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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref KJ/KG
Ein cyf/Our ref DC/EH/04948/15

Cllr Ken James

kenjames@caerphilly.gov.uk

8 December 2015

Dear Cllr James

Thank you for your letter of 11 November, inviting me to visit Caerphilly Town Centre and to meet with business members regarding business rates.

I recognise the challenges that are faced by retail businesses on Wales's high streets and have introduced a range of business rates measures to help, targeted at supporting jobs and growth across Wales. My approach has been informed by the work of the Business Rates Task and Finish Group and the Business Rates Panel.

For example, this year I extended the Small Business Rates Relief scheme, a measure which is reducing the business rates bill for around three quarters of business premises in Wales. In addition, the Wales Retail Relief Scheme also reduced business rates bills for more than 10,500 retail, food and drink business premises last year and has been enhanced this year so that businesses can receive a discount of up to £1,500 through the scheme.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

These business rates measures form part of a wider package of support for town centres which includes regeneration measures such as Vibrant and Viable Places, our support for Business Improvement Districts, and our direct financial support towards High Street initiatives across Wales.

I am aware of the Town Centre Management approach that has been adopted by Caerphilly County Borough Council, which I understand aims to address the strategic and operational needs of Caerphilly, Blackwood and Bargoed town centres. Locally led responses to the challenges faced by high street businesses have an important part to play in the overall approach.

I will ask my Officials to consider the possibility of a visit when I am next in the area and should other engagements allow.

Edwina Hart