

FREE ONLINE FILING ENDING WITH COMPANIES HOUSE & HMRC FIND OUT MORE BELOW

For many small business owners and accountants across the UK, the ability to file company accounts and corporation tax returns online using free government-provided tools has been a convenient and cost-effective solution. However, this long-standing arrangement is coming to an end. As of 31st March, the joint free filing service offered by Companies House and HMRC will be withdrawn, marking a significant shift in how businesses meet their statutory reporting obligations.

WHAT'S CHANGING?

The free online filing service allowed businesses to submit both their annual accounts to Companies House and their corporation tax returns (CT600) to HMRC in one streamlined process. It was particularly popular among micro-entities and small companies with straightforward financial affairs.

From 1st April onwards, businesses will no longer be able to use this service. Instead, they will need to adopt alternative methods for filing, most commonly through commercial accounting software.

WHY IS THE SERVICE BEING WITHDRAWN?

The decision reflects a broader move towards modernisation and improved digital infrastructure. The existing joint filing system has not kept pace with evolving accounting standards, user expectations, and security requirements. By phasing it out, HMRC and Companies House are encouraging businesses to transition to more sophisticated software solutions that can handle a wider range of reporting needs and integrate with other financial processes.

Additionally, maintaining a free service that meets current technological and compliance standards has become increasingly complex and costly.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

Businesses will now need to use third-party software to prepare and file their accounts and tax returns. There is a wide range of options available, from low-cost solutions aimed at small businesses to more comprehensive platforms used by larger organisations.

Many of these tools offer additional features such as:

- Real-time financial reporting
- Automated calculations and error checking
- Integration with banking and payroll systems
- Compliance updates in line with UK regulations



Some popular accounting software providers also offer free or low-cost tiers for micro-entities, which may help ease the transition.

WHAT SHOULD BUSINESSES DO NOW?

If you have been relying on the free filing service, it's important to act promptly:

1. Choose suitable software: Research and select a solution that fits your business size and complexity.
2. Allow time to transition: Get familiar with the new system well before your filing deadline.
3. Seek professional advice if needed: We can help ensure compliance and recommend appropriate tools.
4. Check deadlines: Make sure you don't miss key filing dates during the transition period.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While the withdrawal of the free filing service may feel like an inconvenience—particularly for smaller businesses, it also presents an opportunity to upgrade to more robust and efficient financial management tools. In the long run, this shift could lead to better record-keeping, improved compliance, and more informed business decisions.

As the 31st March deadline approaches, preparation is key. By planning ahead and embracing new digital solutions, businesses can ensure a smooth transition and continue to meet their statutory obligations without disruption.

WE CAN HELP

For more information on any issues raised in this article, call us on **01753 888 211** or email info@nhllp.com, we are here to help.