



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01223

Name of petitioner

Ron Beaty

Petition title

School bus safety

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take all appropriate action, whether through amending guidance, contracts, agreements or legislation, to require local authorities to install proper safety signage and lights on school buses, to be used only when school children are on the bus when necessary, and make overtaking a stationary school bus a criminal offence.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

Spoken with our MSP & Minister of Transport Stewart Stevenson on this matter on numerous occasions, Alex Salmond, First Minister is also aware of this ongoing problem though emails to him. I have attended a meeting with Aberdeenshire Council on this matter with Stewart Stevenson & the parents of the two children recently killed.

Raised a petition in 2006 (PE892) on a similar subject, that was forwarded to Dept of Transport at Westminster. This petition has now been amended, so we can stop children being killed & seriously injured with this new petition

No further action has been taken by anyone, yet we have had at least three children killed leaving school transport since then. No accurate figures exist on accidents happening on School Transport

I am also in regular touch & speak for the Oldham & Milne families who both lost children in September 2008, also with details of other families who have lost or had children injured under the same circumstances. We are also in the attempt to get other parents to contact us & get our point of view across.

Petition background information

In 2004 my granddaughter Erin Beaty, aged 8, was knocked down getting off a school bus, only a few feet from safety & the kerb on the other side of the road. She was left totally wheelchair bound & severely brain damaged. She is totally reliant on others daily & needs full time care.

Erin's accident caused her internal decapitation, the only child in the UK to survive this type of injury, only child to have this operation done. She is paralysed down one side & her speech is bad. Erin was in hospital for 10 months, seven in Edinburgh & three in

Aberdeen, we had to travel week in & out, the cost was horrendous, who helps, of course no one does, it's just another burden on top of the tragedy that has already happened. When Erin was in hospital in Edinburgh there were another 4 children, all injured leaving school transport. Our family was spared the utter despair the other families I also speak for, Erin was returned to us.

I appeared before the Petitions Committee in 2006 (PE892) & my suggestions were endorsed by all on the committee, also most other groups who were asked their opinion as the petition will show. This was before the Scottish Parliament realised it was not a devolved matter, this is why it is now approached in a different manner. The decision of the committee then was to be referred to Dept of Transport at Westminster, still no action has been taken 2 years later.

Two weeks after my last appearance at the Scottish Parliament, a young lad was killed in Crossgates, Fife, again leaving school transport. The saddest news is, In September of this year, 15 year old Robyn Oldham was killed then 2 weeks later, 11 year old Alexander Milne was also killed, both leaving school transport in Aberdeenshire.

I have been in contact with them on a regular basis, its soul destroying to watch families go through this, utter devastation for them, who would wish this on anyone, but it happens because of faults within the school transport system.

I have letters from 12 other parents who have lost children & another 9 who were left injured since 1972; this is only the tip of the iceberg. Many parents even after 30 years cannot bring themselves to speak on the subject. There are many more than this.

It cannot go on; we cannot go on seeing young children killed in this manner, school transport is supposed to protect children, not harm them. They are our most precious commodity, yet we stand looking on as this happens time & time again. If you have your own children or grand children using school transport, think about this.

Can you imagine sending your child to school, seeing them leave home as normal healthy children, that can run, walk, play games, in fact doing everything a young child or teenager should be able to, then seven hours later seeing them lying at death's door & left severely brain damaged.

Or the worst possible outcome, finding out they have been killed, your child killed, can you understand this & that also virtually every constituency in Scotland has been affected by this.

Take it UK wide & the figures grow, the sad bit is, there are no accurate records of these accidents. These accidents are treated as a pedestrian accident, they are not, it is a school transport accident. We do not expect every accident will be avoidable, that is impossible, but most could be avoided, you can as a Parliament take steps to do just that.

Over the years the school bus sign has been left on during bus trips, OAP outings, tours etc etc, I am sure each one of you has seen a school bus, with the sign up, used for other purposes, its affect has been simply diluted, its legal to display when children are aboard the bus, but its not illegal to leave it displayed when they are not, that's a nonsense.

- We need it made illegal to use the sign unless children are aboard
- We need better visibility for school transport, adverts are larger than the sign we use for safety, we need signage changed & improved, led flashing signs etc.
- We need larger extra flashing lights [The Dept of Transport legislation allows this] not the simple hazard lights buses use, many people simply use these hazards lights to pop into the newsagents,
- We need to ensure that this also applies to service buses that also transport school children; they do not have any extra protection, as offered to those who travel often on private contract buses, which are sometimes yellow
- We need to ensure no children are carried in double decked buses, which often carry a whole community aboard, or from the same street
- We need to ensure that every local authority in Scotland follows the same procedure, in safe guarding our school children. as in the short term options now being considered

by Aberdeenshire Council

- We need to ensure school children are offered the same safety measures that they do in the family car, or in taxi used for transporting school children by providing seat belts, if a bus crashes & goes on its side, occupants are then dragged out of any broken windows.

If you study coach accidents', this is where the most serious injuries occur. We need to ensure children are protected by seeing a law passed as in North America, where traffic simply stops as the children load or unload. Is that too much to ask, that motorists cannot spare a few minutes to do this, to save lives or injury to children.

We have 20mph limits around schools to protect them. Why? To ensure their safety. Can't we take a simple step forward? We all need to think this through properly, & with great concern, so we can protect our children as their parents expect & as in fact the children themselves expect to be protected. Children in many cases do not feel safe on School Transport.

What we don't need is the status quo, things have to change, we cannot go on killing or injuring our school children, this is 2008; surely we devise solutions we can take forward to the Dept of Transport at Westminster.

Do you realise that animals have more protection than children have aboard school transport & that a dust cart has more visible warnings than a school bus.

There is much we can do, simply & without great cost, much electrical equipment is so cheap now. The total disruption to family life, the cost to NHS & social services over a lifetime suddenly a house is no use because a wheel chair does not fit. Months of travelling. Then of course those families whose children will never come home, nor who will ever need a wheel chair.

Our families ask, please take this forward as a parliament, regardless of politics, something you can & must be proud of as MSPs, that at last you in this Scottish Parliament can stand together & insist there must be a change in the way we transport school children & that it can be done more safely.

I have fought for change since 2004, with councils & individuals through our own Parliament, nothing changed. There are deaths that could have been avoided if people had heard what was being said then. Surely we have the power to lay these matters before Westminster, asking the law be improved & to say that no to change is not an option.

I ask this on behalf of all the families mentioned here, we are all of the same voice that no family should have to suffer in the way we have. When things can be changed to avoid this happening again. We ask this for all the families who have suffered loss or injury, for those brave enough to contact me open their hearts.

This petition is also for them, I ask please to be allowed to speak to the committee, so that they will get a full understanding of this horrendous problem.

I can only do so much, the rest is up to you, can you grasp this problem & solve it, this is something you have to ask yourselves.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01223>

Related information for petition

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

509

Closing date for collecting signatures online

N/A

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