Biodiversity Net Gain - Brownfield Site Exemption

Having responded to the consultation on the topic, BALI is disappointed with the announcement that brownfield sites up to 1.5 hectares will be exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. Continued changes to BNG through exemptions and reworked definitions creates uncertainty for the future of the program and disincentivises engagement with BNG for landscaping businesses. Government continues to pit housing targets and growth against environmental goods, while BALI has been advocating that housing does not exist in isolation and instead is a single part of a wider placemaking agenda. The landscaping industry is well placed to deliver biodiversity support and placemaking which supports the environment and the creation of quality housing estates and communities. These exemptions undermine the efficacy of the Government's 30 by 30 commitment to protect 30% of England's land and sea by 2030. Constant changes to BNG rules make it harder for members to future-proof their businesses and confidently invest in projects that aim to increase biodiversity.

Planning Reform and Housing

BALI welcomes the announcement that all local councils in England will have access to support tools which will half routine planning decision times and build capacity in the planning system. Planning delays are a significant barrier in the delivery of landscaping projects, with lengthy timelines creating delays and frustration for members.

National Minimum Wage/ National Living Wage

The landscaping industry remains committed to paying a fair wage to everyone working in the landscaping industry. While we support and understand the drive to raise both the national minimum and working wages, Government must appreciate the additional pressure this places on businesses – particularly when taken in conjunction with previous national insurance increases – at a time when they are facing multiple cost challenges across all parts of their activities.

Improving Opportunities for Young People

BALI welcomes the announcement of £100 million over two years to expand local apprenticeship services. BALI has long advocated for an improved service connecting employers and apprentices to ensure that everyone who wants to be, or employ, an apprentice can do so easily. Giving current mayors the power and funding to deliver tailored local support that helps young people access apprenticeships and supports employers to create apprenticeship opportunities promises to be a significant step forward in improving local apprenticeship delivery.

In this budget announcement, we had anticipated further details of the measure Government is proposing to address the youth unemployment crisis. The landscaping industry remains ready to play its part in providing worthwhile, rewarding and long-lasting career opportunities to

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young people. BALI awaits the publication of the final Milburn review and looks forward to working with Government and playing its part in addressing this pressing national challenge.

We also welcome the Government's commitment to pilot for a Young Entrepreneurs Allowance to support young entrepreneurs with living costs during the first year of their business. The proposal recognises the importance of entrepreneurs and SME's in the landscaping industry and wider economy. For those young people looking to start their business in the landscaping sector, this will be a welcome source of support that will improve their chances of success.

Devolution

The Government has announced their intentions to increase fiscal power to local authorities, with revenue from business rates being kept locally and an aim of 100% local retention by the end of the decade. Local authorities have jurisdiction over a range of relevant policies including skills and training, housebuilding, and placemaking and in keeping more money locally and injecting it back into the economy, the landscaping sector has an exciting opportunity to become more entrenched in the local decision-making process and become a part of the solution to many local challenges. We await the Rewiring the State Delivery Plan at the end of the year which will set out further details.

Household Costs Reduction and SME Support

The Chancellor's Budget announcement today included measures to alleviate immediate cost pressures for households such as extending the VAT cut to electricity to July 2027, which is expected to take around £50 off the annual Ofgem price cap in April 2027, and launching a £2.6 billion Household Energy Payment, which will provide a £100 payment directly into bank accounts from January 2027 for households in England in council tax bands A-D, supporting up to 20 million households and a similar support program for the devolved nations through the Barnett formula. However, the support for SMEs is limited, with Small Business Rate Relief being offered to high street businesses with brick-and-mortar shops. BALI has continually advocated for greater business support for the industry and will continue to engage with government.

However, BALI welcomes the announcement of the extension of parental pay to eligible self-employed fathers, partners and adopters in Great Britain from April 2029, which will support members that are sole-traders and offer greater flexibility and support for members starting their families.

Fuel duty

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As expected, the government has extended the current 5p cut to fuel duty until at least 1 July 2027, adding a further six months to the policy. The cut was introduced by the previous government, following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and has been extended five times since. While this move is welcome, many argued for more drastic action on fuel duty in advance of the budget, given the uplift in tax take from higher fuel prices over recent months.

In the 2025 budget, the government said it would introduce Electric Vehicle Excise Duty to counter the long-term decline in fuel duty receipts. The government has built on this commitment in the latest budget, promising the introduction of a milage estimation tool, opt-in passive reporting, and automated refunds model. These appear to be positive developments and will ease the transition for landscapers who have or will be moving to electric vehicles.

The government has also extended the current 3.7p cut to red diesel duty until 1 July 2027, adding a further six months to this policy too. Some landscaping activities, such as golf course maintenance and professional garden maintenance, will benefit from this extension. However, following changes to red diesel use rules in 2022, activities such as commercial landscape construction and professional garden construction can no longer use the fuel and will not benefit from this policy.

Fertiliser Costs

The government will temporarily suspend tariffs on fertilisers, as well as kerosene heating oil, following price increases caused by the Middle East conflict. This will be a welcome announcement for growers and maintenance businesses alike, though officials need to ensure the savings are passed down the supply chain. The move also follows a recent BALI consultation response which strongly supportive the government proposal to remove fertiliser tariffs.

Business Travel Mileage

Following their earlier announcement in April 2026, of an initial increase to the tax-free business mileage rates for employees and self-employed people who use their own car for work, the chancellor has now reviewed this and today announced this as a permanent increase of 55p for the first 10,000 miles. On the 27th October, ahead of the budget announcement, for mileage over 10, 000, the tax-free mileage rate has increased from 25p to 35p, which is particularly important for those who spend most of their time driving for work.

What does this mean for you?

As an employee, if you use your car for work mileage, this means that you will have more tax-free money to use towards the cost of using your own vehicle.

For self-employed people or sole traders, this increase can be used to apply for increased deductions against taxable profits, subject to applicable rules.

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For businesses, if adopting this increased rate, BALI Members are encouraged to increase their awareness surrounding the impacts on additional business expenses, payroll, financial planning and the administration of any policies or documents that may need to be reviewed.

While these changes are expected to benefit around 3 million employees and self-employed people, the increased mileage rates are not compulsory for employers. Employers can choose how much they pay employees; if an employer pays less than the advisory rate, the employee can apply for tax relief on the difference, from HMRC, using the Mileage allowance relief (MAR).

For further information, BALI Members should consult HMRC's guidance on travel, mileage and fuel rates.

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