LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM GORDON GRAY

Equal treatment with other charities

I object to the exemption from non-domestic rates being removed from independent schools.

Independent school are charities and should be given the same benefits as all other Scottish charities.

Advancement of education is recognised in law as a charitable purpose – this is a long established principle which I believe has been the case for several hundred years. Also, in recent times, OSCR has tested and confirmed the charitable status of Scottish independent schools.

It is therefore not appropriate to have different rules for a tiny proportion of charitable organisations.

Fairness to parents

Families who make use of independent schools make a careful financial judgement. They commit to the school for the long term. Any change to law which unexpectedly increases costs is unwelcome.

Comparison with state school

I understand that non-domestic rates do not affect the budgets of state schools.

Parents who pay for independent schools are directly adding to the resources used to educate the nation’s children. Often they are paying for facilities which are used by the wider community (and made available on favourable terms). They are also reducing the burden on the state to educate children.

In contrast, parents who pay inflated prices for houses near good state schools are not contributing resources to education. Furthermore, should the houses appreciate in value they benefit from substantial tax-free capital gains.

Comparing the 2 positions, it is not clear why the latter set of parents is favourably treated by the tax system while the former are specifically targeted with a tax-raising measure such as non-domestic rates.