



*For immediate release
29 September 2004*

To: Retail, Business, Commercial Property, Political

UNITED PLEA TO CHANCELLOR: ACT NOW ON COMMERCIAL LEASES

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) and an alliance of small business organisations have today united in a letter to the Chancellor - urging him to legislate on commercial leases as soon as possible and put an end to the inflexibility in the property market that is undermining the competitive edge of the UK economy.

The BRC letter, signed by the Federation of Small Business, the Forum of Private Business, the Small Business Bureau, Business in Sport & Leisure and the Property Managers Association, comes ahead of tomorrow's deadline for submissions on commercial leases.

In the letter, the alliance said: "As the current consultation on options to outlaw or deter upwards only rent reviews draws to a close we urge Government to take this opportunity to bring forward legislation to create a fairer more flexible property market for commercial tenants.

"As businesses, we support the principle of self-regulation but are disappointed by the property industry's lack of progress in addressing their leasing practices. It is clear that continuing with a voluntary approach, however well intentioned, will do nothing to deliver more flexible leases for tenants.

"Upward only rent reviews are an iniquitous system found only in the UK and have no place in a modern economy. If both economic growth and job creation are to continue, landlords must offer tenants what they need rather than present them with terms that are often wholly inappropriate and totally inflexible."

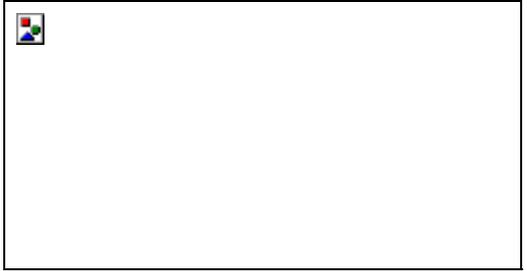
Kevin Hawkins, BRC Director General said: "This letter shows the strength of feeling across the business community. I urge the chancellor to listen to this united voice and act on our concerns."

Ends

Notes to editors

For a copy of the letter in full or for further information, please contact Kate Ison, BRC press officer 0207 854 8920 kate.ison@brc.org.uk

A recent BRC survey showed an overwhelming 88% of retailers want the Government to bring forward legislation to tackle upward only rent reviews. 54% of retailers responding to the survey believe there will be fewer stores closures following a ban on UORRs, 71% believe that a ban will improve flexibility and choice in the commercial property market and 80% feel a ban would help them respond better to market conditions.



In its consultation document published on the 1st June 2004, the Government set out six options to deter or prohibit the use of Upward Only Rent Review (UORR) clauses. The BRC will be responding to the consultation and has undertaken this survey of members' views to inform our position on the proposed options.