

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the Coat of Arms of the Government of Western Australia. The crest includes a crown with four flowers, a shield divided into four quadrants (ship, lion, sheaf of wheat, and kangaroo), and a ribbon at the bottom with the motto 'AN E FOR A'.

## **Agenda Item 7**

**Request to Undertake a Formal  
Consultation on a Proposal to  
Change the Distance Criteria for  
Home to Schools Transport**

**Falkirk Council**

**Title:** Request to Undertake a Formal Consultation on a Proposal to Change the Distance Criteria for Home to Schools Transport  
**Meeting:** Education, Children and Young People Executive  
**Date:** 31 January 2023  
**Submitted By:** Director of Children's Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- provide Education, Children and Young People Executive (EC&YPE) with information and details surrounding a proposal to make changes to the Falkirk Council School Transport Policy with respect to distance entitlement limits for free home to school transport.
- seek EC&YP Executive's agreement to undertake a formal statutory consultation exercise on this proposal in accordance with the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010 as detailed in Section 8.

1.2 This proposal if approved will assist the service in meeting the Council Plan priority "Supporting a thriving economy and green transition" by reducing the number of buses required to take children to school which in turn will positively impact on our carbon targets.

1.3 This proposal if approved will also support the Council Plan enabler of financial sustainability.

- positively impact on the significant financial challenges that the Council face in addressing an estimated £67m budget gap over the next 4 years.
- address the current c.£750k financial overspend that is currently being projected for School Transport for 2022/23.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1 The Education, Children and Young People Executive is asked to:**

- (i) agree to proceed with the statutory consultation, as required by the "Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010", on the proposal as outlined in Section 5; and**
- (ii) request the Director of Children's Services to report back to the Education, Children and Young People Executive on the feedback and results of this consultation along with any appropriate recommendations.**

### 3. Climate Change Implications

- 3.1 Whilst this report is requesting agreement to undertake a consultation exercise on a proposal to change school transport entitlement, it has no direct climate change implications, it should however be recognised that any potential future reduction in the bus contracts would impact positively on our carbon targets, particularly when such journeys are replaced by use of active travel or the use of existing public transport.

If this proposal is agreed it is expected that the Climate Team will provide information on the estimated carbon reduction on the revised bus contract requirements, as part of the follow up report.

### 4. Background

#### 4.1 Current Falkirk Council Transport Policy

Free home to school transport is currently provided for:

- (i) Primary pupils **up to 8 years old** who live more than 1 mile from school by the nearest available safe walking route; and
- (ii) All primary and secondary pupils **aged 8 years and over** who live more than 2 miles from school by the nearest available safe walking route.

#### 4.2 Review of Transport as part of the Zero-Based Budgeting Project

At the Executive Meeting on 4 October 2022 it was agreed that a report requesting agreement to undertake a statutory consultation on a change to the school transport criteria would come to the EC&YP Executive. This is due to Falkirk's current school transport distance entitlement exceeding that of the recommended national distance entitlement, which results in considerable additional cost to the Council, at a time when Council finances are under severe pressure.

#### 4.3 Current Financial Challenges

The current and well reported financial challenges that the Council faces with an estimated budget gap of c£67m over the next 4 years is the key driver as to why proposals such as this, which have the propensity to deliver significant savings require to be progressed.

Significant additional revenue costs were also incurred when the existing contracted services were re-tendered as they were impacted by the current UK wide inflationary pressures. Section 9.1 provides details of this.

#### 4.4 Comparison To Other Scottish Local Authorities

Currently there are **24** local authorities that operate with higher distance entitlement levels than Falkirk, with the remaining **7** operating lower or broadly similar distance entitlement levels.

Of the **24** local authorities that currently operate higher distance entitlement levels than Falkirk, **12** of them have in place the policy that Falkirk are proposing. These are: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Angus, Argyll & Bute, Dundee City, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, Eilean Siar, North Ayrshire, Perth & Kinross, Scottish Borders, and South Ayrshire.

The **7** local authorities in Scotland that operate lower or broadly similar provision to that of Falkirk currently are: Clackmannanshire, Fife, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire.

If the proposed change was approved it would mean that Falkirk's amended distance entitlement levels would still be lower than **5** local authorities who operate to the statutory minimum distance entitlement: Dumfries & Galloway, Highland, Midlothian, Orkney and Shetland.

Note: Given the financial challenges that are facing all local authorities, it is likely that others will also be considering similar reductions in their existing distance entitlement.

## **5. Proposed Changes to the Existing Transport Policy**

### **5.1 Proposed Change to Existing Transport Policy**

It is proposed that the Transport Policy is changed so that free home to school transport is provided for:

- (i) **Primary pupils** who live more than 2 miles from school by the nearest available safe walking route; and
- (ii) **Secondary pupils** who live more than 3 miles from school by the nearest available safe walking route.

Note: This proposed change would still exceed the minimum distance entitlement prescribed in the national guidance as the proposed minimum for primary school aged pupils over 8 would be 2 miles and not the 3 miles stated in the national guidance.

### **5.2 Date of Proposed Change**

It is proposed that these changes in the Transport Policy would take effect in **August 2023**, from the start of school session 2023/24.

### **5.3 Impact on Existing ASN Transport Provision**

The proposed changes to the existing Transport Policy do not affect the current transport provision for children with additional support need, where transport is provided by virtue of their individually assessed support needs. This will remain the same.

## 6. Legislative and Policy Considerations

### 6.1 Current Legislation - Home to School Transport Provision

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (as amended) places the responsibility on parents for their own children's transport to school where they are:

- (i) Primary age children up to 8 years old that live less than 2 miles from the school.
- (ii) Primary age children aged 8 years and over, and secondary age children that live less than 3 miles from the school.

The Act provides local authorities with discretionary powers to extend this minimum statutory provision, which is what Falkirk have previously done.

The local authority is only responsible for school transport where the pupil lives over these prescribed distances from the school, measured by the nearest available safe walking route.

### 6.2 Current Falkirk Council Transport Policy

Falkirk Council has used the discretionary powers outlined in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (see Section 6.1) to reduce all of the minimum statutory distances by 1 mile.

### 6.3 Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

The above Act states that: *"A proposal to discontinue arrangements for the provision of transport by the education authority for pupils attending a denominational school"* requires a formal consultation to be carried out.

Although a statutory consultation is required due to the proposed changes impacting on denominational schools it is further proposed that the scope of the consultation should extend to include all pupils affected by the proposed changes at both non-denominational and denominational schools.

Details of the proposed consultation that meets this duty are outlined in Section 8.

### 6.4 Safe Walking Routes

Current distance entitlements are measured by the nearest available safe walking route. The Transport Policy defines the measurement of a "safe walking route" as:

"When assessing a safe walking route, Falkirk Council expects that parents will take responsibility for accompanying their child to school (or for making other suitable arrangements for ensuring their child is accompanied).

Accordingly, the nearest safe walking route will be the shortest route along a road, footpath or right of way suitable for a child accompanied by an adult, from their home gateway nearest to the school to the nearest designated school gate(s)."

Note: Children's Services do not consider the wider risks associated with pupils walking to school unsupervised when assessing eligibility for free home to school transport, as this is the duty of parents.

It is anticipated that parents will draw Officers attention to concerns they have with safe walking routes as part of this proposed consultation.

## 6.5 Review of School Crossing Patrols

As the Council are also currently undertaking a review of school crossing patrols, it is important that the final outcomes from this proposed consultation are aligned to and take account of this review, which is likely to recognise the need to maintain existing resources that are best deployed to support safe routes to school.

## 6.6 Active Travel

It is hoped that if this proposal is agreed that it may encourage more participation in active travel (walking, cycling or wheeling), which has numerous benefits for pupils.

Travelling actively to school is a great way to build regular physical activity into young people's lives, with these behaviours typically being carried into adulthood. Physical activity can also benefit mental health and increases mental alertness. Pupils travelling actively will arrive at school ready to learn with an increase in concentration levels which can last for up to four hours.

Encouraging more active travel to school can also reduce traffic around schools, increasing safety and reducing the carbon emissions associated with road traffic.

# 7. **Implications of the Proposed Change to the Transport Policy**

## 7.1 Estimate of Pupils Affected

Based on current pupils, the estimated change in the number of pupils entitled to free school transport would be as follows:

	Pupils Currently Entitled	Following Proposed Change			
		Pupils that remain entitled		Pupils that lose entitlement	
		Number	%	Number	%
Primary	580	282	49%	298	51%
Secondary	2,348	1,474	63%	874	37%
<b>All Schools</b>	<b>2,928</b>	<b>1,754</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>1,174</b>	<b>40%</b>

The details of how this affects individual schools and localities is contained in Appendix 1.

## 7.2 School Transport Implications

### Existing School Transport Contracts

A reorganisation of existing school bus contracts and provision would be necessary if the proposed change is agreed. This would result in a considerable reduction in the number and capacity of buses required to provide school transport

### Existing Fare-Paying Bus Services

There will be a continuing demand for fare-paying bus services (and capacity for fare-payers) in many areas. Although there are no longer any fares collected on these service routes following the introduction of the Under 22 entitlement card, some revenue is generated from the rebate claimed from the Scottish Government for usage of these cards.

This fare-paying capacity is heavily subsidised and would need to be considered alongside the reduced obligation for the Council to provide bus services for pupils currently entitled to free school transport.

The future provision of school bus services post-implementation would be fully re-assessed, re-organised and planned if the proposal was agreed following the consultation, ahead of the proposed implementation date.

### Existing Taxi Provision

The impact on taxi provision should the proposal be agreed is expected to be minimal.

### Scheduled Public Bus Transport

If the proposal is agreed, some affected pupils may be able to access existing public bus services free of charge, using their National Entitlement Card.

## **8. Statutory Consultation Process**

### 8.1 Statutory Requirements

The consultation on the proposed changes to the Children's Services Transport Policy would be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the "Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010".

### 8.2 Consultation Period

It is proposed that the consultation takes place for 6½ weeks between Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February and Friday 17 March 2023. This meets the legislative minimum period of 30 term-time days.

### 8.3 Educational Benefits Statement

Education provision remains one of the Councils main priorities. This has been demonstrated in several areas:

- Falkirk's current attainment levels sit well above the national average with several areas featuring in the top quartile of national performance data.
- Continued investment in the school estate, including new build schools, extensions and expansion of our early year's provision.
- The overall quality and condition of our school estate is good.
- Significant investment in ICT equipment and devices for all pupils and staff.
- There are significant mental health and wellbeing benefits that can accrue to children who participate in Active Travel. These are outlined in Section 6.6.

Each year as part of the need to achieve a balanced budget the Council approves a package of budget savings proposals. Given the current financial pressures faced by Local Authorities, including Falkirk Council, it is important that where existing services are provided at either at an additional cost to the Council or at a level more favourable than national guidelines that these are carefully considered given the current challenging circumstances. If this proposal was agreed, it would have a positive impact on existing and future expenditure and the overall budget position.

#### 8.4 Publicity

To initiate the consultation process, and in accordance with the legislation, a statutory notice will be placed in the Falkirk Herald and the Bo'ness Journal.

#### 8.5 Public Meetings

3 public meetings are proposed across each of our 3 localities as follows:

- Grangemouth High School on Tuesday 7 February 2023 at 6:30pm
- St Mungo's High School on Thursday 16 February 2023 at 6:30pm
- Denny High School on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 6:30pm

#### 8.6 Statutory and Other Consultees

The following stakeholders will be made aware of the proposal and invited to complete an online survey response:

- (i) Parents and carers who could be directly affected by the policy change within 2 years of the proposal taking effect (all parents of existing pre-school pupils at Falkirk Council nurseries in areas affected, and all primary and secondary pupils at the affected schools).
- (ii) The Parent Councils of all Falkirk Council denominational and non-denominational schools that would be affected by this proposal.
- (iii) Staff at all affected schools.
- (iv) Secondary pupils at affected schools.
- (v) Local community councils.
- (vi) All Elected Members.
- (vii) Education Scotland.
- (viii) The Roman Catholic Church.
- (ix) The Police Commander for the Central Scotland division of Police Scotland.



- (x) Local Trade Unions (represented at LNCT and Children's Services Partnership Forum).

8.7 Proposal Document

This is attached as Appendix 2 and will be made available during the consultation period:

- online on the council's website (all consultees will be provided with a link)
- at affected schools/nurseries and partner pre-school establishments
- in public facing council offices and libraries

There will also be engagement with primary pupils at the affected schools to gather representation of their views on the proposal.

8.8 Involvement of Education Scotland

The involvement of Education Scotland is a requirement of the 2010 Act.

Education Scotland will be invited to attend the public meetings and to discuss proposals with Education Services officers during the consultation period.

At the end of the consultation period, and in accordance with the requirements of the Act, a copy of all representations received will be forwarded to Education Scotland who are then required to submit a report back to the council within 3 weeks.

8.9 Consultation Report

Following receipt of the Education Scotland report, Children's Services will then prepare and publish a Consultation Report which will detail responses to the consultation and include:

- a summary of the consultation responses received
- minutes of the public meetings
- the report from Education Scotland.
- A response to the issues raised during the consultation and to the report by Education Scotland

The consultation report will be published on the Falkirk Council website and respondents to the consultation made aware of it at least 3 weeks before a decision on the proposal is made.

8.10 Report Back to EC&YP Executive

The earliest date that a report of the Consultation can be brought back to a scheduled meeting of the Education, Children and Young People Executive for a decision on the proposal will be 30 May 2023.

There is no requirement for decisions on school transport to be referred to government ministers following a consultation.

## 9. Implications

### Financial Resources

9.1 The current 2022-23 financial position for school transport provision is:

- Current Annual Budget £ 4.286m
- Current Projected Annual Expenditure £ 5.036m
- **Current Projected Overspend** **£ 0.750m**

Note: That significant additional costs were incurred when existing contracted services were re-tendered and were impacted by the current UK wide inflationary pressures.

9.2 The final savings associated with this proposal will only be known once the full contractual consequences of changes to distance entitlement and revised capacity needs are fully discussed, understood and assessed by all the current transport providers and the potential impact on the viability of existing commercial bus services is also fully considered.

9.3 If the proposal is agreed it is currently estimated that potential savings for August 23 to March 24 could be:

- 23/24 Annual Budget £5.036m
- Projected Expenditure: £4.411m
- **Budget savings: £0.625m**

Note: the budget includes an uplift to reflect the contractual inflationary pressures incurred in 2022/23.

### Legal

9.4 The legal and statutory position has been detailed in Section 6 and 7.

### Equalities

9.5 An initial exercise has been completed that identifies on an individual school basis the estimated number of pupils and the localities within the catchment area that would be potentially affected by this proposal. This is shown in Appendix 1.

9.6 A full Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment (EPIA) will be completed once the consultation exercise has been undertaken and the exact impact on the revised school transport contract arrangements is assessed. Whilst this proposal will impact on pupils and families currently in receipt of home to school transport, the EPIA will highlight any particular group that may be disproportionately affected and assess any possible mitigations.

## **Risk**

- 9.7 There is no risk associated in agreeing to undertake such a proposal.

## **Sustainability/Environmental Impact**

- 9.8 If after the consultation exercise has been completed the proposal is agreed there will be a significant reduction in school transport contracts. This in turn will reduce current levels of transport emissions which will have a positive impact on Falkirk's commitment and progression to meet Climate Change targets. In addition, if more children become engaged in active travel, this would also lead to fewer parental car journeys being undertaken.

## **10. Conclusions**

- 10.1 The need to take forward a consultation exercise on this proposal was acknowledged by the Council's Executive on 4 October 2022. This recognised both the significant fiscal challenges the Council faces and the fact that our existing Transport Policy for Schools exceeds the national statutory minimum distance entitlements, which results in significant additional expenditure being incurred.

If after consultation the proposed changes are agreed then this will help the Council's overall financial/budget position.

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**Director of Children's Services**

**Authors:** Gary Greenhorn, Head of Planning and Resources, Children's Services.  
[gary.greenhorn@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:gary.greenhorn@falkirk.gov.uk)  
David Mackay, Head of Education, Sport & Leisure, Children's Services.  
[david.mackay@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:david.mackay@falkirk.gov.uk)

**Appendices:** 1. Impact on School Bus Services  
2. Proposal Document

**List of Background Papers:** NIL

## ESTIMATED IMPACT OF PROPOSED CHANGE ON FALKIRK PUPILS

### Primary Schools Unaffected (19) – With No Current Mainstream Transport Provision

- |                     |                     |                 |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| • Avonbridge PS     | • Deanburn PS       | • Moray PS      |
| • Bainsford PS      | • Dunipace PS       | • Nethermain PS |
| • Bo'ness Public PS | • Easter Carmuir PS | • Shieldhill PS |
| • Bonnybridge PS    | • Kinnaird PS       | • Victoria PS   |
| • Carmuir PS        | • Kinneil PS        | • Whitecross PS |
| • Carron PS         | • Ladeside PS       |                 |
| • Carronshore PS    | • Langlees PS       |                 |

### Other Primary Schools Unaffected (5) by the Proposed Change

- Blackness PS (less than 5 pupils)
- Bowhouse PS (less than 5 pupils)
- Drumbowie PS (less than 5 pupils)
- Laurieston PS (less than 5 pupils)
- Shieldhill PS (less than 5 pupils)

Many of these pupils live in remote farms and villages with no safe walking route to school, so qualify for free home to school transport regardless of distance.

### Transport for Pupils Attending Gaelic Medium Education Schools Out-with Falkirk

All of the pupils who attend primary (14) and secondary schools (10) in Cumbernauld and Stirling are not affected by these proposed changes due to the current transport distances

### Primary Schools Affected by Proposed Change

- **24** primary schools are affected by the proposed change. (See *Table 1 below*).
- At these schools, **528** pupils are currently provided with free transport, of whom **256** (48%) will remain entitled and **298** (52%) will lose their entitlement.

### Secondary Schools Unaffected by Proposed Change

- **2** Secondary Schools are unaffected by the proposed change, due to all transport provided pupils living more than 3 miles from the schools. These are:
  - Bo'ness Academy (15 pupils)
  - St Modan's High School, Stirling (235 pupils)

### Secondary Schools Affected by Proposed Change

- **7** Secondary schools are affected by the change from 2 miles to 3 miles for secondary pupils (See *Table 2 below*).
- At these schools, **2,088** pupils are currently provided with free transport, of whom **1,214** (58%) will remain entitled and **874** (42%) will lose their entitlement.

**Table 1 - Primary Schools**

<b>School</b>	<b>Pupils Remaining Entitled</b>	<b>Pupils Losing Entitlement</b>	<b>Localities Unaffected</b>	<b>Localities Affected</b>
Airth	*	10	n/a	Letham
Antonine PS	16	*	Allandale, Glenyards Farm	Bonnyhill Farm
Bankier PS	0	*	n/a	Longcroft
Bantaskin PS	0	12	n/a	Tamfourhill
Beancross PS	39	*	Grangemouth Old Town and Skinflats	Grangemouth Town Centre
Comely Park PS	*	13	Rural & farms	Lionthorn, Princes Park area
Denny PS	*	6	Carron Valley	Area around Weir Crescent, Stoneywood
Grange PS	0	8	n/a	Charles Snedden area (The Drum), Carriden Brae
Hallglen PS	0	*	n/a	MacNab Gardens area
Head of Muir PS	0	*	n/a	Longcroft
Larbert Village PS	5	*	Torwood	Hills of Dunipace
Maddiston PS	*	*	Rural (no safe walking route)	Woodbank Road area
Sacred Heart PS	7	*	Grangemouth Old Town, Skinflats and Airth	Area North of Bo'ness Road
Slamannan PS	19	*	Limerigg, Rural and farms	Binniehill Road Area
St Andrew's PS	104	43	Slamannan, Limerigg, Avonbridge, California, Shieldhill, Reddingmuirhead, Polmont (part), Brightons, Maddiston, Hallglen (part), Slamannan Rd/Lionthorn (part)	Hallglen (part), Glen Village (Part), Laurieston, Lionthorn, Redding, Westquarter

School	Pupils Remaining Entitled	Pupils Losing Entitlement	Localities Unaffected	Localities Affected
St Bernadette's PS	5	26	Torwood	Carronshore (part), Larbert (part), Stenhousemuir (part)
St Francis PS	*	41	Ochiltree Terrace (Camelon)	Camelon, Grahamston, Bantaskin, Tamforhill (part), Carmuir, Middlefield, Bainsford, Langlees
St Joseph's PS	*	8	Glenyards Farm area, Allandale	Anderson Park area, Greenhill, Dennyloanhead
St Margaret's PS	0	42	n/a	Polmont
St Mary's PS	*	*	Whitecross	Carriden, The Drum, NW Bo'ness
St Patrick's PS	44	23	Dennyloanhead (part), Longcroft, Haggs, Banknock, Fankerton, rural & farms	Nethermain Road area, Head of Muir, Dennyloanhead (part), Stoneywood
Stenhousemuir	0	*	n/a	Part of Antonshill
Wallacestone PS	0	6	n/a	Epworth Gardens area, Breside area (Reddingmuirhead area)
Westquarter PS	0	39	n/a	Canalside Drive area
<b>All Affected primaries</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>298</b>		

Note: \* Where pupil numbers are less than 5, the actual number has been redacted for data protection reasons.

**Table 2 - Secondary Schools**

<b>School</b>	<b>Pupils Remaining Entitled</b>	<b>Pupils Losing Entitlement</b>	<b>Localities Unaffected</b>	<b>Localities Affected</b>
Braes HS	113	54	California, Avonbridge, Standburn, rural and farms	Maddiston
Denny HS	216	266	Greenhill (part), Glenyards Farm, Haggs (part), Banknock, Fankerton, rural & farms	Bonnybridge, High Bonnybridge (All?), Greenhill (part), Dennyloanhead, Longcroft, Haggs (part)
Falkirk HS	109	121	Slamannan, Limerigg, rural & farms	Langlees, Bainsford, Etna Road area, Lionthorn & Slamannan Road
Graeme HS	78	192	Whitecross	Lionthorn, Redding, Polmont (All?)
Grangemouth HS	*	34	rural	Grangemouth Old Town. Skinflats
Larbert HS	161	13	Airth & surrounding villages, Torwood (part)	Torwood (part)
St Mungo's HS	536	194	Bo'ness, Grangemouth, Bonnybridge, Hallglen (part), Laurieston (part), Redding, Polmont, Brightons, Maddiston, Shieldhill, California & other rural villages, Airth & surrounding villages, Torwood	Larbert (part), Kinnaird Village (part), Stenhousemuir, Carronshore, The Bog, Laurieston (part), Hallglen (part), Lionthorn & Slamannan Road,
<b>All Affected Secondaries</b>	<b>1,214</b>	<b>874</b>		

Note: \* Where pupil numbers are less than 5, the actual number has been redacted for data protection reasons.

**CHANGES TO FREE TRANSPORT ENTITLEMENT FOR FALKIRK SCHOOLS**

**A PROPOSAL DOCUMENT**



# 1 PROPOSAL

<b>Background</b>	<p>Falkirk Council Children's Services currently provide home to school transport for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Any child under the age of 8 years in full-time education who lives more than one mile from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route.</li><li>Any child who has reached the age of 8 years during a school session and is in full-time education who lives less than two miles but more than one mile from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route. Those children/young people will be granted free transport until the end of the school session.</li><li>Any child who is aged 8 years or over in full-time education who lives more than two miles from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route.</li></ul> <p>This is more generous than the legislation, which places the responsibility on the local authority to provide transport to school for children who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>are under 8 years of age and live more than 2 miles from school; or</li><li>are 8 years of age or older and live more than 3 miles from school</li></ul>
<b>Proposal</b>	<p>It is proposed that the Children's Services Transport policy is changed to provide home to school transport for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b><u>primary</u> pupils who live more than 2 miles their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route; and</b></li><li><b><u>secondary</u> pupils who live more than 3 miles from their catchment area school by the nearest available safe walking route</b></li></ul>
<b>Who Would Be Affected?</b>	<p>Home to school transport would no longer be provided for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>primary pupils, aged 8 or under, that live more than 1 mile but less than 2 miles from their catchment school</li><li>secondary pupils that live more than 2 miles but less than 3 miles from their catchment school</li></ul>
<b>Reason for the proposed change</b>	<p>Falkirk Council are facing severe financial constraints and are required to make urgent budget savings. This proposed change in free school transport entitlement would be in line with the majority of Scottish Councils and result in considerable financial savings reducing the risk to more critical Council services</p>
<b>Outcome of the Proposed Change</b>	<p>It is estimated that 40% of currently entitled pupils (1,174 pupils) would lose their entitlement to free school transport. The number of school bus services would be reduced as a result and no longer available to large numbers of pupils, even on a fare-paying basis.</p>

**Proposal Document**

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**Educational Benefits** Education provision is one of the Council's main priorities. This has been demonstrated in a number of areas:

- Falkirk's current attainment levels sit well above the national average with several areas featuring in the top quartile of national performance data.
- Continued investment in the school estate, including new build schools, extensions and expansion of our early year's provision.
- The overall quality and condition of our school estate is good.
- Significant investment in ICT equipment and devices for all pupils and staff.
- It is hoped that if this proposal is agreed that it may encourage more participation in active travel (walking, cycling or wheeling), which has numerous benefits for pupils. Travelling actively to school is a great way to build regular physical activity into young people's lives, with these behaviours typically being carried into adulthood.
- Physical activity can also benefit mental health and increase mental alertness. Pupils travelling actively arrive at school ready to learn with an increase in concentration levels which can last for up to four hours.
- Encouraging more active travel to school can also reduce traffic around schools, increasing safety and reducing the carbon emissions associated with road traffic.

Each year as part of the need to achieve a balanced budget the Council approves a package of budget savings proposals. In undertaking this exercise, the Council has over a number of years protected schools from having to achieve the same level of savings required to be found in other service areas. This protection has meant that the focus within schools is firmly on improving learning and teaching.

Given the current financial pressures faced by Local Authorities, including Falkirk Council, if this proposal was not to be implemented it would have an adverse impact on the level of resources that can be allocated to our schools.

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## 2 CONSULTATION

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<b>Legislation</b>	<p><b>Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010</b></p> <p>A formal consultation is required for any proposal to “discontinue arrangements for the provision of transport by the education authority for pupils attending a denominational school”. This consultation fully accords with the requirements of this legislation and goes further to consult <u>all affected schools</u>, not just denominational.</p>
<b>Consultees</b>	<p>During the consultation period, and in accordance with legislative requirements, views are being sought from a range of interested parties including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• parents and carers of all affected schools and also of any pupils that may attend those schools in the coming 2 years;</li><li>• the Parent Councils of affected schools;</li><li>• school staff at affected schools and their trade unions;</li><li>• pupils at affected schools; and</li><li>• Education Scotland</li></ul>
<b>Consultation Period</b>	<p>The consultation is taking place over a 6½ week period between 1 February and 17 March 2023</p>
<b>Public Meeting</b>	<p>There will be 3 public meeting to discuss the proposal as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grangemouth High School on Tuesday 7 February 2023 at 6:30pm</li><li>• St Mungo's High School on Thursday 16 February 2023 at 6:30pm</li><li>• Denny High School on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 6:30pm</li></ul> <p>Officers of the Council will be present to discuss this proposal and there will be an opportunity to ask questions at the meeting. Everyone is welcome to attend.</p>
<b>How to Respond</b>	<p>Interested parties are encouraged to complete the online survey at:</p> <p><a href="https://say.falkirk.gov.uk/">https://say.falkirk.gov.uk/</a></p> <p>It asks some specific questions regarding the proposal and provides the opportunity to detail any issues of concern. There is also further information on the schools and areas affected by the proposal.</p> <p>Separate written submissions regarding this proposal will also be accepted by letter or e-mail until <b>Friday 17 March 2023</b> when the consultation period ends.</p>
<b>Contact Details</b>	<p>If you have any queries regarding the consultation process, please email us at <a href="mailto:educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk">educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Written submissions should be sent by email to <a href="mailto:educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk">educ.consultation@falkirk.gov.uk</a> or if sending by post to:</p> <p><b>School Transport Consultation, Falkirk Council Children's Services</b> <b>Suite 1A, Falkirk Stadium, 4 Stadium Way, Falkirk FK2 9EE</b></p>