

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

Scottish Bakers

Scottish Bakers has been supporting and protecting the interests of Scotland's bakery trade for over 125 years.

Our core purpose is to promote and protect the interests of the trade; representing, advising and supporting all aspects of Scotland's baking industry to ensure it remains competitive and equipped for growth.

On behalf of our members in Scotland, we wish to express our concerns at the Amendment to the Non-Domestic Rates Bill. This would see local councils levy the business rate and rates reliefs rather than these being set by the Scottish Government, as is currently the case.

This seems like a retrograde step and are concerned at any potential compromise to Scotland-wide rates reliefs, such as the Small Business Bonus scheme, from which many of our members benefit.

Our members are facing unprecedented business pressures; the rising costs of ingredients, energy and other utilities, and labour are all squeezing margins further than ever before. We have lost several members through financial difficulties in the past year and we fear any further changes that may affect overheads could lead to further closures.

We would like to see a full consultation and an impact assessment on this policy change before it is progressed any further in legislation, to better understand for what this will mean in cold, hard, factual terms for ratepayers, for existing reliefs, and for local councils themselves.

We understand from other trade bodies who operate in Northern Ireland - where local authorities set business rates - that their members there pay a fifth more in business rates than they do in Scotland. We would ask Members of the Scottish Parliament to think again about this Amendment.

Your sincerely,

Alasdair Smith
Chief Executive