

PE1098/K

20 January 2009

Re: Petition PE1098

Dear Fergus

Please find below my response to the letter received from Stephen Orr (The Scottish Government) on 8 January 2009.

I note from the reply that The Scottish Government are content with the current legislation and are happy for each and every Council in Scotland to implement different policies regarding School Transport and seatbelts. However, I find the response slightly contradictory with regard to the following statement:

Ministers have nevertheless made clear the policy direction in which they would wish authorities to consider proceeding. They have also taken steps to support and encourage them to review the stance which they take in respect of seat belts when the time for renewal of school transport contracts comes around.

If the Scottish Government are happy with the current legislation, why would Ministers be encouraging local authorities to update their policies at the time of renewal regarding seatbelts on all school transport?

Clearly Ministers support the need for Seatbelts on school transport, I would therefore ask that the Scottish Government help support this Petition by taking the issue forward to Westminster.

I do not and have never stated that I have an issue with the local authorities making the decisions regarding school transport however after a telephone call with my local authority (Fife) on this issue, I was told "We will not change our policy, and the only way that we will change is if the law changes. We are not breaking the law". This to me, shows that the current legislation allows the local authorities too much power to act just within the law and no more. More recently, this month Fife Council have 'Promised' parents within an area of Fife that their children will be travelling safely on seatbelted buses to their school. It horrifies me that a local authority can play judge on which children will be provided with a seatbelted bus and which children wont! Every child deserves the same treatment, but due to the current legislation this is not happening.

Regarding the Aberdeenshire joining the ranks of other authorities specifying the provision of seatbelts – Well Done! A local authority with a conscience! Unfortunately our law allows other children from having the same privilege.

Kind Regards

Lynn Merrifield