

2024.07.16

**2.13 Deputy C.D. Curtis of the Minister of Infrastructure regarding expanding the existing legislation requiring compulsory helmets for children (OQ.141/2024)**

Will the Minister advise whether he intends to expand the existing legislation requiring compulsory helmets for children when cycling to cover any vehicle with wheels, such as skateboards and scooters; and if not, why not?

**The Connétable of St. John (The Minister for Infrastructure):**

Again, I thank the Deputy for her question. The safety of our children is of paramount importance and we continuously review our policies to ensure we are providing the safest environment possible. I am aware of the popularity of skateboards and scooters among children and recognise the potential risks associated with these activities. At this stage, I do not intend to expand the existing helmet legislation to include other wheeled vehicles such as skateboards and scooters. I am, however, committed to promoting parental responsibility in relation to the voluntary use of helmets and other protective gear when children are using skateboards and scooters. I believe that raising awareness among parents about the benefits of wearing helmets can be a positive and immediate step towards improving safety rather than criminalisation of guardians and potentially introducing barriers to this type of activity, which should be accessible to all.

**2.13.1 Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Would the Minister agree, though, that a comprehensive government helmet policy for children could help to prevent potentially serious injuries and would assist parents in keeping their children safe?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I do believe we do have a policy. We encourage people who use our skate park, for example, to wear helmets. A policy is different to legislation and I believe our policy is to encourage people to wear protective gear.

**2.13.2 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Talking of the skate parks, where there is a public skate park potentially administered by the Government or a locality, does the Minister believe that it might well be reasonable to have it as a requirement, that protective equipment, including certainly head protection, is mandatory.

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I can speak from experience, having run a skate park in St. John for a good number of years. The challenge is policing, because often these sites are not manned and therefore people will use the sites when there is nobody there. The encouragement for people to wear helmets is always made, as is the use of guards on elbows, et cetera.

**2.13.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Notwithstanding the issue of policing, does the Minister not agree that most citizens are law-abiding and if there is signage saying that there is a requirement to wear a helmet, that most people will do it? Most parents would also then tell their children to wear a helmet. There is also, I suppose, a question of insurance and liability from the Parish or the Government in that regard. Would the Minister give it further consideration?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

To my knowledge, there is signage recommending exactly that, both at the new skate park at Les Quennevais and the skate park in St. John that I am familiar with. It is always encouraged and we encourage those people who are more experienced to encourage other participants to wear helmets.

**2.13.4 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

I thank the Minister for his answers. The Minister mentioned criminalisation and to not criminalise people. Thinking about the law, it is not illegal but there is a requirement not to ride on the pavements. We all know that there are not many fines issued for people riding on the pavements, at the same time there is a public clear message that people can be stopped and told you are not allowed to ride on the pavement. Would something similar not encourage young people to wear helmets as well?

[11:30]

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I think I made it clear when I answered a question to Deputy Jeune in May, that I support the wearing of helmets. It is important that you do not just wear a helmet, it is important that the helmet is secured, it fits you properly and that you are wearing it properly. The policing element is a question for Home Affairs. The legislation comes to Infrastructure and I think we need to do more to encourage people to encourage their children, their friends and peers to wear helmets if they do not currently do so.

**2.13.5 Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Following the response to Deputy Tadier's question about the signage, I recently visited the skate park at St. Brelade and the requirement to wear a helmet is in small letters, like one of the rules. Would the Minister consider to put the requirement to wear helmet in bold letters on top so that it will be clearly visible?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

Certainly. I have not seen the signage personally. I have been assured that there is signage there. If it is not large and like a caricature, I will ensure that we do something which is bold, that people can see and they cannot say that they did not notice it.

**2.13.6 Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

Could I ask the Minister if he has any data or information that shows the policy currently is working? Will he also consider collecting data going forward on incidents involving these particular items that may actually give him some content with regards to reconsidering future legislation?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I thank the Deputy for her question. I do not have data in front of me, but recently when I was on holiday I read the book *Bike Nation*, an interesting read for those of you who are interested in cycling and how it can help environments. I could not agree with the negative observations about Jersey, because they wrote about the introduction of cycle helmets for youngsters. They spoke about the lack of accidents, the amount of people who were already wearing helmets, so there is some data. The Infrastructure team will only collect data from any accident that is on a road and are not aware of any accidents involving scooters or skateboards for youngsters on roads. I would imagine that the Health Department may do for what happens at Les Quennevais.

**2.13.7 Deputy K.M. Wilson:**

Could it be that he is not aware because we do not collect any data and does he believe that we should?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

The Infrastructure Department, of which I am answering this question, does collect data for accidents on roads. I would need to speak to my colleague from Health about what data is collected at the Emergency Department for accidents that are reported there.

**2.13.8 Deputy C.D. Curtis:**

Regarding the Minister's comments that policing is a challenge to skate parks, would the Minister nevertheless not agree that a law could help prevent potentially serious injuries to children?

**The Connétable of St. John:**

I am not sure what change it would make if we had a law; it is something I am prepared to go and have another look at. We want to prevent accidents from happening and any accident we want to be as least impact on the person and the people connected to that person. I will go back and have another look and I will also find out about the data from the Health Department.