# Nottingham café owners face steep business rate increases



The owners of a small café in Nottingham are grappling with significant increases in their business rates, mirroring challenges faced by many traders across the city. Darren and Dee Brookes, the proprietors of Biscuit & Brew, located on Victoria Street, have seen their monthly business rates surge from £350 to £850, a staggering £500 increase.

Darren expressed his disbelief and frustration regarding the hike, stating, "For the last few years we've always paid a similar amount. Like council tax it goes up every year, by a small percentage." He described how the couple accepted incremental increases as a part of doing business but deemed the current rise as “not proportional and not reasonable.” He articulated a sentiment of helplessness, asserting, "I feel like I'm being bullied. I can’t do anything about it. I’m just powerless."

Initially, the couple thought the revised bill was issued in error due to the abrupt increase. A follow-up call to Nottingham City Council clarified that while the council manages the collection of business rates, the scale is determined by the government. "All they told me on the call was actually it’s not an increase, it’s a change in the relief you’re getting," Darren explained, highlighting the reduction in their discount from 75% to 40%. He remarked, “Practically speaking for people like me who live in the real world, it's an increase - a massive increase.”

Biscuit & Brew, which opened its doors in February 2021 in Hounds Gate, has grown from a modest six-table establishment to a more spacious two-floor venue on Victoria Street after relocating in January of last year. Darren credited various forms of government support when they started the business, including grants and a government-backed start-up loan, but expressed that their experience was steepened by the new hurdles as they expanded.

Darren, who is currently managing the business while Dee is at home caring for their premature baby girl, highlighted the steep financial demands placed on small business owners, stating, "How are we meant to find that sort of money with a few weeks' notice?" The couple has initiated various strategies to upgrade business profitability, including special tea experiences and a secret menu offered via social media, while also encouraging patrons to purchase loose-leaf teas to take home.

Despite these operational challenges, Darren remained optimistic about the café's stability, stating, "I don't feel like we're in a position where we're thinking we're going to be closing," although he recognised that many businesses might not be as fortunate. He conveyed a desire for a collaborative approach with local authorities, stating, "To me this should be a collaboration with your local council and the government on the same team... it just feels a bit brutal."

The council collects around half of the business rates, with the remainder allocated to the government. The rates contribute to essential services such as police and fire services, street lighting, and refuse collection.

In response to the situation, Nottingham City Council did not provide a formal statement, clarifying that they do not set the business rates. A spokesperson from the Treasury noted that the recent changes are linked to a reduction in temporary relief for retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses, saying, "This government extended the relief at 40 percent until the new permanent cut for RHL businesses comes into force in April 2026." Further information on this is expected to be released in the upcoming Autumn Budget 2025.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)