

PE1223/FF

We realise this is mostly a new committee & the seriousness of this subject might be hard to totally grasp, however the amount of deaths & injuries of youngsters leaving school transport over the last 40 plus years speaks for itself.

We would like to direct you to our site if you require further information www.schoolbus.org.uk & we thank you for the continuation of this petition, you as a committee have the ability to change & save lives.

Before I answer the answers from Transport Scotland, I inform the committee that school bus safety is in severe danger of being allowed to deteriorate further, despite this petition & The Scottish Government recommendations & guidelines, LAs don't appear to have any appetite to crack down on offenders, nor in fact change much at all.

There are some of the petition committee members here today who have pupils in their constituencies travelling less safely to school than others sitting beside you. How can this be right, how can a postcode ensure a child's safety on the way to school, I ask you to think carefully about this & why would it be allowed in 2011.

Transport Scotland states The Committee is already aware that primary legislation currently places the provisions of school contracts firmly with local authorities and Ministers cannot dictate what these provisions should be.

Sadly until this happens by ministers & regulations are made, school pupil safety will be at risk, as it is now.

Aberdeenshire has written on numerous occasions over the last few years to bus ops regarding signs not displayed properly & in fact illegally, but it still happens & is allowed to, I have reported in the last 4 weeks 6.

There should be none, if this is happening in Aberdeenshire & it is happening through out Scotland today.

I reported illegal signs being used in an LA in Central Scotland, who I will not name yet, they checked on the first day of school, & informed me **NOT ONE** bus op was running legally as regards signage, this is a shocking admission., that in fact LAs cannot & do not insist on punishment when contracts are broken, we are told by LAs they cannot inset safety signs are not used out with school hours , yes they can!!, but refuse to do so.

The Scottish Parliament & Transport Scotland it seems are prepared to accept this is a failing best left to LAs to improve, I can tell you it's not happening & never will until regulations are put in place, it happens UK wide.

This particular LA has reported the facts to VOSA & the police, yet apart from a letter to bus ops has done nothing more, yet as an LA it could do much more, but state in their letter to bus ops that "Its not a formal warning", but may in the future??

I have two photos, two buses side by side, yet one has an illegally fitted smaller sign to the back, obviously the bus company don't care or don't know, nor in fact have the police even picked up on this, so do they know? & so it goes on daily.

I had a meeting with Traffic Police Inspector Roddie MacInnes of Grampian police, after showing him photos of illegally placed signs, he accepted this to be the case & will bring this up in future meetings, but only bring it up.

This however needs to be brought up with every police force, & to be honest they should in fact be aware of this without my input.

The police in fact could do much more regarding this problem, they have the regulations that tell them when a bus sign is not clearly displayed, yet it appears have no appetite to do so, or are ignorant of the regulations.

Any sign not clearly visible is breaking the law, this would include signs at a slant on dash boards, or hidden behind names or motifs on windows, behind tinted windows, or placed so high on the windows its out of a drivers peripheral line of vision, yet it seems police forces are not fully aware of this, after years of this happening, I ask do they in fact really care? They are not clearly visible when displayed in this manner

I can't do this on my own; this needs done by those who govern.

We need the Dft to listen to Scottish concerns from a Scottish point of view which may not suit parts of the rest of the UK, we need Keith Brown. Minister of Transport & Transport Scotland to get a grip of this problem & ask themselves why some pupils in Scotland travel to school safer than others, this is not inclusive safety, you would not ask your own workers within the Parliament to accept this , so why youngsters who need our protection?

With regard to the questions answered by Transport Scotland.

I would urge you all to read Improving school transport by the TRL, who also inform us no tests what so ever have been used to determine the luminance of the school safety sign. Whilst we recognise this is a Dft problem, we feel this is a total disgrace that everyone is working on assumptions regarding this. When a lead should in fact be taken by someone? Transport Scotland state

>. In October 2010, we understood that the number of Scottish authorities which had taken steps to require that seatbelts be fitted in all school transport vehicles had grown to eleven; and a further four at that time required them to be fitted in vehicles used for the transport of primary pupils.

We find that quite appalling, as far as we are aware there are 32 LAs in Scotland only a definite 11 insist on belts being fitted, & four for primary schools.

This again proves our point that pupils in some areas of Scotland travel to school safer than others, why would this possibly be, & why would it be allowed in 2011.

Nothing has really changed much since the 1960s, we are still placing school pupils at risk, still seeing them injured & sadly killed, & yes it will happen again!

We also have those who look after huge areas & make decisions for them as in SPT, yet they themselves are not fully compliant in school bus safety, at least in questions we have asked.

TRL also completed a survey of local authorities, some disturbing facts of this are The data suggest that the majority of those who responded felt strongly that school transport safety was a priority in their authority.

Sadly one respondent was unsure and one felt strongly that school transport safety was not a priority in their authority. Four respondents did not answer the question.

5.4.3 > Who do local authorities see as being responsible for school transport safety?

Very worrying is the Scottish Government is happy not to interfere, & I am told this is the correct procedure with LA rulings

You can see by the response this is far from perfect, LAs it seems have not yet even managed to grasp the basics of school bus safety.

It appears five LAs did not answer the question, our interpretation would be, they did not know the answer?

Those surveyed who did answer as the following

Schools 9%

Pupils 2%

Parents 54%

Bus Operators 15 %

LAs 20%

So we have a situation whereby LAs have legally in fact a duty of care of every child, yet so many don't realise this.

We find this disturbing & this would indicate to us why some LAs refuse to answer mails from us.

After my last visit to Parliament, I reported illegal signs being used on school buses, safety signs on service buses & on private contractors mini buses used for other business, as not recommended by this Parliament & spoke to the Transport Unit, will this change the way they operate, no it wont.

Many LAs treat school bus safety as an after thought. They don't acknowledge it, possibly the reason being is they are unsure of their ground & knowledge, so ignore it

Aberdeenshire council still, after letters written to bus ops re contractual agreements, still have there own transport department breaking contractual agreements.

Aberdeenshire have still not rolled out the new signage promised & was trailed almost one year on, & to a great fanfare & worthy of praise in this committee room by Mike Penning MP & Transport Scotland, they have progressed on some points like seat belts, unlike other LAs who refuse to move at all.

Respondents' division of responsibility for ensuring pupil safety when travelling to and from school

To quote from the Transport Research Laboratory report, which I recommend you read. Respondents overwhelmingly considered that parents bore much of the responsibility for ensuring pupil safety when travelling to and from school. The maximum responsibility allocated to parents was 90% while the minimum was 20%.

This is noteworthy as the minimum responsibility allocated to all other parties was zero by at least one respondent.

[This is someone in charge of school transport in a local authority & who makes decisions on school bus safety.](#)

Local authorities were rated as having the second largest responsibility for pupil safety when travelling to school, although the maximum level of responsibility reported was 50%.

Bus operators were considered to have a reasonable level of responsibility for pupil safety with a maximum of 30% reported.

Schools were also considered to have a reasonable level of responsibility with a maximum allocation of 25% reported.

One respondent added that pupils were 20% responsible for their own safety, yet scientific research tells us, children under 14 cannot judge safety as an adult can, its worse with those even younger.

How confident is this committee that all LAs are aware of all relevant Government policy relating to school transport. I welcome the fact that it looks now possible devolved power will happen & its encouraging to see the possibility of following Welsh regulations. We welcome this as we

welcome changes, some facts re regulations would never be know unless unearthed by us, of that we are proud, Mike Penning & the petitions committee congratulated us on these facts, the point is someone should of know about them. It is not our job, but Governments.

Also at my meeting with Grampian Police transport division, I was informed they are unwilling to ensure pupils wear seat belts, I have been told this is impractical, & the manpower is not available, also when the bus was stopped they would belt up yet, so making it hard to in fact point how wrong it is, this is breaking the law & motorists or passengers in cars would be fined, yet not on the school bus.

These are double standards, but we should be surprised in this, as anything that deals with school bus safety is full of double standards.

Could the committee be provided with an update on the general progress of the work that is currently being undertaken in relation to the devolution of powers with regards to school bus safety.

We are encouraged that safety has improved in some areas because we raised the issue, we are encouraged the petitions committee have dealt & pushed this forward over the last few years, but we need the simple things grasped by those who make decisions on school bus safety, that this should be inclusive, every pupil should have the same right to safety, safety should not be governed by a postcode. This petitions committee needs to know, truthfully where every LA stands & how they will progress this dire situation, before the next death or injury.

Enclosed photos show signs that are illegal, also double deckers with wrongly placed & an illegal sign, these signs are also used & left on while the bus does normal service runs, which detracts from the signs value, drivers become accustomed to seeing it displayed on buses no children are on, so pay little heed to it.

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