

A big thank you to all the members who offered to help on policy. We will be in touch very shortly.

Rating Revaluations – by how much has yours increased?

Valuable advice from the VOA

Crime – are you affected?

FSB Study days – what's the best day and time for you?

Staff welfare grants available for small firms

Cut the cost of working from home

Mobile phones a pain on the Continent? – join a member's campaign

**Rating Revaluations** – by how much has yours increased?

We are getting a lot of feedback from members, especially in Devon, about some very big changes in valuations.

The SW FSB is talking to the Valuation Office Agency about this but more information from you would be a big help. I need your postcode and the rent you pay, as well as the current and proposed valuations. If you own the property it is especially important that you include that information.

Information please to [Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk](mailto:Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk)

**Valuable advice from the VOA**

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has issued a [fact sheet](#) to help businesses ensure they are not caught out by 'professionals', who offer help to reduce business rates bills but end up charging more in fees than they could ever save. Some less scrupulous 'rating agents' even claim to be working on behalf of the VOA to confuse business owners and drum up trade under false pretences.

Find the fact sheet at:-

[http://www.2010.voa.gov.uk/rli/static/HelpPages/Documents/professional\\_advice\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.2010.voa.gov.uk/rli/static/HelpPages/Documents/professional_advice_leaflet.pdf)

Email [marc.shoffman@fsb.org.uk](mailto:marc.shoffman@fsb.org.uk) if you have been targeted by rogue agents.

**Crime – are you affected?**

Thanks to FSB lobbying nationally, more attention should be paid to crime against business locally – where it matters.

Is crime an issue for your business?

What kind of crime?

Would you be prepared to work with your local police to try and do something about it?

Are you already on your local 'Community safety Partnership' or 'Crime and disorder reduction partnership'?

Please send your comments and feedback in to [Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk](mailto:Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk)

**FSB Study days – what's the best day and time for you?**

Several times a year, the SW FSB runs study days to look at certain topics in detail. In the future we want to look at issues around Tourism, local Transport and getting councils to buy locally to boost the local economy.

What is a good day or time for you?

We have held them on a Sunday and quite successfully, but many people will not attend.

We have tried to hold meetings mid week starting late afternoon. This timing allowed people to do at least the morning at work and get home that night. This one was cancelled for lack of interest.

Your thoughts and comments please to [Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk](mailto:Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk)

### **Staff welfare grants available for small firms**

Small businesses can bid for funding to go towards improving the health and welfare of employees.

The Department of Work and Pensions(DWP) announced a total of £4m which will be available from now until March 2011.

The fund is aimed at improving conditions in the workplace and helping prevent workers taking time off sick. They are looking for innovative and exciting ideas to improve the health and welfare of employees in the workplace. These can include projects to reduce stress, improve a work-life balance or provide healthy activities.

To apply companies must have less than 250 employees and have been trading for at least two years. Successful projects will be awarded between £1,000 and £50,000 a year.

Further details, including project criteria and guidance for entries, are available at <http://www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/ChallengeFund>

### **Cut the cost of working from home**

A campaign is being launched by Business Link and the Energy Saving Trust to help home-based businesses cut the cost of working from home.

Make sure you are maximizing your savings by checking the advice on the Business Link website at [www.businesslink.gov.uk/southwest/environment](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/southwest/environment) from November 20th

Until then go to <http://qurl.com/qw5np>

As well as saving money, businesses can also find out how to work in a greener way, which can help boost their environmental credentials and make them more appealing to potential new customers.

The new campaign is the first time support and advice has been focused specifically at people working from home.

I looked at the temporary website and was not very impressed. I raised this and was told that it will improve once the campaign gets underway. As always, your comments will be very much appreciated. [Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk](mailto:Vivienne.rayner@fsb.org.uk)

### **Mobile phones a pain on the Continent? – join a member's campaign**

For members who go on business within continental Europe, the apparently restrictive practices by mobile phone companies with respect to SIM locks and pan-European contracts are an expensive pain.

An FSB member raised this issue with Graham Watson MEP, who has tabled a written question to the European Parliament. Find the question at:-

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sidesSearch/search.do?type=QP&language=EN&term=7&author=2155>

FSB members for whom this topic is a concern can contact their MEP (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/public/geoSearch/zoneList.do?country=GB&language=EN>) and express their concerns directly. Members contacting them by email are recommended to include their name and address. MEPs are political animals and registered voters get more attention.

Of course in the not too distant future, mobile data contracts may be more important than voice contracts so getting things sorted now will have real benefits in the future.

Trust this is of interest and helpful - look forward to hearing from you

Best Wishes

Vivienne Rayner MBE

SouthWest Policy Manager

[swpu.policy@fsb.org.uk](mailto:swpu.policy@fsb.org.uk)

[www.fsb.org.uk](http://www.fsb.org.uk)

For South West Policy webpage [www.southwestfsbpolicy.co.uk](http://www.southwestfsbpolicy.co.uk)