

## COVID-19

### FAREBROTHER BUSINESS RATES BRIEFING

*“Businesses expected to receive almost £10 billion in business rate relief as part of the government’s support for the economy during the coronavirus pandemic”*

Welcome news on 22 April 2020 from MHCLG, but not all businesses benefit!

Help to date is aimed at the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality sectors, with 12 months rates free. This could easily be extended to all other businesses. There is no help so far for the office sector, where premises have closed, as required by law, and staff are working from home.

The much-maligned business rates system has suddenly become an important lifeline, which illustrates that this remains a vital and flexible tax measure.

As a minimum, England, Scotland and Wales should follow the example of the devolved government in Northern Ireland and grant three months rates holiday for all business. We were delighted to see the CBI argue for this in the Times on Friday 24 April. Many decisions remain with Local Billing Authorities and a variety of decisions are being seen nationwide.

The Government has seen the benefits of using the system to get its necessary measures across into businesses bank accounts and we expect potential rate free holidays to be set out for more than retail and leisure businesses in the near future.

#### Action

Claims for rate relief should be lodged as soon as possible, merited even if declined, as pressure needs to come from Billing Authorities to MHCLG to do more.

COVID19 is considered a “Material Change in Circumstances” and Farebrother recommend rating checks be lodged as a result, seeking a reduction in Rateable Value. In these testing times occupiers need to chase whichever method of getting relief is possible just in case decisions are made to limit to those that do apply at the right time.

Please contact us.

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We are here to help