



Analysis of Petition Responses to Proposed Cyclists (Protective Headgear) Bill

14th March 2011

from CTC and Sustrans

Analysis of petition responses

Sustrans and CTC encouraged the public to engage with the DOE Committee during the public consultation process of the **Cyclists (Protective Headgear) Bill** which was advertised 22nd February 2011. As part of that process we established an on-line petition for those people opposed to the Bill. This petition site required people to give their full name and address so we could avoid multiple responses and verify authenticity if needed.

This petition went live on Tuesday 1st March and was hosted on www.surveymonkey.com/s/cyclehelmetbill.

Within less than two weeks (by 14th March) there were an impressive 2,891 signatories (with 260 from NI) and 1161 comments offered. This number will rise.

We summarise a selection of the 1161 comments below and can provide those interested with all comments. We have not altered these comments in anyway and there are some spelling mistakes. These are direct copy of quotes from the web site.

1. **It's a deterrent –**

"If I am visiting relatives a mile or so down the country road, I do not want or need to wear a helmet. **If law I either will not visit or take the car.** I can manage my own risk"

"I am opposed to this bill as it causes an unnecessary obstacle when wanting to get out on your bike. **It would put me off cycling as a means of transport.** I believe that cyclists that are in greater need of helmets such as competitive road cyclists or mountain bikers know this and wear helmets. Helmets can be an inconvenience to a commuter as it needs more storage space at their destination....."

"My **children** have decided that should a helmet law come into effect they **will no longer cycle** to school (they use a cycle path for 99% of the journey). I would then be driving them to school so more cars on the road and more pollution for the environment."

"I am an **experienced, competitive cyclist** and would never train without a helmet, however a **short journey to the local shops I would not wear a helmet.** I believe it would discourage myself and others from similar short journeys....."

"Cycling has been in my blood all my life, I havn't raced for years due to ill health, but taking it up again for leisure/ fun purpose with friends. **If this Helmet bill was passed, i would not be going out on my bike,** would really put me off."

"**I am a transport planner** whose work includes persuading people to switch from car to cycle. This proposal if passed would make this harder to achieve, because of the "scary" image of cycling which compulsory helmets portray. By all means use them for off-road mountain biking if you wish, but for everyday utility cycling their use should be a matter of personal choice."

“..... **I do not like wearing a helmet when making small trips** locally to buy food or simply to get to somewhere without using the car. This law, if it were to come in, would encourage more people to abandon cycling and use the car.....”

“an helmet ban will automatically **xclude millions of shiks**.it is against there religeos beliefs to wear helmets even on motor cycles.”

“**Don't do it!** You'll put people off cycling. People can make their own decisions about these things”

2. It will deter tourism – (a huge number on this issue – including a travel journalist) people adamant they will not come if law goes through.

“Myself and my family are planning to come to Northern Ireland next year for the centenary of the maiden voyage of RMS Titanic. We would be cycling round the province. **If helmet wearing is compulsory we will not come**, we will take our money elsewhere, where we are able to make our own grown up decision when to wear our helments and when not to”

“I am planning a cycling holiday in Northern Ireland but would **most definitely go elsewhere** if the wearing of a helmet were to be made mandatory”

“It would deter non-cycle-helmet-wearing cycle tourists from visiting, **especially in the border areas**”

“I have cycle-toured in Northern Ireland several times, and **written about it in my capacity as a travel writer**. I would certainly not cycle-tour in Northern Ireland again if this bill were passed, **nor recommend it as a destination.**”

“If helmets become a legal requirement in NI I will **never again tour on my bike in your country.**”

“If the law passes then our cycling holidays in Ulster are at an end.”

3. Disproportionate - Cycling is relatively low risk

“**My daughter has a severe acquired head injury** which will mean she is disabled for the rest of her life - she got the injury in the commonest of places - **a car**”

“Should be your own personal choice. I fractured my skull many years ago and a **Helmet would not have saved me at all.** As hit on chin.”

“Hospitals are NOT full of cyclists with head injuries. What they ARE full of is overweight people suffering from diabetes and other consequences of lack of exercise. Be clear what this proposed law means: it will **MAKE CYCLING ILLEGAL** unless you are wearing a helmet. Few things could be worse for the nation's health than deterring people from cycling through such misguided legislation.”

“I am a survivor of a severe head injury, inflicted by a car that knocked me from my bicycle. Since then, I have taken a keen interest in road safety and am very disappointed that Headway, who I would love to support, are engaged in such a backwards and harmful bill that I can only oppose.”

“I have been cycling since I could walk (I am now 67). **I have fallen off innumerable times**, often on purpose as a juvenile stunt, and **I have NEVER come down on my head**. I do not deny that on rare occasions wearing a helmet would have saved some cyclists from head injury, but why legislate for such rare events, when such legislation would be to the detriment of the majority, and reduce the incentive to cycle. Many MLA's claim to be cycle friendly and seek to encourage cycling - or so they say. Now is the time to back up the words with actions. This is ridiculous, and difficult to enforce legislation”

“I have been cycling for 45 years both commuting and touring in which time **I have fallen many times but I have never sustained an injury which a cycle helmet could have prevented**. I believe compulsory helmet wearing will discourage cycling which will ultimately restrict individual freedom and contribute to future increased healthcare costs and pollution.”

“I am an Australian who left my country after the helmet legislation was introduced there. The then-new law discouraged cycling on a huge scale. **It also sent a signal to the public that cycling was a foolhardy and dangerous activity**, and only people who disregarded their wellbeing and those who care for them would undertake such an activity. Please do not introduce this law here! John Isles, formerly of Sydney, Australia.”

4. Enforcement issues

“more money grabbing at the common man painted up to make it look good for either political gain or more money in fines and sales, nothing more nothing less it's hard enough to get people into cycling or any form of exercise without making it worse....”

“I know numerous experienced, safety-conscious cyclists, who are aware of the foregoing, and other evidence against the advocacy of helmet wearing, and have not been brain-washed by those who campaign with much mis information, into trusting such unreliable evidence in favour of helmet wearing. **Many state that they would refuse to obey mandation !”**

5. Socially deprived communities will suffer – and other low income groups

“I am a pensioner and the cost of helmets is toooooo much !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

6. Alternatives where money better spent

“The onus should be on the **drivers to adapt their driving** to the weakest and most vulnerable road user, not on the weakest and most vulnerable road user to protect themselves against aggressive, fast and dangerous driving.”

“In favour of a well designed and promoted campaign to **encourage people to wear helmets** and to **educate** young people.”

“Perhaps focusing on poor driving would be better. **Compulsory cycling as part of the driving test ?**”

7. Other without category but notable –

“I feel that the word **encourage** should be emphasised strongly rather than enforcement. If children can be encouraged to wear helmets through parental leadership then the process will be carried on into adulthood and the need for any legislation will become ineffective. I also feel that the cycling charities/bodies should be more pro active in pushing this message. **One final suggestion would be that when buying a bike a helmet should be a mandatory purchase.**”

“I bought a £120.00 helmet and in the enclosed documentation it said that the helmet was **not guaranteed to protect you**, therefore, what good is a helmet”

“As a citizen of the UK I want to be able to move freely within my own country, unimpeded by different regulations in different areas.....I have just returned from Australia where helmet-wearing is compulsory. What do Aussies do? They cram any old helmet on their heads, irrespective of fit, so as to avoid penalty, but in doing so place themselves in great danger. Landing head-first on an undersized helmet would probably be far worse than on no helmet at all”