

# Hardship Relief

## Guidance Notes for Ratepayers Affected by the Bank Buildings Fire



Land & Property Services  
Seirbhís Talún & Maoiné

### NOTE TO ASSIST IN THE COMPLETION OF HARDSHIP RATE RELIEF SCHEME APPLICATIONS FOR RATEPAYERS AFFECTED BY THE 2018 BANK BUILDINGS FIRE

## Basic criteria:

Hardship Relief may be granted to non-domestic ratepayers who meet two basic criteria:

1. They have been impacted by exceptional circumstances, which will usually be external to the ratepayer, beyond normal business risks, unavoidable and unforeseen; and
2. The exceptional circumstances have caused hardship to the ratepayer by impacting on their business activities. The nature and extent of the hardship must be evidenced by the ratepayer to qualify for relief.

## Exceptional circumstances

Land & Property Services (LPS) accepts that the Bank Buildings fire and its aftermath clearly qualify as exceptional circumstances. The events are external to the ratepayers who have been affected, they are beyond normal business risks, they were unavoidable by the ratepayers who have been affected and they were unforeseen.

In the answer to question 2.1, enter the date: **28 August 2018**.

In the answer to question 2.2, write **'Primark fire'**.

## Outline recovery plan

The guidance notes indicate that an outline recovery plan might be requested. Because of the uncertainty around when Bank Buildings might be made safe, which would in turn allow the cordon to be pulled back and footfall patterns to return to normal, LPS understands that it will be hard for a business in the city centre which has been affected by the fire to produce an outline recovery plan. Therefore, there is no need to produce and submit a recovery plan with your application for hardship relief.



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# State Aid

The Department has assessed the Hardship Relief scheme in relation to how it will operate in Belfast City Centre in the aftermath of the Bank Buildings fire and has concluded that the relief does not constitute State Aid in these circumstances. **Therefore, there is no need to complete Section 5.**

## Supporting documentation

The types of supporting information which are listed in the guidance notes are indicative and are not required in every case. The nature and circumstances of each business – and therefore the kind of information or evidence we need to obtain from it – will be different. Staff from LPS will be available to work with ratepayers affected by the fire to establish the nature of the impact on their businesses and identify what information is needed to substantiate that impact.

## Chains

Further financial information may be sought from those businesses with multiple outlets.

## Deadline

**Applications should be made as soon as possible but must be received by LPS by 31 March 2019 at the latest.**

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## CONTACT US

### **Application Based Rate Relief Team**

Land & Property Services  
Lanyon Plaza  
7 Lanyon Place  
Town Parks  
Belfast. BT1 3LP

**Telephone:** 0300 200 7801 (calls charged at local rate)

**Telephone:** +44 028 9049 5794 (if outside NI)

**Text Relay:** 18001 0300 200 7801

**Email:** [applicationbased.raterelief@finance-ni.gov.uk](mailto:applicationbased.raterelief@finance-ni.gov.uk)

**Information and application form available on the NI Business Info website**

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/hardship-relief>