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26 June 2013

Mr Kevin Stewart MSP
M3.17
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Stewart

I write regarding the Local Government and Regeneration Committee's meeting on Wednesday 19 June 2013, and specifically the evidence session on Regeneration. Mention was made of Asda during the discussion and I should like to take this opportunity to respond to a few points that were raised.

Regarding pay levels, I should like to confirm that Asda is not a minimum wage employer – even our basic rate of pay is far above the minimum wage, and combined with our package of pay and benefits adds up to approximately £7.70 per hour. We are proud of the package we offer our colleagues and believe our retention rate speaks for itself: over 50% of our colleagues have been with Asda for more than five years, which is unusual for a retailer of our size.

Following the Committee's discussion around community facilities, I would like to make mention of our Community Life initiative, which has seen every one of our stores and depots appoint a Community Life Champion with responsibility for supporting their local areas, including volunteering, fundraising and working with local schools and charities. As part of Community Life we have opened our stores up, free of charge, to local groups and good causes – using our foyer space, training rooms, cafes and car parks to provide space for the community to come together. We would be delighted for the organisations represented at the Committee's evidence session to make contact with their nearest Asda store to see whether we are able to support them locally.

Finally, in light of the Committee's discussion on using surplus food, I thought it might be helpful to highlight Asda's partnership with FareShare, the first of its kind on this scale in the UK grocery retail sector. The partnership will see thousands of tonnes of surplus chilled food from our supply chain, which is fit for human consumption but would otherwise be thrown away, delivered to FareShare to be redistributed to local charities across Scotland, such as homeless hostels, breakfast clubs, women's refuges and luncheon clubs for the elderly.

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We have committed to send 1,500 tonnes of food to FareShare across the UK this year, increasing the amount of food FareShare redistributes by 41%, with Asda covering the cost of transportation. This new partnership will not only eliminate thousands of tonnes of food waste and provide 3.6 million meals for the charities FareShare supports – approximately 773,000 meals in Scotland – but will also help the charities save approximately £4.5 million per year to invest back into their services. We would encourage charities and community organisations to contact any of FareShare's depots in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen to see if they could benefit from becoming members of the FareShare service.

Please let me know if you would like any further information on Asda's efforts to support the local communities we serve.

Yours sincerely



Polly Jones
Corporate Affairs Manager, Scotland

cc Mr David Cullum, Clerk, Local Regeneration Committee
Ms Karen McGregor, Kirkcaldy East Regeneration Forum
Ms Judith Robertson, Head of Oxfam Scotland
Ms Jackie Brock, Chief Executive, Children in Scotland