

The Board Room Brief



Celebrating 60 years of Representation, Education and Support for Employed Barristers.

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the December edition of this newsletter which will also be my final one as Chair of BACFI. It really has been a pleasure to hold the Chair position for the last 4 years and I have met some extraordinary people on this journey. Throughout my time I have seen first hand BACFI's commitment to representing the interests of employed barristers and unregistered barristers across a range of employment constructs. I will, of course, still be around and fully supporting BACFI but it is time to hand the Chair over to some fresh ideas and I congratulate Sara George on taking up the position from January. Thank you to the Committee, our Vice Presidents and our President, Lady Hale for all their support over the years.

As the year draws to a close and we hopefully break for time with family and friends I wanted to reflect on what has been a busy and a particularly important year for BACFI. As well as celebrating our 60th year we have also lost some dear friends.

We have continued our drive to bring the voice of the employed bar to students. It is important that future members of the bar have full sight of the enormous range of opportunities open to them, including the employed bar. I enjoyed meeting many of this cohort at the Bar Council Pupillage Fair in October and discussing examples of the interesting areas of law that employed barristers get involved with (sometimes internationally). Very much linked to this, over the course of the year we have continued to encourage employers to consider providing pupillages in their own firms. The more the employed bar can offer in this regard the more we will continue to raise its profile.

In the context of recognition for employed barristers, you will no doubt have seen a reference in the latest Employed Barristers' Committee Newsletter this week [Employed Barristers' Committee newsletter - Winter 2025](#) to the work that the Bar Council is doing in the form of a KCA Working Group. I would encourage you all to please send through your thoughts on the areas highlighted to ensure that the broadest possible range of forums in which advocacy is undertaken are represented and heard.

In October, we had a wonderful evening hosted by Lady Hale in the House of Lords to commemorate BACFI's 60th year and some snaps from the evening are in this newsletter.

Our annual Denning Lecture and Reception took place at Inner Temple once again this year and we were honoured to have Professor Ewan McKendrick KC (Hon) 3 Verulam Buildings speaking to us about "Contracts, Certainty and the Supreme Court".

I would like to welcome the incoming Chair of the Bar, Kirsty Brimelow KC and thank her for joining us at the AGM and thank outgoing Chair, Barbara Mills KC, for her support over the past year.

Finally, I want to thank Sandra once again for all the work she does for BACFI (and all the organising!) and thank Marque Wealth Management for their constant support.

I will leave this newsletter with my usual reminder.... please regularly check-in with the BACFI website where you will find a wealth of information pertinent to practice at the employed bar, including career opportunities, links to relevant information from other organisations (eg the Bar Council) and details regarding how to join us. Please do not hesitate to contact Sandra with any questions, comments, or ideas.

I look forward to seeing you all at our many planned events for next year and, in the meantime, wish everyone a healthy and happy Festive Season and a healthy and prosperous 2026.

Warm regards, Gaynor Wood, Chair

Sir Stephen Brown

We are sad to report that Sir Stephen passed away on 1st October aged 100. He was the President of BACFI from 1991 – 1999. He was was a Lord Justice of Appeal from 1983 to 1988 and President of the Family Division from 1988 to 1999 and a Bencher of Inner Temple. A full obituary can be found here: [Sir Stephen Brown - Malvernian Society](#).

Celebrating 60 years of BACFI at the House of Lords: 10 October

Our 60th anniversary dinner was a huge success! Hosted by Lady Hale, we welcomed 80 to the Peers' Dining Room at the House of Lords for a Champagne reception and three course dinner. It was lovely to see both long standing BACFI members and several new recruits along with their guests, and many of our Vice Presidents too.





The Bar Council's annual Pupillage Fair: 18 October



Once again, we attended the Bar Council's Pupillage Fair. We spoke to students about careers at the Employed Bar and also to those exhibiting who offer employed pupillages such as Reading Borough Council, Express Solicitors and the CPS. Thanks to Gaynor Wood, Ryan Porter and Stephen Potts for giving up their time to attend.

BACFI / City Law School Student Evening: 22 October

Our annual student event was chaired by Dan Byrne and the panel included Patrick Rappo, Alexandria Carr and Janet Mernane. The speakers gave us an outline of their career path along with their tips on how to succeed. Thank you to City Law School for their continued support of this event and also to Thomson Reuters for their sponsorship, along with the speakers for giving their time to inform students what a career at the Employed Bar can look like.

Pro Bono Opportunities and the Employed Bar: 19 November



Many thanks to Calum Macdonald for sharing his experience of working with Advocate and to Advocate for giving us details of how our members can get involved in this worthwhile work which ranges from advice, written submissions and appearing in court to represent those who cannot afford to pay for legal assistance. Please do consider volunteering. If your employer does not cover insurance for this work then Advocate can arrange this through their Bar Mutual insurance.

To find out more about Advocate, please visit their website: www.weareadvocate.org.uk

BACFI AGM: 26 November

Our speaker at this year's AGM was Kirsty Brimelow KC, incoming Chair of the Bar. Kirsty spoke about her focus points for next year which include children in the justice system and a review of the age of criminal responsibility, VAWG and establishing a Nature and Climate committee. She is also keen to make sure that the EDI and social mobility work that the Bar Council does continues to grow. She is wanting to support the Employed Bar and recognise their unique and varied challenges. This includes support for career progression and she mentioned the KCA Working Group which has been set up following BACFI and the EBC's submission of the paper outlining potential reforms to the system. The first Employed Barrister to become Chair of the Bar will be Heidi Stonecliffe in 2027 which is wonderful news so we look forward to that milestone. She also mentioned that the EBC is looking for new members so look out for further details.

The formal business of the AGM then took place which included the report of the general committee on the year's activities which was presented along with the accounts for 2024. The following were nominated and duly elected: Chair – Sara George, Senior Vice Chair – Gaynor Wood, Junior Vice Chair - James Kitching, general committee members – Ryan Porter, David Bunting and Shahmeem Purdasy.

Thanks were expressed to Ian Brookes-Howells who is standing down from the committee. Ian has been a committee member, Chair and Senior Vice Chair over many years and contributed much to BACFI. We wish him well for the future and are sure to see him at events in his capacity as a Vice President.

BACFI / The Inner Temple Employed Bar Forum Denning Lecture

This year's Denning Lecture was given on 1st December by Professor Ewan McKendrick KC (Hon). His excellent lecture was attended by many members of the senior judiciary (including Lady Rose) along with BACFI members, Vice Presidents and their guests. A recording of the lecture can be found here innertemple.org.uk/denninglecture2025 and a transcript here [Denning Lecture 2025.pdf](#). Following the lecture, Gaynor Wood presented Stephen Collier with a BACFI Fellowship award. Unfortunately the other recipient of a Fellowship award, Christiane Valansot, was unable to attend due to illness. We wish her a speedy recovery. Both Stephen and Christiane have contributed an enormous amount to BACFI over many years and are worthy recipients of the awards which celebrate our 60th year.

James Kitching presented Gaynor with a token of the committee's appreciation for all she has done in her 4 years as BACFI Chair and thanked her for her outstanding leadership and commitment. The reception followed where guests enjoyed drinks and canapes. We would like to thank Inner Temple for hosting the event and also Marque Wealth Management for their generous sponsorship once again.



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Autumn Budget: walking a tightrope

Raising £26 billion over the next five years through measures such as **frozen personal tax thresholds**, introducing **national insurance on salary sacrifice contributions**, as well as **increased taxes on dividends**, property and savings income, Chancellor Rachel Reeves has closed the “black hole” in the UK finances. Hetal Mehta, Chief Economist at St. James’s Place, says extra fiscal headroom* offers much needed flexibility to reduce policy volatility and ultimately supports economic growth.

At a glance:

- Tax increases of **£0.7 billion next year** rising to **£26 billion by 2029-2030** offset the increase in spending, which is focused on UK healthcare and defence sectors.
- The energy bill package will lower inflation in the short-term, but it doesn’t offset other effects. Overall **inflation has been revised up** and it most likely won’t help the Bank of England cut rates aggressively in the coming months.
- The **UK productivity downgrade** and resulting GDP growth downgrade in the medium term look much more realistic. Combined with the **additional fiscal headroom**, there is more resilience baked into the fiscal framework.

Hetal welcomed another change regarding the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) assessments every six months. “The move to only one assessment a year against the fiscal rules should dampen the policy volatility and speculation.”

While the OBR downgraded medium term UK productivity, its 2025 forecast for **UK growth moved up from 1% to 1.5%**, commensurate with other independent forecasts.

Ahead of the Budget the Chancellor faced unenviable choices says Hetal – support the economy or balance the books? Break manifesto pledges or break fiscal rules? Keep markets onside or keep voters happy? “The UK tax burden, already on track to reach around 38% - the highest on record - could climb even higher. For Reeves, there were no easy fiscal choices to make. This **Budget demanded a delicate balancing act**, with direct implications for households, markets, and many of our clients.”

As Hetal pointed out, the economic picture heading into the Budget was mixed: GDP growth has been lacklustre, though running slightly ahead of the OBR’s expectations back in March. **Inflation has remained elevated**, but not as high as the Bank of England had feared, she says.

In her speech, the Chancellor says net UK debt this year will be **£2.6 trillion – 86% of GDP**. This means **£1 in every £10 of government spending goes on debt interest**. Hetal says: “Overall, it seems the Chancellor has managed a fine balancing act. Although taxes will rise, she is also increasing spending, resulting in a very small fiscal tightening. The growth and productivity downgrades were at the upper end of expectations and now look much more realistic.”

Key announcements and forecast changes

- UK medium term productivity downgraded by 0.3 percentage points to 1% resulting in medium term GDP growth revised down from 1.8% to 1.5% (though 2025 was revised up to 1.5%)
- Overall increase in taxes by 2029/30 is £26 billion but spending will increase by £11 billion
- The **fiscal headroom** has increased from **£9.9 billion to £22 billion**
- **National Insurance** and **income tax thresholds frozen** for additional **three years beyond 2028**
- **Tax on property and savings income** to rise by two percentage points for each tax band. **Tax on dividend income** to rise two percentage points for basic rate and higher rate taxpayers but not additional rate taxpayers
- Amount people can **sacrifice from their salary** to avoid paying NI on pension contributions **capped at £2,000 a year from 2029**
- Amount under-65s can put into **cash ISAs capped at £12,000 a year**, with the rest of the £20,000 annual allowance reserved for investments

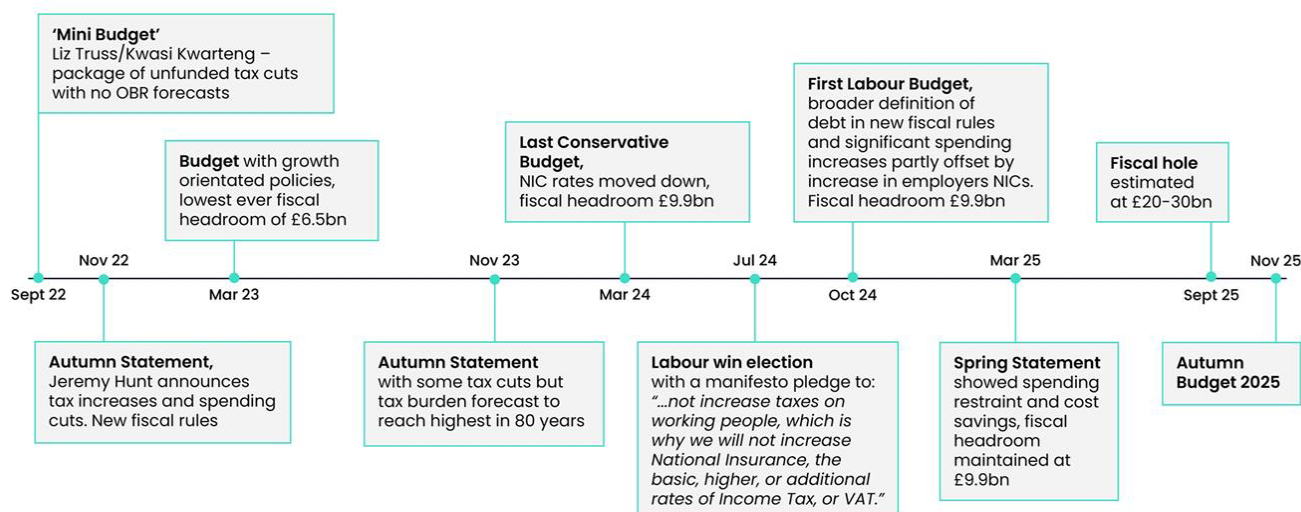
- In England, **properties worth more than £2 million face a £2,500 annual charge**, rising to £7,500 for properties worth more than £5 million
- **Cap limiting households** on universal or child tax credit from receiving payments for a third or subsequent child to be **scrapped from April**
- By maintaining the triple lock policy, the basic and **new state pension payments** will go **up by 4.8%** from April, more than the current rate of inflation
- **Three-year exemption for stamp duty reserve tax for companies** that choose to list in the UK
- To protect high street retailers, there will be a **new custom duty on deliveries from online businesses**
- **Defence spending** to reach of **2.6% of GDP** by 2027

What's next?

For Hetal it will be important to dig into the numbers behind the Chancellor's speech. Neither the tax increases nor the spending were particularly aggressive and **the fiscal hole has been closed**. Hetal retains a watchful eye on UK productivity and how it translates to growth and in the near term to the Bank of England's interest rate policy.

The **initial response from the gilt market**, after the pre-announcement lurch in yields when the OBR report was accidentally published too early, was **somewhat muted**, she notes.

How did we get here?



Source: Hetal Mehta, SJP Chief Economist

Would you value some guidance on how to navigate through the recent Budget changes?

Get in touch with Marque Wealth Management and we can help you establish a resilient financial plan for the future.

- **Contact Mark Quayle (APFS) - Chartered Financial Planner: 0203 917 5304 / 07764 963 701 www.marquewealth.co.uk**

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The levels and bases of taxation, and reliefs from taxation, can change at any time. The value of any tax relief depends on individual circumstances.

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Senior Partner Practice

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Dates for your diary

18th February: Update on the motor commissions case. Webinar at 6pm with speaker Kate Urell, Gough Square Chambers. Free for BACFI members, £20 others.

5th March: The Post Office Scandal: Update. Webinar with speakers Flora Page KC, Professor Richard Moorhead and Dr Alan Brenner. Free for BACFI members, £20 others.

10th March: International Women's Day – Lady Hale speaking on “Diversity is not a dirty word”. In conjunction with SEAL. Venue tbc, 6pm in person only followed by drinks. Free for BACFI and SEAL members, £20 others.

26th March: Legal Coffeehouses of London walking tour, 6pm – 8pm meeting at Cornhill. We will be exploring London's original coffeehouses in the City and move on to Fleet Street and Temple. Dr Matthew Green will lead the tour which includes sampling 17th century style coffee and a cup of “clairret”, the lawyer's preferred drink in 18th century London. Cost £45 each for BACFI members and their guests, £55 others.

23rd April: Wine tasting at Bedales, Leadenhall Market, 6pm. Kindly sponsored by Marque Wealth Management. Cost to be confirmed.

BACFI members on Bar Council Committees 2026

Bar Council

Sara George, Lucinda Orr (elected Treasurer), Lorinda Long (elected), David Bunting (BACFI representative), Mike Jones KC (elected).

General Management Committee

Sara George, Lucinda Orr

Employed Bar Committee

Mike Jones KC, Lucinda Orr, James Kitching, Charlotte Pope-Williams, Hannah Smith

Finance Committee

Lucinda Orr

Regulatory Review Working Group

David Bunting

European Committee Law Committee and Retained Law Working Group

Alex Carr

Bar Representation Committee

James Kitching,

Race Working Group

Sharon Blackman, Rebecca Dix

Money Laundering Working Group

Shahmeem Purdasy

Bar Council Ethics Committee

Sara George, Hannah Smith, Brian Cahill

Bar International Co-ordination Group

Charlotte Pope-Williams

Legal Services Committee

Lorinda Long

Wellbeing at the Bar Group

Shahmeem Purdasy

Audit Committee

Lucinda Orr

Policy and Regulation Panel

Lucinda Orr

KC Working Group

Lucinda Orr, Gaynor Wood, Sara George

BACFI Committee 2026

Chair:	Sara George
Senior Vice-Chair:	Gaynor Wood
Junior Vice-Chairs:	James Kitching
Hon. Treasurer:	James Kitching
General Committee:	Ryan Porter
	Stephen Potts
	Lorinda Long
	Alex Carr
	Daniel Byrne
	Charlotte Pope-Williams
	Shahmeem Purdasy
	Patrick Rappo
	Laurence Fry
	Rebecca Dix
	Sara Lawson KC
	Hannah Smith
	David Bunting

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