

RETAIL RESPONSE TO ELECTION RESULT

Commenting on the General Election result, Dr Kevin Hawkins, BRC Director General, said:

"Retailers are currently facing the most difficult set of trading conditions in living memory. Consumer confidence is weak, price competition is fierce, retailers' cost base is inflating and profit margins are under pressure. While a speedy reduction in interest rates is essential to reverse the downward trend in consumer confidence, we expect many of the present trends to continue.

"In these circumstances, the key to maintaining and improving profitability is higher productivity and more innovation. So retailers are looking for a regulatory framework, which helps retailers deliver these goals. The Government has already promised to lighten the burden of regulation and we now expect it to deliver. Specifically, we want to see rapid progress in implementing both the Hampton report and the BRTF report "Less is More" which the Chancellor announced with his last Budget.

"We look forward to maintaining and extending our constructive dialogue with Ministers and civil servants to deliver policies and regulatory changes which will help our members improve their productivity, encourage them to invest and create more jobs".

The BRC outlined its policy priorities at the start of the campaign and we will work constructively with all Government departments and agencies to deliver them:

- National Minimum Wage - to prevent further above-inflation increases.
- Commercial Leases- to get more flexibility on assignment and subletting whether by voluntary action or Government intervention.
- Retail Crime - to toughen the penalties and reverse the trend towards violence
- Nutrition and Obesity- to achieve a sensible approach to tackling the growing imbalance between energy input and output.
- Europe - to assist the Government to achieve a successful UK presidency, particularly in kick-starting the Lisbon Agenda and achieving radical change in the Brussels regulatory culture.