



NARBERTH CHAMBER OF TRADE

Established 31st May 1922



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Naomi Stocks
Clerk, Petitions Committee,
National Assembly for Wales,
Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff,
CF99 1NA.

Your ref: P-03-271
Tuesday, 10 May 2011

Dear Ms Stocks,

PETITION: P-03-271 Business Rates in Narberth

Thank you for your letter of the 5th April 2011, informing us of the latest update to our petition by the third Assembly and its progress to the fourth Assembly.

You have asked for our views on the latest correspondence.

1) Carl Sargeant AM – Minister for Social Justice & Local Government. Letter 14 March 2011

The Chamber is more than happy to support SBRR for Wales. It noted that the research by the University of Cumbria carried out its survey in May of 2010; one month after the 2010 business rate revaluation became effective and possibly before the impact of the revaluations had been fully realised.

However the following paragraph sums up the Narberth and Pembrokeshire problem

"7.8.5 The group also acknowledges that the current system equitably supports Welsh SMEs of various sizes in the most practical and accessible method currently available. So the current bands for rates relief are probably about right (pre revaluation) and do not need amending."

2) Chief Executive Ceredigion County Council. Letter 14th March 2011

Whilst grateful for the support of Ceredigion with the similar petition to ours, we do appreciate the difficulties associated with conducting a meaningful assessment 'county wide' given the distorting effects of SBRR and its extensions.

3) Leader Pembrokeshire County Council. Letter 11th March 2011

The Chamber is particularly appreciative of the Leaders support for Narberth and the understanding of the revaluation difficulties. His suggestion for a reintroduction of the Rural Rate Relief Scheme is worthy of further investigation.

The last Committee meeting agreed to:

"Write to the Valuation Office Agency to ask if any impact assessment was undertaken before the 2010 revaluation of Non-Domestic Rates."

It would be useful if the VOA could provide more detailed information on the 2010 Welsh revaluation increases, particularly for retail businesses, possibly town by town.

To once again reiterate; the particular problem highlighted by Narberth town is the very large and sudden increase in rateable value. So large that it puts the majority of retail businesses outside any current relief schemes.

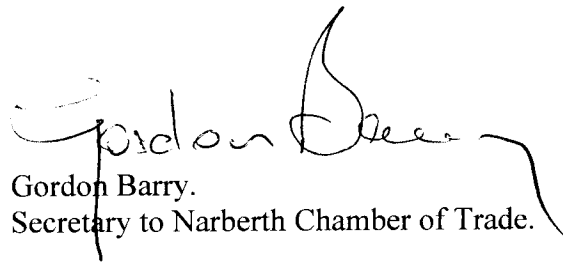
Thus before April 2010 there were 5 businesses on Narberth High Street with Rateable Values above £12,000 (with a max RV of £23,500)
This changes to 31 businesses with RV above £12,000 (with a max of £73,000) as of April 1st 2010.

Taxation is usually based on the 'ability to pay' In our case and that of other Welsh businesses hit with massive revaluations it will be increasingly difficult to so do.

Considering that only 2,570 Welsh businesses had revaluations of more than 100% (The Ministers figures) it would seem sensible to specifically target them rather than adjusting the rate relief qualifying bands.

Please may our petition go forward to the forth Assembly.

Thank you,



Gordon Barry.
Secretary to Narberth Chamber of Trade.