LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM ALISON BROWN

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed removal of rates reduction for independent schools. I believe that if this bill were to be passed then many parents would no longer be able to afford to have their child privately educated, as undoubtedly fees would have to be increased. This would therefore deny these parents the right of choice between state or private education. As a consequence, school roles in the state sector would rise inflicting further financial demands on an already straining education budget and teachers would be faced with even bigger class sizes to manage. Conversely, class sizes would fall in the private sector, leading to the catastrophic loss of jobs in both direct teaching and ancillary jobs in an effort to cut costs.

Another pertinent point worthy of mention is that in order to provide our children at St Mary’s with enriched and beneficial experiences, we hire a variety of local facilities including; Tweedbank Astroturf, Galashiels Swimming Pool, Melrose Tennis Courts and The Queens Centre Sports Hall. We pay for the privilege of using each of these, but in this way we are contributing to the running costs and upkeep of them. Our healthy school role enables us to make use of these venues thus feeding income back in to the local economy.

Finally, as an independent school there are many additional overheads we have to finance, such as ensuring that our roads, paths and play areas are accessible and safe to use during the winter months. The presence of rates reduction allows us to address extra costs such as these.

To conclude, I strongly urge that the bill to remove rates reduction for independent schools is revoked to maintain the healthy status quo of choice between state and private schooling and to avoid a negative financial impact on the wider community. This would enable us to continue to thrive and serve our community in a variety of positive and effective ways.