

Cycle Helmets – my personal opinion

The issue of personal safety is unquestionably a very difficult one, and cyclists' feelings, the right as an individual to your own decisions, and often the opinions of non-cyclists bring a wide variety of ideas to the table.

Furthermore, statistics to back up any argument are usually easily engineered, and are often dubious. So I will not throw a handful of statistics in the pot to support my personal opinion.

Despite having worn a cycling helmet since around 1990, I feel that a compulsory cycle helmet law is not in the best interest of the general public. I base my opinions on the following:

1. Countries like The Netherlands, Denmark and Germany, where there is a big cycling population and cycling is considered mainstream, don't feel the need for legislation, despite the huge numbers of people who cycle.
2. Cycling for recreation or transport is good for you, it is cheap, it uses no fossil fuels, and it does not need a large amount of expensive infrastructure to work. Increased cycle use would lead to a healthier population, with fewer demands on the health service.
3. Forcing people to wear helmets will not encourage them to cycle.
4. How easy would it be to implement a helmet law, and are there more urgent traffic issues that cause injury?
5. Is it right that someone who nips to the shop on a Sunday morning, and forgets their helmet is suddenly a criminal?

Personally I feel that putting greater efforts into getting people to cycle, irrespective of whether they wear a helmet or not, would provide a huge benefit to the quality of life, and the health of the population, even before one considers the numerous environmental issues.

In an island as small as Jersey, where there is already a network of relatively car-free routes, there cannot be many really valid reasons for not cycling, if only occasionally. There are unlimited bicycle-based options for transporting luggage, children and even dogs! And with a rise in the number of good electrically assisted cycles, it is not necessary to be super fit to use a bike.

Get more people cycling first – then leave them to decide if they need a helmet.

My bio:

Spent the greater part of my working life running a cycle shop – I don't nowadays. I have delivered cycle maintenance and cycle safety lessons to schools and youth groups.

The shop sponsored riders and events.

I organised mountain bike races for the Ceasarean Cycling Club.

I wrote a cycling blog for several years on 'Jersey Online'.

I wrote 'Jersey Cycles' – about 180 miles of almost car-free cycling around the island.

I have also written articles for cycling magazines, brochures and websites.

I've ridden from St.Malo to the Mediterranean.

Veteran MTB champion 1992-94.

Cycle tour guide since 1994.

In 2008 I showed Bernard Hinault (5 time Tour de France winner) around Jersey.

These days I am a self-employed freelance tourist guide specialising in walking and cycling, and also write.

In this role, I have assisted Jersey Tourism with Petit Tour de Manche, one of three Cycle West routes, I have recently helped in the production of the new cycle map and content for Petit Tour de Manche website.

I also help with the Jersey Cycle Challenge.