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23rd June, 2008

Department of Finance and Personnel,
Rating Policy Division,
Room D12, Rathgael House,
Balloo Road,
Bangor, BT19 7NA.

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Gentlemen,

Rating Review

I am writing to support the proposal that the rates cap should be set no higher than £400,000 and, preferably, at a lower level than that.

This would bring the highest rates bills here approximately into line with the highest band under England's Council Tax system. The Minister is on record as saying that that would be fair, which the present system is not.

There is a general belief that those with high value homes have high value incomes. This is not necessarily the case. Many of us have been astounded at the rate at which our homes have appreciated in value and only wish that our incomes had kept pace! In my case I shall be retiring next year and my income will halve.

Can we assume that, if water rates are to be charged separately, the general rates will reduce by an equivalent amount? If not, then there seems to be an argument for setting the rates cap at a lower level than £400,000. In any case, there seems to be no logical reason to have water rates: we pay for the electricity we use, for the oil we use, for the gas we use: we should pay for just the water we use. Anything else encourages profligacy and increases the costs.

Yours faithfully,

