

**PE1648/B**

Comhairle na Gaidhealtachd submission of 5 July 2017

I refer to your letter dated 20 June, 2017 in which you sought the views of the Council in connection with the petition calling on the Scottish Government to abolish or freeze business rates for nurseries.

The Council has identified 231 nurseries and/or playgroups across Highland. Of these 190 are situated within schools, community halls and other establishments and as such are not liable for business rates.

Of the remaining 41, 20 have no liability due to being eligible for 80% mandatory relief as they hold charitable status and receive 20% top up small business bonus scheme (SBBS) or they are in receipt of 100% SBBS.

4 receive 80% mandatory relief but due to commercial activity and rateable value will not qualify for the discretionary or SBBS top up.

14 properties have seen a reduction in their charge (two now no longer pay rates at all, due to increase in SBBS limits) whilst 9 have seen an increase. Of these 9 only 4 have an increased liability in excess of 14.75%, the figure the Scottish Government set as the transitional relief qualifying limit for the hospitality sector.

On the basis of this information, it would seem that this is not a significant issue for the majority of nurseries in Highland.

The Council would suggest that this issue should be viewed in the context of the Government's commitment to ensure that arrangements for the delivery of these services are 'provider neutral', in that neither providers or parents should experience additional costs or other barriers, simply because the provider may be operating within the private sector, or any other sector.

I do hope my reply is of assistance.