

Financial Support

Business Support Grant Schemes for NI businesses (26 March 2020)

Registration is now open for businesses to apply for the £10,000 Small Business Grant Scheme in NI. The schemes are administered by the Department for the Economy and Invest Northern Ireland working with the Department of Finance's Land & Property Services.

Registration and further information can be found here:

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-business-support-grant-schemes>

Vehicle owners to be granted MOT exemption (25 March 2020)

Vehicle owners are to be granted a 6-month exemption from MOT testing, enabling them to continue to travel to work where this absolutely cannot be done from home. All cars, vans, and motorcycles which usually would require an MOT test will be exempted from needing a test from 30 March 2020.

Vehicles must be kept in a roadworthy condition, and garages will remain open for essential repair work.

Further information can be accessed here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/vehicle-owners-to-be-granted-mot-exemption-in-battle-against-coronavirus?utm_campaign=534501_FindBusinessSupport%20-%20COVID-19%20Updates%20&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Scottish%20Enterprise&dm_i=4X7B,BGF9,3LJY8F,19BUQ,1

Business Support helplines (26 March 2020)

HMRC tax helpline

HMRC have introduced a helpline for businesses and self-employed workers who are concerned about paying their tax due to COVID-19. You can call 0800 0159 559 for help and advice.

Invest NI helpline

Businesses based in Northern Ireland can also call the Invest NI helpline for help and information on 0800 181 4422.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.investni.com/support-for-business>

Companies to receive 3-month extension period to file accounts during COVID-19 (25 March)

UK businesses are now eligible for an additional 3 months from 25 March 2020 to file accounts with Companies House to help avoid penalties as they deal with the impact of COVID-19.

Full guidance on applying for an extension can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-more-time-to-file-your-companys-accounts>

Commercial insurance (25 March)

Most commercial insurance policies are unlikely to cover pandemics or unspecified notifiable diseases, such as COVID-19. However, those businesses which have an insurance policy that covers government ordered closure and pandemics or government ordered closure and unspecified notifiable disease should be able to make a claim (subject to the terms and conditions of their policy).

Further information can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

£1 billion business Support Fund opens (25 March)

Businesses can now apply for grants to help them deal with the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The one-off grants are designed to protect jobs, prevent business closures, promote economic recovery. It is estimated that more than 90,000 ratepayers across Scotland will be able to benefit.

More information on how to apply can be found at:

<https://www.mygov.scot/non-domestic-rates-coronavirus/>

Help with non-domestic rates in Scotland (25 March)

To help owners of non-domestic properties, including businesses, to deal with the impact of COVID-19, the Scottish Government has made changes to non-domestic rates (business rates) for 2020-21. Extra reliefs (discounts) have been introduced and these reliefs will be available to non-domestic properties from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Further information can be found here:

https://www.mygov.scot/non-domestic-rates-coronavirus/?utm_campaign=532949_FindBusinessSupport%20-%20COVID-19%20Updates%204&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Scottish%20Enterprise&dm_i=4X7B,BF85,3LJXWT,196GM,1

Grants and loans available to businesses in Scotland (25 March)

The Scottish Government has compiled a list of the current grants, loans and advice for business in Scotland to help with the impact of COVID-19.

More information can be found here:

<https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/>

Demand for more self-employed support during the coronavirus outbreak. (24 March 2020)

Scottish Government Economy Secretary Fiona Hyslop and Finance Secretary Kate Forbes have written to Chancellor Rishi Sunak calling for the Jobs Retention Scheme he announced last week to be expanded to include the self-employed. They also appealed for a change in the rules to enable more people to access statutory sick pay.

To view the letter please click here: <https://www.gov.scot/news/call-for-action-to-help-self-employed/>

Support for business water bills (24 March 2020)

A package of measures worth £60 million has been agreed between the Scottish Government and the water industry to help businesses facing difficulties with water charges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Scottish Water has agreed to suspend pre-payment charges for licensed providers for two months, beginning with the April payment. This means providers - who supply water services to businesses - can be flexible with their own customers at this difficult time.

For more information: <https://www.gov.scot/news/support-for-business-water-bills/>

The Chancellor and Under-Treasurer of Her Majesty's Exchequer (Chancellor of the Exchequer) has implemented various new measures to help businesses in the UK during this period of disruption caused by COVID-19. We have outlined some of the support available below:

As the coronavirus pandemic worsens, small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 250 employees, are being greatly affected. Please read below for financial guidance to help your business in these tough times

Support for businesses who are paying sick pay to employees

The UK Government will bring forward legislation to allow SMEs and employers to reclaim Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) paid for sickness absence due to the on-going coronavirus pandemic. The eligibility criteria for the scheme can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about->

[covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-who-are-paying-sick-pay-to-employees](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-who-are-paying-sick-pay-to-employees)

Support for businesses through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme

A Coronavirus Business Loan Scheme has been introduced by the British Business Bank, will launch early next week to support primarily small and medium-sized businesses. The temporary scheme will provide SMEs access to bank lending and overdrafts.

Lenders will be provided with a guarantee of 80% on each loan (subject to a per-lender cap on claims) to give lenders added confidence in continuing to provide finance to small and medium-sized businesses. The government will not charge businesses or banks for this guarantee and loans up to £5 million will be available. The first 6 months of interest on the finance will be covered by the government.

The eligibility criteria for the scheme and how to access the scheme can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-businesses-through-the-coronavirus-business-interruption-loan-scheme>

Support for larger firms through the COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility

Under the new COVID-19 Corporate Financing Facility, the Bank of England will buy short term debt from larger companies. This will support companies if it has been affected by a short-term funding squeeze, and allow you to finance your short-term liabilities.

All UK businesses are eligible.

The scheme will be available early in the week beginning 23 March 2020 and more information will be provided on the UK Government website here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses#support-for-larger-firms-through-the-covid-19-corporate-financing-facility>

Support for businesses paying tax: Time to Pay service

All businesses and self-employed people in financial distress, and with outstanding tax liabilities, may be eligible to receive support with their tax affairs through a new Time to Pay service introduced by HMRC. These arrangements are agreed on a case-by-case basis and are tailored to individual circumstances and liabilities.

You are eligible if your business pays tax to the UK Government and has outstanding tax liabilities.

If you have missed a tax payment or think you will miss your next payment as a result of COVID-19, please call HMRC's helpline: 0800 0159 559.

Job Retention Scheme

All UK employers will be able to access support to continue paying part of their employees' salary for those employees that would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis.

HMRC will reimburse 80% of "furloughed" workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

Employers are required to designate affected employees as "furloughed" workers, notify employees of this and submit earnings information to HMRC on a new online portal which is being set up.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

Deferred VAT and Income Tax Payments

VAT payments are being deferred for 3 months and if you are self-employed, Income Tax payments due in July 2020 will be deferred to January 2021.

VAT refunds and reclaims will be paid by the government as normal.

This is an automatic offer with no applications required.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/covid-19-support-for-businesses>

Scottish business coronavirus advice helpline

A new helpline has been launched to supply Scottish businesses with tailored advice on coronavirus.

The helpline is open from Monday to Friday from 08:30 – 17:30, based at Scottish Enterprise's call centre in Clydebank.

Call handlers will answer questions from businesses related to COVID-19, as well as relaying the challenges faced by businesses to the Scottish Government.

The helpline number is 0300 303 0660.

Northern Ireland Executive

The Northern Ireland Executive are publishing regular updates and full statements from First Minister Arlene Foster and deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill in relation to COVID-19 .

An immediate grant of £10,000 will be provided to all small businesses who are eligible for the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme.

The Northern Ireland Executive has also committed to providing a 3 month rates holiday to all businesses from April to June.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/>

Interest Rates have been reduced

The Bank of England has cut the UK interest rates from 0.25% to 0.1% to lower financial costs and stimulate economic growth.