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Fergus Cochrane
Clerk to the Committee
Public Petitions Committee
TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

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CONSIDERATION OF PETITIONS PE1098 AND PE1223

Dear Mr Cochrane

Thank you for your letter of 18 June 2009 to Susan Malcolm seeking written responses for the Public Petitions Committee on PE1098 and PE1223. The Committee asked for responses to five points, reproduced below in bold, followed by the responses.

What impact will its road safety framework (published on 15 June 2009) have on these two petitions?

The Framework states our ambitious vision for road safety in Scotland. It sets out our national road safety priorities, Scottish casualty reduction targets and a range of commitments which the Scottish Government and road safety partners will work towards delivering over the next ten years in order to achieve the targets.

The Framework contains a section and commitments specific to children and young people as this is one of our priority areas. The commitments, including two on school transport, are:

- Aim to achieve our ambitious child casualty reduction targets by 2020 by scrutinising the circumstances of each child fatality and reporting to Scottish Ministers with recommendations for action.
- Fund Road Safety Scotland to develop innovative road safety educational resources (including a new Early Years resource to replace the Children's Traffic Club in Scotland).
- Undertake an audit of our road safety education resources to ensure they address the specific issues which Scotland's child road casualty record presents and that they keep pace with educational developments and methods.

- Commission new research to investigate the links between road safety and disadvantaged children and those in ethnic minority groups and implement agreed action.
- Continue to support the use of school travel plans, fully involving the local community, through grant to the Sustrans School Run Team and cycle training resources from Road Safety Scotland and Cycling Scotland.
- Investigate, report and implement ways to help ensure schoolchildren's safety when getting on and off school buses.
- Call on the UK Government to consider any strengthening of legislation in relation to school transport.

How will it ensure the measures outlined in it will be implemented in a uniform way across every local authority?

Chapter five of the Framework states our intentions for better working together. This is supported by specific commitments to be taken forward in the lifetime of the Framework including setting-up a high-level strategic grouping; promoting information sharing fora and databases; promulgation of results across Scotland of local pilots of initiatives; and encouraging and supporting intelligence-led road safety targeting. We will produce an annual public update on delivery of the Framework which will show the progress on these and the other Framework commitments.

What were the results of the 'See Me' bus stop pilot? Does it have plans to provide additional funding to local authorities to allow this technology to be adopted nationwide? If not, why not?

Initial trials of the SeeMe technology were launched at three trial sites across the North East (one in each Council area - Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray) on 20 May 2009 with the trials running for six weeks, ending on the 3 July 2009.

As the first UK trial of the technology, a robust evaluation methodology has been adopted, including the following methods:

- Analysis of before and after speed surveys;
- Focus group discussion with pupils involved in the trial;
- An online drivers' surveys;
- A bus driver questionnaire; and
- A questionnaire for parents of pupils involved in the trial.

The local authorities have stated that feedback from the initial trials has been promising, although they have still to fully analyse the results. Full results from the evaluation will be reported by the local authorities in the future alongside the results from further trials of the SeeMe system, which will be run throughout the autumn and winter period. Given the pilot nature of the technology, for example, it is considered important that the system is tested in a range of environments and conditions.

The initial trial allowed the local authorities to test the technology in operational terms but ran during May and June when conditions are lighter. As we move into the autumn and winter months, further trials will allow the local authorities to test out the system in darker daylight conditions with results to be considered alongside the initial trial results and reported when complete.

The purchase of road safety equipment is a matter for individual local authorities from their core budgets in accordance with their needs and priorities. In the responses to our Framework consultation, local authorities and other partners stated they wanted to have evidence of what worked before investing in new initiatives. To facilitate this, we will help share the results from the pilot across other local authorities in Scotland.

It clearly believes that there are many issues that are best left to each local authority to determine. However, how does it ensure consistency across all local authorities? That the good practices of one are replicated in another? That a situation does not emerge that children travelling to school on a school bus do so more safely in one area than in another? There must surely be minimum expectations here? What are they?

The Committee is already aware that the statutory responsibility for the provision of school transport and the wider safety aspects of safe journeys to school rests quite rightly with the appropriate local authority. You ask what we are doing to ensure consistency across Scotland. May I remind the Committee that Ministers have previously explained that following a Scotland wide survey, the Scottish Government produced a booklet setting out examples of good practice in school transport which was sent to all local authorities for their consideration. The Committee will also wish to be aware that local authorities themselves meet regularly under the auspices of the Road Safety Working Group of the Society of Chief Officers of transportation in Scotland to discuss transport matters and share best practice.

The Committee is also aware of the School Transport Circular 7/2003 which sets out what the Scottish Government expects of local authorities on this issue.

In answers given to previous questions from the Committee, Ministers have stated the expectations of the Scottish Government with regard to safe school transport while making clear that it is quite rightly for individual local authorities to consider. Local circumstances not only across Scotland but across individual authorities will dictate the best and safest way of getting children to and from school.

How does it 'support and encourage' local authorities in this area? Which local authorities does it consider are not doing enough and how is it addressing this?

The Scottish Government provides funding to Sustrans, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity for the development of safe routes to school projects

and to provide support to school travel co-ordinators in local authorities. Encouragement is provided through the good practice booklet mentioned earlier.

As the Committee is aware from information provided to it for previous meetings, school transport contracts is a matter for individual local authorities. Local authorities are themselves best placed to determine what school transport provision is suited to the circumstances in their area. The Scottish Government has no reason to believe that local authorities are failing in this respect.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Mulholland', written in a cursive style.

Jill Mulholland
Road Safety Team Leader