

RESEARCH BRIEF • 7 OCTOBER 2026

UK Autumn Budget 2026: Why Waiting for Tax Certainty Costs More Than It Saves

Osborne Clarke's 6 October 2026 preview of the 28 October Budget points to possible further capital gains tax rises, with wider reform likely deferred. For UK investors weighing Dubai, waiting for tax clarity is a decision with ...

MEDIUM

INVESTOR IMPACT

7.4

SIGNIFICANCE SCORE

6 October 2026

EVENT DATE

7/10

SOURCE RELIABILITY

OI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UK Autumn Budget 2026: Why Waiting for Tax Certainty Costs More Than It Saves

Osborne Clarke published its Autumn Budget 2026 preview on 6 October 2026. Chancellor John Healey delivers the Budget on Wednesday 28 October. The firm says capital gains tax faces possible further increases, the corporation tax rate for large companies is expected to stay at 25%, and wider reform looks likely to be deferred. This is commentary and forecast, not an announcement. Meanwhile, Dubai's market keeps moving. DLD data for September 2026 shows 11,431 sales transactions worth AED 29.7bn, with off-plan at 65.4% of sales by count. The point for a capital preservation investor is simple. Budget uncertainty is real, but a decision deferred until the Budget passes is still a decision, and it carries its own price.

- Osborne Clarke's preview (6 October 2026) is forecast commentary. The Budget itself lands on Wednesday 28 October.
- The firm flags capital gains tax as facing possible further increases, with the annual exempt amount possibly cut or abolished.
- The government has committed not to raise the main rates of income tax, VAT or employee national insurance, which pushes revenue raising towards other taxes.
- Osborne Clarke expects wider reform to be deferred, so one Budget is unlikely to deliver full certainty.
- Dubai activity did not pause: DLD recorded 11,431 sales transactions worth AED 29.7bn in September 2026, with off-plan at 65.4% by count.
- Waiting for tax clarity is a cost, and the right response is to size the decision to your own tax position rather than to headlines.

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THE EVENT

What happened, and why it matters

WHAT HAPPENED

On 6 October 2026, law firm Osborne Clarke published an analysis of what tax measures the UK can expect in the Autumn Budget. Chancellor John Healey, the UK's new chancellor of the exchequer, will deliver it on Wednesday 28 October. In his first speech as chancellor on 7 September, he set three goals for the Budget: to encourage investment, innovation and jobs. The prime minister, Andy Burnham, has committed to Labour's manifesto promise not to increase the main rates of income tax, VAT or employee national insurance. Osborne Clarke notes the chancellor still has to find revenue despite high borrowing costs and a lack of fiscal headroom. Its at a glance summary says capital gains tax faces possible further increases, with investors hoping for some concessions. The corporation tax rate for large companies is expected to stay at 25%, with possible changes for banks. Wider reform looks likely to be deferred. On CGT specifically, the firm says rates on shares and other assets have risen steadily and could rise again, and the annual exempt amount could be reduced or abolished. Equalising CGT with income tax rates has been rumoured, though there has been industry lobbying against it. One alternative the firm raises is matching the 32% rate that applied to carried interest before April 2026. None of this is confirmed. It is an adviser's reading of the likely direction.

WHY IT MATTERS

UK tax policy is the main anchor for overseas investors weighing Dubai. How gains, income and assets are treated at home shapes where capital feels safest. If you hold UK assets and the direction of travel on CGT is up, that is a fair reason to look at diversifying jurisdiction. But the other side matters just as much. A forecast is not a rule. Osborne Clarke itself says wider reform looks likely to be deferred, which means one Budget day may not end the uncertainty. If your plan is to wait until everything is clear, you may be waiting through several more cycles. Meanwhile the Dubai market is not waiting for anyone. DLD recorded 11,431 sales transactions in September 2026 with a total value of AED 29.7bn.

WHO IT AFFECTS

If you're a UK resident holding shares, funds or investment property, the CGT commentary is directly relevant to you, including the possible cut or abolition of the annual exempt amount. If you're a business owner or employee shareholder, the firm's note on EMI and tax-advantaged share plans is worth reading in full. If you've been sitting on the sidelines on Dubai until after 28 October, this affects your timeline. It is less relevant if your UK exposure is small or if your Dubai plans rest on lifestyle and family reasons rather than tax comparison.

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INVESTOR READ

Implications, risks and opportunities

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Osborne Clarke notes that capital gains tax has been a target in several recent budgets and that CGT rates on shares and other assets have risen steadily. It also points to the carried interest regime, which moved into the income tax regime in April 2026, and to the employer national insurance rise introduced from 6 April 2025. The pattern the firm describes is a government with limited fiscal headroom reaching for taxes outside the three main pledged rates. That context is why the CGT speculation carries weight. The fact sheet does not provide earlier Dubai market comparisons, so I will not draw one.

IMPLICATIONS

Start with what you can control. First, separate what is known from what is rumoured. The known: the Budget date, the chancellor's stated goals and the manifesto pledge on main tax rates. The rumoured: CGT equalisation, a change to the annual exempt amount, any new rate. Second, stress test your own position under a worse CGT outcome and ask whether your decision changes. If it does not change, waiting adds nothing. If it does, speak to a qualified UK tax adviser before the Budget rather than after, because this piece is not tax advice. Third, think about what deferral costs. Off-plan payment plans, unit availability and launch pricing are set by developers, not by the UK Treasury. The fact sheet does not give a price trend, so I will not claim one. What I can say is that off-plan made up 65.4% of September 2026 sales by count, so it is where most of the market's activity sits. For a capital preservation mindset, the aim is not to time the Budget. It is to avoid making a large decision under pressure, in either direction. Also note that financing conditions matter: the 3-month EIBOR was 4.3% in October 2026, per the Central Bank of the UAE.

RISKS

Be straight about the bear case, because there is a real one. First, the forecast may be wrong. Osborne Clarke is speculating, and the Budget could land softer than feared, which would weaken any argument built on UK tax pressure. Second, tax is a poor reason to buy on its own. A property purchase in Dubai should stand up on location, developer, payment plan and your own liquidity, whatever Westminster does. Third, moving capital offshore does not remove UK tax obligations that attach to you personally. Your residency and domicile position decide that, and you need professional advice on it. Fourth, off-plan carries delivery and market risk. Off-plan at 65.4% of sales by count

shows depth of participation, but it is also a reminder that a large share of buyers are committing ahead of completion. Fifth, borrowing costs matter. With the 3-month EIBOR at 4.3% in October 2026, leveraged purchases need careful cash flow testing. Finally, a single month of DLD data, 11,431 transactions and AED 29.7bn in September 2026, is a snapshot, not a trend. I would not build a thesis on it.

OPPORTUNITIES

The useful opportunity here is clarity of process, not a trade. If the CGT direction does worry you, the sensible window is before 28 October, when you can take advice on your options with the facts you have, rather than reacting afterwards. For some UK investors, adding a second jurisdiction for part of their wealth is a way to spread policy risk, which is a core capital preservation idea. Dubai's market is active and regulated, with DLD recording AED 29.7bn of sales value in September 2026. Off-plan staged payments can let you commit capital gradually, though the fact sheet gives no payment plan terms, so I will not quote any. The opportunity belongs to the person who does the homework early and sizes the position sensibly, not to the person who rushes.

WHAT TO WATCH

Wednesday 28 October: the Budget itself, and whether CGT rates or the annual exempt amount actually change. Whether the rumoured CGT and income tax equalisation is confirmed or dropped. Any detail on investor relief or Business Asset Disposal Relief changes. Final guidance on mandatory reporting of benefits in kind, which Osborne Clarke expects at or around the Budget. On the Dubai side, the next DLD monthly figures for October 2026, including the off-plan share against the 65.4% recorded in September, and the direction of the 3-month EIBOR from its 4.3% level.

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THE BOTTOM LINE

What this means for Dubai investors

THE MEANING

If you're weighing Dubai, treat the Budget as one input, not the trigger. The September 2026 DLD figures show a market with real depth: 11,431 transactions, AED 29.7bn in value, and off-plan at 65.4% by count. That tells you Dubai buyers are not holding back for UK clarity. It does not tell you prices will rise, and I won't claim it does. Decide on the asset and your own balance sheet first. Use the Budget to understand your home tax picture, take proper advice on residency and reporting, and keep your Dubai decision tied to fundamentals: developer track record, escrow protection of off-plan payments where it applies, and your cash flow under stress. Capital preservation means you can be wrong on the Budget and still be fine.

“ Here's the thing. Every time a UK Budget approaches, I hear the same sentence: I'll wait until after the Budget. I understand it. Be straight with you, it feels prudent. But two things are true at once. The uncertainty is real, and Osborne Clarke's own read is that wider reform looks likely to be deferred, so Budget day may not give you the clarity you're waiting for. So ask yourself this. If the answer on 28 October is bad, would you act? If it's good, would you act? If your answer is the same either way, you're not waiting for information, you're avoiding a decision. That's not caution, that's drift. What I'm seeing on the ground is people conflating two questions: is Dubai right for my family's wealth, and what will the Chancellor do? The first one rests on location, developer quality and your cash flow. The second is noise you can't control. I'd never tell you to buy because of a tax forecast. I'd tell you to get proper UK tax advice before

the Budget, stress test your numbers, and only then decide. If the numbers only work when the Budget goes your way, the deal wasn't strong enough. Comment DATA and I'll send you the numbers, no sales pitch.

BRADLEY JAMES, DUBAI REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT ADVISOR

SOURCES AND VERIFICATION

Osborne Clarke, Autumn Budget 2026: what tax measures can the UK expect? Published 6 October 2026.

<https://www.osborneclarke.com/insights/autumn-budget-2026-what-tax-measures-can-uk-expect>

Dubai Land Department, sales transactions, sales transaction value and off-plan share of sales by count, September 2026. Via Bradley James data warehouse. Central Bank of the UAE, 3-month EIBOR, October 2026. Via Bradley James data warehouse.

Begin the conversation.

Every allocation starts with a candid, numbers-first discussion shaped around your mandate, risk profile and timeline.

Bradley James

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR & SENIOR INVESTMENT ADVISOR

Bradley James is an Associate Director and Senior Investment Advisor based in Dubai, specialising in Dubai real estate, off-plan investment, strategic wealth allocation, portfolio diversification, and relocation and residency planning. He advises private investors and family offices on entering the Dubai market with the same rigour he applies to his own capital.

SPECIALISMS

- Dubai Real Estate
- Off-Plan Investment
- Strategic Wealth Allocation
- Portfolio Diversification
- Relocation & Residency Planning



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SOURCES

Osborne Clarke, Autumn Budget 2026: what tax measures can the UK expect? Published 6 October 2026.
<https://www.osborneclarke.com/insights/autumn-budget-2026-what-tax-measures-can-u>



SCAN TO MESSAGE