



Our ref IG/ED/T/10/2
Your ref

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Mr Franck David
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr David

Consideration of Petition PE1223

I refer to your letter dated 14 January 2009 seeking a written response on the issues raised in the above petition and specific issues raised during discussion on the petition. May I apologise for the delay in responding to your original request and assure you that Aberdeenshire Council has and continues to give this issue very careful consideration.

I can confirm that the Council replied to a formal request from Mr Beaty to the Leader of the Council dated 31st December 2008 seeking support for the petition and that the reply set out the approach that this Council has taken on these matters. Officers have also provided Mr Beaty with several other replies to his enquiries both by e-mail and letter over the last few months.

With regard to the specific issues raised within the above petition, the position of Aberdeenshire Council is set out in the report to the joint meeting of the Infrastructure Services and Education, Learning and Leisure Committees held on 11th December 2008. It contains 15 recommendations, all of which were approved by the joint Committees and officers are already well advanced on a number of them. The full report can be accessed via the Aberdeenshire Council website www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk but the 15 recommendations are;

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- (1) to note the issues set out in the report,
- (2) to approve the continuation of work by officers on the production of revised DVDs which were more specifically focussed on improving the safety of pupils along the whole journey of their trips between school and home,
- (3) to approve the comments set out in Appendix D of the report for submission to the Yellow School Bus Commission,
- (4) to request that officers and transport operators jointly prepare options for revised and supplementary school bus warning signage,
- (5) to support joint working with the Scottish Government to examine the scope for the redesign of the existing school bus sign,
- (6) to instruct the Directors of Education, Learning and Leisure and Transportation and Infrastructure to meet with senior officials of the Scottish and UK Governments, to discuss how any further review of legislation concerning banning the overtaking of stationary school vehicles should be progressed, with particular emphasis on the responsibility of drivers when overtaking stationary school vehicles,
- (7) to instruct officers to:-
 - (a) reinforce the crucial importance of the correct use and display of school bus signs in line with the current contractual requirements,
 - (b) restate the clear requirement within current contracts for the use of hazard warning lights when picking up and dropping off pupils, and
 - (c) request that all operators also use dipped headlights when picking up and dropping off pupils,
- (8) to approve the continuation of work currently ongoing with Talisman to design specific high visibility clothing items of a fashionable nature,
- (9) to instruct officers to undertake further work investigating the feasibility and costs of introducing interactive roadside bus stops aimed at increasing the visibility of pupils at school transport Pick Up Drop Off (PUDO) sites,
- (10) to instruct the Head of Transportation to report back to the Committees on the results of the two pilot PUDO assessments and provide more detailed information on options and costs for undertaking further PUDO assessments across Aberdeenshire, and/or develop an Aberdeenshire Council PUDO assessment methodology based on consultant guidance and research from elsewhere,
- (11) to instruct the Head of Transportation to work with Scottish Government officials to encourage further research of PUDO (or to develop national guidelines on PUDOs) through the relevant local authority associations which cover road safety and public transport, i.e. SCOTS and ATCO,

(12) to acknowledge the extensive range of road safety education initiatives promoted in Aberdeenshire's primary and secondary schools and encourage officers to continue to investigate opportunities to introduce new education initiatives which can support improved road safety,

(13) to instruct officers to disseminate information on existing school transport policy and other road safety issues to pupils, parents and teachers through the Council's Glow system,

(14) to instruct officers to work with partners to maximise the use of the media to promote joint, co-ordinated messages to pupils, parents and drivers regarding the issue of road safety and school transport, and

(15) to approve the launch of a schools poster competition aimed at developing a poster which would be displayed inside and outside school buses across Aberdeenshire to raise awareness amongst drivers of the potential of pupils crossing.

Our officers have also been involved discussions with the operators of the vehicles that provide School Transport under contract to the Council and with the relevant officials in Scottish Government who deal with Road Safety.

With regard to the specific issues raised during the discussion on the petition my senior officers have reviewed the transcript of the Petitions Committee session of 13 January 2009 and I would make the following comments based upon their observations.

The Council promotes best practice to encourage school buses providers to use correct signage and hazard warning lights on school buses by regular reminders by letter and telephone to the operators and through meeting with them and/or their representative group on a regular basis.

The initiative to show pupils a new DVD which focuses on school bus safety has been progressed jointly by Council officers dealing with Road Safety, School Transport and Education alongside the Road Safety Officers at Grampian Police and representatives of Stagecoach Bluebird and Talisman who have provided financial backing to the production and role out of the DVD. Discussions are ongoing with our partners, including Grampian Police, with regard to the options for a public campaign aimed at parents and drivers who are using the road network at the same time as the School Transport vehicles. The need to educate parents and drivers was highlighted in the report to the joint committees in December 2008 and forms a key part of all of the work on Road Safety that this Council has done in partnership with Grampian Police and Grampian Fire and Rescue such as Safe Drive, Stay Alive.

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You have asked whether it would be possible to introduce by-laws in relation to the transport of school children, and how would these be enforced. Having examined the letter sent by Jill Mulholland of the Scottish Government Road Safety Team I would concur with the view that such an approach would seem to be inappropriate given that the specific issues are not exclusive to Aberdeenshire. In relation to the enforcement of any additional legislation relating to the transport of schoolchildren I would refer you to my later comments on involving ACPOS, the Confederation of Passenger Transport and the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland.


I have attached a table setting out the relevant action that Aberdeenshire Council is taking to address the issues raised with and by the Petitions Committee.

Finally I would also wish to comment on some of the statements/issues recorded in the transcript of the meeting of 13th January 2009.

There seems to be a common theme through the discussions that school transport is done on the cheap with little regard to the safety of the children. This is not the case in Aberdeenshire and I would be sure that it is also the case in any other authority in Scotland. We spend in the order of £13.8 million pounds a year transporting 12,500 children to and from school and the report to the meeting of 11th December 2008 sets out the relevant statistics on safety of the services provided.

The Petitions Committee has undertaken to seek the views of a number of stakeholders but I would suggest that two further groups should also be consulted, namely ACPOS who would give a view on the practicalities of enforcing new legislation, the Confederation of Passenger Transport who would be able to comment on the practicalities of the types of systems that are mentioned in the transcript from an operators standpoint and the Traffic Commissioner for Scotland who could indicate the type of issues which may fall within their regulatory/inspection regime.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Gabriel', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Iain Gabriel
Director of Transportation and Infrastructure
Aberdeenshire Council

Road Safety and School Transport: Progress Update

The following table outlines the full list of recommendations on Road Safety and School Transport presented to the joint meeting of Infrastructure Services Committee and the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee on the 11th of December 2008, along with a progress updates on the current status of each recommendation and proposed future actions. Those stakeholders with a responsibility for taking forward each recommendation are also noted in the table.

Recommendation (“The Committee are recommended to...”)	Current Position	Future Actions	Responsibility
1. Note and comment on the issues set out in the report.	Report considered and commented upon at Joint ISC/ELL Committee on 11/12/2008.	-	-
2. Approve the continuation of work by officers on the production of revised DVDs, more specifically focussed on improving the safety of pupils along the whole journey of their trips between school and home.	‘Bus Stop’ DVD and Learning Resource Pack completed. Launch date 25 th of Feb, Portlethen Academy. (May be the case that AC does its own launch if formal Talisman launch does not take place soon.)	Once launched, the DVD will be rolled-out to schools, with schools encouraged to use the ‘Bus Stop’ DVD and Learning Resource Pack as soon as practical. With regards to the Stagecoach DVD, the group involved with this agreed to see how the Talisman DVD shapes up before making a decision. Still keen to do something but not too late in the year.	-
3. Approve the comments in Appendix D for submission to the Yellow School Bus Commission.	RF prepared covering letter. EW to review and issue response to the YSB Commission. RF and various other	Issue response to YSB Commission. Future correspondence may result in future actions.	EW

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Recommendation (“The Committee are recommended to...”)	Current Position	Future Actions	Responsibility
	AC officers attended CILT Lecture by Aberdeen University’s CTR on 03/02. Powerpoint presentation available.		
4. Ask that officers and transport operators jointly prepare options for revised and supplementary school bus warning signage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meeting held 13/02 in Inverurie with NEPCOA (including Stagecoach) to keep them informed / get their views on options, particularly school bus signs. 2. In parallel, contact Scottish Govt – use this to outline the work we’re doing and to get progress update on the work they’re doing. Meeting confirmed 12/03 in Dundee. 3. Agree approach to DfT. Dependent on discussions with Scottish Govt. 4. Following this, contact DfT to establish what options may be feasible (and piloted). 	<p>Issue Minute to NEPCOA. Future meeting to be set up once actions have been further progressed. Discuss issues raised by NEPCOA at Scottish Govt. meeting. Various actions on the back of the NEPCOA meeting to be followed up including bus driver workshop and discussions with Grampian Police re. the appropriate use of the school bus sign.</p> <p>Prepare Agenda for Scottish Govt. meeting.</p>	<p>IT, RF</p> <p>RF</p> <p>RF</p> <p>RF</p>
5. Support joint	To be progressed in	Look to progress by	As above

Recommendation (“The Committee are recommended to...”)	Current Position	Future Actions	Responsibility
working with the Scottish Government to examine the scope for the redesign of the existing school bus sign.	combination with the above.	end of Feb. Dependent on meeting with Scottish Govt.	
6. Instruct the Directors of Education, Learning and Leisure and Transportation and Infrastructure to meet with senior officials of the Scottish and UK Government, to discuss how any further review of legislation concerning banning the overtaking of stationary school vehicles should be progressed.	Agreed to raise this issue at the meeting with Scottish Government officers at the meeting scheduled for 12/03 to discuss wider issues (see recommendation 4 above).		EW, RF
7. Instruct officers to:- i. reinforce the crucial importance of the correct use and display of school bus signs in line with the current contractual requirements; ii. restate the clear requirement within current contracts for the use of hazard warning lights when picking up and dropping off pupils; iii. request that all operators also use dipped headlights when picking up	Instructions previously issued (i.e. before Committee Meeting). RM/IT to issue a second letter to operators, emphasising the point that they must clearly display the sign ‘to the satisfaction of Aberdeenshire Council’.		RM, IT

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Recommendation (“The Committee are recommended to...”)	Current Position	Future Actions	Responsibility
and dropping off pupils.			
8. Approve the continuation of work currently ongoing with Talisman to design specific high visibility clothing items of a “fashionable” nature.	RF contacted Elaine Duffy. This issue was put on the back burner with the development of the DVD taking highest priority. It is considered that due to the range of school clothing suppliers (i.e. making logistics difficult), and the lack of ‘winter’ pieces that could be modified, as well as cost implications, this work is unlikely to be taken any further forward at the time being.	-	RF
9. Instruct officers to undertake further work investigating the feasibility and costs of introducing interactive roadside bus stops aimed at increasing the visibility of pupils at school transport Pick Up Drop Off (PUDO) sites.	<p>Contact previously established with Swedish manufacturers regarding the Amparo “See Me” interactive lighting systems. Leon Nillson (Amparo) prepared to offer a demonstration to interested officers. Demonstration likely to be in Aberdeen on 16/17 March.</p> <p>John Swift of Clearview (Astucia) has also offered to meet RF in Aberdeen at the end of February re. visibility options.</p>	Confirm date of demonstration and invite other interested stakeholders (e.g. other local authorities, Scottish Government).	RF, EW
10. Instruct the Head	RM commissioned	Results of pilot	RM, RF, IT

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of Transportation to report back to Committee on the results of the two pilot PUDO assessments and provide more detailed information on options and costs for undertaking further PUDO assessments across Aberdeenshire; and/or develop an Aberdeenshire Council PUDO Assessment Methodology based on consultant guidance and research from elsewhere.	MVA. Revised pilot PUDO areas encompassing range of sites identified by IT for South Deeside Road/North Deeside Road/Durriss area; and A90/Ellon area. RF agreed scope of works (all elements bar training at the present time) and received revised costs for pilot locations. Inception Meeting set up for 18/02.	assessments likely to be reported to June ISC.	
11. Instruct the Head of Transportation to work with Scottish Government officials to encourage further research of PUDO (or to develop national guidelines on PUDOs) through the relevant local authority associations that cover road safety and public transport, i.e. SCOTS and ATCO.	Aberdeenshire Council submitted research application to SCOTS on PUDO / General Visibility of School Buses.	Dependent on outcomes of research proposals (to be confirmed following meeting 10 th Feb).	RF, EW
12. Acknowledge the extensive range of road safety education initiatives promoted in Aberdeenshire's primary and secondary schools	New education initiatives considered on an ongoing basis through the School Travel Planning Process.	-	AI, Grampian Police

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Recommendation (“The Committee are recommended to...”)	Current Position	Future Actions	Responsibility
and encourage officers to continue to investigate opportunities to introduce new education initiatives that can support improved road safety.			
13. Instruct officers to disseminate information on existing school transport policy, and other road safety issues, to pupils, parents and teachers through the Council’s GLOW system.	<p>Revised Home-to-School Transport Guide being prepared.</p> <p>AI attended GLOW training session on 04/02. (NB. GLOW is like a social networking site for schools. Used for curriculum exchange. Teachers and pupils have usernames and passwords (parents can access site through pupils) to access range of information about schools.</p>	<p>Anticipated for distribution in March.</p> <p>AI to update specific page on School Travel (‘Safe and Sustainable Travel’) with safety resources e.g. revised Home-to-School Transport Guide etc.</p>	<p>IT</p> <p>AI</p>
14. Instruct officers to work with partners to maximise the use of the media to promote joint, co-ordinate messages to pupils, parents and drivers regarding the issue of Roads Safety and School Transport	<p>Pre-planning. EW, RM, IT, RF to give consideration to the best means of achieving this. RM outlined that the provision of information to car drivers is a gap that needs addressed.</p>	<p>Future meeting concerning all stakeholders – Local Authorities, polices, health service etc. and media groups – paper, tv and radio.</p>	<p>EW, RM, IT, RF</p>
15. Approve the launch of a Schools Poster competition aimed at developing a poster which would be displayed inside and outside of school buses across	<p>RF to liaise with AI concerning launch of poster campaign and undertake a brief review of work done in this field elsewhere (e.g. Ulsterbus).</p>		<p>RF, AI</p>

Recommendation ("The Committee are recommended to...")	Current Position	Future Actions	Responsibility
Aberdeenshire to raise awareness amongst drivers to the potential of pupils crossing	Possibility that posters/drawings developed by Aboyne Academy for the Home to School Transport Guide could be used for this purpose.		

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