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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-466
Ein cyf/Our ref EH/00866/16

William Powell AM
Chair - Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

08 March 2016

Dear William

I am writing to update you on the work that has taken place regarding business rates and charity shops following the 2013 petition on Business Rates Relief for Charity Shops in Wales.

Following the Business Rates Task and Finish Group Report into Business Rates Reliefs for Charities and Social Enterprises, I wrote to the UK Government and Devolved Administrations on this issue. Although there was some recognition of the issues raised in the Panel's report, agreement on joint action in this sensitive area could not be reached. Throughout this work I have also received many representations from charities across Wales, and from Members, expressing concerns about changes that would seek to reduce the amount of business rate relief available to charities and the wider impact that such a move could have.

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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.

I informed Members that I would seek to develop a picture of current practice across Wales regarding the monitoring of new goods in charity shops. Last year, I wrote to Local Authority leaders on this subject and it is clear from the responses we received that in some areas regular inspections are taking place to monitor this. Going forward, there could be value in exploring whether this practice can be shared across authorities. I am also informed that the current guidance on Charitable Rates Relief is being updated, and that this will include revised information on the sale of new goods.

I have been aware of, and sensitive to, all viewpoints on this matter. The work undertaken has been significant in drawing attention to the importance of keeping business rates support for charities under review and I hope that this focus will continue.

Edwina Hart