

Appendix D2

Date	From	Message
9/3/24	Rishi Sunak	<p data-bbox="384 304 603 331">Dear Sir/Madam</p> <p data-bbox="384 367 742 394">For your information below.</p> <hr data-bbox="384 456 1337 461"/> <p data-bbox="384 470 587 497">Dear Mr Sunak</p> <p data-bbox="384 533 1321 797">I have recently learnt about the potential changes to Home-School transport in our area, meaning that our children will only receive paid transport to our closest school. This will potentially have a huge impact on our three children's (currently aged 10, 8 and 3) secondary school education. After thriving at Richmond School myself and progressing to University where I achieved a First Class Honours degree, I will always take their education seriously. My husband had a positive experience at Richmond School too.</p> <p data-bbox="384 837 1337 1169">With the proposed changes, transport will only be provided for Kirkby Stephen Grammar School. Whilst closest, this involves a very tricky journey to school during the winter months over Tailbridge (547m above sea level), which I know you are familiar with. A diversion on lower routes would involve a 50 mile + journey, which is not practical at their age. Schools are complaining about poor attendance records and these changes will definitely not help in our area. Getting a bus company to tender for such a route would be difficult and I would imagine one that would go for the tender, might not be particularly reliable. I would hope the Council will agree when the route is assessed.</p> <p data-bbox="384 1209 1337 1370">The second closest school would be Wensleydale School. Again, there would be difficult inclined route to pass if the shortest route was taken, or even the valley routes include lower gritting priorities than the direct Priority 1 gritting route (after the first part from our house to the B6270) to Richmond.</p> <p data-bbox="384 1411 1337 1639">Whilst the fees for transport to the preferred school for our children would be considerable and a challenge for us (approximately £2,100/year when they all reach secondary school), we would be forced to pay it if the changes go ahead. My biggest worry would be that a bus would not be available for spaces at all if the changes happen and taking them to school ourselves would not be possible with our jobs (an upland hill farming family and I work part-time away from the farm too).</p> <p data-bbox="384 1680 1337 1809">I understand the change will reduce costs in some parts of the county but with only a 3 mile distance between Leyburn and Richmond for us, the difference is negligible but could have a significant impact on our children's school career.</p> <p data-bbox="384 1850 1337 2009">I appreciate other counties do not have the option of transport to their catchment schools already (local school only), but I think the nature of our rural area is the reason that the change has not been made here and generations have attended school in Richmond. There are many other families who will be affected negatively in upper Swaledale and I am sure</p>

		<p>others will be writing to you. Our catchment options are currently the two schools in Richmond and Wensleydale School, I would really hope this continues to be the case and hope you might be able to help in our fight.</p> <p>I look forward to hearing from you soon.</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p>
9/3/24	Rishi Sunak	<p>Dear Mr Rishi Sunak,</p> <p>I write to you as a parent from upper Swaledale with deep concerns about the proposed changes to the current Home-School transport policy. If these changes go ahead our child and all other children in our area will only receive paid transport to our closest school (Kirkby Stephen) which as you know from Keld is over a particularly dangerous route which is never fully gritted in the winter months due to it being deemed unsafe for gritters, let alone buses and cars. I struggle to believe you will get any transport company to take the tender as they will not safely be able to get to school certain times of the year, if they do Swaledale children will unfortunately have very poor attendance records, this will ultimately affect their education which we obviously don't want to see. We get extreme winters in Swaledale with snowdrifts, as well as black ice and sheet ice which on any road is not nice but on the Tailbridge road is lethal. A diversion from Keld to Kirkby Stephen is 50 plus miles which is ridiculous for children of school age.</p> <p>The last person to go to school in Kirkby Stephen from Swaledale is Doris Harker nee Whitehead, this was over 50 years ago which in itself surely highlights that no one from this area has chosen to go to school over this route for a very long time due to the road simply not being fit for transport in winter months.</p> <p>Our second closest school is in Leyburn (Wensleydale School) which also has no safe route in bad weather, Grinton top and Stainton Lane are both roads that are not well gritted in winter. There is only a three mile difference in distance from the Keld - Richmond route and the Keld - Leyburn route. This in my mind is a no brainer especially when you take into account the safety of our children should be the most important factor when it comes to school transport. Not distance. Not money. I urge you to help us stop these changes and put our childrens safety first.</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p>
14/03/24	Rishi Sunak	<p>Having recently been made aware of the new school transport consultation published by NYCC, I have raised my concerns with the council but would like to bring your attention to the issues this may cause, albeit I'm sure you will be being inundated with similar correspondence from other parents in the Dales.</p> <p>In the consultation document there is much focus and consideration on the "safety of walked routes", obviously aimed at those within the 2/3 miles of their school, but no mention of the safety of roads for buses.</p> <p>I assume this is completely obvious and therefore think it is unnecessary for me to be concerned, however I would just like it to be checked that these proposed changes won't actually come into place for the children of Upper Swaledale, and their transport arrangements will remain the same,</p>

and they will travel down the dale - currently to Richmond School.

This consultation suggests that transport would be provided to 'nearest suitable school' but isn't very clear on what 'suitable' means. The nearest school for Upper Swaledale by road miles is Kirkby Stephen, in Cumbria, but I trust this won't actually be an option that NYCC are considering. The B6270 from Keld to Kirkby Stephen is not a suitable route at all in winter months, which often runs from November through to March. The road is sometimes not gritted at all, due to it being deemed not safe for a gritter. For anyone who lives at the top of Swaledale and experiences first hand how exposed the road is to the extreme weather conditions in winter, it is obvious just how many days school the children would miss if their school transport was over the country border. This would be of huge detriment to their education. The idea of children being transported over a road with a 14% gradient, at 530m altitude to school is simply ridiculous. It is just common sense to continue to take all children of Swaledale down the dale towards Richmond.

I understand the proposed changes are with the aim of saving costs. The current transport situation for the children of Swaledale are as follows:

A Mini bus from Ravenseat to Gunnerside (10miles), then a coach from Gunnerside to Richmond (17miles). Currently 2 bus contracts, for the whole of Swaledale, with total mileage of 27 miles.

Under the proposed changes, the children of Swaledale would be split, around the Gunnerside area, with the children of Upper Swaledale (Gunnerside up to Ravenseat) being transported to Kirkby Stephen (their nearest school), so the situation for Swaledale would be:

A Mini bus from Gunnerside to Kirkby Stephen (17miles), plus the existing bus from Gunnerside to Richmond(17miles), so 2 bus contracts, for the whole of Swaledale, with total mileage of 34 miles.

Therefore for this specific community, I cannot see how this would be a cost saving, instead it increases total miles between the 2 buses, as well as travelling over a very unsuitable road.

I appreciate that I am sure there are many other areas in the whole of North Yorkshire where these changes will decrease costs and improve efficiencies, however I trust that the whole point of this being a consultation is to highlight/confirm any exceptions to these very simplistic changes, and Upper Swaledale must be one of them.

The communities living and working in the Dales already face many challenges both logistically and financially for school and work opportunities. Bringing in changes to transport policies like this would completely deter any young families from moving to the area, specifically Upper Swaledale, if their only school options where transport is provided is by travelling over a dangerously high route.

NYCC will surely agree that safety is paramount in defining which school is 'suitable'.

If parents had to transport their children to the school that is truly suitable

		<p>(Richmond) then this would have a hugely negative impact on working parents. Many of these working parents have overcome the challenges of maintaining a career alongside raising young children, and if transporting their children from Upper Swaledale to Richmond, two times a day, was to become the only option, this would take 2 hours out of every working day for all of those working parents. There could be almost 20 vehicles travelling 54 miles a day.</p> <p>I do hope NYCC is not aiming for the dales to become only a museum where tourists visit at weekends, and instead is going to support those who live, work and look after these rural areas.</p> <p>I have never before felt the need to email yourself about any issues, however in this instance the impact this could potentially have is so huge I feel I must contact you and I hope you can provide support in reassuring the people of Upper Swaledale that these changes will not be coming into place for our community.</p>
14/03/24	Rishi Sunak	<p>I have recently learnt about the potential changes to Home-School transport in our area, meaning that our children will only receive paid transport to our closest school. <i>[REDACTED TEXT]</i></p> <p>With the proposed changes, transport will only be provided for Kirkby Stephen Grammar School. Whilst closest, this involves a very tricky journey to school during the winter months over Tailbridge (547m above sea level), which I know you are familiar with. A diversion on lower routes would involve a 50 mile + journey, which is not practical at their age. Schools are complaining about poor attendance records and these changes will definitely not help in our area. Getting a bus company to tender for such a route would be difficult and I would imagine one that would go for the tender, might not be particularly reliable. I would hope the Council will agree when the route is assessed.</p> <p>The second closest school would be Wensleydale School. Again, there would be difficult inclined route to pass if the shortest route was taken, or even the valley routes include lower gritting priorities than the direct Priority 1 gritting route <i>[REDACTED TEXT]</i> to Richmond.</p> <p>Whilst the fees for transport to the preferred school for our children would be considerable and a challenge for us (approximately £2,100/year when they all reach secondary school), we would be forced to pay it if the changes go ahead. My biggest worry would be that a bus would not be available for spaces at all if the changes happen and taking them to school ourselves would not be possible with our jobs <i>[REDACTED TEXT]</i></p> <p>I understand the change will reduce costs in some parts of the county but with only a 3 mile distance between Leyburn and Richmond for us, the difference is negligible but could have a significant impact on our children's school career.</p> <p>I appreciate other counties do not have the option of transport to their catchment schools already (local school only), but I think the nature of our rural area is the reason that the change has not been made here and generations have attended school in Richmond. There are many other families who will be affected negatively in upper Swaledale and I am sure</p>

		others will be writing to you. Our catchment options are currently the two schools in Richmond and Wensleydale School, <i>*REDACTED TEXT CONTINING PERSONAL AND IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</i>
14/03/24	Rishi Sunak	<p>I write to you as a parent from upper Swaledale with deep concerns about the proposed changes to the current Home-School transport policy. If these changes go ahead our child and all other children in our area will only receive paid transport to our closest school (Kirkby Stephen) which as you know from Keld is over a particularly dangerous route which is never fully gritted in the winter months due to it being deemed unsafe for gritters, let alone buses and cars. I struggle to believe you will get any transport company to take the tender as they will not safely be able to get to school certain times of the year, if they do Swaledale children will unfortunately have very poor attendance records, this will ultimately affect their education which we obviously don't want to see. We get extreme winters in Swaledale with snowdrifts, as well as black ice and sheet ice which on any road is not nice but on the Tailbridge road is lethal. A diversion from Keld to Kirkby Stephen is 50 plus miles which is ridiculous for children of school age.</p> <p>The last person to go to school in Kirkby Stephen from Swaledale <i>[REDACTED TEXT]</i> 50 years ago which in itself surely highlights that no one from this area has chosen to go to school over this route for a very long time due to the road simply not being fit for transport in winter months.</p> <p>Our second closest school is in Leyburn (Wensleydale School) which also has no safe route in bad weather, Grinton top and Stainton Lane are both roads that are not well gritted in winter. There is only a three mile difference in distance from the Keld - Richmond route and the Keld - Leyburn route. This in my mind is a no brainer especially when you take into account the safety of our children should be the most important factor when it comes to school transport. Not distance. Not money. I urge you to help us stop these changes and put our childrens safety first. <i>*REDACTED TEXT CONTINING PERSONAL AND IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</i></p>
14.03/24	Rishi Sunak	<p>It has recently been brought to our attention that our local council have been reviewing their home to school transport policies.</p> <p>As a part of the policy, North Yorkshire county council would like to amend and change a major part (in our eyes living in the western part of the North Yorkshire) of the policy! In which we think this would have massive detrimental affects on our children!</p> <p>The new policy is stating that the children would have to travel to the nearest school, and this means it could be in a neighbouring county! For us this would be our children would have to apply for Kirkby Stephen school! This for us is not an option! The road is not suitable for a bus or taxi to be carrying school children especially in winter! This road does not get gritted it sits as a height of 1740ft and is completely exposed to all elements of weather! Previously when we have been asking for this road to be gritted, Westmorland council have deemed it not safe for a gritter to be travelling on in bad weather! But yet you're willing to put our children on this road?!</p>

		<p>If we are right in thinking if this policy goes ahead but we chose not to send to Kirkby Stephen purely on safety issues for our own children, we then have to pay and organise our own transport then to the school of your own choice!</p> <p>The families of the upper Swaledale community, in which we are a part of your constituency. Would like to take this opportunity in asking whether you could discuss this matter further with North Yorkshire county council, as we feel our opinions alone may not help! We just all feel we are getting punished for the beautiful part of the world we live in!</p>
15/03/24	Rishi Sunak	<p>I have just been made aware of proposed changes to school transport and catchment areas by North Yorkshire County Council.</p> <p>I live in Arkengarthdale and under the proposal my child would have to go to secondary school in Barnard Castle, which would mean crossing the A66 road and the Stang Road which is routinely impassable in the winter with snowfall, both of which are extremely dangerous!</p> <p>Not only this but all students in Reeth and Gunnerside Primary School would be split up and sent to different schools which will be deeply distressing for all concerned and totally avoidable. Please put yourself in our shoes, would you consider it acceptable for your children to be sent on a potentially dangerous journey on a daily basis?</p> <p>There is a meeting at Richmond Town Hall tomorrow at 1.30pm that I will be attending with other very concerned parents, we really need your help!</p> <p>I urge you to look into this quickly and take it as seriously as we are.</p>
21/03/24	Rishi Sunak	<p><i>[Redacted text]</i> Reeth and Gunnerside school, it is a small school that around 80 children attend. The proposed changes would mean that our children will be entitled to transport to only their nearest school which would be Wensleydale School in Leyburn. Other children that attend Reeth and Gunnerside school that live further up Swaledale will have transport provided to Kirby Stephen School and those living in Arkengarthdale will have transport provided to Barnard Castle school. There are many reasons why I believe NYC has not thought about the implications to the proposed changes, and I have listed these below.</p> <p>Safety: Wensleydale school is 12 miles away from our home, but the road can be very dangerous, and it is not a priority road that is gritted in the winter, the road can be very steep in places and not always safe to pass other oncoming vehicles, there is also a 7.5 ton weight limit restriction on the road. The current catchment school where transport is provided for all of those living in Swaledale and Arkendarthdale is Richmond school, the road to Richmond along the B6270 is well maintained, gritted as a priority road and is the safest route to school in and out of our Dale.</p> <p>Children living further up Swaledale will be provided with transport to Kirby Stephen school which means them having to travel on roads that are not gritted and can be steep in some places.</p>

Children that live in Langthwaite in Arkengarthdale will be provided with transport to Barnard Castle school, again not only going over the Stang which is an ungritted dangerous road, it also means them having to cross the A66.

The Department for Education states that school transport will be provided for children if there is not a 'safe' route to walk to school. Why does this policy not extend to mention that transport will be provided on 'safe' roads.

Another concern is that children are going to miss a number of days at school due to the roads not being safe to travel on during winter months.

Community: Dividing the friendship groups already made at primary school will ruin our community for generations to come, it is unfair to isolate any child when they have been in a class size of 8, then to potentially split them from their friends due to their postcode when being sent to secondary school.

Jobs: *[Redacted text]* if transport is not provided to Richmond school I will have to leave my job so that I am able to drive my children to school each day and pick them up, I will look for another job in Richmond. For my employer and many others in the Dales this will have a detrimental impact, they are already short staffed due to the cost of affordable homes and affordable rent in the Dales.

Housing: There are many second homes in Swaledale and Arkengarthdale, by changing the transport to school it may have a significant knock-on effect of young families wanting to bring their children up here. It could potentially reduce the cost of houses due to families of school age children not wanting to live here or it even increase the amount of second homes, both of which will ruin the community.

Local transport: There is very limited local transport that our children could use so this is not even an option.

Cost: The proposed cost is just under £800 a year per child if we choose to send our children to Richmond school and that is only if there is a space on the bus to do so, it is not a cost that I can personally afford so I feel that NYC will be forcing myself and many others into a decision based on not having the money to pay for the transport.

Consultation: I attended the consultation meeting on Thursday 14th March at Richmond Town Hall along with 6 other people, one of those being the head teacher from Richmond school. I would have been surprised to see such a low turn out however I was expecting it as most other parents I have spoken to did not realise the meeting was on, nor did they understand what the proposed changes would mean for their families. I was also surprised and saddened to hear that the head teacher of Richmond school had not been told about the proposed changes even though it was going to have a detrimental impact on her school. I asked at the meeting why a consultation had not taken place in Swaledale or at Reeth or Gunnerside considering it is going to impact every pupil at the school and the community, I was told that it was because they could not

		<p>find anywhere to hold the meeting. I have asked as a matter of urgency that a consultation meeting is held in this area before the closing date of the consultation period on April 12th, I was advised they would 'see what they could do'.</p> <p>I understand NYC need to save money, but I do not believe putting this cost onto families is the correct way. I do not also understand how NYC will save money as currently they provide two coaches, these will have to be replaced with at least 5 or 6 minibuses due to the many other schools it will have to provide transport to, a coach will not be able to travel on the road to Wensleydale school due to the restrictions.</p> <p>I am a very concerned parent and I do not believe that any consideration has been taken about the safety of our children when travelling to school or the impact it will have for our community, I feel that NYC are putting initial financial benefits above these.</p> <p><i>*REDACTED TEXT CONTINING PERSONAL AND IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</i></p>
22/03/24	Julian Smith	<p>Following the recent Local Government reorganisation (carried out at the behest of your Government), when Craven District Council and others were subsumed into the much larger and more remote North Yorkshire Council, based at Northallerton, we on the western periphery of the District are now seeing the first fruits of this change.</p> <p>Tomorrow afternoon (Thursday 21st March), a public meeting will be held, here in Ingleton, to explain plans to amend the Home School Travel Policy.</p> <p>The main proposal is 'C - Amendment to the main eligibility criterion to be 'nearest school (with places available)', to match the statutory requirement.'</p> <p>This bland-sounding proposal has considerable, very far-reaching consequences.</p> <p>The nearest secondary school to Ingleton, Bentham and Burton, is in the next county, QES at Kirkby Lonsdale, in Cumbria - 7 miles from Ingleton.</p> <p>Settle College, in N. Yorkshire, is 11 miles from Ingleton.</p> <p>Under the proposal, in future, only travel from Ingleton to QES at Kirkby Lonsdale would be subsidised. The Council clearly anticipates sending children across the County boundary - that is specifically mentioned in the FAQ's on the Consultation.</p> <p>The ramifications are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Everyone leaving the local primary schools would have to apply to QES (Kirkby Lonsdale), initially, which would not have the capacity for all the children. (However, school finances being roll-number dependent, you can be sure they would cram in as many as humanly possible!). Most local children would be sent to QES, but a few others (chosen on a random basis), would not, and would still go to Settle College.

		<p>Families would be split, to everyone's great inconvenience - and bear in mind that Cumbria and North Yorkshire tend to have entirely different holiday dates.</p> <p>2. Because Settle College would no longer have these important feeder schools within its catchment, it is estimated it would lose a huge amount of income, and would probably quickly become unviable as a unit. Settle is already a modest-sized, rural secondary school, so is already vulnerable to the financial effects of scale, and it may, perhaps, be considered less important by those in power on the other side of the Pennines.</p> <p>If Settle College were to close, then the children from Settle, Horton and all the surrounding areas (including some travelling from Ingleton etc.) would have to be transported - at great extra expense and hardship - to Skipton (26 miles from Ingleton, on a difficult road).</p> <p>The deleterious effects of such changes to the towns and villages here in West Craven surely hardly need spelling out, as they are obvious and wide-ranging - but perhaps not so to Council bean-counters?</p> <p>3. Less obviously, but of vital importance, the children from Ingleton and the other schools mentioned currently have the benefit of being part of the North Yorkshire catchment for sporting and other cultural activities. Running, for instance, which is enjoyed greatly by redacted text and redacted text school friends, is based at Giggleswick. Take them out of North Yorkshire's ambit, and they will have to join up with Cumbrian schools, which will be far less convenient, at much greater distance - and impractical on school nights.</p> <p>4. Although few in number and living near the borders of 'God's Own Country,' and therefore of little consequence, we still pay Council Tax and Business Rates to North Yorkshire Council, and we are entitled to proper services from them in return - especially as those Council Taxes are levied at a higher rate than in Cumbria!</p> <p>The Council will doubtless claim they have to make savings, and this will help them more effectively spend scarce funds.</p> <p>However, I understand, on very good authority, (though unofficially, for obvious reasons!), that the comparative costs to the Council of transporting children to Settle College and QES are - exactly the same! That's because these costs aren't primarily based on mileage, but on time involved, which is identical.</p> <p>So, if there is no actual fiscal advantage to the Council in making this change, one has to ask - what is the point of this exercise? And one is driven to conclude that it must surely be to drive Settle College out of business, in the name of centralisation and 'efficiency.' That would be myopic lunacy.</p> <p>This is a matter which is too important to be left to the tender mercy of a far-away Council with myriad financial problems to solve.</p> <p>]</p> <p><i>*REDACTED TEXT CONTINING PERSONAL AND IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</i></p>
26/03/24	Julian Smith	<p>I am writing to you with regards to the consultation that is currently happening for school transport in NYCC.</p> <p>I feel strongly that the rural communities of North Craven are going to be left with no choice but to send their child out of county to QES at Kirkby Lonsdale, as they won't be able to afford school transport to Settle</p>

		<p>College. The long term affect will be that Settle College will be forced to close due to low numbers.</p> <p>I attended the meeting Ingleton last week, and couldn't help feeling that the blanket approach that is being proposed just will not work for North Craven.</p> <p><i>*REDACTED TEXT CONTINING PERSONAL AND IDENTIFYING INFORMATION</i></p>
28/03/24	Rishi Sunak	<p>We, Arkengarthdale Parish Council, are contacting you with regards to the proposed changes in school transport policy, since we have found the online consultation to be impractical for a parish council. We object to the proposed changes and outline our concerns below.</p> <p>We have also written to NYC to Cllrs Wilkinson and Carlton as we would like our concerns to count as our submission to the consultation. We have been unable to complete the online survey as it has been designed for individual respondents (parents/pupils), rather than groups/committees who need to be able to view the entire survey (rather than one question at a time) in order to reach an agreed response in a time-efficient manner. Neither the technical format nor the question format of the survey makes it easy for a parish council to complete.</p> <p>Our first concern is the timing of the public consultation meeting: Holding it on a lunchtime in the middle of a working week was not convenient for many people, and indeed several parents have indicated that it was impossible for them to attend this meeting owing to work commitments.</p> <p>Our second concern is the lack of clarity in the justification for awarding a contract to a national taxi firm (24x7 Ltd) apparently based in Essex, operating from Ripon. This firm will send buses and drivers from Ripon to transport pupils from Arkengarthdale and Swaledale to Wensleydale, although a local bus operator already exists in Reeth. With no local knowledge of the communities, outlying properties and the local road conditions under certain weather conditions, we are unconvinced that this proposed new arrangement can (a) make financial sense, (b) be environmentally sustainable and, most importantly, (c) be in the best interests of pupil safety.</p> <p>Our third concern is the effect that the proposed changes could have on the interests and well-being of local school pupils. The populations of Arkengarthdale and Swaledale feed the primary school at Reeth, which is geographically and socially the 'centre' of a very close-knit, supportive community for children and adults. Both dales are several miles long. The changes to the policy would effectively segregate local children into three zones according to the geographic distances they live from the nearest school. We can only summise that someone with no local experience of the dynamic of the upper dales' communities or the character of roads between upper Swaledale and Kirkby Stephen (Cumbria), or between upper Arkengarthdale and Barnard Castle (County Durham), or between lower Swaledale/lower Arkengarthdale and Leyburn has devised this</p>

		<p>plan. Not only are all these roads frequently impassible in bad weather, but the notion of pulling young children out of their core community by sending them to three different schools in three different counties based on journey differentials of just a few miles seems incommensurate with the amount of disruption and distress it could cause.</p> <p>Arkengarthdale Parish Council would like to emphasise the sentiment expressed by many in the local community which is that anyone living in these two dales would not consider this plan to be a sensible or practical proposition as it increases the risk levels in terms of road safety, school attendance and personal well-being. We strongly oppose the proposed changes, and request that the option to continue with existing arrangements is given serious consideration.</p> <p>We would be grateful for clarification on the justification for proposing these changes. If this is financially motivated, we would be grateful if you could share the calculations with us that relate to the options for the current and proposed school bus services specifically for Arkengarthdale, so that we can see for example, how the additional costs relating to increased winter maintenance on the proposed 'Priority Two' bus routes (The Stang and Leyburn moor road) and the increased cost of sending at least twice as many vehicles and drivers to Arkengarthdale make the proposed changes financially feasible.</p> <p>We look forward to hearing from you, Arkengarthdale Parish Council</p>
<p>04/04/24</p>	<p>Rishi Sunak</p>	<p>We, Reeth, Fremington and Healaugh Parish Council, are contacting you with regard to the proposed changes in school transport policy, since we have found the online consultation to be impractical for a parish council. We object to the proposed changes and outline our concerns below.</p> <p>We have also written to NYC to Cllr Wilkinson as we would like our concerns to count as our submission to the consultation.</p> <p>We have been unable to complete the online survey as it has been designed for individual respondents (parents/pupils), rather than groups/committees who need to be able to view the entire survey (rather than one question at a time) in order to reach an agreed response in a time-efficient manner. Neither the technical format nor the question format of the survey makes it easy for a parish council to complete.</p> <p>Our first concern is the timing of the public consultation meeting: Holding it on a lunchtime in the middle of a working week was not convenient for many people, and indeed several parents have indicated that it was impossible for them to attend this meeting owing to work commitments.</p> <p>Our second concern is the lack of clarity in the justification for awarding a contract to a national taxi firm (24x7 Ltd) apparently based in Essex, operating from Ripon. This firm will send buses and drivers from Ripon to transport pupils from Arkengarthdale and Swaledale to Wensleydale, although a local bus operator already exists in Reeth. With no local knowledge of the communities, outlying properties and the local road conditions under certain weather conditions, we are unconvinced that this proposed new arrangement can (a) make financial sense, (b) be</p>

		<p>environmentally sustainable and, most importantly, (c) be in the best interests of pupil safety.</p> <p>Our third concern is the effect that the proposed changes could have on the interests and well-being of local school pupils. The populations of Arkengarthdale and Swaledale feed the primary school at Reeth, which is geographically and socially the 'centre' of a very close-knit, supportive community for children and adults. Both dales are several miles long. The changes to the policy would effectively segregate local children into three zones according to the geographic distances they live from the nearest school. We can only surmise that someone with no local experience of the dynamic of the upper dales' communities or the character of roads between upper Swaledale and Kirkby Stephen (Cumbria), or between upper Arkengarthdale and Barnard Castle (County Durham), or between lower Swaledale/lower Arkengarthdale and Leyburn has devised this plan. Not only are all these roads frequently impassible in bad weather, but the notion of pulling young children out of their core community by sending them to three different schools in three different counties based on journey differentials of just a few miles seems incommensurate with the amount of disruption and distress it could cause. Reeth, Fremington and Healaugh Parish Council would like to emphasize the sentiment expressed by many in the local community which is that anyone living in these two dales would not consider this plan to be a sensible or practical proposition as it increases the risk levels in terms of road safety, school attendance and personal well-being. We strongly oppose the proposed changes, and request that the option to continue with existing arrangements is given serious consideration.</p> <p>We would be grateful for clarification on the justification for proposing these changes. If this is financially motivated, we would be grateful if you could share the calculations with us that relate to the options for the current and proposed school bus services specifically for Reeth, so that we can see for example, how the additional costs relating to increased winter maintenance on the proposed 'Priority Two' bus routes (Leyburn moor road) and the increased cost of sending at least twice as many vehicles and drivers to Arkengarthdale make the proposed changes financially feasible.</p> <p>We look forward to hearing from you,</p> <p>Best wishes</p> <p>Reeth, Fremington and Healaugh Parish Council</p>
24/04/24	Keir Mather	<p>24 April 2024 Enquiry received from Keir Mather MP</p> <p>Please find attached Keir's response for the Home to School Travel Policy consultation dated 24 April 2024.</p> <p>Please could you kindly ensure this is received by the appropriate team(s) - I understand the consultation closes this week.</p> <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am writing to you in relation to the proposals for a revised Home to School Travel Policy.</p>

It is my understanding that the consultation on the new policy ends this week. I note that, in the Council's draft proposals consultation, it was noted that the authority would be seeking the views of local Members of Parliament on the changes.

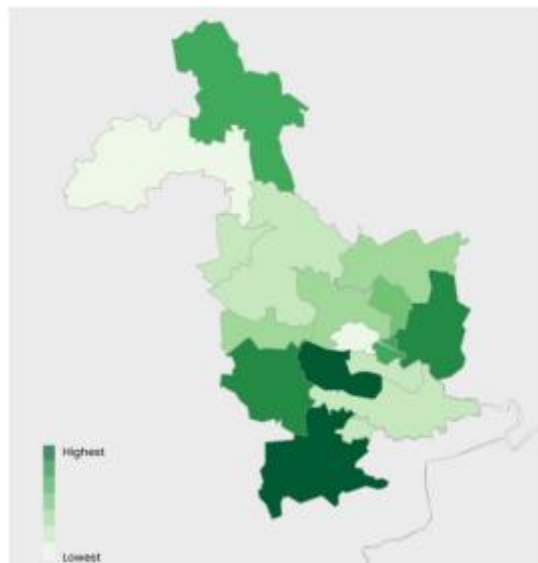
Speaking to constituents across Selby and Ainsty, it has become increasingly apparent that the proposed changes have raised questions and concerns for families who stand to be impacted. I have since carried out a survey, sent to all those who had contacted me on this issue specifically, and also shared via my social media. I intend to share a copy of your anticipated response with those who engaged with the survey - so please do let me know if any of it is to remain confidential.

I understand that lots of families are confused about the impact of the proposed amendments for their locality. 50% of survey respondents were not previously aware of the proposed changes. Families have highlighted to me that they would like further clarity on the policy, specifically in relation to school catchment areas.

Issues have been highlighted around safety for pupils. One respondent said that the policy, as the proposals currently stand, would mean that their child had to take a 48-minute walk to school along a busy highway, with no proper footpath and inadequate street lighting during the darker months.

The Selby area could be impacted disproportionately by the proposed amendment to the main eligibility criterion for free transport to be 'nearest school'. Selby's position on the edge of North Yorkshire means that several of my constituency's communities lie on a tricounty border. For many families in these areas, the 'nearest school' often lies outside the county.

The below map shows the level of response to the survey by ward in my constituency:



I would be grateful if you could outline how the council plans to 'assess travel requirements on the grounds of special educational needs, disability and/or mobility on a case-by-case basis for eligible children'.

SEND parents have expressed their feeling that greater clarity is needed on this and the proposed changes to travel allowances.

As you know, the Selby area also does not have a specialist SEND school. I am pleased that the application for the much-needed new special school for the area is progressing through the planning process. Given that the implementation date is before the new school is set to open, many of the parents who have responded to my survey have understandably expressed concern that choice of provision for children with SEND may now be reduced even further by the proposed changes.

Please could you outline whether any specific steps will be taken to mitigate the impact of the changes on the Selby area, taking into account the aforementioned lack of SEND provision and the cross-border challenges?

Many parents are understandably worried about the financial impact of this policy change. Families tell me they are struggling with the rising cost of living, and whilst I'm conscious of the need to manage expenditure, I would be grateful if you could outline if any further support will be made available to families. I understand that the 'statutory provision for lowincome families' remains unaffected, however I recognise not all families who will struggle with transport costs will be eligible for this provision. I would welcome any further support you might be able to introduce to mitigate financial worries for families in the Selby area.

I am grateful to you for taking the views of my constituents into consideration. It is very important to me that those impacted by changes have the opportunity to voice their concerns. I would be more than happy to discuss any of the above, or any of the details of my survey in greater detail at a mutually convenient time.

Thank you for your anticipated response.
With best wishes,
Keir Mather MP
Member of Parliament for Selby and Ainsty