

Surface Drainage Charges for Non-Household Premises
Response from the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

[Click here](#) to read the Scottish Government consultation letter

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities welcomes the proposed deferral of the introduction of the surface drainage charge. We have previously responded to consultations about the exemption scheme that benefits many faith community and small voluntary organisations, and we welcomed the Minister's statement in May 2008 that this would be continued until 2014. We do, however, remain concerned at the impact of the proposed changes on organisations that do not qualify for the exemption, particularly during the current recession.

The Secretary of State for Scotland has publicly recognised that faith-based organisations are at the forefront of providing support to local communities "*tackling poverty at grassroots level*"¹. Moreover, a study of the economic contribution made by faith communities in North West England² indicates that "45,667 faith volunteers in the Northwest generate between £60.6 million and £64.4 million per annum." – i.e. they save the public purse that sum. (These figures exclude the work of national faith-based welfare organisations that operate in the area, such as the Children's Society, and NCH Action for Children, and also exclude the value of other services such as the provision of premises for community activities.)

No comparable research has been conducted in Scotland, but research for Volunteer Development Scotland indicates that more than 30% of the population in rural communities, and 15% in urban areas are involved in volunteering.³ Since research also indicates that volunteering is higher among members of faith communities than among the general population⁴, and 67% of Scots identified themselves in the 2001 census as belonging to a religion, the value of faith volunteering to the Scottish economy is likely to be considerably higher than the above finding for the North West of England.

However, many of the organisations that provide this substantial benefit do so with extremely limited resources. They are often heavily reliant on donations from individuals and small trusts, and, as a result of the recession, many have suffered a significant loss of income during the last year, and are struggling to meet their current costs.

¹ <http://www.scotlandoffice.gov.uk/scotlandoffice/9753.html>

² Faith in England's Northwest: Economic Impact Assessment (DTZ Pineda Consulting, February 2005 for the Northwest Regional Development Agency)
http://www.faithnorthwest.org.uk/assets/_files/documents/dec_07/faith__1196946056_economicimpactassessment2005.pdf

³ Scotland's Volunteering Landscape: The Nature of Volunteering, June 2006
[http://www.vds.org.uk/Resources/The%20Nature%20of%20Volunteering%20\(RFSNo9\).pdf](http://www.vds.org.uk/Resources/The%20Nature%20of%20Volunteering%20(RFSNo9).pdf)

⁴ Who volunteers? Volunteering trends: 2000-2007
http://www.nfpsynergy.net/includes/documents/cm_docs/2008/v/volunteeringtrendsjan08.pdf

The introduction of surface drainage charges will impact heavily on faith communities since many places of worship have both a large roof area and significant hard surface car parking. The charges will also impact heavily on many voluntary organisations, particularly those that provide services to disabled and elderly people, since these necessarily maintain large areas of car park, often with wider than normal bays to permit wheelchair access. Those that do not benefit from the exemption were already concerned whether they would be able to pay the new charge even before the current financial crisis, and its introduction at this time would certainly result in the closure of some premises with consequent serious social and financial implications to the local community.

Deferring the introduction of the new charges would provide significant assistance, and we therefore welcome the proposal and urge that it should be ratified without delay.

Note: The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland comprising Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee as well as the more loosely linked groups of the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands, and of students studying in Scottish Universities and Colleges. SCoJeC is Scottish Charity SC029438, and its aims are to advance public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community. It works with others to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality, and represents the Jewish community in Scotland to government and other statutory and official bodies on matters affecting the Jewish community.

In preparing this response we have consulted widely among members of the Scottish Jewish community, particularly synagogue management committees, welfare organisations, youth clubs, and other voluntary organisations.