



Business Briefing

By Jonathan Moules

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Red tape cost freeze welcomed

Business groups this week welcomed government plans for a three-year freeze on the costs of any new regulation that may be introduced by a government department.

The proposals, issued for consultation by John Hutton, the business secretary, were hailed as a "world first" in the trying to curb the cost of red tape.

The Forum of Private Business (FPB) was among those in favour of the new plans. However, Thomas Parry, the FPB's research manager, said the government's own regulatory impact assessments had in the past underestimated the time and effort new rules had imposed on small business owners.

The Institute of Directors also approved of the plans but questioned the proposal to exempt measures to tackle climate change from the red-tape budgets.

Tax management 'boosts cashflow'

Businesses being squeezed by the economic downturn could improve their cash flow through managing their tax more effectively, according to PricewaterhouseCoopers, the accountancy firm.

Empty properties, employee share plans, and research and development tax credits all offer opportunities to reduce tax costs and increase cash in the business, Richard Farnsworth, tax director at PwC, said.

Funds ended for payments website

The government has ended its funding for a website dedicated to helping small business owners tackle late payments, after deciding that the resources could be better spent elsewhere.

The Better Payments Practice Group, which was set up 10 years ago, was wound up after it could not find a chairperson last summer. However, the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (DBERR) continued to fund its website, www.payontime.co.uk until the end of last month.

Dan Martin, editor of the website BusinessZone.co.uk, who first reported the withdrawal of funding, said: "It is hugely ironic that the financing of a group set up to deal with the [late payment] problem should be pulled."

Stephen Alambritis of the Federation of Small Businesses, which was among the members of the Better Payments Practice Group, said the group had "run its course" and that members now lobbied ministers to tackle individual cases of companies extending their payment terms.

A spokesperson for DBERR said all the website's content and advice would be transferred to www.businesslink.gov.uk

£1m contract for enterprise agency

PNE Group, the Tyneside-based enterprise and economic development agency, has been awarded a £1m contract by Royal Dutch Shell to develop and deliver its global youth enterprise programme, Shell LiveWIRE International, for the next three years, **writes Chris Tighe**.

LiveWIRE, the only global youth enterprise programme, encourages and supports 16 to 30-year-olds worldwide to start up and develop their own businesses. It now operates in 23 countries ranging from Brazil to Nigeria, Libya, Pakistan, Singapore and the Netherlands.

PNE, founded 28 years ago as Project North East, has run Shell's UK LiveWIRE programme throughout the UK since 1986 and LiveWIRE International since 1999. Four PNE employees work directly with partners in the participating country to develop innovative means of meeting the needs of enterprising young people across the globe and sharing good practice.

Shell LiveWIRE International runs a social networking website for participants globally at www.shell-livewire.com.

Deadline near for mentoring event

Aspiring entrepreneurs have less than 48 hours to submit their applications for this year's Seedcamp, an intensive mentoring programme for early-stage businesses with global ambitions.

The four-day event, founded by serial entrepreneur Saul Klein (see main feature opposite) and sponsored by the Financial Times, will include seminars and one-to-one sessions with some of

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Applications can be made from anyone resident in the EU, but must be made before midnight on Sunday. Short-listed entrants must be available for interview in London on September 3 and be free to attend Seedcamp in London between September 15 and 18.

Jonathan Moules

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