

26<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to parents of children who are likely to live and attend school in the West of the city about a recent spate of vandalism to Buses, in Millbrook, Redbridge and Lordshill. This has been widely reported and we are appealing for help. These attacks are believed to involve young people from the local area who are using catapults to target moving buses operated by First Bus (Red) or Southern Vectis (Bluestar).

On occasions the damage to individual vehicles has exceeded £50,000 and the risk of serious injury to the driver, passengers, pedestrians and other road users has been extremely high. More recently vehicles have been approached whilst idling, but most often high-powered catapults are being used at a distance to cause the damage. These incidents cause disruption to those using the bus services for work and medical appointments, especially the elderly and key workers in the area.

These catapults are likely being ordered online and we ask parents to either monitor purchases that are being made and stop them, or if ordering them for their children to please desist. Youths have been stopped in the area with these items, which have been seized and robust action will be taken.

As part of a collaborative approach involving both bus operators, schools, Southampton City Council and Hampshire Constabulary we are reaching out to parents to ask that they discuss the seriousness of this behaviour with their children. Not only are the potential consequences difficult to comprehend, but the outcome for any young person involved, if arrested and taken through the criminal justice system, is potentially severe.

If anyone has any information or thinks they may know someone who is involved in these incidents, please call 101 quoting 44210008050 or alternatively people can call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

With schools expecting to return in full on 8<sup>th</sup> March, it is more important than ever that local operators can provide services safely and without incident.

We appreciate your help in solving this complex issue – information is our currency so the primary aim here is to stop the vandalism and reduce the risks. There is a collective concern that the consequence of injuries caused by these incidents or the withdrawal of bus services will have a significant impact on the community, including schools whose pupils rely on these services.

Yours sincerely,



Jason Murphy  
Stronger Communities Manager