LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM: SANDRA AND GAVIN CLARK

Discrimination:

- We are the parents of a child who attends Stewarts Melville School, a private/independent school which is a registered charity. The school does a great deal of charity work and donates a substantial amount of money via the school fees and donations from parents of children who attend. It seems very discriminatory for such a school to be treated any differently from the other charities which receive and will continue to receive rates reliefs/exemptions.

- A public petition in 2014 states that "This charitable status allows Scotland's elitist and privileged private schools, which serve only 4% of pupils, 80% mandatory discount on non-domestic rates, while financially-strapped state schools, which serve 96% of pupils, pay the full sum" This is a total miss-information - Private/independent schools save the government a very substantial amount of money and without them, the "financially-strapped state schools" will see a considerable increase in their financial hardships. We are not elitist, we have worked very hard all our lives, and saved when we could, in order to be in a position to send our child to Stewarts Melville school, we are now a low income family receiving Working Tax Credits, and this increase will most certainly mean we can no longer afford to keep him at this school, how can our family be considered elitist?

- "The bill proposes maintaining the remission for any independent school where all the pupils are selected on the basis of musical ability or potential, and follow a curriculum which includes "classes aimed at developing musical excellence" " Does this imply that it is not possible for other private/independent schools, e.g. Stewarts Melville, to develop musical ability or potential talents to a similar degree as a specialist music school would? Specialist music schools provide the rest of the curriculum as well as music. Stewarts Melville have the Scottish Cricket Academy centre of excellence, is sporting abilities/potential less important to a society than music? I would say it is equally important.

- Removal of the rates relief only puts such schools out of reach of the common person, and they once again become a privilege of the wealthy.