



# Business Rates Local Discounts Policy



The following local relief/discount schemes are currently in place and are administered under the provision of Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988: -

- Rural Rate Relief
- Retail Discount
- Local Newspaper Relief
- Supporting Small Business Relief
- Heat Network Relief

**Service Delivery** - The Business Rates function is delivered for Boston Borough Council by Public Sector Partnerships Limited.

This policy was approved on 6th September 2017 and replaces the former Local Discounts Policy approved in 2014 that is now null and void. Future updates to this policy have been delegated to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Finance Portfolio Holder, in accordance with legislation and guidance. Last updated February 2023

## Rural Rate Relief

**Overview** Rural Rate Relief is available for post offices, village shops, petrol filling stations and public houses subject to rateable value restriction, where they are the only business of that type in the rural settlement.

The Government announced in the Autumn Statement on 23 November 2016 that the relief will double from 50% to 100% from 1 April 2017.

As a measure the government is not changing legislation, instead local authorities are required to adopt a local scheme and decide each individual case using their discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act (under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988).-

### The scheme

Anyone who is entitled to mandatory Rural Rate Relief will be eligible for the increased level of discount to 100% off their business rates bill.

### Qualifying Criteria

Properties that will benefit from the relief will be hereditaments that:

- Are those which are located in a rural settlement with a population of less than 3,000 and are either:
- The sole general store, food shop or post office with a rateable value of up to £8,500, or
- The sole public house or petrol filling station with a rateable value of up to £12,500

The districts Rural Settlement List is reviewed annually and designates settlements within a rural area which have a population of 3,000 or less. The Rural Settlement List currently includes all parishes in Boston except Boston, Kirton and Fishtoft.

### **Conditions of the award**

Eligibility for the relief will be calculated on a daily basis. The amount of relief awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change in circumstances, including a backdated change to the rateable value or the hereditament, whether arising during the year in question or during a later year.

### **Application for Rural Rate Relief**

Written applications are required on the approved application form. Amounts of Rural Rate Relief awarded under this policy will be notified by the issue of a rates bill.

### **State Subsidy**

Will follow the process set out in the Council's main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

### **Decision Making**

Decisions in respect of applications for Rural Rate Relief will be made by officers.

### **Complaints and Appeals**

Will follow the process set out in the Council's main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

## Retail Discount

**Overview** The 2022/23 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Business Rates Relief scheme provided occupied retail, hospitality and leisure properties with a 50% relief up to a cash cap limit of £110,000 per business.

Support for eligible Retail, Hospitality and Leisure has been extended and increased from 50% to 75% for the 2023/24 financial year.

Ratepayers who occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties up to the maximum £110,000 cash cap per business. This cash cap of £110,000 applies at a Group company level, which means holding companies and subsidiaries cannot claim up to the cash cap for each company. No Business Rates payer should in any circumstances exceed this limit across all of their properties in England.

This scheme is also subject to the subsidies chapter within the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The subsidies chapter applies to subsidies over the value of approximately £343,000 per beneficiary over a 3-year period – the 'Small Amounts of Financial Assistance limit'. The 3-year period is the current financial year and the 2 previous financial years.

### Eligibility Criteria

Boston Borough Council will administer the scheme in line with Government guidance set out in its Retail Guidance (links below) using its discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief to eligible businesses

[2022/23 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Relief Scheme: local authority guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/2022-23-retail-hospitality-and-leisure-relief-scheme-local-authority-guidance)

### Applications for Retail Relief

Written applications are not always required. Where possible, and in line with governments direction, relief has been automatically applied to accounts as part of the billing process. In some cases, the council will write to retailers inviting them to make an application.

### **Conditions of the award**

Eligibility for the relief will be calculated on a daily basis. Relief will be adjusted, including retrospective adjustment, in cases where the amount of rates payable changes.

Businesses are able to refuse this discount, the Council has assumed that all businesses that qualify for the discount will want to benefit from it. However, if they do not wish to receive this discount this will be removed on request.

### **State Subsidy**

Will follow the process set out in the Council's main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

### **Decision Making**

Decisions in respect of awards of Retail Relief will be made by officers.

### **Complaints and Appeals**

Will follow the process set out in the main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

## Local Newspaper Discount

**Overview** From 1 April 2017 the Government announced a business rates discount of up to £1,500 a year to business rates accounts for office space occupied by local newspapers up to a maximum of one discount per local newspaper title and per hereditament. This relief scheme has been extended to 31 March 2025.

Local Authorities are required to adopt a local scheme and decide each individual case using their discretionary relief powers introduced by the Localism Act (under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988).

Boston Borough Council will use the Government criteria to determine qualifying ratepayers, and will review this for 2025/26.

### Eligibility Criteria

Properties that will benefit are those that meet the following criteria:

- The property must be occupied by a local newspaper and must be wholly or mainly used as office premises for journalists and reporters
- The local newspaper must be what is considered to be a 'traditional local newspaper'; the relief is not available to magazines.

'Wholly or mainly' is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, properties which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

### Amount of Relief available

Up to £1,500 relief a year, the amount of relief is limited to a maximum of one discount:-

- Per newspaper title (e.g. per newspaper name)  
And
- Per hereditament (property) that is wholly or mainly occupied by the local newspaper

## **Applications for Local Newspaper Discount**

Where possible ratepayers entitled to local newspaper relief under this local scheme will be identified by Boston Borough Council.

## **Conditions of the award**

Eligibility for the relief will be calculated on a daily basis. The amount of local newspaper relief awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change in circumstances, including changes to occupation of premises by the local newspaper or identification that the relief has been applied on additional accounts.

## **State Subsidy**

Will follow the process set out in the Council's main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

## **Decision Making**

Decisions in respect of awards of Local Newspaper Discount will be made by officers.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

Will follow the process set out in the main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.



## Supporting Small Business Relief

**Overview** At the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022 the Government announced that it would create a new Supporting Small Business relief scheme to ensure no small business faces a bill increase greater than £50 per month for 2023-24 as a result of losing eligibility for Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

Boston Borough Council will administer the scheme in line with Government guidance set out in Annex A of Business Rates Information Letter (7/2022) using its discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief to eligible businesses.

### Eligibility Criteria

Ratepayers facing increases in their rateable value due to revaluation who are losing some or all of their Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief.

To support these ratepayers, the Supporting Small Businesses relief will ensure that the increase per year in the bills of these ratepayers is limited to a cash value of £600 per year (£50 per month). This cash maximum increase ensures that ratepayers do not face large bill increases in 2023/24 after Transitional Relief and Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief (as applicable) have been applied.

Ratepayers entitled to Supporting Small Business Relief for 2023/24 whose 2023 rateable values are £51,000 or more will not be liable to pay the supplement (1.3p) to fund Small Business Rate Relief while they are eligible for 2023 Supporting Small Business Relief.

### Application for Supporting Small Business Relief

Where possible ratepayers entitled to Supporting Small Business Relief under this local scheme will be identified by Boston Borough Council.

Successful applicants will be notified of the amount of Supporting Small Business Relief awarded by the issue of a new rates bill.

### **Conditions of the award**

Eligibility for the relief will be calculated on a daily basis. Relief will be adjusted, including retrospective adjustment, in cases where the amount of rates payable changes.

### **State Subsidy**

Will follow the process set out in the Council's main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

### **Decision Making**

Decisions in respect of awards of Supporting Small Business Relief will be made by officers.

### **Complaints and Appeals**

Will follow the process set out in the main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

## Heat Network Relief

**Overview** At the Spring Statement on 23 March 2022, the Government announced a new Heat Network relief which will be available for hereditaments being used wholly or mainly as a heat network which have their own rating assessment from 1 April 2022.

Boston Borough Council will administer the scheme in line with Government guidance using its discretionary powers under section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant relief to eligible businesses

[Business rates heat network relief: local authority guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/business-rates-heat-network-relief-local-authority-guidance)

### Eligibility Criteria

Properties that will benefit are those that meet the following criteria:

- Have their own business rates assessment
- Be wholly or mainly used for the purpose of a heat network, and
- The heat, over the next 12 months, is expected to be generated from a low carbon source (irrespective of whether that source is located on the hereditament or on a different hereditament)

‘Wholly or mainly’ is a test on use rather than occupation. Therefore, properties which are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for the relief.

### Exclusions and Ineligibility

The following hereditaments are not eligible for Heat Network Relief:

- Those that are wholly or mainly providing heat for a different purpose, for example an industrial process
- Those that do not have their own business rates assessment such as small and medium scale heat networks, for example common heating systems in multi-occupied buildings or estates, which do not give rise to a separate business rates bill. In these cases, the heat network forms part

of the services of the properties which have a wider purpose (e.g. offices).

### **Amount of Relief available**

Anyone who is entitled to Heat Network Relief will be eligible for 100% relief off their business rates bill for any day on which they meet the eligibility criteria.

### **Application for Heat Network Relief**

Ratepayers who believe they might be entitled to this relief should contact the Business Rates team.

Amounts of Heat Network Relief awarded under this policy will be notified by the issue of a rates bill.

### **Conditions of the award**

Eligibility for the relief will be calculated on a daily basis. Relief will be adjusted, including retrospective adjustment, in cases where the amount of rates payable changes.

If the use of the hereditament changes so that it is no longer eligible, the relevant chargeable amount must be recalculated to reflect that fact.

### **State Subsidy**

Will follow the process set out in the Council's main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

### **Decision Making**

Decisions in respect of awards of Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund will be made by officers.

### **Complaints and Appeals**

Will follow the process set out in the main Discretionary Rate Relief Policy.

## Contact us

### Boston Borough Council

Municipal Buildings

West Street

BOSTON

Lincolnshire

PE21 8QR



(01205) 314200



[businessrates@boston.gov.uk](mailto:businessrates@boston.gov.uk)



[www.mybostonuk.com](http://www.mybostonuk.com)

## Other formats

We can provide this information in other languages and formats for example, in large print, in Braille, on CD or audio cassette.

Please phone 01205 314200.