Northumberland County Council

Education Consultations <educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk>

Fwd: Invitation

1 message

Kate Dickinson <chattlehope@gmail.com> 4 June 2018 at 19:29
To: Educationconsultation@northumberland.gov.uk

June 4th 2018

Dear Councillors & Interested Parties and consultation

INVITATION

We would like to invite to all to come along and join my daughter on her journey to school. We live on a remote farm in North Redesdale not far from the Scottish Border. Nina is in Year 5 at Bellingham Middle School and is 10 years old. This will give you an insight to what is like for a child with a long commute to school.

Nina's school day starts at 6:15 am when the alarm goes off. This allows just over an hour for her to quickly pop to see her pony and give her a carrot, get herself ready and her school bag packed, have breakfast before walking half a mile to the school bus meeting point for her pick up time at 7:30am. She is collected by a mini-bus which takes her to Otterburn to connect with the 50 seater coach provided to travel to Bellingham picking up in West Woodburn. We currently live 26 miles from Bellingham Middle School and Nina's journey is already not the most direct route as it collects children from West Woodburn and is already longer than the Northumberland County Council recommended journey travelling time of 90 minutes **per day**. Her current journey time being more like 60-70 minutes each way making a daily total of 120 to 140 minutes which is well in excess of your recommended daily travel of 90 minutes for middle school children. I note the online policy from Northumberland County Council. The policy states and I quote"

The County Council will make every effort to ensure that a child's home to school journey to an appropriate school is not too long. In general, the following maximum journey times apply:

90 minutes per day for first, middle and primary school age pupils (4-13)

150 minutes per day for high and secondary school age pupils (11-16)

These times may be extended in some exceptional circumstances but the County Council will make every reasonable effort to arrange transport within these times. Children should be at pickup points in the morning at least 5 minutes before pickup times. "

The policy is inconsistent and misleading for pupils age 11 and depends which type of school, i.e. middle or secondary for your recommended daily travel. How can this be? Are children traveling to secondary schools more robust and used to travelling longer distances than their peers at middle school, surely not?

Services for people living in remote and rural areas are already few and far between, school transport being one of the most vital to retain families living in Upper Redesdale and these small villages and keep rural communities sustainable.

Due to the nature of our business we are required to live and work on the farm and " moving closer" is simply not an option. If, Bellingham Middle School closes as per the recommendations of consultation Nina is due to complete her "middle school years" education at Haydon Bridge. Is she starting at a Secondary school as we are informed we need to apply for a high school place for her in the future? So far this question is unanswered. Which recommended travel time will apply? With the best will in the world and a fair wind behind us we can get to Haydon Bridge in a car in just over an hour and is about 40 miles away. Many adults don't commute this length of journey either in distance or time to work let alone an

11 year old to travel to school (over 80 miles a day) involving 2 busses and collecting at many stops on the way adding to the time. So again I invite you to join Nina on her journey to school.

The boarding facility for Haydon Bridge closed last year again removing an option for children from outlying and remote parts of Northumberland to ensure that children are best provided for.

We would like to request that considerations are made to opening a new boarding facility.

We would also like to propose that a dedicated bus service is provided to Haydon Bridge for the school pupils of Upper Redesdale i.e. those living north of the A68 Elishaw junction which would reduce both the travel journey and time for the children living in Byrness & Rochester villages and of the outlying properties and farms of Upper Redesdale. This will also assist to meet the guidelines of the Northumberland County Council policy.

School education is an important stage of life but there are many stages of being a child and many ways of learning. This includes living and learning life outside of school. Having time to play, socialise (not just on the school bus) and be part of family life. Already the burden of homework is very evident in our household and causes some stress for Nina and means that she sometimes neglects her animals and hasn't time for non-school activities, especially during winter months.

So again we invite you to join Nina on her journey to school.

Yours sincerely

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