

# Small Business Saturday: The 'backbone of our local economy' needs support in greening operations and improving employee welfare



# Green Party

6 December 2021

Today, Small Business Saturday, the Green Party is calling on both national and local government to implement a series of measures to help small and independent businesses and social enterprises green their operations, improve employee welfare and make it easier for people to 'shop local' [1].

Green Party co-leader, Adrian Ramsay, said:

"Small and independent businesses and enterprises are the backbone of our local economy. They are vital for providing jobs and keeping money circulating in the local area. They also make our towns and cities diverse, distinctive and unique.

"We know many small businesses are committed to becoming more sustainable and to improving the welfare of their employees, but it is often made difficult and expensive for them to do so. That's why, this Small Business Saturday, Greens are calling on the government and local councils to introduce a series of measures to support small businesses do the right thing."

"The Green Party has long championed business rates reform and extending and expanding business rates relief. We are proud to be the party of small business; we want to see them thrive, and provided support to do so."

ENDS

Notes

[1] List of measures being proposed by the Green Party:

In addition to our on-going demands to reform business rates and extend and reform business rates to advantage small businesses and enterprises, we are calling for a series of measures to help small businesses green their operations and improve employee welfare:

1. No small business should pay higher business rates as a result of greening their business. The government must incentivise rather than penalise small businesses that are tackling their carbon emissions and making their operations more sustainable. There should be a clear list of items/actions that businesses can implement without fear of increasing their business rates including, but not limited to, fitting solar panels and insulation, introducing recycling facilities or schemes, building bike sheds and putting in employee showers and changing rooms.
2. Small business should be supported to improve employee wellbeing. Government must help businesses improve the wellbeing of their employees. Measures should include exempting all childcare providers in England from business rates, in line with Scotland and Wales; increasing employment allowance to at least £5000 to help the smallest employers; and ensuring no business is penalised by higher business rates when they implement Covid-safe measures such as ventilation systems.
3. Reform VAT to support small businesses. The VAT holiday until 2022 is a welcome break for small businesses but the government must use the time until this holiday to review our VAT system so that it differentially supports smaller shops and businesses compared to larger and online businesses.
4. Creation of Virtual High Streets. Councils should work with small and independent businesses and help create 'Virtual High Streets' so residents within a district can use an online portal to enable them to buy from participating local shops and have items delivered on the same or next day. Such schemes are operating in both Brighton and Lewes where Greens are in power. In Herefordshire, Green councillors have worked with local businesses to enable a prepaid card loaded with £15 to spend with local businesses – a great way to encourage people to shop local.

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