

The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury

Via email:
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Dear Chancellor,

Support for Hospitality Businesses – Business Rates and Wider Cost Pressures

I am writing on behalf of communities in my district to urge your government to do more to support hospitality businesses. I welcome your government's announcement of a 15 per cent discount on business rates and a two-year freeze for pubs and music venues in England from April. Locally, this has been received as a small step in the right direction and a welcome acknowledgement of the challenges these businesses face.

However, the focus on pubs and music venues is too narrow, and hospitality businesses across our district have been very clear to me that it is not this issue alone that concerns them; significant pressures remain and, in some cases, are intensifying, as they are for retail and leisure industries too, which are not considered in your announcement this week.

Local publicans, restaurateurs, café owners and others in the hospitality trade, are also concerned by the recent rise in National Insurance contributions. Many have spoken out to say that this increase is discouraging them from employing part time staff, a model on which the sector heavily relies. Such roles are especially important for young people, parents with caring responsibilities, older workers and other demographics seeking flexible or part time hours.

Businesses are also expressing concern that, even with the new discount, their overall cost burden continues to rise. Higher property valuations, increased wage and employment costs, supply chain inflation, utility bill rises, and the tapering of earlier business rates relief mean the uplift in business rates for many will still feel substantial.

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Several operators have warned that the cumulative pressures risk reducing their ability to invest, hire staff, and contribute to vibrant high streets across our community. Pubs, restaurants, and music venues are not only economic assets but social ones; vital to community wellbeing, local culture, thriving town centres, and isolated rural locations. Support that recognises the realities of the sector's operating environment is essential if we are to sustain these valued spaces.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further and to share local experiences directly from affected businesses in our district.
Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Bethia Thomas
Leader of the Council