RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE
SUBMISSION FROM THE SCOTTISH PARENT TEACHER COUNCIL
SEAT BELTS ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

SPTC is pleased to respond to the consultation on the above Bill.

An independent charity, SPTC provides membership benefits for parent groups in Scottish schools and works across the sector to support effective parental engagement with schools and their children’s education through training and practice development. We provide a range of services to parents, including a helpline for information and advice. We are contacted by parents on this and similar topics occasionally.

SPTC’s board is primarily made up of parents and teachers who bring with them a wealth of experience from their schools around Scotland. Our board members commented on the Bill and referenced the Belt Up School Kids (BUSK) campaign which, as far back as the 1990s, pursued the issue of seat belts on school transport after a number of fatalities associated with school transport in different parts of the UK, including Biggar in South Lanarkshire.

More recently there have been a number of serious incidents involving school transport, which have continued to highlight the issue of seat belts and also the safety and maintenance regimes relating to school transport.

When parents encourage their children to go to school each day and entrust their children to the transport provided at local level, they deserve to know that every possible step has been taken to ensure their safety and safe return home.

Scope of the Bill
The Bill addresses the matter of seat belts on dedicated school transport. While this is welcome, in the view of SPTC it does not go far enough as it will not protect the very many young people who travel to their educational setting in service busses.

We would therefore argue that public transport, particularly on main school routes, ought to have seat belts fitted. In addition, vehicles used to provide transport to school pupils should be subject to frequent and rigorous safety checks. We would also like to see specific guidance relating to long-distance journeys (including driver rest periods) and rural driving.

We recognise that the fitting of seat belts does not, in itself, make young people safer. Responsible behaviour and personal safety require to be addressed in a co-ordinated way with pupil councils, parents and school staff to support young people to make the right choices as they travel to and from school.

Scottish Parent Teacher Council
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