

PE1223/BB

PETITION 1223

To The PPC

We congratulate Aberdeenshire advances in school bus safety, as we do their partners Stagecoach & Talisman Energy that helped fund the DVD 1second1life.

We are encouraged by the fact The Motorist Questionnaire was completed by 911 respondents with results overwhelmingly positive, a vast improvement but sad many drivers were unaware of the signs meaning in the first place.

Also as regards new signage, although the statement regarding front signs has not been thought through.

They state > [regrettably](#) however, it was accepted that for some buses, owing to their physical dimensions, the only suitable position for the sign was behind the window space.

Its regrettable its not been thought through, the regulations plainly state the sign "has to be visible". **In these circumstances its not & often lying on a slant on the dashboard**, but it seems they have not considered other methods.

One could be an additional LED sign fitted inside the screen along with the present legal sign; this would ensure a safety sign is visible, when not in use it's simply a blank dark screen.

According to the DOT the signs at present used should not be behind glass nor at a slant as it affects there retro reflection.

Couple this with the statement made "Speed data analysed for Counter 1, at the front of the bus, suggested the new front school bus signs made no impact to motorists behavior.

This should tell us how very serious & dangerous this sign misplacement is, not as the council state "[regrettable](#)"

This we totally agree with & in fact raised this in 2006 at the petitions committee Firstly; it is considered that it could be interesting for national agencies to experiment with a further sign incorporating flashing lights. Recent studies in Sweden have recommended that further school transport signs should have blinking lights and be in another format with another type of icon than at present, which in turn required more research (Anund et al 2005).

How ever reading through this New School Bus Signage: Results from a Trial in Aberdeenshire I find myself really angry, & that is not me.

I am concerned about the way Aberdeenshire portrays themselves as sole inventors of change in school bus safety.

This is blatantly incorrect & it saddens me to have to point this out, possibly it looks good for them, but is a mistruth the way I read it.

Much of the pressure for change came from us, the petitions committee, various MPS & MSPs, Stewart Stevenson & much unwanted media attention; the council did not change & have not changed anything voluntarily. Simply through pressure.

If this were not the case changes would of taken place after Erin was run down, or my 2006 petition which raised many of the same points, nothing changed. Aberdeenshire waited until two teenagers were sadly killed before thinking along the grounds of change.

The TRL report was instigated by Transport Scotland & the PPC as far as I am aware. This has also highlighted many concerns, its good to see them aired openly.

Aberdeenshire quote As Thornthwaite (2009) highlights, the signs are "...widely misused (e.g. wrongly sized signs) or are left in place when it is evident that the vehicle is not being used by children" and the regulation surrounding the appropriate use of the sign "...appears to be widely disregarded and inconsistently applied, and it is doubtful today whether there is any benefit or change in driver behaviour around buses as a result.

Again nothing changed voluntarily; parent pressure, PPC & the media ensured changes took place.

There have been accidents in Aberdeenshire, as in many LAs areas, over many years, yet nothing changed anyone's opinion of safety.

In Parliament it was said in 1999 "Changes to school bus safety have to happen" the bus ops & LAs have had years to address these problems, yet did nothing.

So it rankles that now we read, "everything was up for change" & through their endeavors.

As In Concerns regarding the signs visibility related to the view that the sign was not very bright and was often lost in much of the other livery and logos on buses or placed behind tinted glass.

I was told originally Aberdeenshire could not insist the safety sign was removed out of contract, the Scottish Government & DOT told them it could be written into their contract. Eventually they agreed.

In fact it was only in November I photographed an illegal home made sign displayed on the back of an Aberdeenshire mini bus, I received an apology regarding this, but still await an explanation and it shows Aberdeenshire are not 100% accurate or in fact truthful.

They have portrayed themselves as instigating many of the safety improvements themselves, which is untrue. Photo attached.

Under methodology "which adds weight to the belief, first raised by school bus operators" that the general motoring public does not understand what the existing school bus sign means. If this were so why was there no change & why wait until we raised the whole question of safety?

The questionnaire is welcome, but in fact many of the problems were caused by bus drivers themselves failing to remove the sign out of contract.

So other drivers were unaware pupils were on board the bus!

This being so why now does Aberdeenshire Council & the bus ops claim it all started with them, utter rubbish.

While research suggests that the use of flashing lights may be worthy of further consideration, in the current financial climate the school bus signs trialed in Aberdeen shire represent an affordable, effective solution to increasing awareness to school buses and, in October 2010, Aberdeen shire Councils Transportation & Infrastructure Committee approved the roll-out of the new signage across the region; a process which is currently ongoing.

Yes it is still ongoing with most buses I see without the new sign, so when will all buses display it?

We look forward to the continuing progress of school bus safety, this will never be allowed to slip behind this far again, we will never allow LAs or bus companies to shirk their responsibility, & by doing so seeing pupils injured or at worst killed.

We will continue our fight until all pupils have the same right to safety on their transport, as it stands this is not inclusive equality that every pupil deserves; it is the minimum of safety practices, when it should be the maximum.

Why any less, no adult works under minimum safety practices, why should pupils be any different.

Ron Beaty

School Bus Safety Group