# Labour councillor fined for driving at protester amid school bus cuts backlash



A Labour councillor has sparked outrage after deliberately driving his car towards a man filming a protest against cuts to school bus services in Coatbridge, Lanarkshire. Councillor Pat Patton, who was celebrating his 59th birthday at the time of the incident, now faces disciplinary proceedings and has been fined £420 for his reckless actions.

The protest, involving concerned parents and children, was a direct response to North Lanarkshire Council's decision to implement drastic cuts to school bus services. This decision has ignited widespread discontent among communities, reflecting a growing frustration over the Labour government’s failure to prioritize essential public services. Changes introduced by the council now dictate that only children living more than three miles from their schools will qualify for free transport, raising significant safety concerns about young children walking along increasingly busy roads alone.

During the protest, Graham Cloughley, who was recording the event, described his shocking encounter with Patton. The councillor’s vehicle moved forward, making contact with Cloughley’s knees, an alarming display of aggression that has no place in public life. “I wasn’t injured but I was shocked, taken aback that someone would do that,” Cloughley stated in court, with footage of the incident further exposing Patton's erratic behaviour. Testimony from Cloughley’s wife corroborated the serious nature of this event.

The implications of such reckless behaviour extend beyond this isolated incident, glaringly illustrating systemic failures in the Labour administration to address pressing issues like road safety, particularly for children. Across the UK, similar protests have been erupting, driven by fears that proposed cuts to transport services pose a direct threat to child safety. In Bradford, protests illuminated the potential fallout from cuts, which could drastically impact school admissions and accessibility for vulnerable pupils, leaving them stranded.

Meanwhile, in Wattsville, Wales, concerned parents articulated their fears regarding proposed eligibility changes for free school transport. This sentiment finds sharp resonance in North Lanarkshire, where residents have raised serious alarms about children being forced to navigate busy dual carriageways without adequate safety measures or reliable public transport alternatives. The urgency of these concerns has also resonated in Meath, Ireland, where a protest following a school bus crash underscored desperate calls for improved road safety measures.

Reflecting on the Coatbridge incident, Sheriff Walter Mercer deemed Patton's actions as constituting assault, albeit “towards the lower end of the scale.” Still, this case ignites a crucial debate over the responsibilities of elected officials, especially concerning public safety and community representation in the face of detrimental policy changes.

This incident serves as a stark reminder of the escalating tensions surrounding educational transport provision in the UK. It is a call to action for communities to demand accountability from local councils, particularly those aligned with an administration more focused on cuts than on the welfare of its constituents. If the recent protests will prompt a crucial reassessment of school transport policies remains uncertain, but the overwhelming demand for accountability from both parents and local authorities is unmistakably on the rise.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14732773/Road-rage-Labour-councillor-drove-car-man-protest-school-bus-service.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0rnqx2qywzo> - In December 2024, pupils in Bradford protested against proposed cuts to school bus services. The council aimed to cancel routes serving St Bede's and St Joseph's Catholic School and Bingley Grammar School to save £40 million. The cuts were expected to save £500,000 annually. Campaigners argued that eliminating the buses would create difficulties for students, with one headteacher noting potential impacts on school admissions. The council stated that the services cost up to £13,500 per pupil to run and could no longer afford to subsidize them.
3. <https://caerphilly.observer/news/1043733/wattsville-protest-over-caerphilly-council-proposed-school-bus-cuts/> - In October 2024, parents and pupils in Wattsville, Wales, protested against proposed cuts to free school buses. Caerphilly County Borough Council planned to raise the eligibility distance for free transport from 1.5 to 2 miles for primary school pupils. Independent councillor Janine Reed criticized the proposal, highlighting the dangers of the B4251 road, which had seen numerous accidents. Parents expressed concerns about the safety of their children walking along the road, emphasizing the lack of safe walking routes.
4. <https://www.meathchronicle.ie/2024/09/11/protest-to-highlight-road-safety-to-take-place-in-wake-of-school-bus-crash/> - In September 2024, a protest was organized in Meath, Ireland, to highlight road safety concerns following a school bus crash. The incident involved a bus carrying primary school children from Boardsmill National School overturning on the R160 road. Two people were hospitalized with non-life-threatening injuries. Aontú councillor Dave Boyne expressed worries about the lack of safety measures on rural roads, emphasizing the need for traffic calming measures to prevent future accidents.
5. <https://news.stv.tv/west-central/children-forced-to-walk-next-to-dual-carriageway-as-council-axe-school-bus-in-north-lanarkshire> - In August 2024, parents in North Lanarkshire, Scotland, protested against the council's decision to cut school bus services. North Lanarkshire Council announced that from August, only children living more than three miles from Coatbridge and St Ambrose High School would be eligible for free transport, up from the previous two-mile requirement. Parents expressed concerns about the safety of their children walking along a busy dual carriageway, highlighting the lack of suitable public transport alternatives.
6. <https://www.falkirkherald.co.uk/news/politics/council/falkirk-council-tories-and-labour-refuse-to-support-school-bus-cuts-4119046> - In April 2023, Conservative and Labour councillors in Falkirk, Scotland, opposed proposed cuts to school bus services. The council planned to save £1 million annually by changing the entitlement for free travel on school buses. The proposal would have affected over 1,000 pupils and potentially led to the axing of up to 33 school buses. Parents voiced concerns about pupil safety if the cuts were implemented, leading to a consultation period before any final decisions were made.
7. <https://www.aberdareonline.co.uk/2024/10/20/protest-held-against-rhondda-cynon-taf-councillors-school-transport-cuts/> - In October 2024, a public protest was held outside the new council offices in Pontypridd, Wales, against school transport cuts. The Rhondda Cynon Taf Save the School Transport Group challenged Labour councillors who voted to reduce school transport services. The cuts would force children to walk up to 3 miles to school, raising concerns about safety, especially given the local geography and weather conditions. The protest highlighted the challenges posed by the cuts and called for the plans to be reversed.