

These notes refer to the Rates (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2012 (c.1) which received Royal Assent on 28th February 2012

Rates (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2012

EXPLANATORY NOTES

CONSULTATION

9. The consultation paper set out a range of proposals aimed at rebalancing the rating system during a period of economic downturn through to recovery.
10. The main consultation proposals were:
 - extending the reach of the small business rate relief scheme;
 - paying for this by introducing a levy on retail properties with a rateable value of £500,000 and above;
 - allowing the use of window displays in empty shops for non-commercial purposes, preserving 50% empty property relief (or any exclusion);
 - clarifying the legislation relating to valuation assumptions for the next general revaluation in 2015 and repealing the rule applied to properties valued by reference to their volume of trade.
11. The published proposals were subject to a 16 week consultation which commenced on 28th June 2011. The consultation paper was issued to a wide range of interested parties, placed on the Department's website and its publication was advertised in the local press. During the consultation period the Finance Minister held a series of meetings with both large and small businesses and their representative organisations.
12. Consultation finished on Tuesday 18th October, with 70 written responses. Of these 23 were from representative organisations and professional bodies, 22 from businesses, 16 from district councils and six from political representatives (including political parties). There were also responses from two public bodies and one ratepayer. The responses focused on the proposed expansion of the small business rate relief scheme and its funding through a large retail levy. Following this a consultation outcomes report was published on 9th November 2011, providing an overview of the issues raised during consultation.

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13. The consultation paper and responses received as well as the outcomes report and way forward report (published on 15th December 2011 and setting out final decisions) can be accessed at <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/rating-review>.