

PE1223/00



The Petitions Committee  
PE1223.

Dear Committee Members.

It appears Transport Scotland have asked Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) to undertake the review. Consequently, the review is now underway and is expected to be concluded in the autumn.

As far as I am aware this is the first time I have heard about this and although encouraged by it, so much for Transport Scotland's promise keeping us up to speed!!

**The powers to change signage is reserved to the UK Government and at present there are no plans to devolve signage to the Scottish Government.**

Local authorities don't need to change it meantime, only implement the rules they can already impose on bus operators, Transport Scotland could push this matter! Mike Penning asked them for ideas!

**Is there likely to be any movement around the devolution of the powers prior to the proposed referendum in 2014?**

**We are currently gathering information from local authorities on potential costs of fitting seatbelts to buses transporting children. The information will, in turn, be dependent upon the collective agreement of Scottish Ministers, and mutual agreement on policy being reached with the UK Government.**

As far as I remember Mike Penning was fully agreeable to devolving safety powers on school buses and in fact had no problem with this issue.

**The Scottish Government had asked the Association of Transport Coordinators (ATCO) to get its lead officers to provide the information requested in the letter you previously sent me a copy of by April 16<sup>th</sup>.**

**However, some of them have missed this deadline so the Scottish Government does not yet have all the data yet.**

I find this absolutely incredible, that local government officials can fly in the face of a petitions committee, or MSPs' recommendations, where is the democracy in this?

If I can find the time to submit information I do so, I have only missed one petition meeting since 2008, if find it upsetting that ATCO cannot get their house in order. If I can take time to so, with my limited resources, why can't ATCO?

My only conclusion can be is that local government officials, including Transport Scotland, are using delaying tactics regarding school bus safety, for what ever reason, I will ensure with your help this does not happen.

It also shows how far we can sadly trust local authorities to carry through any recommendations that will be insisted on, now or in the future.

It also shows that unless that recommendation/laws are legally binding, this will never happen, local authorities don't want this problem now, or in the future, that is until the next accident!

Mike Penning has already told the Petitions Committee and others that local authorities can place any restrictions they wish **IN** a school contract; very few seem willing to do so, or change.

**We still see** the smallest of signs on the front, dwarfed by a huge windscreen.

**We still see** that no local authority has in fact embraced the fact the sign can be any size. The safety point being vehicles approaching the school bus need as much warning at those behind it, it not the case!

**We see local authorities** allowing the safety sign to the front of the school bus being displayed incorrectly as regards safety and **AT TIMES ILLEGALLY!**

**We see that** often the paper sign giving the pupils information which bus to board, as large as, or in fact often larger than the actual safety warning sign to the front. Does this make sense? What utter madness is this!

**We see minibuses** under 8 seats who do not need to display the safety sign, yet those over 8 seats have to. Why? You could not make this up!

**We see in fact** now at many schools the bus number the pupils need to find the correct transport is as big as or at times larger than the safety sign. Who makes these decisions within local authorities?

Is someone paid to do this job? Are they qualified to do so? Because from where we stand there is a total lack of common sense!

May I suggest a parliamentary committee meeting with all local authority safety officers, or in fact local authority leaders at Parliament, so this can be discussed, so as they can see this from a sensible point of view and possibly have a chance to appreciate what they can change and improve, an open discussion might do wonders for school bus safety.

Because as it stands at present it does not appear so, every local authority should have exactly the same basic safety rules, no pupil should travel to school less safely than another.

Possibly safety officers have expertise in safety measures regarding road signs etc, but seriously lack basic skills as regards bus signage .

My feeling is we will see no change, until local authorities and Transport Scotland are fully open and above board and decide that school bus safety is a priority.

Instead of passing blame on to others, the child in their care is their responsibility.

If Aberdeenshire can implement some changes, so can other local authorities if they have the will, most changes will be free or cost very little.

It simply means needs thinking through properly and on a basis that every local authority has the same rules, so all pupils are transported safely and none safer than others as happens meantime, a sensible approach by all, pushing in the same direction.

Surely it cannot be that hard to do, or can it?

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