



ne of the major sources of international disruption has been the recent escalation of trade tensions, particularly surrounding U.S. President Donald Trump's renewed rhetoric around tariffs. His proposed reimplementation of steep import duties – especially those targeting Chinese and European goods – has already sent ripples through global markets.

While these measures may be aimed at boosting domestic production in the U.S., they risk reigniting a cycle of retaliatory tariffs and fractured trade relations that could have serious implications for UK exporters and importers alike.

Closer to home, UK manufacturers are also contending with a host of challenges including rising energy costs, skills shortages, and an evolving regulatory environment post-Brexit. These issues are further compounded by global factors – geopolitical tensions, climate policy shifts, and the ever-changing state of consumer demand – all of which add layers of complexity to strategic planning and financial forecasting.

So, in these somewhat turbulent times, this edition looks at some of the more practical solutions you can put into place for support.

We explore the many grant opportunities available in the sector and how we can help you through the application and onto to compliance and reporting. And we take a look at how cash flow forecasting can support business growth even in trickier times.

In an industry where vehicles and machinery are critical for normal operations, we explore the pros and cons of hire purchase vs operating leases, and a reminder of what the forthcoming FRS102 changes will mean for this. Plus, as a proud patron of the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, we hear how they work across the county to support local manufacturing and engineering businesses to thrive.

So, whether you're navigating supply chain disruption or considering new markets for growth, we're here to help you make informed decisions with practical financial guidance to help you stay resilient in an uncertain world.

**Steven Burgess** Audit Partner

# Why Cash Is Still Your Critical Survival Tool For Growth

The term 'cash is king' was popularised in the late 1980s by Pehr Gyllenhammar, the then CEO of Swedish car group Volvo, as a term to express the value of holding cash during times of economic uncertainty.



nd whilst the term may now have some critics during recent high inflationary times, it's still an important concept to consider, particularly for businesses with high capital costs, such as those within the Manufacturing and Engineering sectors.

Sam Willis, Audit Associate, explores how and why businesses in the sector should be looking to optimise their cash flow for both stability and future growth.

Cash is a key driver of any business and in recent times when interest rates have continued to rise, the ability to pay off debt is becoming increasingly difficult, meaning that future liquidity issues for some businesses are almost a given.

And whilst this isn't to say that for the nearly 2000 manufacturing businesses in the UK who entered insolvency in 2024\*, that a cash flow forecast would've stopped them from entering administration. What can be said is that keeping on top of cash flow can certainly help to indicate if there is trouble on the horizon.

### What is a Cash Flow Forecast?

Firstly, let's start with a simple definition: cash flow forecasting is the process of estimating the inflows and outflows of cash within a specific time frame, typically on a monthly or quarterly basis.

It involves projecting the expected cash receipts and payments and considering various factors that could influence the financial operations of a company. This forward-looking analysis allows companies to anticipate potential cash shortages, plan for investments, make informed decisions, and implement strategies that ensure their financial stability.

### What is Working Capital?

Working capital, is the money available within a business to be used for its day-to-day operations, and it's what keeps the metaphorical engines of manufacturing and engineering companies going.

Cash flow forecasting aids businesses to manage their working capital effectively. By estimating future cash inflows and outflows, a company can adjust its expenditure, negotiate favourable credit terms, and make sure it has enough liquidity to meet its operational needs. This proactive approach prevents the costly consequences of delays and can help mitigate unexpected expenses, both of which can disrupt operations and damage client relationships.

### **Planning for Seasonal Fluctuations**

Many manufacturing companies will experience seasonal fluctuations in demand. Whether due to increases around holiday periods, seasonal sector demand (such as retail) or industry-specific trends, these fluctuations can significantly impact resources such as staffing, stock holding, machinery usage and subsequent maintenance, which will then in turn affect cash flow.

But cash flow forecasting enables companies to anticipate these shifts and allocate resources accordingly. By knowing when and where demand is likely to spike or dip, companies can adjust their staffing, usage requirements, project cycles, transportation and storage capacities, to make sure they can meet customer demands without overcommitting resources during the quieter periods.

### Navigating Capital Expenditure in the Manufacturing and Engineering Sector

In this industry staying ahead often means making strategic investments in things like technology, machinery and equipment, storage facilities and vehicle and transportation management.

Investments can range from expanding plants or warehousing, to upgrading facilities to become more energy efficient, installing new machinery or automation software and acquiring new vehicles to support operations.

Cash flow forecasting helps to provide the financial insights necessary to plan and execute these investments without putting undue strain on the company's cash balances.

Allowing you to then use the information to evaluate whether or not you have the funds to cover the costs straight from the bank or if other financing options are required.

### **Making Informed Decisions**

Manufacturing and engineering are dynamic sectors, meaning that decisions must often be made promptly and accurately. Cash flow forecasting can facilitate this by providing decision-makers with accurate and timely financial insights. Whether it's determining whether to expand into a new market, negotiating contracts with customers, or the use of external financing, having a clear picture of the financial implications of future strategy is invaluable.

The process has become even more of a consideration after events in recent years that have significantly impacted cross border activity, supply chains, labour and material availability, interest rate fluctuations and technological advances.

Now more than ever it's crucial that contingency plans are in place. And by using cash flow forecasts, decision-makers can analyse and make informed decisions on varying scenarios and 'what-if' events to ensure plain sailing through the murky waters.

### **A Critical Survival Tool**

In capital-intensive industries like manufacturing and engineering, cash flow forecasting isn't just helpful — it's critical to survival and growth. With unique challenges such as long project cycles, large upfront costs, fluctuating material prices, and extended payment terms, liquidity can easily be overstretched

And with continuing global disruptions the need for accurate, forward-looking cash flow insights has never been greater.

Because it's not just about seeing what's in the bank today — it's about understanding what's coming, weeks or even months ahead, so that you can stay agile, resilient, and competitive.

Here at Scrutton Bland we can help you overcome your cash flow challenges by:

- Carrying out an initial cash flow review to identify both 'quick wins' and opportunities for longer-term improvements.
- Benchmarking your working capital cycle to compare against your peers' performance and identify potential opportunities to improve.
- developing detailed action plans for your business, where the dependencies between cash, costs and customer service are optimised.
- Recommending appropriate technology solutions so that your company is making the best use of the latest cloud-based accounting packages and apps
- Supporting the implementation of sustainable procedures, optimising your processes throughout your working capital cycles, and identifying and improving commercial terms

Get in touch with Sam or one of the team to find out more by calling 0330 058 6559 or email hello@scruttonbland.co.uk

\*data taken from the Company Insolvency Statistics Commentary - Company Insolvency Statistics September 2024 - GOV.UK



At a time when the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has published a forecasted fiscal deficit for UK Public Finances for 2024/25 of £127.5 billion\*, business owners around the UK looking to source grants will no doubt find themselves wondering whether, in all reality, there is much money in "the pot" to go round?



ut whilst the media consistently reminds us of the predicted deficit of the UK's funds, now is still a good time to explore potential grant funding options for your business.

Amongst our own varied client portfolio, a number have recently been successful in obtaining grant funding, evidencing that there are avenues out there to explore, even at a time when you feel your businesses cost base is expanding rapidly, mostly out of your control.

Lesley Aldons, Audit Assistant Manager, looks at the grant opportunities available to the industry and how these could lead to not only a potential improvement of your financial position, but also significant growth.

### Where To Start?

A good starting point in the search for grant funding is the "Home - Find a grant" area of the GOV.UK website, part of the Grants Management Function.

This simple search tool allows you to search by sector, and helpfully by location, and often offers a large number of grants available - dependent on where you're operating within the UK.

In terms of the finance available, we're noticing more opportunities for funding for digital technology, including artificial intelligence and cyber security, both of which are at the forefront of many a company's future plans.

There's also a particular focus on environmentally friendly, and carbon-reducing operations, with the UK Government announcing its desire for the nation to have reached the point of carbon neutrality "net zero" by 2050.

And whilst some of us may feel this date seems like a lifetime away at two and half decades, there will be lots of business owners out there who clearly remember "Y2K" like it was yesterday, despite being a date now 25 years in the past!

Based on our current client portfolio, some of the largest providers of grants in the manufacturing and engineering sectors are UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Innovate UK, and regional growth funds. We've seen a number of our clients receive grant funding from these bodies in recent years, helping to grow their businesses and use innovation to enhance the products and services they offer.

The UKRI website offers an interactive platform, and its initial eligibility checking tool is available at an early stage before you delve further into the details of what funding is available.

A funding finder tool is then available to narrow down your potential grant options by funding council, including those from the Engineering and Physical Research Council. It's important not to rule out other grant providers too though, such as the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Institution of Civil Engineers.

### Is It Worthwhile?

Of course, as with all sources of funding for both businesses and individuals, sadly nothing is handed to you on a plate, and the application processes to source such funds can be a very long and drawn out.

However, it's important to hold on to the thought that there are funds out there for the taking, for both small and large businesses, and it's particularly important to review the grants available on a regular basis as new funding opportunities are continually published.

As with the majority of government grants awarded, there are defined reporting schedules to confirm that any costs incurred by the business are eligible and in line with original documentation at award date. The grantor will detail specific criteria which must be met, such as job creation, innovation in a certain area, or carbon reduction.

In most cases, to be sure funds are used as intended, the overseeing body may require an audit of the grant claims on an ongoing basis, to confirm that funds have been allocated and spent according to agreed terms.

### How We Can Help

As a registered auditor, this is a service that we have experience in offering, meaning we can support those fortunate enough to have obtained funding to progress and grow their business

This work can involve reviewing both your financial and non-financial information, agreeing compliance with original grant award documentation, agreement to timesheets/payslips, and invoices and bank payments where applicable. And so long as appropriate records are maintained for the work done and the projects carried out, the task shouldn't be too onerous.

### So, Is A Grant Right For You?

It would be a lie to say that the grants process is a quick and easy one, so the time required for the application monitoring and reporting must all be factored in.

However, at a time when businesses across all sectors are seeing what feel like never-ending cost increases, particularly with respect to energy and staff costs, there has arguably never been a better use of your time than to research and apply for any grant funding opportunities that may be available.

Adding a monthly diary note to check availability for release of any new grants in your sector could be a valuable way to spend your time

Determining whether the funding you've applied for will be subject to a grant audit depends on various factors such as who the grant has been provided by, the size of the grant, the complexity of the project, the agreement terms and past performance with other funding.

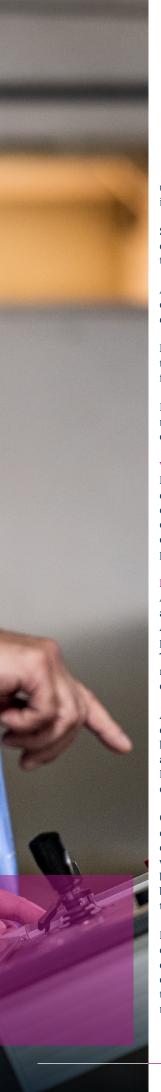
You can find out more here Grant Audit | Scrutton Bland including 5 tips to help you determine whether you need a grant audit or not

So, whether your business is in the process of looking for, applying for, or recording details of grant funding, we're here to help.

Contact Lesley or one of the Audit team by calling 0330 058 6559 or email <u>hello@</u> scruttonbland.co.uk

\*Brief Guide to the Public Finances-published October 2024





ith this shortage in talent comes an associated expectation of increased salaries, and along with the recent increase in Employer National Insurance Contributions, taking on new employees using traditional remuneration packages is becoming increasingly expensive.

So, many businesses are therefore now looking at other ways of rewarding new or existing employees to differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

And one effective way for UK businesses to do this is by offering Enterprise Management Incentive (EMI) share options.

EMI schemes provide significant tax benefits whilst aligning the interests of employees with those of the company, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment.

In this article, Tax Partner Chris George explores the key reasons to consider incentivising employees with EMI share options and the tax advantages of such schemes.

### What Are EMI Share Schemes?

Enterprise Management Incentives (EMIs) are a type of employee share option scheme where employees are granted options to buy shares in the company at a future date, often at a predetermined price. These options can then be exercised after a specified period or upon meeting certain performance criteria.

### **Key Benefits of EMI Share Options**

Attracting and Retaining Talent: EMI schemes are an attractive benefit for both potential and current employees. And by offering share options, companies can attract skilled professionals who are looking for more than just a salary. The prospect of owning a stake in the company can be a motivational tool, encouraging employees to stay with the company longer and contribute to its growth.

Aligning Interests: Share options align the interests of employees with those of the company. When employees have a financial stake in the success of the business, they are more likely to be motivated to work towards its success. Leading to increased productivity, innovation, and overall company performance.

Cost-Effective Remuneration: For many growing businesses, cash flow can be a constraint. So, by offering share schemes, companies can offer competitive remuneration packages without the immediate cash outlay. This can be particularly beneficial in those environments such as startups and small businesses that need to conserve cash while still attracting top talent.

Employee Loyalty and Engagement: Offering EMI share options can foster a sense of loyalty and engagement among employees. When people feel they're part-owners of the company, they're more likely to be committed to its long-term success, leading to lower staff turnover rates and a more stable workforce.

### **Tax Benefits of EMI Share Options**

One of the most compelling reasons for UK businesses to implement EMI schemes though is the significant tax advantages they offer such as:

No Income Tax or National Insurance on Grant: When EMI options are granted, there is no income tax or National Insurance Contributions (NICs) payable by the employee. Making EMI schemes more attractive than other forms of employee compensation.

Tax-Advantaged Exercise: Generally, no income tax or NICs are payable when the employee exercises the EMI options, provided the exercise price is at least equal to the market value of the shares at the time the options were granted. However, if the options are granted at a discount, income tax and NICs may be payable on the difference between the exercise price and the market value at the time of grant.

Capital Gains Tax (CGT) Relief: When the shares acquired through EMI options are sold, any gain is subject to Capital Gains Tax (CGT) rather than income tax. This is beneficial because CGT rates are generally lower than income tax rates.

Additionally, if the shares are held for at least two years, the employee may qualify for Business Asset Disposal Relief (BADR), which reduces the CGT rate on gains up to  $\pounds 1$  million.

Corporation Tax Deduction: Companies can benefit from a corporation tax deduction equal to the difference between the market value of the shares at the time of exercise and the amount paid by the employee for the shares. And this can result in significant tax savings for the company.

### Is an EMI Share Scheme Right for You?

Incentivising employees with EMI share options is a strategic move for UK businesses looking to attract, retain, and motivate top talent. The combination of aligning employee and company interests with significant tax advantages, makes EMI schemes an attractive option for both employers and employees. And by offering EMI share options, businesses can create a more engaged and committed workforce, to drive long-term success and growth.

Implementing an EMI scheme does require careful planning and compliance with HMRC regulations, but the benefits far outweigh the complexities.

To find out more about whether an EMI scheme could be right for your business, contact Chris or one of the team on 0330 058 6559 or email hello@scruttonbland.co.uk



ut these businesses are also typically very capital-intensive. with assets holding a significant balance sheet presence in accounts, making asset financing a strategic issue. With decisions affecting not only cash flow and tax planning but also operational agility and long-term asset management.

In this article, Ben Cussons, Business Advisory Partner explores the different options for asset financing, and what to consider when it comes to making a choice for your business.

As with many things, there's no right answer for everyone here, there are pros and cons to each route. But to begin with there are some considerations you might want to think about before you start:

How often are the assets going to be used? And what's their average lifespan? High-usage fleets may wear out faster, affecting residual value.

What's your cash flow like? You may have capital available or predictable revenue streams.

What's the operational flexibility of the different types of purchase? What happens if you need to scale the fleet up or down quickly?

How long will the technology last? Specialist or tech-heavy assets can become obsolete much auicker.

Ultimately each option will have a different impact on your balance sheet too.

### Purchase - Outright or Hire Purchase

- Immediate Corporation Tax saving in the year of purchase based on 25% of the total costs of the asset, irrespective of whether you purchase outright or on finance.
- 100% of the VAT can be reclaimed on the cost of the asset.
- Shown as an asset of the company which strengthens the balance sheet.
- Once paid for the asset is yours and there is no immediate commitment to replace the asset, any future earnings out of the asset are yours.

### Cons:

- Requires initial outlay of cash by way of the deposit and funding of the VAT upfront.
- Significant liabilities used to borrow the money to finance the purchase of the asset may compromise raising additional finance.
- You are responsible for the ongoing maintenance costs and as the asset's future life shortens - these are likely to increase.

Buying an asset on finance means you spread the cost over a period of time and the asset will belong to you at the end of the repayment period. You can also claim the VAT back up front, plus there's up to 25% in Corporation Tax reduction from day one, depending on your tax rates and where tax profits fall within the financial year.

The asset will appear on your balance sheet as an asset (together with any associated acquisition costs), and because the HP finance is linked to the asset, it may be easier to source funding. At the end of the payment plan you will own the asset, to either keep using or sell on second hand.

However, you should bear in mind that there may be limits as to what you can afford. As well as putting a deposit down - which at the very minimum will be the entire VAT value of the acquisition - the cost of servicing the debt may be difficult to maintain when other costs and revenues in your business may be fluctuating.

Repayments will be over a set period, potentially longer than on a lease, adding a lot more debt to your balance sheet. Remember that buying outright will mean the responsibility of maintaining and servicing the asset is down to you, and the risks of dealing with expensive repairs will need to be factored

Furthermore, you need to consider the impact of your current ratio which will be worsened by the addition of debt (an element of which will be a current liability). This is important for those businesses with borrowings that have financial covenants attached.



### **Operating Leases**

### Pros:

- Reduced initial outlay of cash.
- Fixed monthly spend, often includes maintenance costs built into the monthly amount for the period of the lease.
- Currently doesn't show as a liability on the company's balance sheet.

### Cons:

- No use of the asset once lease term expired.
- Need to enter into a new contract to replace the asset.
- VAT is typically claimed monthly on the lease rentals.
- May incur additional charges if you exceed the agreed usage as set out in the initial contract.

Leasing is a popular option and will provide some certainty over outgoings as the repayments are fixed over a finite period. However other costs often materialise, and leasing companies will be passing those on to their clients, so don't expect any irresistible deals.

Many lease contracts will have a maintenance plan as part of the contract and there is a tax relief element as VAT can be claimed back as payments are made. On the other hand, the most obvious point is that the asset will not belong to you. So, you won't have the option to sell it if your business needs change, or if you need to realise your assets.

Leased assets and their associated liabilities are not (currently) included on the company's balance sheet; instead, you must disclose operating lease commitments in the notes to the accounts.

## Accounting Treatment of a Purchase on Finance

If you have taken out debt to finance the purchase of the asset, you will have a large asset and liability on the balance sheet. A deposit is likely to be required initially and then the asset will be brought over a set period, which is likely to be longer than a lease period would be. This would add a lot more debt to your balance sheet over time and represents a bigger commitment than leasing.

A fixed asset needs to be recognised for the acquisition costs which will then be depreciated over a number of years, often over the term of the lease. A liability is also recognised for the obligation of the future instalments of the agreement. Consequently, buying makes the company appear more profitable but results in a weaker balance sheet.

### **Accounting for Operating Leases**

Under current FRS102 rules a company doesn't need to show leased assets as an asset in the accounts or recognise the liability for the future obligations. The rental payments are just expensed to the statement of profit and loss, but a disclosure also needs to be included for the remaining commitment of the lease. This can make you seem less profitable but with a stronger balance sheet from a finance point of view.

However, this changes for accounting periods commencing on or after 1 January 2026 which will see – for all except those leases that are short-term (12 months or less) or low-value – the need for an asset and liability to be recognised, regardless of whether the company leases or buys. The change will see assets under operating leases capitalised on your balance sheet (the 'right-of-use' asset) with a corresponding lease liability within creditors. You can find out more about these changes on page 13 of this newsletter.

Any decision on leasing or purchasing assets, whatever your business sector should always be made on the merits to your company and any future plans you have.

For advice that's bespoke to you on this topic, get in contact with Ben or one of the Business Advisory team by calling 0330 058 6559 or email <a href="mailto:hello@scruttonbland.co.uk">hello@scruttonbland.co.uk</a>

# Supporting Suffolk's Manufacturing & Engineering Sector

Suffolk Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to supporting businesses within the manufacturing and engineering sector, recognising it as a vital part of the regional and national economy, contributing significantly to employment, exports, and technological innovation. Luke Saunders from the Chamber shares how members across the sector can benefit from this support.

"We're delighted to be partnering with Suffolk Chamber of Commerce as patrons. By sharing a common goal of championing local businesses, we work closely with the Chamber and its members to offer support, share expertise, and contribute to the economic growth of our region." Emma Clifton, Business Advisory Partner





In recent years, the manufacturing and engineering sector in Suffolk has faced numerous challenges, from supply chain disruptions to changing market demands and the need to keep up with new technology. Suffolk Chamber aims to be at the forefront of supporting businesses through these changes, helping them overcome challenges and become stronger.

We have recently worked with Brafe Engineering Limited and had the opportunity to support them in developing and upskilling their team, contributing to their training initiatives, and improving internal processes. This partnership helped Brafe improve their skills and abilities, allowing them to secure more important contracts.

Thanks to this support, Brafe Engineering has invested in its staff and positioned itself for continued growth. This has opened doors to significant future opportunities, and we are proud to have played a role in helping them achieve this. We look forward to seeing their continued success in the coming years.

We remain committed to supporting the manufacturing and engineering sector and our dedicated team offers a range of services designed to assist businesses in growing, innovating, and developing their teams.

Through our membership, we can help with everything from connecting companies with funding opportunities to facilitating partnerships that can drive innovation and long-term success. We are dedicated to helping businesses grow, innovate, and develop their teams, ensuring they are well positioned to meet future challenges.

By making sure these businesses have the right resources, connections, and support to thrive, our ongoing efforts aim to help growth, sustainability, and innovation across the sector.

Unlock exclusive business benefits today by joining the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and access expert advice, valuable networking, discounts, and more.

Contact us at <a href="membership@suffolkchamber.co.uk">membership@suffolkchamber.co.uk</a> to get started!



FRS 102 applies to medium and large companies, public benefit and other entities who are not required to apply (and do not voluntarily adopt, where applicable) IFRS, FRS 101, or FRS 105.

### What's Happening, And What's The Impact?

Effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2026, significant changes are being introduced to FRS 102. Small (or micro) businesses that currently apply section 1A of FRS 102 will also be affected by these changes.

The changes are intended to move accounting to a basis more aligned to international accounting standards.

Two areas will see the biggest changes:

### **Revenue Recognition**

- A five-step revenue recognition model will be implemented – using "promises" rather than "performance obligations".
- Entities will need to review revenue contracts and apply the five-step model.
- In particular, you'll need to consider the treatment for contracts that have bundles of goods/services, variable consideration, warranties, customer options, or significant financing components.
- No restatement of comparatives required.
- Micro entities applying FRS 105 may also be impacted by these changes to revenue recognition.

### Leases

All leases are to be recognised on the balance sheet for lessees in a similar way to IFRS 16 'Leases':

- As a right of use (RoU) asset and corresponding lease liability reflecting the obligation to make the lease payments.
- Lease expenses will need to be presented as depreciation and interest.
- Exemptions will be available for shortterm leases and leases of low-value assets.
- No restatement of comparatives required.

The forthcoming lease changes were covered by John Perry in the <u>September 2024 edition of our Manufacturing & Engineering Newsletter</u>.

It can be seen from the above that FRS 102 could have a significant impact on EBITDA calculations and other key metrics.

And with the potential to impact the timing of revenue recognition, the amendments may also lead to increased disclosures in financial statements from previous years, providing more information to the readers of your accounts, some of which may be sensitive.

### What You Can Do Now

These amendments are likely to require some changes to systems and processes to be in place for 1 January 2026, which may involve updating charts of accounts and assessing system capabilities for example.

Early adoption is also available provided all amendments are applied at the same time.

### We're Here To Help

To find out more about how FRS102 will impact your business please contact one of the team on 0330 058 6559 or email <a href="mailto:hello@scruttonbland.co.uk">hello@scruttonbland.co.uk</a>

# **Meet The Team**

Our team of Manufacturing & Engineering specialists regularly advise a wide range of corporate and owner managed businesses, from small to large manufacturers, engineers, as well as importers of manufactured goods and, have a thorough understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the industry.

We seek to build long-term, trusted relationships with you by getting to know the details of your business and by understanding your personal aims and objectives. The means we can offer bespoke personal advice to suit your circumstances.

Get in touch with a member of the team to see how we can help.



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In 2024, Scrutton Bland became part of Sumer – a collaboration of the best regional accountancy practices with a shared vision to champion local small to medium-sized enterprises. By bringing together the best in business services, Sumer retains the value that community-based practices offer and combines this with the scale, breadth of expertise and technologies that only a national organisation

To find out more about Sumer, visit our website: www.sumer.co.uk

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