



Department
for Transport

From the Parliamentary
Under Secretary of State
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Dear Colleague,

14 May 2018

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

I wanted to update you on next steps following the end of the Department's consultation on community transport permits: 'Section 19 and 22 permits: how to apply EU Regulation 1071/2009.'

It is important to emphasise once again that the Government fully recognises the importance of the community transport sector. As colleagues will be aware, we are having to act on a point of law to clarify the relevant regulations, with limited information.

Even so, the Department believes that, with the exception of a small number of large operators who may in effect be genuinely competing on commercial terms with commercial bus operators, community transport operators should not be affected by future clarifications of law.

I am grateful to all those who responded to the consultation, either in writing or at one of the 19 workshops run by the Department across the UK. The work of analysing the many hundreds of responses received is now under way. Those responses will improve our evidence base and help to ensure that our approach is a fair, deliberate and proportionate one.

I can assure you that the concerns from local authorities and community transport operators have been heard loud and clear. The Department acknowledges the uncertainty in the sector and is well aware that many local authorities and permit issuing bodies are unsure about how to proceed. That is why I want to outline for you now our next steps.

The Department will issue a summary response to the consultation before summer recess. This will present our emerging findings, and it will

set out what local authorities and community transport operators can expect in the coming months. We have an obligation to the sector to consider the responses of the consultation carefully, and to spend time analysing each and every letter and email received. These in turn will form part of our detailed consideration of the impacts of any changes to the regulatory regime.

However, as I said in the recent Westminster Hall debate on this subject, while we explore these changes, it would in general be premature for any local authority to end or withhold community transport contracts.

Alongside this letter, I am issuing further advice to local authorities, which makes this point and asks any local authority which may be considering making a change to its policy to discuss it first with my officials. Colleagues should of course also feel free to raise any concerns they may have directly with me.

As the consultation has underlined, there is a very wide variation in the circumstances in which community transport operators work and the services they provide. As a result the Department is unable to provide advice to individual operators. However, the Community Transport Association has an advice line, which is available on 0345 130 6195 between 10:00 - 16:00, Monday to Friday.

The community transport sector is unique to the UK, and it is a shining example of communities pulling together for the common good. There is a legal question to answer here, but officials are analysing responses with a view to finding solutions, not putting up barriers. We want to work with operators and local authorities alike, and we will be engaging with both closely in the coming weeks and months.

Yours ever, and with thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jesse Norman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jesse Norman