LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM GILLIAN DURHAM

I strongly believe that the bill singles out independent schools from tens of thousands of other charities to pay non-domestic rates and it takes no cognisance of the schools charitable purpose that has been ratified by OSCR and is core to the values and actions taken by the school and Board of Governors at Hutchesons’ Granmar School, Glasgow. Like many independent schools, Hutchesons’ Grammar School has significant bursary provision, and in 2017/18 academic year, independent schools in Scotland have provided in excess of £51 million in fee assistance demonstrating the sector’s absolute commitment to widening access to curriculum choice in Scotland. Removing the charitable exemption will either increase fees, significantly reduce the bursary provision or a combination of both.

Many parents make significant sacrifices in choosing to educate their children independently. The increase in fees and removal of bursary provision will force parents to remove their children from independent school. The proposed changes would therefore result in a migration from the independent sector to the public sector which would cost the government significantly more than the tax revenue the proposed change would generate.

My local state schools are already over-stretched. There does not seem to have been any research carried out to ascertain whether state schools could cope with the burden.

The bottom line for Scotland is that every child removed from an independent school if fees rise will be an additional cost and space for local authorities to deal with – the bill makes no mention of any of them. I see no way that implementing this change could have a positive impact for anyone: parents, tax revenue, teachers, schools, but most importantly children and their education. Surely children and their education should be the most important factor in these proposals?