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RECEIVED  
09 JUN 2014

6 June 2014

Dear Ms Henderson

### Amended Rule 43 Report – Inquest into the death of Donald Spooner – 23 April 2014

Thank you for your letter of 9 May 2014, concerning the tragic death of Donald Spooner. You raised two matters of concern in relation to the circumstances of Mr Spooner's death, on which you believe RoSPA and the Secretary of State for Transport have the power to take action:

1. That it is not compulsory to wear a suitable protective helmet whilst travelling on a motorised bicycle which can reach speeds in excess of 15 mph.
2. That Mr Spooner's injuries would have lessened and may have been survivable if protective headgear was compulsory for riding a motorised bicycle.

As a charity, RoSPA has no power to introduce legislation of any kind, but we can, of course, campaign for changes to legislation, as we have done on many occasions. However, we always consider the evidence for the need, costs and likely effectiveness of a new safety law before campaigning for it to be introduced.

RoSPA strongly recommends that all cyclists wear a cycle helmet; this has been one of our key cycle safety messages since the first British Standard for cycle helmets was introduced in the late 1980s. Research shows that helmets can be effective in reducing the risk of head injuries in an accident, and we believe that the protection they provide has enabled many people to survive accidents that would otherwise have killed them. A 2009 research study by TRL, "The potential for cycle helmets to prevent injury - A review of the evidence", estimated that 10% -16% of cyclist fatalities in a police dataset may have been prevented if the riders had worn a cycle helmet. Cycle helmets are most likely to be effective in accidents that do not involve another vehicle or where a vehicle has light impact with the cyclist causing their head to hit the ground.

However, RoSPA has not called for a compulsory cycle helmet law because voluntary wearing rates are still too low and it would require a significant enforcement effort by the police. Also, it is not clear whether such a law would discourage people from cycling, thereby losing the significant health and environmental benefits from cycling. These benefits are why promoting cycling has become an important public health policy, with significant investment, in recent years.



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There is strong evidence that cycling provides a wide range of health benefits, mainly because it is a good form of physical activity. Many research studies show that physical activity reduces the overall risk of dying prematurely from any cause, reduces stroke risk, diabetes risk, the risk of dying from breast and colon cancer, and it can help to reduce blood pressure in people with high blood pressure. Conversely, a lack of physical activity is a significant risk factor for coronary heart disease, with a physically inactive lifestyle doubling the risk compared to an active lifestyle.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Therefore, we do not support calls for mandatory cycle helmet laws.

We note from your letter that Mr Spooner was using a "motorised bicycle", but we are not clear exactly what this was, nor its top speed. Presumably, it was not a low-powered motorcycle or moped, for which a helmet would have been compulsory. Electric bicycles seem to be becoming more popular and can make cycling more accessible to people who may require some assistance (when going uphill or when starting off, for example).

We know from our experience of many years of campaigning for legal changes just how difficult it can be to persuade government and Parliament to act, even when we have clear data on the potential casualty savings. I do not believe that the necessary data (i.e., the exact type of bicycle that would be captured by such a law and how easy it would be for the police to identify it from normal bicycles, the numbers being used and the number and type of injuries suffered by their users) exists in relation to motorised bicycles. It is highly unlikely that the government would be prepared to introduce a mandatory cycle helmet law covering a specific type of bicycle.

As a charity with limited resources, we have to prioritise the campaigns we conduct. Therefore, RoSPA's approach as far as cycle helmets are concerned is to raise awareness about them and to promote their use through our wide range of communication methods. We publish a range of cycle safety advice on our website, and we will expand this to include motorised bicycles. We will also, when appropriate, include these messages in our safety journals and in our communications on social media networks such as twitter. The Highway Code provides cycle safety advice, and the next time it is being revised we will suggest it includes specific advice about motorised bicycles.

Thank you for raising this with RoSPA. Hopefully, together we can reduce the risk of other people being injured or killed in similar circumstances

Yours sincerely



**Tom Mullarkey MBE**  
**Chief Executive**

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<sup>1</sup> Cycling: Towards health and safety, BMA, Hillman, M. (1992)

<sup>2</sup> "Cycling and Health: What's the Evidence?" Nick Cavill and Dr Adrian Davies, Cycling England, 2007

<sup>3</sup> Walking and cycling: local measures to promote walking and cycling as forms of travel or recreation, NICE public health guidance 41, NICE, 2012