RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SUBMISSION FROM THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

SEAT BELTS ON SCHOOL TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

I am responding to your call for evidence regarding the above. I will follow the numbering used for your questions.

1. The Highland Council fully supports the Bill, and indeed we have required seat belts to be provided on all our school transport contracts for many years. We believe that the Bill will make a contribution to safety. However, we would point out that buses are already a very safe mode of transport with a very low casualty rate. The highest risk of accidents on school bus journeys is after alighting, and seat belts do not reduce this risk. Other measures, such as Safer Routes to School projects and safety awareness training, are likely to have a higher rate of benefit.

2. In Highland this has been successful. Our contractual provisions exceed the Bill’s requirements and have resulted in the majority of buses on public services being fitted with seat belts. We recognise that for other authorities this would cause difficulties, and our position reflects the long-established requirement for seat belts in this area.

3. The Bill’s scope is specific and there is nothing else we would suggest for inclusion in it.

4. We do not believe there is any particular impact on equalities groups.

The Highland Council
April 2017