

# Fair Rates for Small Traders

## A Five Point Plan

Fair Rates for Small Traders is a coalition of Business Organisations, local Chambers of Commerce and Traders Groups dedicated to addressing the burden of high business rates on small businesses and our independent retail sector in Northern Ireland. The independent retail sector and our small business sector are central to our town and city centres and our economy as a whole.

It is vital that the NI Assembly provides a sound business environment that encourages small trader start-ups which creates more jobs, widens the tax base and increases local economic development.

Northern Ireland now has the worst town centre shop vacancy rate in the United Kingdom and we urgently need to address this growing problem.

The NI Executive is rightly putting a strong focus on attracting inward investment and strongly supports the campaign for a competitive rate of corporation tax to help achieve this. We also need to ensure that more support is given to local small traders, our independent retail sector and our town centres.

Independent traders and small businesses in every part of Northern Ireland are expressing concern that the burden of high business rates is crippling them. This is putting at risk local jobs and businesses.

Fair Rates for Small Traders is therefore vital to develop our local small business sector and we would urge all local political parties to support our campaign.

## What are we calling for?

1. We support the current proposals outlined by the Finance Minister to extend the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme towards an NAV of £10,000 to be paid by the large retailers. Three fifths of this will be met by large out of town multiple superstores, many of which already pay less per square foot in rates than many town centre independent traders.
2. We would also support serious consideration for the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme to be funded by an alternative funding mechanism of an additional Rate Levy on all large out of town stores which currently have large free car parks. This would address the concerns of the stores in Belfast City Centre which are liable for the additional rate levy. Also DFP should look at ways to ensure parity in business rates between town centre and out of town retail units.



3. We recognise the problem of vacant units in many of our town and city centres and the need to incentivise business start-ups. Therefore we call upon DFP to examine ways of getting empty shops back into business. This would apply to large and small retailers. We appreciate that there are issues subsidising new businesses to compete with established ones and that there are difficulties in deciding what is a genuinely new business, but all we are proposing is a modest rate concession involving newly occupied premises retaining their 50% empty property relief for that vulnerable first year of trading. In the long run this will help stimulate business, not stifle it and full rates will be payable when these businesses become established.
4. We support the Green New Deal and support investment in Green technology and energy efficiency. To incentivise this sustainable investment, DFP should give a rates reduction to any small business which makes such a commitment. This is a sure way to support a radical extension of the Green New Deal and address the challenge of climate change.
5. We support an early Rates Revaluation for Northern Ireland.



## The following support the Fair Rates for Small Traders

N.Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association  
 Pubs of Ulster  
 Banbridge Chamber of Commerce  
 Warrenpoint Chamber of Commerce  
 Lurgan Chamber of Commerce  
 Down Business Forum  
 Derry/Londonderry City Centre Traders' Forum  
 Carrickfergus Chamber of Commerce  
 Larne Traders' Forum  
 Ballymoney Chamber of Commerce  
 Ards Chamber of Commerce  
 Omagh Chamber of Commerce  
 Lisburn Road Business Association  
 Cookstown Chamber of Commerce  
 Ballymena Chamber of Commerce  
 Ballycastle Chamber of Commerce  
 Enniskillen Business Partnership  
 Belmont Road Traders' Association  
 Dungannon Traders' Association  
 Bangor Chamber of Commerce  
 Strabane Chamber of Commerce  
 Newry Chamber of Commerce  
 Magherafelt Chamber of Commerce  
 Ballyclare Chamber of Commerce  
 Roe Valley Chamber of Commerce  
 Causeway Chamber of Commerce  
 Portadown Chamber of Commerce  
 Lisburn Chamber of Commerce  
 Newcastle Chamber of Commerce  
 Ulster Chemists' Association

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