

## **GENERAL EXPLANATORY NOTES 2023-2024**

### **Non-Domestic Rates**

Non-Domestic Rates, or business rates, collected by local authorities are the way that those who occupy non-domestic property contribute towards the cost of local services. Under the business rates retention arrangements introduced from 1st April 2013, authorities keep a proportion of the business rates paid locally. The money, together with revenue from council taxpayers, locally generated income and grants from central government, is used to pay for the services in your area. Further information about the business rates system, may be obtained at:

[www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates)

### **Rateable Value**

Apart from properties that are exempt from business rates, each non-domestic property has a rateable value which is set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), an agency of His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. They compile and maintain a full list of all rateable values, available at [www.gov.uk/voa](http://www.gov.uk/voa). The rateable value of your property is shown on the front of your bill. This broadly represents the yearly rent the property could have been let for on the open market on a particular date specified in legislation. For the current rating list, this date was set as 1st April 2021. The Valuation Office Agency may alter the valuation if circumstances change. The ratepayer (and certain others who have an interest in the property) can also check and challenge the valuation shown in the list if they believe it is wrong. Further information about the grounds on which challenges may be made and the process for doing so can be found on the VOA website:

[www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-check-your-rateable-value-is-correct](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-check-your-rateable-value-is-correct)

### **Revaluations**

All non-domestic property rateable values are reassessed at revaluations. The most recent revaluation took effect from 1st April 2023. Revaluations ensure that business rates bills are up-to-date, more accurately reflect current rental values and relative changes in rents. Frequent revaluations ensure the system continues to be responsive to changing economic conditions.

### **National Non-Domestic Rating Multiplier**

The local authority works out the business rates bill for a property by multiplying the rateable value of the property by the appropriate non-domestic multiplier. There are two multipliers: the standard nondomestic rating multiplier and the small business non-domestic rating multiplier. The Government sets the multipliers for each financial year, except in the City of London where special arrangements apply. Ratepayers who occupy a property with a rateable value which does not exceed £50,999 (and who are neither entitled to certain other mandatory relief[s] nor liable for unoccupied property rates) will have their bills calculated using the lower small business non-domestic rating multiplier, rather than the standard non-domestic rating multiplier.

Both multipliers for a financial year are based on the previous year's multiplier adjusted to reflect the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation figure for the September prior to the billing year, unless a

lower multiplier is set by the Government. The current multipliers are shown on the front of your bill.

### **Business Rates Instalments**

Payment of business rate bills is automatically set on a 10-monthly cycle. However, the Government has put in place regulations that allow businesses to require their local authority to enable payments to be made through 12 monthly instalments. If you wish to take up this offer, you should contact the local authority as soon as possible.

### **Unoccupied Property Rating**

Business rates will not be payable in the first three months that a property is empty. This is extended to six months in the case of certain industrial properties. After this period rates are payable in full. In most cases the unoccupied property rate is zero for properties owned by charities and community amateur sports clubs. In addition, there are a number of exemptions from the unoccupied property rate. Full details on exemptions can be obtained from your local authority.

### **Partly Occupied Property Relief**

A ratepayer is liable for the full non-domestic rate whether a property is wholly occupied or only partly occupied. Where a property is partly occupied for a short time, the local authority has discretion in certain cases to award relief in respect of the unoccupied part. Full details can be obtained from the local authority.

### **Business Rate Reliefs**

Depending on individual circumstances, a ratepayer may be eligible for a rate relief (i.e. a reduction in their business rates bill). There are a range of available reliefs. Further details are provided below and at [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rate](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rate) or from the local authority

### **Temporary Reliefs**

Some of the permanent reliefs are set out below but other temporary reliefs may be introduced by the Government at a fiscal event. Further detail on current temporary reliefs is available at [www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief](http://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief)

You should contact us for details on the latest availability of business rates reliefs and advice on whether you may qualify.

### **Small Business Rates Relief**

If a ratepayer's sole or main property has a rateable value which does not exceed a set threshold, the ratepayer may receive a percentage reduction in their rates bill for the property of up to a

maximum of 100%. The level of reduction will depend on the rateable value of the property. For example eligible properties with a rateable value below a specified lower threshold will receive 100% relief, while eligible properties above the lower threshold and below a specified upper threshold may receive partial relief. The relevant thresholds for relief are set by the Government by order and can be obtained from our website or [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates).

Generally, these percentage reductions (reliefs) are only available to ratepayers who occupy either:

(a) one property, or

(b) one main property and other additional properties providing those additional properties each have a rateable value which does not exceed the limit set by order.

The aggregate rateable value of all the properties mentioned in (b), must also not exceed an amount set by order. For those businesses that take on an additional property which would normally have meant the loss of small business rate relief, they will be allowed to keep that relief for a fixed additional period. Full details on the relevant limits in relation to second properties and the current period for which a ratepayer may continue to receive relief after taking on an additional property can be obtained from our website or [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates).

Certain changes in circumstances will need to be notified to us by the ratepayer who is in receipt of relief (other changes will be picked up by the local authority). The changes which should be notified are:

(a) the property falling vacant,

(b) the ratepayer taking up occupation of an additional property, or

(c) an increase in the rateable value of a property occupied by the ratepayer in an area other than the area of the local authority which granted the relief.

### **Charity and Community Amateur Sports Club Relief**

Charities and registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs are entitled to 80% relief where the property is occupied by the charity or the club, and is wholly or mainly used for the charitable purposes of the charity (or of that and other charities), or for the purposes of the club (or of that and other clubs). The local authority has discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill. Full details can be obtained from the local authority.

### **Transitional Rate Relief**

At a revaluation, some ratepayers will see reductions or no change in their bill whereas some ratepayers will see increases. Transitional relief schemes are introduced at each revaluation to help those facing increases. Transitional relief is applied automatically to bills. Further information about transitional arrangements may be obtained from the local authority or at [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates)

### **Local Discounts**

Local authorities have a general power to grant discretionary local discounts. Full details can be obtained from the local authority.

### **Hardship Relief**

The local authority has discretion to give hardship relief in specific circumstances. Full details can be obtained from the local authority.

### **Rating Advisers**

Ratepayers do not have to be represented in discussions about their rateable value or their rates bill. However, ratepayers who do wish to be represented should be aware that members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS - website [www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org)) and the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV - website [www.irrv.org.uk](http://www.irrv.org.uk)) are qualified and are regulated by rules of professional conduct designed to protect the public from misconduct. Before you employ a rating adviser, you should check that they have the necessary knowledge and expertise, as well as appropriate indemnity insurance.

### **Information Supplied with Demand Notices**

Information relating to the relevant and previous financial years in regard to the gross expenditure of the local authority is available at [www.darlington.gov.uk/rates](http://www.darlington.gov.uk/rates). A hard copy is available on request by writing to the council or at 01325 406666.