



BUSINESS NEWSLETTER

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We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter and find it useful. Please contact us if you would like to discuss any matters further.

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On 30 October 2024, Chancellor Rachel Reeves presented her first budget to parliament. This was a budget intended to restore stability to our economy and to begin a decade of national renewal. Investment will be funded by revised debt rules to facilitate additional borrowing and a hefty £40 billion of tax rises.

Headlines included:

- Immediate increases to capital gains tax rates with further uplifts in relation to some business disposals from both April 2025 and April 2026.
- Immediate increases to Stamp Duty Land Tax, including for those buying residential property when they already own at least one dwelling.
- Confirmation that 20% VAT will apply to private school fees for the school term beginning in January 2025.
- Increased costs for many employers from April 2025 through both increases to the national minimum wage and significant reforms to employers' national insurance contributions.
- Another change in approach for businesses utilising double-cab pick up vehicles, coming into effect in April 2025.
- Plans to restrict inheritance tax agricultural and business property reliefs from April 2026.
- Plans to include an individual's undrawn pension fund in their inheritance tax estate from April 2027.

Below, we talk more about the Budget and what it means for you.

INCOME TAX

Please note that 'tax years' run to 5 April each year and that, for example, 2025/26 signifies the year to 5 April 2026.

Your personal allowance

Your tax-free personal allowance will remain at £12,570 in 2025/26. The personal allowance is partially withdrawn if your income is over £100,000 and then fully withdrawn if your income is over £125,140.

Income tax rates and allowances

For 2025/26, income tax rates and thresholds remain frozen at their 2024/25 levels.

After your tax-free 'personal allowance' has been deducted, your remaining income will be taxed in bands in 2025/26 as follows:

		2025/26		
		'Other income'	Savings income	Dividend income
Basic rate	£1 - £37,700	20%	20%	8.75%
Higher rate	£37,701 - £125,140	40%	40%	33.75%
Additional rate	Over £125,140	45%	45%	39.35%

'Other income' means income other than from savings or dividends. This includes salaries, bonuses, profits made by a sole trader or a partner in a business, rental income, pension income and anything else that is not exempt.

Scottish taxpayers

If your main residence is in Scotland or you are otherwise classed as a 'Scottish taxpayer', the application of income tax rates and bands applies differently where 'other income' is concerned. After the 'personal allowance' has been deducted, your 'other income' is taxed in bands as follows:

	2024/25	
Starter rate	£1 - £2,306	19%
Basic rate	£2,307 - £13,991	20%
Intermediate rate	£13,992 - £31,092	21%
Higher rate	£31,093 - £62,430	42%
Advanced rate	£62,431 - £125,140	45%
Top rate	Over £125,140	48%

The rates for 2025/26 are expected to be announced at the Scottish Budget, on 4 December 2024.

Welsh taxpayers

Similarly, you pay Welsh income tax if you live in Wales. The rates set by the Welsh government usually shadow the main UK income tax rates and allowances and this was the case for 2024/25. We expect the 2025/26 rates to be confirmed when the Welsh Budget is published on 10 December 2024.

Tax on savings income

A savings allowance determines how much savings income you can receive at 0% taxation, instead of the usual tax rates for savings income as shown above. This will remain at the 2024/25 level of £1,000 for basic rate taxpayers and £500 for higher rate taxpayers.

Interest income from an Individual Savings Account (ISA) continues to be exempt from tax.

Tax on dividend income

A dividend allowance determines how much dividend income you can receive at 0% taxation, instead of the usual tax rates for dividend income as shown above. This will remain at the 2024/25 level of £500.

Dividend income from a 'stocks and shares' ISA continues to be exempt from tax.

The High-Income Child Benefit charge (HICBC)

You may have to pay the HICBC if you are considered to have 'high income' and child benefit is being paid in relation to a child that lives with you, regardless of whether you are a parent of that child. If you are living with another person in a marriage, civil-partnership or long-term relationship, you will only be liable to HICBC if you have the higher income of the two of you.

Since 2024/25 the child benefit 'high-income' threshold is £60,000. The HICBC is calculated at 1% of the child benefit received for every £200 of income above the threshold. This means that child benefit is only fully clawed back where income exceeds £80,000.

The HICBC does not apply if the child benefit claimant opts out from receiving the payments.

The new government will not proceed with previous plans to explore a household income basis of calculating the HICBC.

CAPITAL GAINS TAX

As expected, and with immediate effect from the budget date of 30 October 2024, the rates of capital gains tax (CGT) have been increased on some asset types as follows:

	2025/26	2024/25	
		From 30 October 2024	Prior to 30 October 2024
Annual exempt amount	£3,000	£3,000	
Rate of CGT on assets other than residential property and qualifying business disposals:			
Within the basic rate band	18%	18%	10%
Outside the basic rate band	24%	24%	20%
Rate of CGT on residential property disposals:			
Within the basic rate band	18%	18%	18%
Outside the basic rate band	24%	24%	24%
Rate of CGT on qualifying business disposals:			
Business Asset Disposal Relief (BADR) lifetime limit	£1million	£1million	
Rate of CGT on gains qualifying for BADR	14%	10%	10%

Entrepreneurs will be pleased to learn that Business Asset Disposal Relief (BADR) will continue to apply when they dispose of their business. However, the rate of CGT on BADR qualifying disposals is increasing from 10% to 14% for disposals made on or after 6 April 2025, and from 14% to 18% for disposals made on or after 6 April 2026. These rates apply to the first £1 million of qualifying disposals.

NATIONAL LIVING WAGE (NLW) AND NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE (NMW)

Employers must pay their employees at least the NLW, for workers aged 21 and over, or the NMW otherwise. The minimum hourly rates change on 1 April each year and depend on the worker's age and if they are an apprentice.

	1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026	1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025
NLW - age 21 and over	£12.21	£11.44
NMW - 18-20 year old	£10.00	£8.60
NMW - 16-17 year old and apprentice	£7.55	£6.40

The percentage increases for the 18-20 year old rate (16.3%) and the 16-17 year old and apprentice rate (18.0%) are significant. This is a step towards Labour's ambitions for all adults to receive the same minimum wage. While this is good news for workers, employers will need to carefully consider affordability when planning their headcount for the year ahead.

EMPLOYMENT TAXESFor employees

The national insurance contributions (NICs) rates and annual thresholds for employees for 2025/26 are as follows:

Employees' Class 1 NICs	2025/26	2024/25
Lower earnings limit (LEL)	£6,500	£6,396
Primary threshold (PT)	£12,570	£12,570
Upper earnings limit (UEL)	£50,270	£50,270
Earnings between the LEL and the PT	0%	0%
Earnings between the PT and the UEL	8%	8%
Earnings above the UEL	2%	2%

Earnings below the LEL are not subject to primary Class 1 NICs and do not accrue entitlement to state benefits. Earnings between the LEL and the PT do accrue entitlement to state benefits and are subject to primary Class 1 NICs, albeit at the 0% rate.

For employers

The Chancellor announced a package of changes to employers' Class 1 NICs that will apply from 6 April 2025:

- An increase in the employers' NICs rate, from 13.8% to **15%**;
- A decrease to the threshold at which an employer starts to pay NICs on each employee's salary (the 'secondary threshold') from £9,100 to **£5,000***; and
- A widening of availability and an increase in the amount of the 'employment allowance', which eligible employers can offset against their employers' Class 1 NICs liability, from £5,000 to **£10,500**. In particular, the employment allowance has only been available to businesses who have incurred an employers' Class 1 NICs liability of less than £100,000 in the previous tax year but that restriction will be removed for 2025/26.

* A higher secondary threshold of £50,270 applies for employees who are under 21 and apprentices under 25. Other variations can also apply.

This increase in employers' NICs is undoubtedly a blow to some businesses and, indirectly, employees. Combined with the increases in the NMW and potential costs associated with reforms in employment law, these measures will stretch employer wage budgets and potentially lead to slower growth in some employee wages or higher costs for consumers.

Benefits in kind

Employees are required to pay income tax on certain non-cash benefits. For example, the provision of a company car constitutes a taxable 'benefit in kind'. In 2025/26, employers will also pay Class 1A NIC at 15% on the value of benefits (13.8% in 2024/25).

The benefit value of a company car is calculated as a percentage of its list price when it was first registered. The percentage used is determined by the car's carbon dioxide emissions or, if it is electric, its electric range. The percentages used are set to increase steadily until 5 April 2028, meaning employees with company cars can expect their percentage to increase by 1% in 2025/26 and consequently will pay more tax on their company car. More substantial increases will affect the percentages used from 2028/29 onwards.

The figures used to calculate benefits-in-kind on employer-provided vans, van fuel (for private journeys in company vans), and car fuel (for private journeys in company cars) increase in line with inflation for 2025/26:

	2025/26	2024/25
Van benefit	£4,020	£3,960
Van fuel benefit	£769	£757
Car fuel benefit multiplier	£28,200	£27,800

Uncertainty surrounding the tax treatment of double cab pick-up vehicles with a payload of 1 tonne or more has been addressed: such vehicles that are not predominantly suitable for carrying goods are to be treated as cars for benefit in kind purposes. However, vehicles that were acquired or ordered before 6 April 2025 can be treated as vans until the earlier of disposal, lease expiry, or 5 April 2029.

Tip – If you are considering buying a double cab pick-up vehicle with a payload of 1 tonne or more, acquiring or ordering it before 6 April 2025 could ensure it attracts the more beneficial tax treatment for vans.

The official rate of interest (currently 2.25%) used to calculate the benefit value of employment-related loans and living accommodation will, from April 2025, be allowed to change on a quarterly basis. Previously the rate has been set for a full tax year.

From 6 April 2026, the use of payroll software to report and pay tax on benefits in kind will become mandatory, except in relation to employer-provided loans and living accommodation. These two benefits can be 'payrolled' on a voluntary basis.

BUSINESS TAX

Motor vehicles

Continuing the topic seen above on double cab pick-up vehicles, a similar change in approach applies in relation to plant and machinery capital allowances claims. From April 2025, most double cab pick-up vehicles with a payload of 1 tonne or more will need to be treated as cars for capital allowances purposes. This is less favourable than the current common classification as a goods vehicle. While the change applies from April 2025, if the expenditure was incurred as a result of a contract entered into before 1 April 2025 for companies, or 6 April 2025 for non-corporate businesses, and the expenditure is incurred before 1 October 2025, it can continue to be treated as a goods vehicle.

Also on motor vehicles, it was confirmed in the budget that the 100% first-year allowance for zero-emission cars will be extended until 31 March 2026 for corporation tax and 5 April 2026 for income tax.

Making Tax Digital (MTD) for Income Tax

Under the government's MTD for income tax initiative, businesses will be required to keep digital records and send a quarterly summary of their business income and expenses to HMRC using MTD-compatible software. These requirements will be phased in from April 2026, starting with income tax-paying sole traders and property landlords with combined trade and rental income of more than £50,000.

This threshold will be reduced to £30,000 from April 2027 and to £20,000 by the end of this parliament.

Eligible businesses are currently able to opt-in to HMRC's beta testing programme. Please talk to us if you'd like to know more.

Business rates

For 2025/26, retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) businesses will be given a 40% relief on their business rates. The small business tax multiplier, which applies to properties with a rateable value of less than £51,000, will also be frozen next year.

The government is looking at longer-term measures to support RHL businesses and intends to permanently lower tax rates from 2026/27 for RHL properties with a rateable value below £500,000.

NATIONAL INSURANCE FOR THE SELF-EMPLOYED

Self-employed individuals pay Class 2 and Class 4 National Insurance Contributions (NICs). The relevant rates and thresholds are:

	2025/26	2024/25
Class 2 NICs per year – mandatory*	£nil	£nil
Class 2 NICs per year – voluntary*	£182.00	£179.40
Small profits threshold (SPT)	£6,845	£6,725
Lower profits limit (LPL)	£12,570	£12,570
Upper profits limit (UPL)	£50,270	£50,270
Class 4 NICs on profits below the LPL	0%	0%
Class 4 NICs on profits between the LPL and the UPL	6%	6%
Class 4 rate on profits above the UPL	2%	2%

* From 2024/25 onwards, Class 2 NICs are effectively abolished. If trade profits exceed the SPT, the individual will accrue entitlement to state benefits such as the state pension. However, if trade profits fall below the SPT, the individual will need to pay Class 2 NICs voluntarily if they need the tax year to qualify for state benefit purposes.

TAX REGIME FOR FURNISHED HOLIDAY LETS

If you let out residential or commercial property, the profits are taxed as part of your 'other income'. If you sell property that has been rented out, capital gains tax is likely to apply. Generally, rental business activity attracts fewer tax reliefs than trading ventures. However, if a residential property meets the strict definition of a 'furnished holiday let' (FHL), enhanced tax relief rules are currently available.

It has been confirmed that, from 6 April 2025, the special tax rules for FHLs will be abolished. Going forward, profits from FHLs will be taxed in the same way as any other rental business.

Please get in touch for a more detailed analysis of how the withdrawal of the FHL status will affect you.

VAT

From 1 April 2025, the VAT registration and deregistration thresholds will remain at £90,000 and £88,000 respectively. There have been no changes to the rates of VAT and the standard rate continues to be set at 20%.

In a key change to VAT, private school fees, which have been exempt from VAT, will be made subject to VAT at 20%. This will start from the school term beginning in January 2025.

CORPORATE TAXES

Rates from 1 April 2025

Corporation tax rates and thresholds for the financial year to 31 March 2026 remain unchanged as follows:

Financial year to 31 March 2026	
Main rate	25%
Small profits rate	19%
Small profit threshold	£50,000
Main rate threshold	£250,000
Marginal relief fraction	3/200
Effective marginal relief rate	26.5%

The thresholds must be equally shared between companies in a group and those controlled by the same person or persons. If an associated company is dormant, then it is not included in this calculation. However, an associated company with only limited activity would be included, which could lead to higher than necessary

effective rates of corporation tax. If you are in this situation speak to us about how you might be able to mitigate this.

Companies with profits between the small profit and main rate thresholds will qualify for marginal relief, which effectively means they pay tax at 19% up to the lower threshold and at 26.5% on the balance of their profits.

Roadmap

A corporate tax roadmap has been published by the government, with the view of creating a stable and predictable tax environment. This includes the following commitments:

- The corporation tax rates will not increase beyond the rates shown above. This includes retaining the small profits rate and marginal relief.
- Maintaining the annual investment allowance, giving 100% tax relief on the acquisition of up to £1 million worth of new or second-hand qualifying plant and machinery each year.
- Maintaining the 'full-expensing' regime, giving 50% or 100% tax relief on the acquisition of new and unused qualifying plant and machinery, without limit.
- Maintaining the rates of the current Research and Development (R&D) tax reliefs (see below).

Research & Development (R&D) reliefs

The R&D tax relief regime has seen a lot of change in recent years, and the Labour government is committing to the current rates of relief. Since 1 April 2024, this equates to a 20% taxable contribution from HMRC on qualifying R&D expenditure in the "merged scheme" (used by most claimant companies) and, for 'loss-making R&D intensive SME companies', an 86% uplift in deductible qualifying expenditure with a 14.5% payable tax credit.

An R&D intensive company is one that qualifies as an SME and at least 30% of its total expenditure is invested in R&D.

HMRC continue to take measures to tackle non-compliance in this area, which has led to a reduction in the number of claims made. They carried out compliance checks on 17% of claims received in 2023/24, compared with 10% for 2022/23. Please talk to us if you are considering making a claim so that we can help you to navigate HMRC's compliance checks.

Annual Tax on Enveloped Dwellings (ATED)

Companies and some other entities may need to file ATED returns or pay ATED if they hold a UK residential property with a market value over £500,000. The rates of ATED will increase from 1 April 2025 so please contact us if you require any support with this.

PENSIONS

Despite numerous rumours of possible changes to the taxation of pensions in the run up to the budget, the Chancellor decided not to make significant changes after all. The ability to receive a 25% tax-free lump sum of up to £268,275 (or higher in some cases) remains.

Individual contributions continue to attract income tax relief at the individual's marginal tax rate and can be particularly effective where net income is between £100,000 and £125,140, where the personal allowance is tapered.

Employer pension contributions continue to qualify for a deduction against business profits and the rumour that employers' national insurance would be imposed on pension contributions did not materialise. Note that the £60,000 annual allowance limit continues for 2025/26 and applies to the combined individual and employer contributions.

One change that was however announced was to make an individual's undrawn pension fund subject to inheritance tax. From 6 April 2027, it is proposed that most undrawn pension funds and death benefits be included within the value of a person's estate for inheritance tax purposes and for pension scheme administrators to become liable for reporting and paying any inheritance tax due on pensions to HMRC.

INHERITANCE TAX

The main rate of IHT remains at 40%, reduced to 36% for estates where 10% or more is left to charity. The IHT nil rate band will continue to be frozen at £325,000 until 2030. The additional nil rate band for passing on the family home to direct descendants (residence nil rate band) will also remain at £175,000 until 2030. This means that married couples and civil partners will generally not pay inheritance tax where their combined estate is valued below £1 million. Note however that the residence nil rate band continues to be tapered where the value of the estate exceeds £2 million.

Gifts made by an individual in the 7 years prior to their death are classed as 'potentially exempt transfers' and can give rise to an IHT liability on death. Despite speculation in the run up to the budget, there will be no changes to this regime. Furthermore, taper relief continues to apply, reducing IHT payable where there are more than 3 years between the date of the gift and the date of death.

As mentioned above, it is proposed that, from April 2027, most undrawn pension funds and death benefits will be included within the value of a person's estate for IHT purposes.

Farmers and business owners

The government is proposing to reform IHT agricultural property relief (APR) and business property relief (BPR) from 6 April 2026. Relief of up to 100% is currently available on qualifying business and agricultural assets with no financial limit.

From 6 April 2026, it is proposed that 100% relief will only apply to the first £1 million of combined agricultural and business property, with the relief reducing to 50% on the value that exceeds £1 million. This means the relief will be focused on small family farms and businesses.

In a further proposed change, the rate of BPR available for shares designated as "not listed" on the markets of recognised stock exchanges, such as AIM, will be reduced from 100% to 50%.

As an anti-forestalling measure, the new rules will apply to lifetime transfers made on or after 30 October 2024 if the donor dies on or after 6 April 2026.

UK RESIDENCY AND DOMICILE

Significant tax changes have been announced for UK resident non-domiciled individuals; namely those individuals spending most of their time in the UK but without permanently settling here. The concept of 'domicile' will be removed from the UK tax system and replaced by a regime based on years of tax residence.

Income and capital gains taxes

At present, individuals who are both resident and domiciled in the UK must pay UK taxes on their worldwide income and capital gains. However, for UK resident non-domiciled individuals, they are able to claim a 'remittance basis' of taxation for their overseas income and capital gains and only pay UK taxes to the extent they remit (bring) the associated funds to the UK. To access this favourable tax treatment, non-domiciled individuals may be required to pay an annual 'remittance basis charge' of up to £60,000.

The concept of domicile and the remittance basis of taxation will be abolished from 6 April 2025, meaning all UK residents will default to being taxed in the UK on their worldwide income and gains. However, a 100% relief from tax on foreign income and/or capital gains will be available to individuals in their first 4 years of UK tax residence. It should be noted that if a 'newly arrived' individual claims this relief, they will sacrifice their UK personal allowance and CGT annual exemption, along with their ability to claim relief for some foreign losses. From April 2025, for employed individuals eligible for the 100% relief from UK taxation on their foreign income and/or capital gains, an 'overseas workday relief' will remain available in relation to their duties performed overseas. Reforms to the regime will however take place, bringing increased flexibility for some but also a new maximum cap on the relief equal to the lower of £300,000 and 30% of total employment income.

Inheritance tax

Currently inheritance tax applies to the worldwide assets of a UK-domiciled individual but, broadly, just to the UK-situated assets of a non-domiciled individual.

From 6 April 2025, individuals resident in the UK for at least 10 out of the last 20 tax years, will be subject to inheritance tax on both their UK and non-UK assets. They will then remain within the full scope of UK inheritance tax for between 3 and 10 years after leaving the UK.

If you have not always lived in the UK, please talk to us about how the new rules will affect you. There may be some exemptions or transitional reliefs that we are able to claim to support your position, including a 'temporary repatriation facility' for any overseas funds you may have and 're-basing' any overseas assets you hold to their April 2017 values to reduce any UK capital gains tax arising in 2025/26 and onwards.

STAMP DUTY

England and Northern Ireland - thresholds

It has been confirmed that the 0% thresholds for Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) will be reduced from 1 April 2025 as follows:

	From 1 April 2025	1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025
Main threshold	£125,000	£250,000
First-time buyers' threshold	£300,000	£425,000

SDLT on additional dwellings such as second homes

For transactions with an effective date (generally the date of completion) on or after 31 October 2024, the higher rates of SDLT payable by purchasers of 'additional dwellings' (i.e. when they already own one dwelling), and by companies, increases from 3% to 5% above the standard residential rates. This measure is clearly targeted at buy-to-let landlords and those acquiring second homes.

The rate of SDLT payable by companies and non-natural persons (e.g. trusts) acquiring dwellings for more than £500,000 increases from 15% to 17% also from 31 October 2024.

Scotland and Wales

Property purchasers in Scotland and Wales do not pay SDLT. Rather, if you buy a property in Scotland you pay Land and Buildings Transaction Tax, and in Wales you pay Land Transaction Tax. No amendments to these transaction taxes have yet been announced.

DEALING WITH HMRC

Interest on unpaid tax liabilities

From 6 April 2025, the late payment interest rate charged by HMRC on unpaid tax liabilities will increase by 1.5 percentage points. For most taxes, this will set late payment interest at the Bank of England base rate plus 4%.

IN CONCLUSION

As we approach 2025/26, we know a number of our clients and contacts will be assessing the impact of the budget on their affairs. While some of our readers will benefit from the increases in public spending, for others, especially if you are an employer or business owner, it may be necessary to re-group and update your business plans for 2025 and onwards. Remember, we are here to work alongside you to ensure your business and personal success. Please do get in touch if there is anything that you would like to discuss.
