RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SUBMISSION FROM ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

SEATBELTS ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

1. Are you in favour of the Bill and its provisions? Do you think the Bill achieves its aim of improving safety on school transport?

In general terms the Bill has a great deal of merit, and has the potential to improve safety and provide reassurance to parents/carers and the wider community

However, it is important to highlight that these benefits will only be maximised if pupils wear the seat belts provided and, in this respect, ADES would welcome a national educational awareness programme to promote the importance of seat belt wearing by pupils on school transport services. It also remains the case that no one is legally responsible for 3 – 14 year olds wearing a seat belt, when these are provided on buses and coaches. Accordingly clarity on this issue would also be beneficial in maximising any safety benefits associated with the proposed legislation.

It may be that the Scottish Government may wish to consider the current and future requirements with regard to the responsibility of ensuring the seatbelts are worn by the passengers. Currently the statutory requirements in this regard are not as clear as they could be, and tend to undermine the actual wearing of the belts by passengers.

In a number of areas, pupils use local bus services rather than dedicated home to school contracts. It is assumed these arrangements will not be affected by the Bill.

2. 18 local authorities have already chosen to make it a requirement of their school bus contracts for seat belts to be fitted on dedicated school transport. Do you feel that this has been successful?

Aberdeenshire Council are one of the 18 local authorities referred to and it is considered the provision of seat belts on dedicated school transport services bring safety benefits. However it should be noted bus travel is already an inherently safe mode of travel, and it is therefore difficult to quantify the success of the measures implemented.

When agreeing the policy to require seat belts on all school transport vehicles, Councils will have advised local operators well in advance of the implementation date, of the intention. This provided sufficient time to enable seat belts to be installed and/or purchase appropriate vehicles and; as a consequence, no difficulties were encountered from an operational perspective. The phasing of implementation is therefore important, a fact that is recognised in the Bill.

I am aware Brendon has still specific questions in this regard and I will respond to him directly.

3. Is there anything else that you feel should be included in the Bill?

A number of schools use vehicles for school trips and educational excursions. Clarification on use of seat belts for such trips should be included in the Bill.
4. Will the Bill and its provisions have a particular impact on equalities groups?
It is do not considered that the Bill and its provision will have any negative equalities impact on any protected group.

Cost of Implementation
It is difficult to estimate the cost of implementing the provision of seat belts on all homes to school contracts. I think this would require a tendering exercise to take place (outlining costs with and without seat belts). A longer period for implementation would reduce costs as this would give industry time to acquire suitable vehicles and/or adapt existing vehicles. It would be helpful if you could provide details on how the estimated costs of £8.92m was determined.

Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
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