

Sandanel
School Lane
STAXIGOE
Caithness
KW1 4QU

8th November 2007

FAO: Councillor Katrina MacNab

Dear Councillor MacNab

Staxigoe and Papigoe School Transport

I write on behalf of the parents of Wick High School pupils travelling to school by public transport from Staxigoe and Papigoe. At present the situation requires our children to catch the service bus to school at 8.30am daily at a cost of 63 pence single fare. There is a service bus at 4.15pm from Bridge Street, Wick that the children can catch for the return journey home. However this is where the problem arises, the children finish school at 3.30pm and have to wait for 45 minutes to catch this bus home. Some of the children walk home, but with our stormy weather conditions this is not always practical or safe, especially for those children with health problems such as asthma.

There are currently 25 children attending Wick High School from this area, many of their parents pick them up after school but despite car sharing between families and friends, this adds to the already congested parking outside the High School. The school buses currently have to park on the yellow **'pick-up or drop-off'** zones at the front of the school due to the traffic congestion. If you include the behaviour of the 'boy racers' that drive past the school this is an extremely dangerous situation that we wish to avoid for safety reasons, not to mention environmental issues.

Some of the parents have spoken with Mr Traill, Head Teacher and he agrees that this is not a satisfactory situation. If a school bus was supplied then this would relieve at least some of the congestion at the school as well as reduce children loitering about the town centre whilst waiting for the bus home.

As far as we, the parents, are aware after making enquiries, the Staxigoe and Papigoe children are the only children in the Country paying for a bus to school due to the distance involved. From a home in Staxigoe to the school it was measured as 2.9 miles which is just inside the 3 mile restriction for provision of transport. If you follow the bus route this distance equates to just over 3 miles. For children walking to and from school this means undertaking a 45 minute walk each way, making 11 road crossings enroute and enduring adverse weather conditions, meaning the children have to suffer these cold, wet, stormy conditions which has knock on health issues.

In the next year there will be a further 9 children attending the High School who will also require transport to and from school. There are also future housing developments being planned which will attract even more families to the area.

We have been in contact with the local police who also agree that the traffic congestion needs to be addressed and they have suggested that we contact the Roads Department to complete an assessment of the situation, which we will be doing in the near future, as well as a letter being sent to Highland Buses to highlight this problem.

We ask that you, our local councillor, and a former resident of Papigoe help us to fight for a statutory school bus for the children in this area who at the moment are being discriminated against due to location. But most important is the safety of all the children attending the High School and we hope this will be a relevant factor in consideration of this matter.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Mr Daniel Budge
Treasurer, Staxigoe Hall Committee

Mr Scott Hervo
Chairman, Staxigoe Hall Committee

On behalf of the parents and children of Staxigoe and Papigoe

cc Mr Alistair Traill, Head Teacher, Wick High School
Councillor Bill Fernie
Mr David Sutherland, Highland Council Ward
Veda Swanson Highland Buses

Staxigoe and Papigoe School Transport

Problems:

- Currently there are 25 children attending Wick High School, numbers will rise to include another 9 in the next year.
- Future housing developments will increase these numbers further.
- Cost of service bus of 63 pence per child per day, one way.
- Return bus at 4.15pm means children are hanging about school/town for 45 minutes after school has finished.
- Traffic congestion at the front of the school is dangerous.
- Pollution adding to environmental issues.
- This is the only area in the Country where school transport is NOT provided.
- Children walking to school in wet weather conditions and sitting in damp clothes all day, especially those with health problems such as asthma.

Solutions:

- Provide school transport for children attending Wick High School.
- Reduction in cars, from Staxigoe, Papigoe and Hillhead areas.
- Reduced congestion and pollution.
- Safety of children attending High School increased.
- Health of children safeguarded in extreme weather conditions.