



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Business Rates

Retail Discount 2020/21 – Local Authority Guidance



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## About this guidance

This guidance is intended to support local authorities in administering the business rates Retail Discount announced in a Written Ministerial Statement on 27 January 2020. This guidance applies to England only.

1. This guidance sets out the criteria which central government considers for this purpose to be retail and eligible for this discount. The guidance does not replace existing legislation.
2. Enquiries on this measure should be addressed to:  
[ndr@communities.gov.uk](mailto:ndr@communities.gov.uk)

## Introduction

3. The Government recognises that changing consumer behaviour presents a significant challenge for retailers in our town centres and is taking action to help the high street evolve.
4. The Government announced in the Budget on 29 October 2018 that it would provide a Business Rates Retail Discount, to apply in the years 2019/20 and 2020/21. In a Written Ministerial Statement on 27 January 2020 the Government announced that it would extend the value of the Retail Discount from one third of the bill to 50% in 2020/21. This relief will apply to occupied retail properties with a rateable value of less than £51,000 in the year 2020/21. Where an authority applies a locally funded relief under section 47 this is must be applied after the Retail Discount and, where appropriate, the 2020/21 pubs discount.
5. This document provides guidance to authorities about the operation and delivery of the policy. The Government expects that local authorities will include details of the relief to be provided to eligible ratepayers for 2020/21 in their bills for the beginning of that year.

## Retail Discount

### How will the relief be provided?

6. As this is a measure for 2020/21 only, the Government is not changing the legislation around the reliefs available to properties. Instead the Government will, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in this guidance, reimburse local authorities that use their discretionary relief powers, under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended), to grant relief. It will be for individual local billing authorities to adopt a local scheme and determine in each individual case when, having regard to this guidance, to grant relief under section 47. Central government will fully reimburse local authorities for the local share of the discretionary relief (using a grant under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003). The

Government expects local government to apply and grant relief to qualifying ratepayers from the start of the 2020/21 billing cycle.

7. Central government will reimburse billing authorities and those major precepting authorities for the actual cost to them under the rates retention scheme of the relief that falls within the definitions in this guidance. However, authorities should continue to complete their NNDR1 for 2020/21 based on the previous one third discount scheme - local authorities will then be asked to provide a further and separate estimate of their likely total cost for providing the 50% relief in 2020/21.<sup>1</sup> Central government will provide payments to authorities to cover the local share, as per the usual process.
8. Local authorities will also be asked to provide outturn data on the actual total cost for providing the relief, as per the usual process, via the National Non-Domestic Rate 3 (NNDR3) forms for 2020/21. Any required reconciliations will then be conducted at these points.<sup>2</sup>

### **Which properties will benefit from relief?**

9. Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied hereditaments with a rateable value of less than £51,000, that are wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues.
10. We consider shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues to mean:
  - i. **Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:**
    - Shops (such as: florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licences, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc)
    - Charity shops
    - Opticians
    - Post offices
    - Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
    - Car/caravan show rooms
    - Second hand car lots
    - Markets
    - Petrol stations
    - Garden centres
    - Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

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<sup>1</sup> Should authorities have calculated the value of retail discount on a 50% basis, they do not need to recalculate this. However they must ensure that the department is notified that the figures have been calculated on that basis when submitting their NNDR1 form.

<sup>2</sup> As required in the NNDR3 guidance notes, the former categories of discretionary relief prior to the Localism Act (i.e. charitable/CASC/rural etc. top up and not for profit) should be applied first in the sequence of discretionary reliefs and, therefore, before the retail discount.

**ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:**

- Hair and beauty services (such as: hair dressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc)
- Shoe repairs/key cutting
- Travel agents
- Ticket offices e.g. for theatre
- Dry cleaners
- Launderettes
- PC/TV/domestic appliance repair
- Funeral directors
- Photo processing
- Tool hire
- Car hire

**iii. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/or drink to visiting members of the public:**

- Restaurants
- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bars

**iv. Hereditaments which are being used as cinemas**

**v. Hereditaments that are being used as live music venues:**

- live music venues are hereditaments wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience. Hereditaments cannot be considered a live music venue for the purpose of business rates relief where a venue is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or a theatre, for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).
- Hereditaments can be a live music venue even if used for other activities, but only if those other activities (i) are merely ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (e.g. the sale/supply of alcohol to audience members) or (ii) do not affect the fact that the primary activity for the premises is the performance of live music (e.g. because those other activities are insufficiently regular or frequent, such as a polling station or a fortnightly community event).
- There may be circumstances in which it is difficult to tell whether an activity is a performance of live music or, instead, the playing of recorded music.

Although we would expect this would be clear in most circumstances, guidance on this may be found in Chapter 16 of the statutory guidance issued in April 2018 under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003.<sup>3</sup>

11. To qualify for the relief the hereditament should be wholly or mainly being used as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues. In a similar way to other reliefs (such as charity relief), this is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, hereditaments which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.
12. The list set out above is not intended to be exhaustive as it would be impossible to list the many and varied retail uses that exist. There will also be mixed uses. However, it is intended to be a guide for authorities as to the types of uses that the Government considers for this purpose to be retail. Authorities should determine for themselves whether particular properties not listed are broadly similar in nature to those above and, if so, to consider them eligible for the relief. Conversely, properties that are not broadly similar in nature to those listed above should not be eligible for the relief.
13. The list below sets out the types of uses that the Government does not consider to be retail use for the purpose of this relief. Again, it is for local authorities to determine for themselves whether particular properties are broadly similar in nature to those below and, if so, to consider them not eligible for the relief under their local scheme.

**i. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:**

- Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
- Other services (e.g. estate agents, letting agents, employment agencies)
- Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, tutors)
- Post office sorting offices

**ii. Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public**

14. Generally speaking, the government also does not consider other assembly or leisure uses beyond those listed at paragraph 11 to be retail uses for the purpose of the discount. For example, theatres and museums are outside the scope of the scheme, as are nightclubs. Hereditaments used for sport or physical recreation (e.g. gyms) are also outside the scope of the discount. Where there is doubt, the local

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<sup>3</sup> The statutory guidance can be accessed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/explanatory-memorandum-revised-guidance-issued-under-s-182-of-licensing-act-2003>

authority should exercise their discretion with reference to the above and knowledge of their local tax base.

### How much relief will be available?

15. The total amount of government-funded relief available for each property for 2020/21 under this scheme is 50% of the bill, after mandatory reliefs and, with the exception of the 2020/21 pubs discount, other discretionary reliefs funded by section 31 grants have been applied, excluding those where local authorities have used their discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act which are not funded by section 31 grants.<sup>4</sup> The 2020/21 pubs discount should be applied after the retail discount. There is no relief available under this scheme for properties with a rateable value of £51,000 or more. Of course, councils may use their discretionary powers to offer further discounts outside this scheme. However, where an authority applies a locally funded relief under section 47 this is must also be applied after the Retail Discount.
16. The eligibility for the relief and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis. The following formula should be used to determine the amount of relief to be granted for a chargeable day for particular hereditament in the financial year 2019/20:

Amount of relief to be granted =

$$\frac{V}{2} \text{ where}$$

V is the daily charge for the hereditament for the chargeable day after the application of any mandatory relief and any other discretionary reliefs, excluding the pubs discount and those where local authorities have used their discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act which are not funded by section 31 grants.<sup>5</sup>

17. This should be calculated ignoring any prior year adjustments in liabilities which fall to be liable on the day.
18. Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties, subject to State Aid De Minimis limits.

### State Aid

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<sup>4</sup> As required in the NNDR3 guidance notes, the former categories of discretionary relief prior to the localism act (i.e. charitable/CASC/rural etc. top up and not for profit) should be applied first in the sequence of discretionary reliefs and, therefore, before the retail discount.

<sup>5</sup> As required in the NNDR3 guidance notes, the former categories of discretionary relief prior to the localism act (i.e. charitable/CASC/rural etc. top up and not for profit) should be applied first in the sequence of discretionary reliefs and, therefore, before the retail discount.

19. State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers is likely to amount to State aid. However, Retail Relief will be State aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)<sup>6</sup>.
20. The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three-year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years). Local authorities should familiarise themselves with the terms of this State aid exemption, in particular the types of undertaking that are excluded from receiving De Minimis aid (Article 1), the relevant definition of undertaking (Article 2(2))<sup>7</sup> and the requirement to convert the aid into Euros.<sup>8</sup>
21. To administer De Minimis it is necessary for the local authority to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the De Minimis Regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State aid is not relevant to the De Minimis calculation). Annex B of this guidance contains a sample De Minimis declaration which local authorities may wish to use, to discharge this responsibility. Where local authorities have further questions about De Minimis or other aspects of State Aid law, they should seek advice from their legal department in the first instance.<sup>9</sup>
22. Whilst the UK is scheduled to leave the EU on 31 January 2020, the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by the Government and the EU provides that during an implementation period State aid rules will continue to apply as now and will be subject to control by the EU Commission as at present. Local authorities should therefore continue to apply State aid rules, including De Minimis, to the relief for during the implementation period.

## **Splits, mergers, and changes to existing hereditaments**

23. The relief should be applied on a day to day basis using the formula set out above. A new hereditament created as a result of a split or merger during the financial year, or where there is a change of use, should be considered afresh for the relief on that day.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

<sup>7</sup> The 'New SME Definition user guide and model declaration' provides further guidance: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme\\_definition/sme\\_user\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/files/sme_definition/sme_user_guide_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts\\_grants/info\\_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/infoeuro/infoeuro_en.cfm)

<sup>9</sup> Detailed State Aid guidance can also be found at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/15277/National\\_State\\_Aid\\_Law\\_Requirements.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/15277/National_State_Aid_Law_Requirements.pdf)

## Annex A: Calculation examples for 2020/21

The retail discount (one third) is always calculated after mandatory relief and other discretionary reliefs funded by section 31 grant. The multiplier used here is provisional.

### Example 1: An occupied shop with a rateable value of £40,000

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £40,000 x 0.499	= £19,960
Retail discount (50%):	= -£9,980
Rates due (after retail discount):	= £9,980

### Example 2: An occupied charity shop with a rateable value of £40,000

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £40,000 x 0.512	= £20,480
Net rates after charity relief:	= <u>£4,096</u>
Retail discount (50%):	= -£2,048
Rates due (after charity relief and retail discount):	= £2,048

### Example 3: An occupied shop with a rateable value of £13,500 eligible for Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR)

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £13,500 x 0.490	= £6,737
Net rates after SBRR (50%):	= <u>£3,368</u>
Retail discount (50%):	= -£1,684
Rates due (after SBRR and retail discount):	= £1,684

### Example 4: An occupied shop with a rateable value of £10,000 eligible for Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR)

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £10,000 x 0.499	= £4,990
Net rates after SBRR (100%):	= £nil
Rates bill is nil and, therefore, no retail discount applies	

### Example 5: An occupied shop with a rateable value of £40,000 eligible for Transitional Relief (TR) and receiving Revaluation Discretionary Relief

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £40,000 x 0.499	= £19,960
Transitional Relief (say):	= -£1,500
Net rates after Transitional Relief:	= £18,460
Net rates after Revaluation Discretionary Relief (say):	= <u>£15,460</u>
Retail discount (50%):	= -£7,730
Rates due (after TR, revaluation relief and retail discount):	= £7,730

### Example 6: An occupied shop with a rateable value of £18,000 previously paying nothing prior to revaluation 2017 and eligible for Supporting Small Businesses Relief (SSB)

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £18,000 x 0.499	= £8,982
Supporting Small Businesses Relief (say):	= -£6,582

<b>Net rates after SSB:</b>	<b>= £2,400</b>
Retail discount (50%):	= -£1200
<b>Rates due (after SSB and retail discount):</b>	<b>= £1200</b>

**Example 7: A shop with a rateable value of £40,000 (example 1) but only occupied until 30 September 2019**

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £40,000 x 0.499	= £19,960
Retail discount (50%):	= -£9,980
Rates due p.a. (after retail discount):	= £9,980
Daily charge while occupied (leap year):	= £27.34 per day
Occupied charge 1/4/20 to 30/9/20 (183 days):	= £4,976
Unoccupied property relief (1/10/19 to 1/1/20):	= £nil
Unoccupied property rates (1/1/20 to 31/3/20),	
£40,000 x 0.512 x 91/365	= £5,106
Rates due for the year (after retail relief):	= £10,082

**Example 8: A shop with a rateable value of £40,000 (example 1) with a rateable value increase to £60,000 with effect from 1 October 2019**

Gross rates (before any reliefs) = £40,000 x 0.499	= £19,960
Retail discount (50%):	= -£9,980
Rates due p.a. (after retail discount):	= £9,980
Daily charge while occupied (leap year):	= £27.34 per day
Charge 1/4/20 to 30/9/20 (182 days):	= £4,976
Daily charge on standard multiplier (1/10/20 to 31/3/21):	
(£60,000 x 0.512)/365	= £84.16 per day
Charge 1/10/20 to 31/3/21 (183 days):	= £15,402
Rates due for the year (after retail relief):	= £20,378

## Annex B: Sample paragraphs that could be included in letters to ratepayers about Retail Discount for 2020/21

In a Written Ministerial Statement on 27 January 2020 the Government announced that eligible retailers will receive a 50% discount on their business rates bills for one year from April 2020.

Relief will be provided to eligible occupied retail properties with a rateable value of less than £51,000 in 2020/21. Your current rates bill includes this Retail Discount.

Awards such as Retail Discount are required to comply with the EU law on State Aid.<sup>10</sup> In this case, this involves returning the attached declaration to this authority if you have received any other *de minimis* State Aid, including any other Retail Discount you are being granted for premises other than the one to which this bill and letter relates, and confirming that the award of Retail Discount does not exceed the €200,000 an undertaking<sup>11</sup> can receive under the *de minimis* Regulations EC 1407/2013.

Please complete the declaration and return it to the address above. In terms of declaring previous *de minimis* aid, we are only interested in public support which is *de minimis* aid (State Aid received under other exemptions or public support which is not State Aid does not need to be declared).

If you have not received any other *de minimis* State Aid, including any other Retail Discount you are being granted for premises other than the one to which this bill and letter relates, you do not need to complete or return the declaration.

If you wish to refuse to receive the Retail Discount granted in relation to the premises to which this bill and letter relates, please complete the attached form and return it to the address above. You do not need to complete the declaration. This may be particularly relevant to those premises that are part of a large retail chain, where the cumulative total of Retail Discount received could exceed €200,000.

Under the European Commission rules, you must retain this letter for three years from the date on this letter and produce it on any request by the UK public authorities or the European Commission. (You may need to keep this letter longer than three years for other purposes). Furthermore, information on this aid must be supplied to any other public authority or agency asking for information on '*de minimis*' aid for the next three years.

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<sup>10</sup> Further information on State Aid law can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/state-aid>

<sup>11</sup> An undertaking is an entity which is engaged in economic activity. This means that it puts goods or services on a given market. The important thing is what the entity does, not its status. Therefore, a charity or not for profit company can be undertakings if they are involved in economic activities. A single undertaking will normally encompass the business group rather than a single company within a group. Article 2.2 of the *de minimis* Regulations (Commission Regulation EC/ 1407/2013) defines the meaning of 'single undertaking'.

**‘De minimis’ declaration**

Dear [ ]

NON-DOMESTIC RATES ACCOUNT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

The value of the non-domestic rates Retail Discount to be provided to [name of undertaking] by [name of local authority] is £ [ ] (Euros [ ]).

This award shall comply with the EU law on State Aid on the basis that, including this award, [name of undertaking] shall not receive more than €200,000 in total of *De minimis* aid within the current financial year or the previous two financial years). The *de minimis* Regulations 1407/2013 (as published in the Official Journal of the European Union L352 24.12.2013) can be found at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:352:0001:0008:EN:PDF> .

<b>Amount of <i>de minimis</i> aid</b>	<b>Date of aid</b>	<b>Organisation providing aid</b>	<b>Nature of aid</b>

I confirm that:

1) I am authorised to sign on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ [name of undertaking]; and

2) \_\_\_\_\_ [name of undertaking] shall not exceed its *De minimis* threshold by accepting this Retail Discount.

SIGNATURE:

NAME:

POSITION:

BUSINESS:

ADDRESS:

DATE:

## Refusal of Retail Discount form

Name and address of premises	Non-domestic rates account number	Amount of Retail Discount

I confirm that I wish to refuse Retail Discount in relation to the above premises.

I confirm that I am authorised to sign on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ [name of undertaking].

SIGNATURE:

NAME:

POSITION:

BUSINESS:

ADDRESS:

DATE: