SUBMISSION FROM THE WATERWAYS TRUST SCOTLAND

The Waterways Trust Scotland [TWTS] a charity registered in Scotland SCO39264 which aims to enrich people’s lives through waterways wishes to respond to the call for written evidence by the Committee.

TWTS do not express any view on the contents of the Scotland Bill or its associated documentation, but do wish to make observations prompted by Key Question 5 “What is your opinion of the proposals to create devolved taxes. Stamp duty and landfill tax and the power to create new taxes.”

TWTS would like to comment on the proposal to devolve Landfill Tax to the Scottish Government and in particular to make the Committee aware of the existence of and achievements of the Landfill Communities Fund, and to express the hope that legislation for any Scottish Landfill Tax or equivalent would contain provision for a Landfill Communities Fund similar to that in the existing UK Landfill Tax legislation.

The existing Landfill Communities Fund which was established when Landfill Tax was introduced in 1996 has since then, injected money into local communities providing and enhancing much needed amenities and the environment –in the case of TWTS the Scottish Canals including the Forth & Clyde, Union, Caledonian, Crinan and the Monkland Canals. In particular in the case of TWTS we have received significant funding from LCF over the last 10 years supporting canal side environmental enhancement projects including most recently:

- £300k for a new water play area at the Falkirk Wheel which will provide an educational visitor experience which teaches children how canals work and how water can be moved – all through play;
- £300k towards environmental enhancements including a sensory garden and nature trail at Auchinstarry Basin in North Lanarkshire;
- £200k towards a new floating canal classroom to operate on the Lowland Canals;
- £50,000 towards environmental improvements to the entrance at Blair Bridge on the Monkland Canal;
- £50,000 towards improvements to the Union Canal towpath and to Harrison Park East in Edinburgh.

This funding stream is vital to an environmental charity such as TWTS – there are much fewer environmental grants available in Scotland and if LCF did not exist; this would be disastrous for environmental charities.
TWTS would also like to encourage the committee to keep the LCF funding distributed in the same manner if it is devolved to Scotland and to not put it through Local Authorities – this does not work for charities and community organisations as any funding given to Local Authorities is then not ring fenced in the same way and excludes charities such as TWTS – a perfect example of this is the aggregate tax. Up until 2005 charities such as TWTS could apply and benefit from aggregate tax funding but this then was removed from Forward Scotland and put to LA’s – this money has now disappeared as a voluntary sector funding stream and is just part of LA budgets as there was no condition by Scottish Government to LA’s to ring fence aggregate tax monies.

If the LCF is devolved a review of the third party contribution charge would be useful as this makes it difficult for charities to apply – especially smaller charities like TWTS. Each time you apply you have to pay 10-12% of your project total cost to the LCF distributor. This means you have to find it from other partners; it is basically an admin charge to receive LCF funds.

I hope the Committee will agree that the Landfill Communities Fund has been and continues to be demonstrably successful and will move to ensure that a Scottish Landfill Communities Fund is incorporated in the legislation establishing a Scottish Landfill Tax and will keep its distribution through registered Environmental Bodies as is the case at present.

Karen Moore
Development Director Scotland
5 September 2011