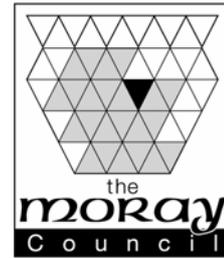


**Response to Petition PE1098 –  
Seat Belts on School Buses**

**By the Moray Council**



During the Committee's discussion on the above, the petitioner advised that The Moray Council has inserted clauses into its transport contracts to specify that seat belts must be fitted to all school transport vehicles, and considered this to be good practice. The Committee decided to seek further information on these arrangements.

The Moray Council decision to adopt this policy was taken in 2002 during a re-tendering of all school transport contracts. Previously, seat belts were not compulsory on school buses, and double deck buses were permitted, albeit forming a small part of the procured service (operating on only nine school routes.)

In the run up to tendering, Members also approved the detail of a parent charter specifying the responsibilities placed on parents and pupils when using school transport. A copy of the ***Parent/Pupil School Transport Charter*** is attached.

Elected members agreed that tenders should be issued on this basis of (a) status quo with no requirement for seat belts and allowing the use of double deck vehicles, and (b) seat belted single deck vehicles only. This approach was adopted allowing a comparison review of the tender returns. All contractors were requested to tender on the basis of two specifications.

In consideration of the local tendering regime and market forces, Moray has only one national provider of public transport but a number of smaller traditional private operators. The national operator's fleet was not equipped with seat belts, but a number of the smaller operators were known to have already purchased seat belted vehicles, a choice made with the experience gained from local private hire bookings.

On analysing the completed tender returns we were able to deliver the second option specification eliminating double deck vehicles and providing a fully seat belted vehicle on every contract. Our ability to deliver this service was made possible in part due to very competitive tendering and expansion of business by the smaller local operators.

More recently we have amended our specification to require all vehicles with more than 33 seats to be equipped with digital CCTV as seat belt legislation prevents the use of a roving escort on the bus/coach.

Whilst we feel we have attained much of what we set out to achieve in terms of delivering a service standard that met parental expectations, the task of persuading pupils, particularly those of secondary age, to wear their seat belts is proving to be a difficult issue. The requirement to wear a belt forms part of the parent/pupil charter introduced at that time. CCTV has helped this, allowing schools to identify those who do not wear a belt, and appropriate sanctions have been taken against persistent offenders by school management.

It is our view that some form of national campaign encouraging pupils to wear bus and coach seat belts would be beneficial as the wearing of seat belts is not seen by pupils as “cool” nor an essential part of their own safety whilst travelling to and from school.