



Northumberland County Council

Rural Rate Relief Information and Guidance.

The discretionary rate relief policy is based on a points scoring system. It is designed to help us direct relief to those businesses that benefit the local rural community and to make the awarding of relief more transparent, allowing you to see how your application is judged.

Your application for relief will be assessed against a set of criteria and scored according to the information you supply. The score you attain will determine the level of relief to be awarded. The following notes are designed to explain the process of a rate relief application and assist you in providing all the information we need to consider your application.

Who can apply for rate relief?

Certain types of properties that are occupied in a rural settlement (defined within the councils rural settlement list) and have a population below 3,000, may be entitled to relief. They include:-

- A property that is the only general store, the only post office or is a food shop and that property has a rateable value of less than £8,500.
- A property that is the only public house, or the only petrol station and has a rateable value of less than £12,500
- Certain other occupied property in a rural settlement where the rateable value is less than £16,500 **and** the business is of benefit to the local community.

What relief is available?

- If your business is the only general store, post office, public house or petrol filling station in the rural settlement, from 1 April 2017 then you may be entitled to mandatory relief of 100%. If your business is a food shop, you also may be entitled to mandatory relief of 100%. Once awarded, **you will continue to receive the mandatory 100% relief** provided you continue to meet the criteria. (Prior to 1 April 2017 relief was awarded at 50%).
- For any other business where the rateable value is less than £16,500 **and** the business is of benefit to the local community, we can consider granting up to 100% rate relief in respect of their liability.

As this relief is at the discretion of the council, you will be required to complete our discretionary rate relief application and provide documentary evidence in support of your application.

What happens when I apply for relief?

- When your application form is received, it is reviewed and checked for all required information and evidence.
 - If further information or evidence is required, we will contact you and advise of what information or evidence you need to supply;
 - If all evidence is received, your application is put forward to the next available rate relief meeting and will be considered as soon as possible.
- When a decision is reached, you will be notified in writing.

How is the decision to grant relief made?

The decision to give relief to any business is based on the ten areas set out on the following page. The questions are designed to ensure that we direct relief to those businesses that benefit the local community. It also allows you to see how we have arrived at the level of relief.

Discretionary Rural Rate Relief Criteria

Criteria	Reason for including	Evidence required
What are the activities of the business and how do they benefit the local community?	To assess at the value and benefit of the business to the local community and whether it meets their basic needs.	Provide details of what your business is about; how it contributes to the local community and why it is of benefit to that community
Does the business provide services to other local business or promotes local produce/products?	To assess the support to other local business and contribution to the local economy.	Provide details of the services you provide to other local businesses or details of local produce/products you promote.
Is the business aimed at tourism and culture?	To identify whether Links to tourism led regeneration and supporting cultural heritage	Provide details of what your business is about; how it contributes to tourism within local community.
Does the business provide visitor accommodation?	To assess the businesses contribution to tourism within the area.	If applicable, provide details of number of bed spaces available and details of visitor numbers
Does the business provide additional community services not related to the business?	To assess and recognise any additional services the business is providing, beyond its core activity to support communities.	Please give details of any additional services, outside of the normal activities of the business, and how they benefit the local community.
Does the activities of the business support healthy/active lifestyles?	To assess the contribution to healthy activity either by local people or visitors	Please give details of any business activities and how they support healthy/active lifestyles and benefit the local community.
What is the nearest similar service/business?	To assess the importance of the business to the community due to the limitations of access to sparse local services.	Provide details of any similar services nearby that you are aware of.
How many part time and full time staff are employed by the business?	To assess the value to the community in relation to employment opportunities.	Please give details of part time and full time staff employed by the business, excluding yourself.
Is the business aimed at serving local community? (Within County and up to 5 miles beyond boundary)	To ensure that the business is supporting local residents whilst recognising that some communities extend beyond the County boundary.	Please indicate on the form the percentage of customers that are from the local area (Northumberland) or 5 miles beyond the boundary.

How is the level of relief determined?

The score you achieve from the information provided in your application determines the level of relief. The score and how this was used to determine the entitlement will be given when we notify you of your entitlement.

Where should I return my form?

All forms and supporting evidence should be returned to the address below:-

Contact details	
Revenues Section Northumberland County Council County Hall Morpeth Northumberland NE61 2EF	Telephone: 0345 600 6400 Email: businessrates@northumberland.gov.uk Website: www.northumberland.gov.uk

What happens if I don't agree with the decision?

- If you do not agree with the decision, you do have the right to appeal. You should write to us at the address above and supply any additional information or evidence in support of your appeal.
- We will notify you in writing of the decision we make regarding your appeal. We aim to have a decision made within 4 weeks.

We hope that these notes will have provided you with all the information you need about your rate relief application. However, if you do need any further information please see our contact details above.