

The bottom line

Carol Undy, national chairwoman, Federation of Small Businesses



Taxing time for our small businesses

THE Chancellor's 11th Budget was no different to the others – he gives with one hand and takes with the other. However, this year, after some welcome initiatives for our members, he throws it all away with a tax hike aimed at small businesses. Corporation tax was cut for large firms but increased for smaller ones. Small businesses employ 58 per cent of the private sector workforce – more than 12 million people – and the increase in their tax rate fails to acknowledge their contribution. A cut in income tax is welcome but does not fully offset the dismay felt by small firms, despite the other allowances he offered.

Investing in education is, of course, vital to the success of British businesses and we welcome the initiative to get universities and business working together on innovation. However, we have had ten years of investment in the school system and our members are still reporting a drastic shortage of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Allowances for small businesses to train their employees in basic skills are also welcome to tackle the problem in the workplace too.

Increasing road tax on larger engine vehicles and company cars will also hit small businesses that use such a car or van for their business needs. Other green measures may also be counter-productive. Higher taxes will rein in the economy at precisely the time when businesses are seeking to invest in new ways of reducing their environmental impact.

We congratulate the Chancellor on accepting our proposals to reduce the business rate relief on empty commercial property. This will ensure better use of commercial premises. The use of more risk-based regulations for employment tribunals is also a boost for small employers.

On the Lyons Review, we are pleased there will be no return to setting business rates at local level. But allowing a variation on top of the business rate and other variable service charges, including a possible bed tax, will lead to even more complexity for businesses to deal with on top of existing initiatives. Councils will undoubtedly use these powers to bring in more money from businesses rather than hit voters with higher council tax. However, a number of our members are home-based and will welcome the initiative to tackle the problems of the council tax.

I also look with interest at the implications of Mr Brown's announcement that he is selling off the student loan book for £6 billion. A large debt collection agency pursuing the nations young graduates is hardly conducive to a happy workforce.

appointments

Southern tunes in to Keeley

CAROLINE KEELEY has been appointed managing director of Southern FM.

She will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the GCap-owned station, developing its online and digital strategies and increasing audience and revenues.

In the newly created post, Caroline, who has been in the radio industry for 13 years, will report to GCap's South East regional managing director Hugh Murray.

She will join the station next month.

Mr Murray said: "Having such a wealth of experience with key

influencers and principal advertisers during her 13 years in the radio industry, Caroline is committed to the growth of the station and development of the region.

"Combined with her passion for radio she will be a great asset to Sussex's management team."

Tara Dyne has been appointed marketing manager at the station.



PASSION FOR RADIO: Caroline Keeley will develop online and digital strategies as new managing director of Southern FM

events

HOTELIERS who want to reduce their water bills might want to attend a free seminar next week for some valuable tips.

Three hotels – one small, one medium and one large – took part in a Seeda-funded project recently in a bid to become "water efficiency champions".

Now Ecosys, the organisation which helped them, has agreed to share the same advice which helped the hoteliers cut their water use – and bills.

The event takes place at Deans Place Hotel in Seaford Place, Alfriston, today from 1.45pm to 4.45pm. Contact Janet Ackroyd on **01273 245587**.

THE Hove Business Association is holding a drop-in meeting for members and those who want to find out more about the group's activities.

The informal meeting will be an opportunity for people to air their views and discuss issues and ideas which affect how they run their businesses.

Hove Place Hotel in First Avenue is hosting the event on Wednesday, April 4, at 6pm.

For more information, contact Alan Gibson, HBA secretary, on **01273 775005**.

THE Brighton and Hove Chamber of Commerce is holding its monthly breakfast meeting at Carluccio's restaurant in Jubilee Street on Friday. The breakfast is £10 for members, £15 for non-members. Call **01273 719097** for more details.

● If you would like your event included on this page, contact James Lancaster at Argus House, Crowhurst Road, Brighton BN1 8AR, or email james.lancaster@theargus.co.uk



STEP UP: Andy Lawrence has been appointed relationship director at the Royal Bank of Scotland's commercial office in Brighton. Andy, pictured, centre, with members of the Brighton commercial banking team, will head a team of six responsible for supporting new and existing NatWest and RBS customers as well as liaising with the city's professional community. Robert Clare, senior director of commercial banking for Sussex, said: "Andy brings with him a wealth of experience of running successful teams and is an excellent relationship manager."

EVERY month Business publishes a list of employers who are doing the most to help disadvantaged people in Brighton and Hove into gainful employment. The table is compiled by Engage, part of the Business Community Partnership. To get involved, contact Claire Mitchell on 01273 774796.

Business/employer	OEEG organisation(s)	Number of people in placements	Number in employment
Banger	Care Coops	1	0
Hilton Metropole	Business Action on Homelessness	2	0
Integra Building Firm	Business Action on Homelessness	1	0
Marks & Spencer	Business Action on Homelessness	1	0
FareShare	Business Action on Homelessness	1	0
Integra	Constructing Futures	2	2
A&A Building Contractors	Constructing Futures	2	0
Terry Sweetman & Co	Constructing Futures	1	0
Keyhole Security	CDG	1	0
South Poles Scaffolding	CDG	1	0

Isn't it about time you checked out Business?

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