Glendinning House
6 Murray Street
Belfast
BT1 6DN
T: 028 9024 9222
E: info@sumerni.co.uk

www.sumerni.co.uk

SUMER
NORTHERN IRELAND

# Autumn Budget 2026: what UK SMEs should expect ahead of 28 October



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**The Government has confirmed that the 2026 Autumn Budget will take place on Wednesday 28 October 2026.**

For business owners, accountants and finance leaders, the Budget is one of the most important dates in the financial calendar. It often shapes tax policy, business investment, employment costs and economic growth for years to come.

While we won't know the full details until Budget Day, businesses already have plenty to prepare for. Several significant changes announced over the past 18 months are now taking effect, while speculation is growing over what Chancellor John Healey may announce in his first Budget.

At Sumer, we're helping businesses understand not only what has already changed, but how to prepare for what comes next.

## What has already changed for UK businesses?

The business landscape has shifted considerably since last year's Budget, with several measures now affecting SMEs.

### Higher employment costs

Many employers have already felt the impact of increases to employment costs through changes to Employer National Insurance and increases to the National Living Wage.

For growing businesses, these changes have increased the cost of recruitment while encouraging many organisations to review workforce planning, productivity, and automation.

### Business rates reforms

Business rates reforms have now begun to take effect, including revised multipliers and transitional relief designed to soften increases for many businesses, particularly within retail, hospitality, and leisure.

While many smaller businesses will benefit from targeted relief, others will experience increased property costs as transitional arrangements evolve.

## Continued focus on digital tax

Making Tax Digital continues to expand, requiring more businesses to maintain digital accounting records and submit tax information electronically.

For SMEs, this isn't simply a compliance exercise. Businesses embracing cloud accounting and real-time reporting are often finding they gain much greater visibility over cash flow, profitability and future planning.

## What could be announced in the Autumn Budget?

Although the Chancellor has not confirmed any specific tax measures, he has indicated the Budget will focus on economic stability while moving "money and power" out of Westminster and supporting regional growth.

With public finances remaining under pressure, businesses should prepare for a Budget that balances investment with fiscal discipline.

Areas widely expected to feature include:

### Business taxation

The Government may consider:

- further reform of business rates
- targeted incentives for investment and innovation
- additional support for regional growth
- changes designed to encourage business productivity

While major corporation tax changes appear less likely, targeted reforms remain possible.

### Investment incentives

Capital investment remains central to improving UK productivity.
Many businesses will be watching closely for announcements around:

- capital allowances
- technology investment incentives
- AI adoption support
- research and development incentives
- manufacturing and green investment

Any extension of existing reliefs could provide valuable opportunities for businesses planning significant investment over the next 12 months.

**Support for SMEs**

Small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) remain the backbone of the UK economy.

We may see measures aimed at:

- improving access to finance
- encouraging entrepreneurship
- supporting high-growth businesses
- simplifying regulation
- boosting regional investment

The Government has previously highlighted SME growth as a key priority through initiatives including the Business Growth Service and expanded British Business Bank funding.

**Skills and employment**

Labour shortages continue to affect many sectors.

Businesses will be looking for announcements covering:

- apprenticeships
- workforce training
- digital skills
- AI capability
- productivity initiatives

## How could the Budget affect SMEs?

Every Budget creates both challenges and opportunities.

Businesses that prepare early are often best placed to respond.

Some of the biggest questions business owners should be asking now include:

**Should we bring forward investment?**

If capital allowances or investment incentives are expected to change, there may be advantages to reviewing planned expenditure before or immediately after the Budget.

**Are our tax plans still appropriate?**

Changes to taxation can affect:

- owner remuneration
- profit extraction
- dividends
- pension contributions
- succession planning

Reviewing these areas before year-end can help businesses avoid missed opportunities.

**Are we managing cash flow effectively?**

Economic uncertainty places even greater importance on:

- forecasting
- scenario planning
- working capital management
- financing options

Businesses with strong financial visibility tend to respond more effectively to policy changes.

## Five actions SMEs should take before the Budget

Rather than waiting until October, businesses can start preparing now.

1. Review investment plans for the next 12 months.
2. Update cash flow forecasts under different scenarios.
3. Review staffing costs and future recruitment plans.
4. Ensure tax planning remains up to date.
5. Speak to your adviser before making significant financial decisions.

Early planning creates flexibility regardless of what is announced.

### How Sumer can help

Every Budget creates headlines.
The real value comes from understanding what those announcements mean for your business.

At Sumer, we work alongside ambitious SMEs across the UK to help them:

- understand new tax legislation
- identify planning opportunities
- improve cash flow
- maximise available reliefs
- support business growth
- make confident financial decisions

Our specialists will be analysing every announcement on Budget Day and providing practical guidance to help businesses respond quickly.

## Stay ahead of the Autumn Budget

The Autumn Budget may introduce significant changes for businesses across the UK.

Whether you're planning to invest, recruit, grow through acquisition or simply protect profitability, preparation is key.

If you'd like to understand how the Budget could affect your business, speak to our team. We'll help you plan ahead, identify opportunities, and ensure you're ready for whatever the Chancellor announces.

## Frequently asked questions

### When is the Autumn Budget 2026?

*The UK Autumn Budget will be delivered on Wednesday 28 October 2026.*

### Will taxes increase in the Autumn Budget?

*No tax changes have been confirmed. However, businesses should monitor announcements affecting investment, business taxation and employment costs.*

**How will the Budget affect SMEs?**

***Potential impacts include changes to business taxation, investment incentives, employment costs and support for growth.***

**What should businesses do before the Budget?**

*Review investment plans, forecast cash flow, assess tax planning and seek professional advice before making major financial decisions.*

**Get in touch with Sumer NI today to ensure you're ready for whatever the Chancellor announces**

**T: 02890249222**
**E: info@sumerni.co.uk**

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