



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01098**

### **Name of petitioner**

Lynn Merrifield on behalf of Kingseat Community Council

### **Petition title**

School Bus Safety

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make provision for every school bus to be installed with three point seatbelts for every school child passenger and to ensure that, as part of a local authority's consideration of 'Best Value' in relation to the provision of school buses, proper regard is given to the safety needs of the children.

### **Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition**

I have contacted Helen Eadie MSP, Willie Rennie MP, Councillor Alex Rowley, the Scottish Executive, Fife Council and the headteacher at Townhill Primary School.

I have discussed at length with the above the issue of a double decker public service bus with no seatbelts transporting our primary school children to and from school. However, the responsibility for school transport lies with the local council and from the contact made so far, I am advised that the council is within the law by providing public service buses with no seatbelts and no changes will be made unless the law changes.

### **Petition background information**

This issue has been an ongoing issue for sometime as worried and concerned parent do not feel that the transport provided is of the safest mode.

I have noted that Section 51 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 states that children aged 3 to 15 years must be provided with a forward facing seat and seatbelt. However this requirement does not apply to Service busses used for organised school trips. This seems to be a loophole whereby Local Authorities can provide transport without any seatbelts.

Current law states that if any child is traveling within a car they must be in an appropriate Car or Booster seat. Anyone failing to comply with this is breaking the law. However this is not the case for Local Authorities providing Home to School Transportation. The view from the Local Authorities seems to be that Contracts are awarded on 'Best Value'. As a parent I feel that although 'Best Value' from the view point of the Local Authority is very important, the Safety of my child is of more an importance. ALL children should have the right to travel safely and with the appropriate safety equipment.

It would be interesting to have a view from Scottish Parliament on 'Best Value' as to definition as it seems that 'Best Value' equates to the lowest Bidder.

There has been a lot of Plans taken forward by schools recently to reduce the amount of parents taking their children to and from school in their own car. I agree very much with the reasons behind these plans however a parent needs to feel confident that the transport provided for their child is safe.

I am aware that Service Bus Provider are in receipt of a 37% Fuel Rebate and would like to know if Private School Bus providers, like First Student could qualify for such a rebate when their buses are used for school transportation. This would help costs to be reduced and a more competitive quote to be entered to our Local Councils.

I have been in contact with First Student UK who currently provide Yellow School Buses to Local councils in Aberdeen, Glasgow, and 13 other Local Councils within England. These vehicles are built and run for school children. From the first journey, a familiar, safe setting is fostered. Each day\* students step onto the same bus, can take the same seat and are looked after by the same dedicated supervisor and specially trained driver, who will have passed a stringent CRB check (DCS in Scotland). Vehicle safety features include padded seating, three point integrated seat belts, additional escape hatches and CCTV. A dedicated hotline for parents as information and communication is all too important for parents peace of mind.

The Yellow School bus is certainly an excellent mode of transport for school children and as a parent this is certainly what I would like my child to be travelling on. I feel that if we have a change in the law to stipulate that ALL school transport must be fitted with seatbelts the Yellow School Bus will become a more familiar sight.

#### Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01098>

#### Related information for petition

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

NO

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

1

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

N/A

**Comments to stimulate online discussion**