LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

SUBMISSION FROM CATRIONA GAMBLES

I fail to understand the equanimity in applying business rates to the independent school sector above all other charities, essentially singling them out for some wider political agenda.

I wholeheartedly feel this Non-domestic Rates Bill penalises and singles out independent schools from other charities to pay non-domestic rates and it takes no account of the wider charitable role schools play in our communities, in fact the schools’ charitable purpose as ratified by OSCR. This charitable purpose is central to the core values and undertakings of the school and Board of Governors at Hutchesons’ Grammar School.

The Barclay Report and the proposed Bill does not accept our public and community benefit and falsely claims that state schools pay rates. State schools do not receive funds which they pay out in rates. It is my belief that no school should pay business rates.

No consideration appears to have been made nor any comprehensive understanding displayed of the impact of this change will have on our school’s bursary provision. Bursaries at Hutchesons’ has and does benefit a significant number of children.

The result of this tax burden will drive children from independent into State schooling as a direct result of increasing fees to an unmanageable level for many of our hard working and dedicated tax paying parents.

The State sector is already under-funded and under-resourced. It appears that no account has been made of the fact that our parent body paying their taxes do not receive their educational allowance for their children as they do not use the State facilities. As such they are net contributors to the State Sector already, and the local councils are already benefitting from the life choices and sacrifices those parents are making. It is not a decision taken lightly nor one that is immediately affordable to many parents, myself included.

I urge you to reconsider enforcing this part of the Barclay Review and to quantify the reality and impact that increasing fees will have for many independent schools – already we have seen schools in Glasgow reach the end of the road, Craigholme the latest casualty. Perhaps this is the wider political agenda and intention. Fundamentally, this is an unfair ruling penalising the good work of our independent sector.