% relief for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors is available for the first three months of 2022-23, capped at £27,500 per ratepayer
- the Business Growth Accelerator relief covers increases in rateable value due to the installation of solar panels
- Enterprise Areas Relief is continued until 31 March 2023
- transitional relief is continued until 31 March 2023 for all but the largest hospitality properties in Scotland, and Aberdeen City/Aberdeenshire offices

Businesses can also [apply for the Small Business Bonus Scheme](#) through their local authority by completing a separate application form. For payment deferral, businesses need to contact their local authority.

For water bills support, businesses should contact their water services supplier directly.

See: [Help for non-domestic ratepayers in Scotland during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - mygov.scot](#)

CORONAVIRUS ASYMPTOMATIC WORKPLACE TESTING IN SCOTLAND

From 18 April 2022, the Scottish Government are no longer asking the general public to test themselves regularly if they are asymptomatic. This includes asymptomatic testing in all workplaces besides Health and Social Care workplaces and prisons.

Staff will no longer be advised to test twice weekly. No new orders or applications are being accepted for the programme.

Business are able to set up their own private testing arrangements should they wish to do so. More information can be found in the [guidance for voluntary testing programmes](#).

See: [Vaccination and testing - Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer businesses and workplaces - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#).

VIBES SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT BUSINESS AWARDS

VIBES rewards businesses whose management, processes and products have reduced their impact on the environment and created positive economic and social outcomes.

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There are 12 categories:

- Adapting Scotland
- Circular Scotland
- Engaging Scotland
- Energy Transition Scotland
- Hydro Nation Scotland
- Innovating Scotland
- Leadership Scotland
- Moving Scotland
- Nature Rich Scotland
- Partnership Scotland
- Product/Service Scotland
- Small Business Scotland

Businesses can apply for more than one category.

Application process:

The application process is split into 2 stages:

Stage 1 – Businesses apply through the VIBES online application portal. The application form is designed to draw out information particular to each award category and to enable the judging panel to assess your application.

Stage 2 - Applications scoring highest in Stage 1 will be selected as finalists and will receive a judging site visit.

See: [Home](#) | [VIBES](#) | [Scottish Environment Business Awards](#)

INDUSTRIAL BIOTECHNOLOGY INNOVATION CENTRE (IBIOIC) ANNUAL CONFERENCE - THE JUST TRANSITION OF BIOTECHNOLOGY

This 2-day conference takes place in Glasgow on 6 and 7 June 2022. The conference is hosted by IBioIC and brings together key thinkers, industrialists and policy-makers in the bioeconomy to explore how sustainable development in industrial biotechnology can secure Scotland's path to net zero.

Learn about the transition to net zero in the chemicals and health industries, novel uses for food and agricultural waste, smart farming, infrastructure and processes of the future, and how Scotland can develop a talent pool that can withstand future challenges.

See: [IBioiC Conference](#)

CARBON DIOXIDE UTILISATION CHALLENGE FUND

This challenge supports companies to carry out research and development (R&D) to develop technology that will lead to new commercial uses for CO₂ and create jobs as part of the journey to a low carbon economy. The funding will support projects at the appropriate level of technology readiness to develop and test technology in CO₂ utilisation projects.

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The level of funding will depend on a number of factors. This includes company size and the activity being supported.

Scottish Enterprise will contribute up to 50% of eligible project costs. Grant amounts are estimated to be between £150,000 and £500,000.

Funding will be available from 11 April 2022 until 31 March 2024. All eligible project costs should be incurred during this period.

See: [Carbon Dioxide Utilisation Challenge Fund \(findbusinesssupport.gov.scot\)](https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)

Film Development and Production Fund

The Film Development and Production Fund offers development and production funding for feature-length films and documentaries, both live-action and animation, being made by filmmakers based in Scotland.

This fund can provide support at the following stages:

- **Single Project Development Funding:** support towards the initial development costs of a single feature film or documentary project (awards usually in the range of £3,000 to £50,000)
- **Film Production Funding:** support towards the production costs for a film or documentary project (awards likely to be made in the range of £100,000 to £500,000)

The support is aimed at projects with international appeal that have the potential to be distinctive, high-quality and commercially and/or creatively driven, as well as projects that enable artists and filmmakers to take risks creatively.

Priority will be given to projects from writers, directors and producers based in Scotland, as well as projects where producers based outside Scotland are developing projects with writing and/or directing talent based in Scotland.

See: [Film Development and Production Fund | Screen Scotland](#)

Film Festival and Screening Programme Fund

The Film Festival and Screening Programme Fund supports organisations that produce film festivals and screening programmes that increase the reach, depth, and diversity of screen culture for audiences in Scotland. The fund will help organisations to do this in a viable, sustainable, representative, and high-quality fashion, with meaningful impacts and the involvement of the communities they reach.

The fund will:

- fund festival and screening activity that is distinctive, high-quality, and valued by the communities it reaches
- increase the reach of and access to festivals for under-represented communities, both geographic and demographic
- support organisations to develop in a viable, sustainable fashion

The total budget for this fund is £600,000. Individual awards are likely to be between £10,000 and £60,000.

See: [Film Festival and Screening Programme Fund](#)