

WHAT YOU SAY

What type of funding would help SMEs to be more entrepreneurial?



STEVE HALE,
DIRECTOR,
CROFTON DESIGN

"Although funding and grants can be helpful, they are rarely large enough to make a significant difference to an SME's business. However, there are rules the government could change that would have a really positive, meaningful effect on smaller business. One would be a rule on VAT and how it is applied. Currently, once turnover exceeds £1.35m, companies are required to pay VAT on an accruals basis. So when we invoice a client at the end of our VAT quarter we have to pay VAT on the invoice – regardless of whether the client's paid us. I believe the threshold for cash accounting should be significantly increased so businesses only pay VAT when they've been paid."



JULIE WHITE,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
D DRILL

"One-off funding or grants do not help sustained growth. From time to time SMEs need an injection of cash for investments, so a funding mechanism where there are small chunks of funding would help. The start-up grant, although very helpful in the early stage of business establishment, runs out, so grants and funding structured over the longer term, accessible even for established businesses, would be of benefit. It would allow us to try new and different ways to build our business and create those important jobs the country needs."

What are you hoping for in 2012?
Email katie.barker@emap.com

Restoring the roof at Oxford's Museum of Natural History isn't easy, especially when the building has to remain open. Katie Barker reports

The art of preservation

Most construction projects are fighting a constant battle against the weather but for Beard Oxford, which is working to restore the roof at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, keeping the 150-year-old museum dry is an absolute must.

"Keeping the museum dry at all times is our greatest challenge," says Beard Oxford special works manager Steve Colmer. "Due to the configuration of the glass roof it is not feasible to put up a temporary scaffold roof externally.

"We keep it watertight in two ways," he explains. "The first line of defence is a purpose-made roof covering like a tent, made in five sections to the exact shape and size of the roof. When work finishes, we fix the sections together and weight it down like a big, made-to-measure marquee covering the roof.

"Our second line of defence is on the scaffold below, where we have created a waterproof deck which holds any water until we can pump it out," says Mr Colmer.

The company is mid-way through the restoration of an iron and glass roof at the museum; the building has three glass roofs covering the exhibition court below, with around 8,500 diamond-shaped glass panes.

The initial stage of the project involves removing, cleaning and refixing 2,200 tiles on the south roof while the museum is still open.



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"We're removing the glass tiles in sections – taking them off, removing the safety film and bits of silicone sealant applied in the past and our conservation cleaners then make them look as good as new," says Mr Colmer. "We're now refixing the tiles with the addition of a site-applied gasket intended to keep rainwater out, allowing condensation to escape and ventilation through the roof tiles."

The painstaking work will take around four months, and although most of the panes will simply be restored, some are beyond repair.

"Some glass tiles are not originals; we are replacing any broken or Georgian-wired glass tiles with reproductions made by specialist Eura, which has taken a mould from an existing tile to replicate

them," explains Mr Colmer.

"We access the roof from the outside and have built a workshop on top of the scaffold for conservation work on the tiles without having to take them offsite – we're effectively working at roof level," he says.

The work includes cleaning the metal structure of the building in order to bring the original paint work back to life. "We are also cleaning the roof and timbers under the south roof, some of which are painted, so when the scaffolding is unveiled the metal and timber will look brighter and cleaner, contrasting with that of the central and north aisles," says Mr Colmer.

Beard has 120 years of experience working on historically important and sensitive sites, while the company has

8,500
Number of panes
in the roofs

Q&A: Simon Campbell

Simon Campbell, managing director of fit-out specialist Portview, would love to be a footballer and fancies a trip back in time to the swinging 60s

Who would you most like to shoot with a paintball gun?

Vinnie Jones – an annoying hard man who has it coming.

You're God for the day. What's the first thing you do?

Start again!

If you could travel back in time to any period in history, when would it be?

In my 20s in the 60s – music, revolution and other things in the air.

Who or what are you enjoying listening to?

Bob Dylan as always. The last CD I bought was by an African band called Tinariwen. I saw them at the Belfast Festival and they were amazing.

What unsolved mystery would you like the answers to?

Who killed Bambi.

What is your favourite book or film?

The Tin Drum by Günter Grass – I love all his work but this is my favourite.

What would you take with you to a desert island?

My wife and a Nespresso coffee maker.

If you were blessed with the necessary talent, what would your dream job be?

Centre midfield for Leeds United and Northern Ireland.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

If your mother-in-law gives you advice on how to raise your kids, tell her you live with one of hers and there is plenty of room for improvement.

What should the construction industry be doing to help itself in the current climate?

Investing in our people – we are still facing long-term shortages of skilled workers in certain trades and it will come back to bite us.



What's the best work-related thing you did recently?

Being part of a team that delivered six major new stores at Westfield Stratford for some of the UK's best known brands.

"Long-term shortages of skilled workers will come back to bite us"



Broken or Georgian-wired glass tiles are being replaced with reproductions by Eura