LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM DR DEBORAH SCHOLES

We do not support the abolition of charitable relief from non-domestic rates in the independent sector.

If the Bill is passed many children will be removed from independent schools and these children will then enter the state sector. This will increase costs for local authorities and the state in general and we don’t feel that the Bill has covered this fact in any detail.

If independent schools have increased costs then not only will fee paying parents take their children out but the children who would have benefitted from bursaries will no longer get the opportunity to stretch themselves and improve their potential. In a world where we are supposed to be widening access the Bill would seem to be doing the exact opposite.

Furthermore, many local children benefit from the excellent sporting and recreational facilities that the independent sector has to offer, through hire of these facilities for their extracurricular activities. If independent schools lose their charitable status then these facilities will either not be loaned out at all or their costs will rise which will be detrimental to the Scottish Government’s drive to increase childhood activity and decrease obesity. As a medical professional I see the extra burden that this in turn is causing on the NHS and its budget, and anything that goes against a reduction in obesity targets cannot be a good thing.

We feel that the independent schools sector is a tiny proportion of the 12,500 charities in Scotland and they are being unfairly targeted. In addition, the extra burden to the state if this Bill is passed has been totally ignored and we think that the Scottish Government needs to rethink its plans.