

**To: Clerks of North Richmondshire Parish Council for circulation to all parish councillors and any other concerned residents within your parish.**

**From: School Transport Action Group (S.T.A.G)**

**29<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

As you may be aware, the Home to School Transport debacle rumbles on. Families, including many within the North Richmondshire division, are still waiting to find out if their appeal to get transport assistance has been successful and many more are still waiting to hear if they have been granted a paid for bus pass. The attached article from this weekend's Yorkshire Post tells the story better than we can. Unfortunately, the uncertainty and stress for rural families with children starting new schools or who have a change of address looks set to become the new normal.

Given this backdrop, we are disappointed to have to step in once more and correct some of the comments made by Cllr. Thompson on this topic in his July Report to Parishes (full version attached).

### **1 Richmond School does prioritise pupils living inside their catchment area**

Cllr Thompson stated:

*"There were various concerns which I have and expressed. The most important one being the fact that the school is full which means students from my constituency may not be able to get a place at the school. This has happened already, and the school went to great lengths to stress that this would be avoided at all costs.*

*If, however, it does happen then there is the right of appeal. The reason Richmond School is full appears to be the fact that it takes in many students from outside catchment like Northallerton, Leyburn and Catterick. Parents pay over £1100 per annum for transport."*

Fact Check:

- The reason some North Richmondshire based pupils were not given places at Richmond School (their catchment school) this year is that North Yorkshire Council's transport policy told parents from North Richmondshire that they must list their five nearest schools on their admissions forms otherwise they wouldn't get free school transport. For many villages in the division, the five nearest are all in Darlington. As those schools are outside of the catchment area (indeed, outside of the county) and as the schools are habitually oversubscribed, the chance of any child living in North Yorkshire getting a place is slim.
- Richmond School didn't save those pupil places as part of the admissions cycle because they were not asked to. Their policy is always to give pupils living within the catchment area priority over non-catchment. As with other schools, places are offered to pupils living elsewhere once all catchment children who had applied had been accommodated.
- Cllr Thompson should be aware of these facts. The blame for this mess lies with North Yorkshire Council not with the schools. This is what happens when you have a school transport policy (based on nearest school) that doesn't marry up with the school Admissions policy (based on catchment areas).

### **2 Funding pressures and their consequences have been exaggerated**

Cllr. Thompson went on to say:

*"Had the motion before full council on 19th May succeeded and we reverted to the catchment system, and which I voted against, then we would certainly have had to put forward cuts in frontline services. SEND or special educational needs could have been one. Is that what people want? Of course not. We all want more funding from central government. But it has been made absolutely clear that that won't be forthcoming. Indeed, sadly the vibes are that even more cuts to funding for councils like North Yorkshire are forthcoming.*

*Please understand that without further funding, by year 28/29 it is very unlikely that anyone in North Yorkshire will get free school transport."*

Fact Check:

- It is seriously misleading to suggest that 'without further funding, by year 28/29 it is very unlikely that anyone in North Yorkshire will get free school transport.' Entitlement to home to school transport support is decided by Government, not by councils and there is no debate underway in parliament to alter those rights. Local authorities have a legal obligation to continue delivering that service and removing it is not within their power. It is both inaccurate and alarmist for Cllr. Thompson to suggest otherwise.
- The evidence of any cost savings from the transport cuts is thin and unsubstantiated. Cllr Thompson pointed out in February in the D&S that "All I can see is taxis running in every direction while buses travel in the opposite direction. And this is going to save us money? What nonsense. When are we going to wake up?"
- While it is true that all councils are facing budgetary pressures, North Yorkshire Council declared a £2.5m underspend last financial year and chose to add that money to the reserves. That is almost the same saving as the officers predict may be saved over the next seven years by the transport cuts they have made.
- It is also inaccurate to say more funding is 'not forthcoming.' The Government has in fact announced more money for SEN (special educational needs) and has stated they recognise the additional cost of delivery of home to school transport (and social care) in rural areas. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Carl Les has acknowledged these points publicly and has reported that details of what this means in terms of possible extra funding will be announced in August.

### **3 Acknowledging mistakes**

We are glad to note that in this report Cllr Thompson has corrected two of his recent mistakes.

- The savings predictions (the figure he originally quoted as predicted savings in a single year was an estimate of total savings over seven years).
- In berating Richmond School for putting on buses he failed to point out that they are not a free service as parents pay more than £1000 for transport from Bedale, Northallerton and Leyburn. Many other schools offer the same service.

We understand Cllr Thompson has promised to publicly apologise for his comments made in the Council Chamber about Richmond School. We look forward to seeing that when it is issued.

We hope this clarifies this latest round of facts.

Should you require any more information on the policy please do not hesitate to contact the team at **[schooltransportag@gmail.com](mailto:schooltransportag@gmail.com)**

**Extract from latest NYC Report to North Richmondshire Parish Councils issued by Councillor Angus Thompson (dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025)**

*Home to School Transport*

*I had a very productive meeting with the head of Richmond School and three governors 2 weeks ago. There were various concerns which I have and expressed. The most important one being the fact that the school is full which means students from my constituency may not be able to get a place at the school. This has happened already, and the school went to great lengths to stress that this would be avoided at all costs.*

*If, however, it does happen then there is the right of appeal. The reason Richmond School is full appears to be the fact that it takes in many students from outside catchment like Northallerton, Leyburn and Catterick. Parents pay over £1100 per annum for transport.*

*An excellent school and that is reflected in the demand for places.*

*In respect of the new transport policy, I don't like it any more than anyone else. I won't trawl through past debates and arguments. Had the motion before full council on 19th May succeeded and we reverted to the catchment system, and which I voted against, then we would certainly have had to put forward cuts in frontline services. SEND or special educational needs could have been one. Is that what people want? Of course not. We all want more funding from central government. But it has been made absolutely clear that that won't be forthcoming. Indeed, sadly the vibes are that even more cuts to funding for councils like North Yorkshire are forthcoming.*

*Please understand that without further funding, by year 28/29 it is very unlikely that anyone in North Yorkshire will get free school transport.*

*I am working on a new initiative brought forwards by Sharon Diamond, a resident of Eppelby, where with some tweaking of the timetable for Hodgsons, students from villages like Stapleton, Manfield, Eppelby, Aldbrough and Melsonby will be able to travel to Richmond School for £1 per journey which, with full attendance throughout the academic year would be about £390. No one likes to pay for something which they have been used to having free, but this is less than half of the cost of using the county system.*

*Finally on this subject, the savings in the section 115 officer's (chief accountant) Medium Term Financial Strategy savings from the new policy are £2.56 million in the 3 years commencing Sept 25 but are now projected to be nearer £3 million.*

*If you don't believe or accept these figures so be it. But they are based on signed contracts at now fixed prices with transport providers. No matter where the taxi or bus comes from it is on a fixed price contract.*



# Anger at school transport change

Victoria Finan  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

DOZENS of North Yorkshire families are being left in limbo over whether their child will get funded school transport after the summer holidays, a campaigning group has warned.

North Yorkshire Council's controversial change to its school transport policy means that from September, the majority of families are only eligible for free transport to their child's nearest school, which can be different from their catchment area school.

The cost-saving policy has attracted ire from families who would prefer to send their child to their catchment school, and according to campaigners over 150 have lodged

Funding uncertainty and appeals backlog leave families in limbo as local authority seeks to cut costs

appeals for free transport to the council.

But the appeals backlog means some families face the start of the academic year without knowing which school their child will attend.

One parent, whose child is on the special educational needs register, told The Yorkshire Post that he had spent £500 on two uniforms for different schools for his son while waiting for his appeal date to be set.

Kodi Sanerivi, from Horsby near Northallerton, wants his son Zak

to attend Northallerton School, 8.2 miles away, but has been told the council will only fund transport to Conyers School in Yarm, 6.2 miles away.

Zak was recently diagnosed Type 1 diabetes and his headteacher and doctors have all supported the appeal for him to attend Northallerton School where staff have put a plan in place to support him.

Mr Sanerivi, a business manager, said: "I've spent £500 on two lots of uniform. If we don't get Zak's ap-

peal heard by September 2, we don't where we're going to send him to school."

"I'm considering homeschooling him for the time it takes to appeal."

For the whole of Year Six, he's been with kids who are going to Northallerton School, he does football and hockey there.

"They all understand his needs and his state of mind."

"We want him to go to Northallerton, he has had his transition days there and met the teams."

"We're a professional family and my wife works away most of the time."

"Driving him to school every day is just not a possibility."

Mr Sanerivi has said he will pay for a bus pass – but passes are only allocated if there are still spaces on

the bus after free transport places have been allocated.

Council documents show there are four scheduled meetings of the Appeals Committee over the summer holiday to clear the backlog.

But according to the School Transport Action Group, families have lost confidence in the council, with families in Ryedale, Selby, the Dales and Hambleton all affected. A spokesperson said: "It's been like a horrible Mexican wave. Trust has broken down between parents and North Yorkshire Council over this policy."

All the warnings were there. Instead of the council thinking 'maybe they've got a point', they missed the opportunity to react. They've got themselves in a hole and they're still digging."

The group has warned that parents appealing for a free transport pass face an uphill battle.

Freedom of Information requests showed just 12 per cent of parents who appealed transport in North Yorkshire in 2024 had it upheld, compared with 54 per cent in York and 46 per cent in Wakefield.

North Yorkshire Council's assistant director for inclusion Amanda Fielding said: "We recognise that there has been an increase in appeals being requested this year and we will be reporting on the exact numbers once the process has been completed."

"All requests will be heard within the required timeframes and some additional meetings have been scheduled to ensure this."

Comment: Page 14.

Yorkshire vicar

Yvonne's mountain dog is just champion

Reeves save

