LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM LORNA HUTCHISON

Section 10, which removes eligibility to claim charitable relief from nondomestic rates from mainstream independent schools.

I would like to register my protest at the proposed removal of business rates relief for mainstream independent schools for the following reasons.

Should this happen, it is highly likely that an increase in fees will be forced upon these independent schools as well as a reduction in the amount of bursaries provided. Operating as commercial businesses, the proposed rates increases will lead to increased costs in the budgets and will therefore make an increase in fees necessary. Not all families will be able to cope with such an increase. These are the families, many of whom currently make many financial sacrifices to send their children to an independent school, having been failed by ever increasing class sizes, a dramatic fall in staff recruitment and the cutting of financial budgets along with the axing of support staff in the state sector. Every child removed from an independent school due to a hike in fees as a result of this proposed bill will have a huge impact and knock on effect on the Scottish taxpayer, adding to the cost for local authorities, not forgetting the pressure on class sizes and space that this will create, pushing local authority schools closer to breaking point.

The loss of 1 in 30 pupils from the independent sector – either to the state sector or boarding pupils locating elsewhere – would cost the Scottish taxpayer more than the entire rates increase proposed by the Bill.

The Scottish taxpayer needs to be aware that there is no mention of this in the Financial Memorandum.

On the point of equity, why are private profit making nurseries to continue to be given 100% rates relief and yet stand alone independent school nurseries are not? How is this promoting equity?

No other charities have been subjected either to the collective public benefit test or the measures proposed by the Barclay Review. Only 56 schools being singled out from over 24,000 Scottish registered bodies (including other fee-charging, restricted admission education charities). Why are independent schools being singled out? How does this promote equity?

The Bill’s policy memorandum, in reference to rating of sports clubs, mentions the Scottish Government’s policy to continue to support and encourage local authorities
to support, affordable community based facilities that give people the chance to take part in sporting activities thus contributing to (amongst other aims around an active Scotland) the Scottish Government aim to cut physical inactivity in adults and teenagers by 15% by 2030. Despite this policy priority, no consideration has been made of the impact on independent school sports facilities and their access by the wider community.

I would like to voice my opposition to Section 10 of the Non-Domestic Rates (Scotland) Bill.