

Budget business rate relief fails to help UK's most historic pubs

- *City's pub campaign group is fighting on behalf of the hardest hit pubs*
- *St Albans has most pubs in the country and the oldest pub in the country*
- *Many of the historic pubs are now under threat*



Left to right: The Boot and Ye Olde Fighting Cocks - two of the UK's most historic pubs

The Chancellor's Budget promise to relieve the business rates pressure on retail, leisure and hospitality companies will not benefit the UK's most historic pubs, which are fighting for their survival, says a leading pubs campaign group.

In yesterday's budget, Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced plans to grant a year business rate holiday for companies with a rateable value (RV) of less than £51,000, but Save St Albans Pubs campaign has said that this does not go far enough to help some of the UK's most historic pubs, whose RV is above £51,000.

The campaign group represents over 30% of the more than 50 pubs in the Hertfordshire cathedral city district, including Ye Olde Fighting Cocks, the country's oldest pub, which dates back to the 8th Century and the Boot which dates back to the 15th Century.

While welcoming the Chancellor's business rate relief, Save St Albans Pubs chairman Sean Hughes, said: " Pubs are taxed differently from other retail businesses. Government agency guidelines are that pubs should be taxed on fair maintainable trade (FMT). If applied correctly, this would result in an averaging out of business rates across pubs, so that under-performing pubs are not subsidised by over-trading pubs. In 2017, that didn't happen, the Valuation office failed to apply its guidelines and taxed turnover. This caused volatile swings and shifted the business rate burden onto roughly 30% of pubs in St Albans and around the UK.

"For the past 18 months our campaign Has called upon Treasury to reform the system and in the interim, to level the playing field by giving the same rate relief to ALL PUBS, for the first £51k of Rateable Values.

"Instead, the government gave pubs with an Rateable Value below £51k (many of whom received a business rate decrease in 2017), a business rate holiday. Pubs with a Rateable Value of over £51k will continue to pay 80%-100% of their business rates bill. That's made the playing field worse and is manifestly unjust.

"Regrettably, the top 30% of the pubs who pay the majority of rates for pubs in St Albans will still be struggling with astronomically high rates and for them, while the £5,000 relief is very welcome, it is going to have a very limited impact.

"Historic pubs such as Ye Olde Fighting Cocks and The Boot, which dates back to the 15th century, are facing a daily struggle to survive due to mounting financial pressure. Coupled with the overall concern about the impact of the coronavirus, the pressure has increased and we had hoped the Budget would go some way to alleviating this pressure.

"In the long term, we are keen to play a role in the Chancellor's plan to review the business rates system so that the voices of independent pubs across St Albans and the UK are not punished for doing well but are encouraged to prosper and continue to provide essential community hubs as well as local employment.

"As the caretakers of our country's historic buildings and tradition we hope that the encouraging signs from number 11 prove that they value the British pub and we may have a good chance of getting a resolution to this campaign."

- ENDS -

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

The 17 pubs in St Albans hit hardest: with increases of more than 20%, and up to 281%

(which have an RV over £51k)

Pub	Rateable value	Rateable Value in 2010	Increase £	Increase %
The Boot	£103,000.00	£27,000.00	£ 76,000.00	281%
The Rose and Crown	£54,500.00	£ 15,000.00	£ 39,500.00	263%
The Cock	£ 92,500.00	£29,250.00	£ 63,250.00	216%
The Snug	£107,000.00	£ 50,500.00	£ 56,500.00	112%
The Six Bells	£62,500.00	£ 33,500.00	£ 29,000.00	87%
The Blacksmiths Arms	£104,000.00	£ 57,000.00	£ 47,000.00	82%
The King Harry	£ 55,000.00	£31,000.00	£ 24,000.00	77%
The White Hart	£ 53,000.00	£30,250	£ 23,250.00	77%
Ye Olde Fighting Cocks	£ 67,000.00	£42,000.00	£ 25,000.00	60%
Waterend Barn	£205,000.00	£133,000.00	£ 72,000.00	54%
The Engineer	£ 61,500.00	£ 41,000.00	£ 20,500.00	50%
The Horn of Plenty	£ 60,000.00	£ 43,000.00	£ 17,000.00	40%
The George	£112,000.00	£ 80,500.00	£ 31,500.00	39%
The Bull	£ 129,000.00	£97,500.00	£ 31,500.00	32%
Moor Mill	£ 285,000.00	£ 235,000.00	£ 50,000.00	21%
Peahen	£157,000.00	£130,000.00	£ 27,000.00	21%
The White Horse	£ 88,500.00	£ 73,000.00	£ 15,500.00	21%

About St Albans

- St Albans is a vibrant and historic market town in Hertfordshire, just 20 mins on the train from London and a short hop off the M1 and M25 motorways, within easy reach of London Luton and Heathrow airports.

- St Albans has the stunning 11th Century St Albans Cathedral at its centre and also boasts Britain's first Saint, Alban himself, the country's oldest pub, Ye Olde Fighting Cocks (in the Guinness book of records), the country's oldest public school (St Albans School) and the only working medieval clock tower in the country.
- St Albans has many excellent attractions to visit, as well as fabulous award-winning independent shopping, restaurants, pubs and coffee houses. With exquisite ancient streets and buildings the city is full of character and very popular with both tourists and locals.
- The city's 2,000 year history is showcased in the St Albans Museum + Gallery, housed in the centre of the city in a Grade II listed Georgian building and
- The history is also evident in the Roman remains and the beautiful medieval architecture throughout the city centre, but also to be found in the lush green parks and countryside.