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If you carry bottles of booze and packets of ciggies in a supermarket poly bag in the boot of your Chelsea Tractor, it was not a good day. But for the rest of us, it was just a bit of a bore, Darling!

However, those of us concerned with providing employee benefits, running pension schemes and maximising our investment returns, hadn't expected much, and not much is what the Chancellor, Alistair Darling, gave us in his first Budget. This is not necessarily a bad thing, given the changes we have all had to absorb over the past few years.

As always with the Budget, the devil is in the detail but, from the little information we have, there is some good news for pension schemes.

There is a continuation in the process of making 'A-Day' changes workable. New regulation-making powers, to be included in the Finance Bill, will clear the way to make it easier for the Revenue to amend the legislation in the light of experience gained in the last few years. Good news because, as the simplified pension regime evolves, anomalies will continue to emerge which hitherto the Revenue had no power to address. For example, correcting overpayments and purchasing annuities with small accounts.

But what of changes already announced and in the pipeline?

- Lifetime allowance increased by £50,000 to £1.65m
- Annual scheme allowance increased by £10,000 to £235,000
- 10% starting rate for pension and earned income scrapped
- Basic rate of income tax reduced by 2% to 20%
- Ceiling for paying National Insurance contributions increased from £34,840 to £40,040

These will take effect from 6 April 2008, as previously announced, and although we are sure you have noted

them, your Buck consultant will continue to help you address the implications for your arrangements.

Should we uncover further gems hidden in the documentation we will, of course, extend our Budget coverage accordingly and comment on their effect.

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