



PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 9 November 2011

RURAL SHOPS ALLIANCE GIVES EVIDENCE TO THE LOW PAY COMMISSION

The RSA has appeared before the Commissioners to provide evidence to help them set future National Minimum Wage rates. Ken Parsons, RSA Chief Executive, and Gloria Williams, RSA Director and practicing retailer in Oxfordshire, emphasised how the current rates of minimum wage are already high enough to be affecting the number of jobs available in the retail sector. The impact is particularly evident in smaller shops. Over the years pay differentials between senior and junior staff have been squeezed, the number of employed staff hours has been cut to a minimum and in many cases the owners of such businesses, working alongside their staff, are actually only able to pay themselves less per hour than their staff are earning, clearly a very unfair situation.

Ken Parsons explained, "Most owners of rural shops would actually like to pay their staff more – nobody wants to be seen to be paying staff the minimum legally possible. They also want to reward employees for taking on more responsibility or acquiring new skills. However, the current tight economic climate makes it very difficult for many shop owners to reward their staff, as they would really want. Small retailers often provide a key stepping-stone into the workplace for young people and individuals getting back into the labour market after a break and they can only do this if it makes economic sense to do so. We need to get the right balance between the legitimate aspirations of both small employer and their employees".

The RSA is calling for the NMW to increase in line with national average wages.

Notes for editors:

The Rural Shops Alliance (RSA) is the national voice for about 7,500 rural retailers. We campaign on their behalf and also help these shops to become more competitive with practical advice and support, to the benefit of thousands of rural communities. Many 'blue chip' suppliers and county councils sponsor and partner the work of the RSA. Our direct contact with rural shops and with these organisations means that we keep in close touch with emerging issues and concerns in our fast changing business sector.

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