The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) notes the recommendations of the previous Scotland Bill Committee together with the further requests made by the Scottish Government in respect of the Scotland Bill.

As we have made clear in previous submissions, the FSB takes no position on constitutional matters per se. We are far more concerned with how particular decisions impact on small businesses, rather than where they are made. Thus, the FSB confines itself to commenting on instances where the taking of a decision at a particular level will have an identifiable impact on small businesses from an operational point of view.

Our main priority in relation to the Scotland Bill is that any change implemented as a result of the legislation involves minimum disruption or additional burden to businesses in Scotland – especially if it might put them at a disadvantage compared with businesses in other parts of the UK.

With this point in mind, we refer to the Scottish Government request to devolve excise duty for alcohol and tobacco and would underline the importance of any such change not entailing significant changes to the way in which excise is collected and administered. The Committee should note that the FSB would not support any moves which involve setting up new administrative systems or processes as part of managing the devolution of this income stream.

Having made enquiries, we understand that the Scottish Government is due to publish a paper providing more detail on how this proposal might work in practice and we look forward to reviewing and commenting on this at that stage.

Federation of Small Businesses
July 2011