

Assisi'
3 Gipsy Lane
Warminster. BA12 9LR

22nd June 2011

Dear Councillor MORLAND :

DENOMINATIONAL TRANSPORT

The enclosed copy letter dated 26 May to Councillor Jane Scott, your Council Leader, expresses our dismay over Wiltshire Council's recently announced proposal on funding denominational transport. We believe the implications are very much more far-reaching than may appear on the surface.

We have received a letter from the Head of the Passenger Transport Unit attempting to claim that you "are certainly not discriminating unfairly against faith schools." We are not in a position to read into the intent of individual councillors, but the stark fact which we ask you to linger over is that whereas parents were given the human right under the 1944 Education Act to educate their children in a church school, effectively your current proposal would take away that right. The proposal is being dressed up as fairness but actually in its effect (which is what matters) it is deeply unfair and discriminatory. It is squeezing more parents out of the chance to exercise their given right. You also seem to have ignored the Millions of pounds extra that the churches and their members (already regular tax-payers) pay into the public purse in order to provide the schools in the first place.

Moreover you face the alarming prospect that your proposal poses a challenge to the future viability and very existence of denominational schools. You can only go so far in penalising parents financially (over and above their existing taxes) before you cross the RUBICON and commit yourselves to total disruption, even dismantling, of an extensive education system which has worked well since WW 11. Have those concerned really thought through these profound implications and ramifications ?

In conclusion, in the kindest possible way we offer a final question for your consideration. Do you know what it really feels like to be squeezed out of existence? Or what it feels like when a major component of your whole being and ethos in life is being threatened? Well, that is what your Council's current proposal is effectively threatening, for those parents and children committed to Denominational schools. You know that education deals with the whole person and his or her values, which have to be respected; and it is the whole person, in the context of beliefs and values which have prevailed for 2000 years of Christianity, which Denominational schools address in their own traditional way. Significantly, that tradition is essentially what underlies our own British democracy and legal system and the freedoms of a host of charitable organisations. Does Wiltshire Council want to initiate the crumbling of that ancient institutional edifice?

Likewise the important symbolism of the recent marriage service for the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge in Westminster Abbey, which had such a stunning impact world-wide, only highlights the traditional stability of the relationship between Church and State and Family which has matured over hundreds of years. We respect other non-christian faiths, even though we believe some may be incompatible with the Christian faith. But do the Councillors of today, with an average tenure in office of just a few years, feel comfortable in subscribing to the destruction of a Christian culture which has been built up over many centuries .? We believe prevention is better than cure.