Statement of Reasons by Karen Whitefield MSP

In relation to my draft proposal for a Bill – the Christmas Day And New Year’s Day Trading in Scotland Bill, I do not consider that consultation on the draft for 12 weeks from the date of lodging is required for the following reasons:

I have produced and issued a consultation paper on Christmas Day and New Year’s Day Trading. On 1 November 2004 I sent copies of the consultation paper directly to 170 organisations which included amongst others, retail organisations, trade unions, consumer groups, enforcement agencies, religious groups, government bodies and major retailers. I have also sent a copy of the consultation document to each MSP and all of Scotland’s local authorities.

A press launch has also been held for maximum coverage. Since launching the consultation I have also received a number of calls requesting a copy of the consultation paper.

The consultation paper is available on my website and I have already received a number of responses using downloaded consultation documents.

The consultation period runs for 3 months and concludes on 7 February 2005.

My consultation seeks views on: the principle of maintaining the special nature of Christmas Day and New Year’s Day; the case for prohibiting large stores from opening in Christmas Day and New Year’s Day by law; the question as to whether the benefits of prohibiting large stores from opening on Christmas Day and New Years Day would outweigh any disadvantages; definition of large shops; any equality or religious issues arising from the proposal; financial implications of the proposal; and the question of penalties for non-compliance.

Given that my consultation exercise is ongoing, I consider that there is no need to commence a further consultation. There remains adequate opportunity for the public to comment on what is being proposed I am confident that I will receive responses which will help to test, develop and refine my proposal.

I therefore request the Committee to consider this statement of reasons and confirm that it is satisfied with the reasons for not consulting for a period of 12 weeks from the date of lodging the draft proposal.