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FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE – HELP AVAILABLE

Dover District Council is highlighting a series of measures being implemented to help those most affected by the recent Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak.

Business ratepayers, who feel that the value of their property is adversely affected because of the impact of the outbreak, may wish to make an appeal against their rateable value. Rateable values are used to work out business rates bills and are based on the rental value for a property. If you think your property has been affected, for example if access has been restricted or prevented completely, an application can be made to the local Valuation Officer, telephone number (01303) 852900 for further advice. This should be done as soon as possible as there are limits on how far back any change in rateable value can be backdated.

If you are suffering reduced income due to the outbreak, for example if you have been laid off work or are self employed, you may be entitled to help with your housing costs (Council Tax/rent). You may wish to request an application form for Housing and Council Tax Benefit. The helpline for this is (01304) 872199.

Central Government has also announced that there will be a scheme for reducing the rate bills of small businesses in rural areas badly affected by Foot and Mouth Disease, to be administered and partly funded by the District Councils. Dover District Council has been designated as a qualifying area.

The Government has advised that full details of the rate relief scheme will follow shortly. If you require further details now, please telephone the non-domestic rate relief helpline on (01304) 872195. However, applications for relief will not be available until the Government announce the full criteria for relief. Full details will be made widely available as soon as they are known.

Councillor Terry Birkett, Leader of the Council, said: "We do understand the grave concern this outbreak is causing people in the District and the great pressure it is putting on the farming community and retail and tourism-related businesses. The Council, together with the Government, is doing everything it can to assist."

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