

## Media Release

For Immediate Release

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### **School bus space limitations provide perfect opportunity for students to walk or cycle**

Active travel will be the key to getting to and from school safely in the coming weeks, as school buses will operate with reduced seating so that social distancing can be maintained wherever possible.

While reducing the number of students using buses is a priority during Phase 4 of the island's exit from lockdown, the infrastructure around schools will struggle to cope if everyone who would have used the bus simply switches to travelling by car.

That is why cycling and walking will be especially important.

Parents are being asked to consider whether it is absolutely necessary for their children to travel by bus when schools open next Monday. If students can walk or cycle, parents are being asked to support this wherever possible.

If travelling by bus is necessary, and to avoid a situation where students are left stranded at the bus stop, parents/carers will have to fill in a form expressing an interest in a place for their child. The form is included in the guidance document on the return to school, sent to parents and published yesterday, and schools will also highlight it in further communications with parents today. If it is indicated that more students require a seat on a bus than the reduced capacity will allow, priority will be given to those that live furthest away from their school.

The Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture has worked with the Committee *for the* Environment & Infrastructure to develop guidance for headteachers on measures that can support active travel, as they consider this week any changes necessary to school travel arrangements in light of capacity limitations on school buses.

Deputy Matt Fallaize, President of the Committee *for* Education, Sport & Culture, said:

“We are asking parents and carers to try, wherever possible, to make alternative arrangements for their children to get to and from school. For some, we know that is not going to be possible, but for any student able to walk or cycle it really is very important that they do so we can save the limited bus seats for those who really need them.”

Deputy Lindsay De Sausmarez, Member of the Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure*, has worked closely with colleagues in education to support headteachers when reviewing potential travel solutions around schools.

“When we prioritise space for cars over space for people, social distancing is much more difficult, and sometimes impossible. We all understand why we have to minimise bus use at the moment, but if all of those students switch to cars, we could have a very, very big problem on our hands. Using my children’s primary school as an example, most students live within a mile, and there are loads of places nearby that could be used for drop and stride or park and stride for families that live further away. We know lots of children want to walk and cycle: we need to help make that possible for them.”

The Committee *for the Environment & Infrastructure* has conducted a number of surveys, which clearly indicate more people would walk or ride a bike if the roads felt safer, and so the Committee acknowledged that would be a key focus in facilitating active travel to school. The walking routes between any drop and stride hubs and schools would be assessed for safety issues, and measures such as pop-up pavements and crossings, clearways, time-limited speed limits, traffic-free school zones and temporary traffic calming infrastructure would be considered where appropriate to make routes safer.

Director of Public Dr Nicola Brink has spoken in the weekly media briefings about the huge benefits to active travel and how important it is for young people. Dr Brink said:

“Maintaining social distancing wherever possible remains really important, so we need to limit the number of people who can ride on a bus. While we have now achieved zero active cases, we cannot become complacent. However, this also presents an excellent opportunity for people to embrace active travel wherever it is possible for them to do so. Children and young people walking or cycling to school has so many benefits from a public health perspective, so I really hope lots use the capacity limitations on school buses as the perfect opportunity to do so.”

**Ends**

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