LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM SARAH SYME

St Mary’s School lies in a central position in the town of Melrose and plays a pivotal role in our community.

Every day parents from all over the Scottish Borders bring their children to school and then stay on in town to shop and use the local cafes and restaurants. Visitors to the town invariably comment on the delightful range of small shops and businesses in the town. St Mary’s School supports our local businesses by using local food suppliers to provision our kitchens, which cook three meals per day for up 250 people. This approach to provision of food echoes the Green ethos of the school – St Mary’s works hard to support the Melrose and wider Scottish Borders communities through a variety of environmental projects.

St Mary’s School also supports and offers facilities for many local events including the Borders Book Festival and Melrose Sevens. The school also reaches out to schools and families across and beyond the Scottish Borders, inviting them, free of charge, to participate in educational and sporting events such as the Bang Goes the Borders science festival and the Farr Out Challenge.

These are just a few of the financial, environmental and educational contributions that one small school makes to our community. Melrose is a finely balanced community that is valued by its residents and visitors alike and to lose a business like St Mary’s would be a tremendous loss for our community.

I would therefore implore you to respect this balance and think carefully before making any changes to arrangements for payment of non-domestic rates for independent schools.