

## What's left to say in the Autumn Statement?

Published: January 13, 2026, 8:14 pm

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Once upon a time leaking a budget statement (and the Autumn Statement meets that definition) was considered a serious issue and a politician guilty of it has to resign.

Tomorrow's Autumn Statement has been well leaked.

The NHS is having money reallocated to it.

The government is promising to spend money in the future on roads and flood defences, in particular, when we know that it is relatively unlikely that they will be in power at that time.

And we know that corporation tax is being cut and that personal tax allowances are likely to go up again.

After that, what will there be? Some noises on consultations on tax avoidance by the likes of Google, but almost no concrete proposals and confirmation that those who evade tax offshore will be subject to prosecution under what is called strict liability in future, which means that fraudulent intent will not need to be proved in future when prosecuting somebody who fails to declare their income from foreign sources. It will sound like a government getting tough except that there will soon be almost no staff left in HMRC to enforce the law.

What else will happen? There will be froth. It's suggested some will involve additional tax relief on television production, which mildly baffles me as to proven benefit.

We'll get some stuff about tax simplification - which usually means it becomes ever easier for small businesses to hide what they're really doing from HMRC - and expect some new consultations.

There may be some tinkering with tax rates, probably on savings income which simply have the net effect of increasing inequality in the UK and all this will be set against endless triumphal talk on growth and the number of jobs created which will ignite the fact that most jobs are part time and low paid and that earnings per head are still well below

2008 levels.

Just remember to listen to it all as you would when hearing the desperate appeal of the 16 year old who knows they have flunked their GCSEs but wants to put the best possible spin on a few aspects of their course work in the hope that will get them into the sixth form place they want. George has flunked it, and he needs no reward. Nothing he promises now on how hard he will work if given another chance will change that: the reality is he will still be behind the bike sheds next year bragging like mad about conquests that never happened, and that's why we should dismiss his appeals for a second chance tomorrow.