

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

County Council
18th October 2018

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Myfanwy Alexander, Portfolio Holder for Learning and Welsh Language

SUBJECT: Question from Heidi Wilson

In light of the recent re-tendering exercise of all Home-to-School transport arrangements, can the council please reassure me and other parents whose children use the x48 local bus (route BW61 Llanddewi to Builth Wells) that a full risk assessment has been carried out and that the council are satisfied that in the event of a road traffic incident sufficient safety measures are in place to protect our children as far as is possible on this dangerous stretch of road? I ask this particularly in relation to those pupils who have to stand whilst using this service.

Response

The authority has received a small number of communications from parents regarding this bus route, which carries pupils from North of Llandrindod to Builth Wells campus of Ysgol Calon Cymru for Welsh-medium provision; these pupils are eligible to free transport in-line with our published criteria.

Following a re-tendering exercise undertaken by the authority, transport for this route is now provided a public bus (as is the case in many local authorities and in, and some parents have been concerned about pupils having to stand for the journey.

In order to assess the risk, a local authority officer travelled the return journey himself and noted that some pupils chose to stand as opposed to sit and the authority is confident that the service provided and route is safe .

Service buses such as the ones provided on the service between Builth and Llandrindod are structurally designed to accommodate passengers in seats, wheelchairs and for those who stand. The bus which is used on this service was first registered in 2018 and is a brand new vehicle which has had to meet very strict European safety standards. The vehicle has a seating capacity of 41, with a further standing capacity of 43 (which is reduced by 1 if there is a wheelchair on board the bus) giving a total of 84 passengers. Our records show that there are 26 learners who attend the Builth campus who are taught through the medium of Welsh. Therefore, the Council has specified a bus with sufficient capacity to accommodate those learners who qualify for statutory home to school transport.

To further mitigate any risks, the Council specifies seatbelts on the majority of service buses we provide, including this particular bus, but there is no legal requirement to have them fitted to a service bus. In addition, the bus company are in

the process of fitting CCTV with a 'live feed' to this bus which will enable the bus company to identify any anti-social behaviour on the bus by any passengers (members of the public or school learners) and other road users. There is a regular driver on this particular service and the feedback from the officer who travelled on the vehicle was that all the learners who used the bus were extremely well behaved, polite, very co-operative and responded well to any instructions given by the driver.

Furthermore, Cllr Aled Davies and senior officers from Powys County Council have met with and continue to maintain ongoing communication with the headteacher and Chair of Governors to ensure any issues that are raised are responded to. Cllr Aled Davies and Cllr Myfanwy Alexander have this week sent a letter to all parents and carers of children who use this route and will continue to work in partnership with the school, with the safety and wellbeing of our young people an absolute priority for the Council.