

Charity Bookshops

Charity book shops which operate like professional businesses should not benefit from receiving tax and business rate concessions, says the Booksellers Association (BA).

The statement follows a strong concern from high-street booksellers that tax breaks received by charity bookshops give them an unjust competitive advantage over other bookshops.

The BA argues that many charity book shops are professionally run and staffed by experienced retailers and in many instances believe charity retail units affect adversely the rateable values of neighbouring properties. One charity is believed to have more outlets in the UK selling books than the largest specialty bookshop.

BA members specifically reported that The Healthy Planet, a new bookshop in Shepherds Bush, West London, was offering titles by best-selling authors and that the charity was now approaching publishers for stock

Tim Godfray, chief executive of the Booksellers Association, said:

“Trading conditions for high street retail booksellers are extremely tough in the current climate and unfair competition from charity bookshops is something our members do not need. If we are serious about protecting retail diversity on the high street, we need to review the strong tax and rate concessions given to charities who run shops. If a charity shop sells new goods, why should it benefit from tax and business rate concessions?”

BA members think that The Healthy Planet has strayed from its stated goal of dealing in genuinely unwanted titles and is now competing with booksellers on the high street.

We believe that alternative methods should be explored to reduce – or offset – the volume of books remaindered, pulped or sent to landfill.”

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