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Call for government support

Entrepreneurs have called on Alistair Darling, chancellor of the exchequer, to support small and medium-sized enterprises in the Budget. Research by YouGov for Small Business Britain, which is backed by Intuit UK, an accountancy software company, revealed that 40 per cent want to see a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions.

Over 45 per cent said they wanted banks to offer better rates to smaller

companies, and 35 per cent called for interest rate cuts to be passed on in full.

Mark Bachelor, managing director of Markman OTW, a business leadership specialist, said: "Small businesses have been recognised by government as the critical force that will drive the UK back to prosperity. However, it will be up to the government to see whether we get the practical support we need."

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