LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM KEITH WILSON

1. Fairness: independent schools have been independently verified as charities but are being targeted (60 out of 24,000) for removal of business rates relief. While there may be a temptation to see independent education as benefitting only the wealthy, this is to implicitly denigrate the work of those identifying charities that meet the qualifying criteria. It is simply unfair to target this one group. If it is correct that charities generally should not have business rate relief then so be it but otherwise this appears to be politically rather than fairly motivated.

2. The economic case and likely impact is not fairly made – independent school fees are very high and there are many parents for which affordability is marginal. Those parents may be forced to change to the state system if the cost of rates increases is passed on by higher school fees. The costs to the state of additional places may negate or even outweigh any value in the change making this a costly and ultimately negative process. There appears to be no research on this.

3. This change is not in the best interests of promoting high standards of education in Scotland. Assuming costs are passed on it is likely to make parents who would otherwise use the Scottish education system to consider alternatives south of the border with the attendant risk of future wealth creators leaving Scotland and generally make the English independent alternatives more attractive than Scotland.