

While Rachel Reeves has been away schmoozing in Washington, furious business owners in her own Leeds constituency rage...

Your tax grab is simply crippling us, Chancellor!

By Richard Marsden

FARSLEY, close to Leeds, has been singled out as one of the country's coolest postcodes – no surprise considering its smart and bustling high street, with artisan bakeries and family butchers.

But the shops in the picturesque LS28 enclave are feeling the hit from the triple whammy of cost increases ordered by their local MP: none other than the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves.

While Reeves was schmoozing American powerbrokers in Washington last week in an effort to get a trade deal for the UK, small store owners in her constituency were struggling to cope with her Budget tax grab.

This will cost British retailers £5 billion in this financial year and has already started to bite this month.

Joining the chorus of discontent on Farsley's Victorian streets is Arlington Interiors. Reeves visited the company in July 2023 in her role as the MP for Leeds West and Pudsey.

In a thank you letter, displayed on the wall of Arlington's premises in a converted mill, she described it as a 'wonderful example of a local company selling such high-quality products'.

The commendation now rings hollow. The company, a specialist in upmarket kitchen design, faces an extra bill of up to £80,000 a year following Reeves's cuts to business rate relief.

Nick Tindall, Arlington's joint owner and managing director, said: 'Reeves struck us as someone who wanted to listen to small business owners when she was in opposition.'

'I'd be very interested in her coming to see us again now. I'd like to see here for a one-on-one!'

Tindall said that the main hit for the firm was the cut in business rate relief from 75 per cent to 40 per cent.

'Our kitchens are priced at up to £40,000. We'll have to sell a couple more of them to cover that extra cost alone,' he revealed.

He fears that the other big cost increases affecting businesses – the rise in National Insurance Contributions and an increase in the national minimum wage – are likely to hit his customer base.

He said: 'A lot of our customers are business owners. If their costs keep going up, they'll have to reconsider what they pay themselves and may



STEWING: Kitchen maker Nick Tindall's costs are soaring



SIGN OF THE TIMES: Rachel Reeves won't receive a warm welcome back by villagers

think twice or delay home improvement projects.

He believes that the Chancellor's days may be numbered unless there is a dramatic upturn – and soon.

Elsewhere in Farsley, business owners are making frantic efforts to absorb thousands of pounds of

extra costs. Hardware store owner Mark Cox is bracing himself for a business rates increase of about £2,500 this year.

He said: 'They came in with the mantra of change and growth. Most people would say there's been change for the worse, which doesn't promote growth.'

'At school, they used to mark you for effort and attainment. I'd say she is putting the effort in but her skills are low.'

In its review of Farsley – once ranked as 'the happiest place in Leeds', The Sunday Times praised its mix of 'micro-breweries, sourdough bakehouses and great live music venues' – saying it has 'all the cultural catnip that hipster dads can't get enough of'.

But grocer Raymond Sutcliffe – who last year threatened to bar Reeves from his family-run store if she dared to venture in – feels angry.

'I'm now in my 42nd year of running the shop and I've never been as worried as I am now,' he says. 'I've never felt like this – including when Labour were in before under Blair and Brown. She's near the bottom in terms of worst Chancellors.'