



Book now to catch the early-bird Jersey share plans and trustees conference – May 22

The Centre is returning to the Pomme d'Or in Jersey for **its employee share plans and trustees conference** on Friday **May 22**.

In a keynote speech **Tony Moretta**, ceo of **Digital Jersey**, will focus on digital technology , including AI & fintech.

A programme of talks from expert speakers to update trustees and employee share scheme professionals will include recent developments in employee share schemes and a panel debate on the progress of PISCES (Private Intermittent Securities and Capital Exchange System), including extension to the timeline.

The programme provides technical information, which we trust is acceptable as counting towards delegates' Continuing Professional Development or Continuing Competence.

Presentations will run from 09:00 to 13:15, followed by a networking lunch. The Centre is delighted that this year's event is held in conjunction with the Jersey Association of Trust Companies (JATCo) along with the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) Jersey.

Tickets: Book early to secure discounted ticket prices:

Esop Centre/STEP/JATCo members: **£380**/each

(if booked before May 1. £450 thereafter)

Non-members: **£485**/each

(if booked before May 1. £548 thereafter)

Multi-booking discount: 50% off cost of ticket for your **third+ delegate**

To reserve your place, email us at events@esopcentre.com



CENTRE AND MEMBERS NEWS

Eighteenth *newspad* awards results announced



The results of the 18th edition of the *newspad* All-Employee Share Plan Awards were announced at the Centre's Share Plans Symposium on March 26, and presented by Malcolm Hurlston CBE, founder and life president.

Many thanks to everyone who took part and congratulations to the winners, commended and all shortlisted for the awards.



UK share plan reporting 2026

The HMRC deadline for submitting ERS annual returns for the 2025/26 tax year is midnight (BST), July 6 2026. All companies with UK employees participating in share plans, including UK, US and multinational groups, need to ensure they meet their Employment Related Securities (ERS) reporting obligations to remain compliant and avoid penalties.

In a useful guide, **Abbiss Cadres** outlines the **essential aspects of UK share plan reporting for 2026**.

At a glance: UK share plan reporting requirements

- ⇒ Register all new share plans or arrangements with HMRC
- ⇒ Submit an annual ERS return for every registered plan
- ⇒ File nil returns where no reportable activity has occurred
- ⇒ Ensure tax-advantaged plans are self-certified

Baker McKenzie **flagged some common issues**: the return needs to be filed by the entity which registered the plan with HMRC using the plan's unique reference number; if you do not regularly access HMRC's website, now is the time to relocate your log-in details or identify the person who has access; HMRC does not have a defined process in place to allow companies to recover lost details, so ahead of the return season it may be worth adding more than one administrator to your Government Gateway account, just in case your primary administrator is not available to log in and submit your returns before the deadline. To set up a secondary administrator, log into your HMRC business tax account and follow the guidance to add a team member.

The template annual return forms and guidance on how to complete them is available on the **HMRC website**. Before submission, files uploaded to HMRC's website will be checked for formatting errors by HMRC's checking service. The files are format sensitive, so you should check files in advance.



EBTs in listed companies

In an article on LinkedIn, **CMS** explores why Employee Benefit Trusts (EBTs) are a cornerstone of share plan delivery in listed companies. While they are sometimes seen as a behind-the-scenes structure, in practice they play a critical role in making equity plans workable, compliant and efficient. The team looks at why **EBTs are so widely used in a listed company context**, and how they operate in practice to support mainstream equity incentive arrangements.



Howells finalise move to Cytec

Following the successful acquisition of Centre member **Howells Associates**, Cytec has announced leadership changes. Shervin Binesh will become Cytec group ceo, while founder and executive chairman Nick Chinn will continue to support the company's future strategic direction.

After a number of years dedicated to transforming the Howells business and successfully guiding it to this point, Alexander Walsh has decided to move on to a new challenge and is leaving the business. His contribution has been instrumental to growing the team, improving financial performance and positioning the company for this next chapter.

"It has been a privilege to lead Howells through a period of transformation over the last six years. I am immensely proud of what the team has achieved and am confident the business is well placed for continued success as a part of the Cytec Group," he said.

Shervin Binesh commented, "I would like to personally recognise the significant contribution Alex has made. Leading a business through a period of transformation requires resilience, clarity and commitment. Alex has played a central role in building the strong foundation we are now able to grow from. We are grateful for that work and wish him every success in the future."

Latest updates to the Employment Rights Act

Lewis Silkin's dashboard breaks down **what's in the Employment Rights Act**, including the government's 'Next Steps to Make Work Pay':

April 16 - Update to cover the launch of a consultation on NDAs

April 9 - Updates following the launch of the Fair Work Agency, a call for evidence on TUPE and a new consultation on the draft code of practice for the new right of access for trade unions.

March 27 - Update covering the government's response to the ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting consultation.

March 24 - Sections - to confirm when certain measures will take effect, including the requirement to keep holiday entitlement and pay records (from April 6).

Where will the real value of AI come from?

In its latest **In Conversation podcast for the Future of Work Hub**, **Lewis Silkin** asks Prof Gina Neff, professor of Responsible AI at Queen Mary University of London, why the real value from AI will come not from topdown efficiency drives but from empowering people on the ground to negotiate, reimagine and shape how these tools are used.



Life in the Boardroom 2025-2026

The latest chair and NED survey report, *Life in the Boardroom has been published*. Copies of **MM&K's** study are now on sale.

For the 2025-2026 survey, the firm collected data from 167 participants representing a total of 435 board appointments. The report includes information on:

- ⇒ Directors' fees
- ⇒ Time commitments
- ⇒ Board effectiveness
- ⇒ Board governance
- ⇒ Other Board issues, including use of technology, ESG and AI.

This year MM&K partnered with Board Excellence – a specialist board effectiveness and performance practice, Women on Boards – the leading network of board-ready candidates and NEDs in financial services.



Image by Urban Origami from Pixabay

New consultations, guidance and a call for evidence

In its latest *Employment Law Coffee Break*, **Osborne Clarke** deciphers the government's recent further publications on employment law reforms covering:

- ⇒ Non-disclosure agreements
- ⇒ Trade union workplace access
- ⇒ Call for evidence on TUPE
- ⇒ Equality action plans

The government has updated the *implementation roadmap*, which now confirms its intention to bring reforms to NDAs into force in 2027.



HMRC whistleblower rewards scheme requires business response

In its Out-Law news this month, **Pinsent Masons** suggests that businesses in the UK should review and, if necessary, update how they handle employees' concerns about corporate compliance to coincide with **the implementation of a new whistleblower reward scheme** by HM Revenue and Customs.

Under the scheme, people who report serious tax avoidance or evasion to HMRC which results in the authority collecting at least £1.5m in unpaid tax, could get a financial reward of between 15 and 30 percent of the tax collected. HMRC published **guidance relating to the scheme** last November.

Whistleblower reward schemes have been operated by US and Canadian authorities for years. The HMRC scheme is the first such UK scheme to focus on economic crime, though the Competition and Markets Authority already offers financial rewards of up to £250,000 for information about cartel activity.

According to forensic accountant Hinesh Shah, the introduction of the scheme is a clear signal of the UK authorities' increasing reliance on whistleblowers as a source of intelligence in tackling economic crime and tax non-compliance.

Centre president Malcolm Hurlston commented "Encouraging employees to report will have the effect of improving the efficiency of the system."



China – Shanghai SAFE cancels quarterly filing

In its April *Worldwide Wrap-Up Tapestry* reports that Shanghai SAFE has confirmed that the requirement to submit quarterly SAFE filings for share incentive plans registered in Shanghai has been cancelled. This is an update to the [January WWWup alert](#), which reported that some companies had informally been told by SAFE that submissions of their quarterly share plan filings were no longer necessary. For Shanghai SAFE registered plans only, this position has now been formally confirmed in a response published on Shanghai SAFE's online Q&A platform in March 2026. The confirmation makes it clear that the cancellation applies to all companies with incentive plans registered with Shanghai SAFE, regardless of whether they have received any direct, individual notification. As a result, no further quarterly SAFE filings are required to be submitted for these plans. Companies are still advised to prepare and retain the completed quarterly filings and relevant supporting records in case of spot checks by SAFE.

Tapestry commented, "This is good news for companies with share plans registered in Shanghai! But while this announcement removes the administrative burden of ongoing submissions, companies should still keep completed quarterly filings and supporting records on file, as SAFE may continue to request historic information as part of their spot checks even where no formal filing obligation applies. Hopefully this development will extend to other SAFE offices in due course."

Reminder: Tapestry's Cert ESP Course 2026

Registration is open for the 2026 Cert ESP Course (online).

2026 Dates:

Part 1: May 11-15 (Exam July 1 2026)

Part 2: September 14-18 (Exam November 4 2026)

Register here: certesp.tapestrycompliance.com. For more information: training@tapestrycompliance.com



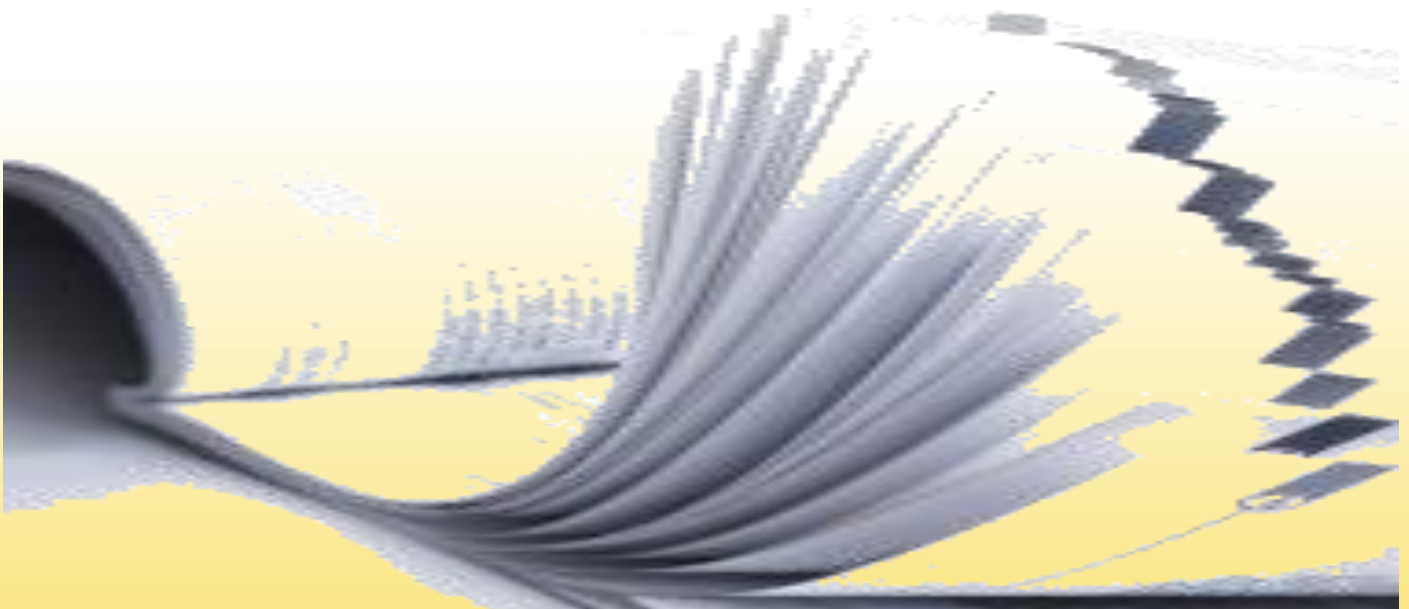


New report on business owner perspectives on selling to employees

NCEO founder Corey Rosen alerted us to a new report by Adria Scharf and Matt Mazewski of Rutgers and Oyindamola Ijewere of Wilmington University - *Business Owner Perspectives on Selling to Employees: Insights from In-Depth Interviews*, which chronicles 24 stories of why business owners decided to sell to an employee ownership plan. While most sold to an Esop, there are also examples of sales to worker cooperatives and employee ownership trusts. The 46-page report also describes how these plans work.

Thomas Rupert of NHS Northstar expressed the most common explanation for selling to an Esop: preserving the legacy of the company and honouring the people who helped build it. After receiving an acquisition offer, they needed to decide what to do. “We’re sitting around the table and we’re saying: all of these people that have been with us for 20 or 25 years could be gone...We’re going to sell this thing, but all of these people who helped us along the way—they could all be gone.” An Esop was a great option.

Jane Hileman, the former owner of American Reading Company said of other potential buyers that “They come in, they hand you money, and you go away. You don’t have to hear from them again. But can you sleep at night? I wouldn’t have been able to sleep at night. I would have felt like my whole life had been wasted and I had thrown it all away to get rich.”





FCA charts path for future of open finance

Fintech Futures reports that the Financial Conduct Authority has unveiled its vision for the future of open finance in the country, with the aim of giving consumers and businesses "greater control over their financial data to help secure better deals".

According to the FCA, open finance represents the "**next major step in the UK's smart data revolution**", building on the progress made with open banking, helping people to share securely a broader range of financial data, including pensions, investments, insurance and mortgages.

Restriction on doctors' strikes?

Writing for *the Critic*, Prof Len Shackleton - editorial and research fellow at the Institute of Economic Affairs – suggests that banning doctors' strikes, though a tough call, may now be feasible. He noted that during the most recent strike by resident doctors, Health Secretary Wes Streeting for the first time suggested that **a ban is an option which could be considered**. So far, this kite-flying has not been repudiated by other members of the government.

"Considering that Labour has recently passed an Employment Rights Bill which is very favourable to unions – for example by making it easier to call strikes, and lengthening the period of a strike mandate from six months to a year – this indicates that ministers are becoming increasingly concerned about the cost of the resident doctors dispute both in monetary and human (waiting lists and missed treatments) terms. They are definitely baulking at the cost of settling the dispute on the doctors' terms, which would be somewhere in the region of £1.5bn and would almost certainly stimulate other public sector pay claims, not least amongst the rest of the 1.5 million NHS workers."





Norway sovereign wealth fund backs esops

According to *IPE magazine*, Norway's sovereign wealth fund has made a strong plea for companies to add employee share ownership schemes. It will become part of its expectations of the thousands of businesses it invests in internationally.

Journalist Rachel Fixsen explained that Norges Bank Investment Management published its official view on employee share ownership on its website on April 16 and a LinkedIn post by NBIM ceo Nicolai Tangen argued that employee ownership “**isn't just a perk – it's good business.**”

Technip Energies launches 2026 employee share ownership plan

Technip Energies has launched *ESOP 2026*, an employee share ownership scheme offered to approximately 17,000 eligible employees in 19 countries, aimed at involving staff in the group's long-term value creation. The *ESOP 2026* offer is available in Australia, Belgium, China, Colombia, France, Germany, India, Italy, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States. Approximately 90 percent of the group's workforce will **be able to take part.**

India

Esop penalty on Vedanta employee quashed

BW People reports that the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, Chennai bench, has set aside a Rs1m (£7,950) penalty imposed on an employee of Vedanta Limited for failing to disclose foreign-held Esops, ruling that the lapse did not amount to deliberate tax evasion.

The employee had received stock options from the company's UK-based parent, Vedanta Resources plc, during an overseas assignment. These shares were held through a fiduciary structure in Jersey but were not reported under the Schedule Foreign Assets section in the income tax return for the relevant assessment year.

The omission led to penalty proceedings under the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) Act, with tax authorities imposing a Rs1m fine, which was upheld at the first appellate level.

On further appeal, the tribunal noted that the Esops formed part of employment income that had already been taxed, with applicable tax deducted at source. It also observed that capital gains arising from the eventual sale of shares had been duly declared in subsequent filings. Importantly, the bench held that the non-disclosure occurred in the first year of mandatory foreign asset reporting requirements and stemmed from a lack of clarity rather than any intent to conceal income.

Terming the lapse as technical and bona fide, the tribunal ruled that penalty provisions under the Black Money Act are discretionary and not automatic, and **accordingly ordered deletion of the Rs1m penalty.**





South Korea

Trust to fund ATI employee ownership in Korea signed

NH Investment & Securities has signed a testamentary substitute trust agreement with Ahn Du-baek, ceo of ATI, the semiconductor inspection and measurement equipment specialist.

Under the agreement, Ahn Du-baek will place the five percent equity (200,000 common shares) inherited from late founder Ahn Jung-gyu into a trust and grant one percent of it each year free of charge to the employee stock ownership association.

The long-term vision of the late founder Ahn Jung-gyu was to share wealth with employees and include future talent.

Ahn Du-baek noted that typical donation or gift methods, under current law, inevitably result in a one-time allocation of shares to employees currently on the payroll, making it difficult to share benefits with future hires, and has been **discussing this with NH Investment & Securities**.



New Zealand

NZX expands employee share ownership

NZX Limited, which operates New Zealand's primary securities exchange, has issued \$1,000 of fully paid ordinary shares, before tax, to each first-time permanent employee who joined or became permanent between February 2025 and February 2026, in a bid to deepen engagement, drive cultural change and align staff interests with those of shareholders.

The company has granted 1,216,382 new performance rights under its long-term incentive plan to executives and managers, seen partial vesting of 2023 and 2025 rights, allowed 699,813 TSR-linked rights to lapse and now has 329,241,123 ordinary shares and 4,346,762 performance rights on issue, fine-tuning its equity-based remuneration structure.

The **latest employee share issuance is part of NZX's broader strategy** to foster an ownership mindset among staff by mandating a one-off grant. It cannot be declined and carries no performance or tenure hurdles beyond continued employment at the issue date.



Image by geekasylum from Pixabay



Nigeria

MTN Nigeria vests 3.77m shares to 106 employees

Ralph Mupita, group president and chief executive of MTN Group, is reinforcing its commitment to the Nigerian market by **rewarding high-performing staff with a significant equity stake**. Under his leadership, the telecommunications giant vested 3,771,677 ordinary shares to 106 employees in April. The transaction, valued at roughly 2.8 billion naira, aligns the interests of Nigerian staff with the broader objectives of the parent company, which is based in South Africa.



Image by OpenClipart-Vectors from Pixabay

USA

Ingersoll Rand ceo extols employee share ownership

In an interview with *Fortune* magazine Ingersoll Rand ceo Vincente Reynald explains how employee ownership helped drive more than eight times enterprise value growth.

When his company, the employee-owned Gardner Denver merged with Ingersoll Rand's Industrial segment in 2020, he became ceo of the new Ingersoll Rand, a global leader in mission-critical flow creation and life science and industrial technologies. Today, an ownership mindset runs deep across Ingersoll Rand's 21,700-person global workforce.

Since 2017, it has grown enterprise value by more than eight times. Attrition has reduced and safety performance exceeds world-class standards. **Employee engagement has climbed to the 90th percentile.**

Shelf registrations:

- ⇒ Earlier this month, **OceanaGold Corporation** filed a shelf registration for up to US\$218.68 million of common stock tied to an Esop-related offering.
- ⇒ **Warrior Met Coal Inc** recently affirmed a regular quarterly cash dividend of US\$0.08 per share and previously filed a US\$326.05m shelf registration covering 3,775,000 common shares for an Esop-related offering.
- ⇒ This month, **VEON Ltd** filed a shelf registration for up to US\$5.16bn in common shares, covering 94,411,725 shares in connection with an Esop-related offering.
- ⇒ **EQT Corporation** recently filed a US\$1.93bn shelf registration for up to 34,000,000 shares tied to an employee stock ownership plan. It had previously declared a quarterly cash dividend of US\$0.165 per share payable on June 1, to shareholders of record on May 6.
- ⇒ According to *Simply Wall Street* **Rumble** filed a shelf registration for a \$50.36m employee stock ownership plan, covering 10,092,331 Class A shares.





Textiles firm Scott & Fyfe doubles profits as sales surge

Pre-tax profits at Scott & Fyfe more than doubled to £2.34m in 2025 as the Fife textiles business reported a near quarter rise in annual sales to just over £21m, up from £17m the previous year. The employee-owned company, which has operated from its base in Tayport for more than 160 years, said the results reflected growth in international markets, targeted investment and the ongoing commitment of its employee shareholders. Cash balances rose from £2.72m to £3.05m, while net assets increased from £7.08m to £8.82m. At the year end, 75.46 percent of the company was held by the Employee Benefit Trust, with the remainder **held by employees through the Share Incentive Plan.**



Image by Tyli Jura from Pixabay

Shambala to become UK's first employee-owned music festival

The Shambala festival is a summer landmark, with its eclectic line-up and counter-cultural appeal drawing thousands of fans year-in year-out.

Though it's always been independent, on April 21 Kambe Events – the company behind the festival – announced that it will be transitioning to an Employee Ownership Trust, becoming the first festival in the UK to adopt the model. “All of us at Shambala have an emotional stake in what we have built over 25 years; now everyone has an ownership stake too,” says co-founder and md, Chris Johnson. “We would be nothing without our people, and they deserve to carry on the Shambala legacy as beneficiaries.

“Shambala stands for independence. In an increasingly commercialised festival scene, we simply could not sell to venture capitalists or the big promotion companies,” Johnson adds. “While exploring alternative paths, we **fell in love with the Employee Ownership model.**”

The annual, four-day music festival will be held in Northamptonshire between August 27-30 this year.



EOT round-up

- ◆ Law Firm **Fidler & Pepper**
- ◆ TV production company **Freeform Productions**

LIBRARY OF WEBINAR BROADCASTS:

Esop Sofa: PISCES Progress; Esop Sofa: 2025 AGMs, Remuneration Policies And Share Plan Design; Esop Sofa 2024 Review: Budget & PISCES; The Employee Voice; The Role Of Direct Employee Share Ownership In Market Economics; Esop Sofa: Hot Topics In Employee Share Ownership – Newspaper Review VIII ; Esop Centre *newspad* Online Round-table; Esop Sofa: Esop Round-Table *newspad* Review VII; Esop Sofa: Hot Topics In Employee Share Ownership – *newspad* Review VI; Employee Share Plans & The Benefits For SMEs; Employee Share Schemes, Levelling-Up & Social Mobility; Why Employee Share Ownership Matters; International Share Schemes: Exporting the Vision; Esop Sofa: Hot Topics In Employee Share Ownership – *newspad* Review V; Share Schemes And The Impact Of Inflation; The Future of Gig Working As A Dynamic Economic Alternative; The Employee Voice: Share Plan Votes ; Esop Sofa: Hot Topics In Employee Share Ownership – *newspad* Review IV; Innovative Tax Techniques For Employee Share Schemes; Share Schemes For Non-Employees & The Gig Economy; Esop Sofa: Hot Topics In Employee Share Ownership; Building Back Better With Your Employees Through Shared Ownership ; EOTs: The Credible Alternative To Succession; The Role of Employee Share Schemes In Achieving The UN Sustainable Development Goals; Esop Sofa: Hot Topics In Employee Share Ownership - *newspad* Review ; Beyond Brexit: EU-UK Social Security Contribution Rules; Esop Sofa: Hot Topics – *newspad* Review; The Share Valuation Worked Examples Group In The Changing Valuation Landscape ; Looking Ahead To 2021: Moving Beyond Brexit In Financial Services Regulation; Insights Into

Share Valuation for Employee Share Schemes: Revealed Through Dynamic Case Studies; Lessons From Lockdown: Re-Assessing How You Manage Share Plans In A Digital Way; Employee Share Schemes: Innovative Communication Strategies Guaranteed To Increase Employee Take-Up ; Selling Your Company To An EOT - How It Differs From An MBO; Institutional Investors' Views On The Use Of Share Plans; Esop Sofa – Hot Topics; Employment-Related Securities: The Complexity Unravelled Into Practical Application; Employee Ownership & The Future Of Capitalism; Could Equity Be Used To Replace A Portion Of An Employee's Salary?; The Case For Employee Share Ownership: The Heart Of The Matter Revealed; Esop Sofa Lockdown Stories; Share Valuation: The Wisdom On Price-Setting For Your Employee Share Schemes; Tools Of Engagement: The Power Of All-Employee Plans; Awarding Shares To Employees In A Covid-19 World; The Employee Share Trust: Establishing A Dynamic Market For Your Employee Share Schemes; How To Ensure All -Employee Share Plans Remain Relevant; Esop Sofa - What Are Today's Big Employee Share Ownership Questions?; Enterprise Management Incentives (EMIs) – Powerful Lessons From Five Practical Case Studies; Enterprise Management Incentives (EMIs) – Igniting Your Business By Sharing Success; Esop's Tales: The Foundation Of The Esop Centre.

Broadening horizons, Z/Yen Group is hosting a range of webinars over the coming weeks. For a full listing of Z/Yen, Long Finance, FS Club, and Esop Centre webinars look here - <https://fsclub.zyen.com/events/webinars/> - or sign up for mailings - <https://fsclub.zyen.com/#Subscribe>



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ABOUT NEWSBRIEF

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