

RATES (AMENDMENT) (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2004

S.I. 2004 No. 703 (N.I. 4)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

BACKGROUND AND POLICY OBJECTIVES

3. The Order aims to make several key changes to the existing non-domestic rating system in Northern Ireland. They are part of a major programme of rating reform initiated by the former Northern Ireland Executive in 2000 with the aim of establishing a modern and fairer rating system in Northern Ireland.
4. The main policy objectives of the Order are:
 - (i) to phase out the exemption from rates for industrial property, known as “industrial derating”. The phase out begins on 1 April 2005 and will be completed by 31 March 2011;
 - (ii) to introduce the rating of unoccupied non-domestic property, including new buildings; and
 - (iii) to provide for hardship relief in exceptional circumstances.