

2019.09.10

7 Deputy S.M. Ahier of St. Helier of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the registration of bicycles: (OQ.211/2019)

Will the Minister advise the Assembly whether he has any plans to reintroduce the registration of all bicycles and what consideration, if any, he has given to the introduction of measures to ensure that all cyclists are insured?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure - rapporteur):

In 1999 and then in 2010 Propositions were brought before the Assembly to consider and in both cases were rejected. In response to the 2010 Proposition the T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services) Department provided a detailed report, which concluded the disadvantages of a registration scheme outweighed any advantages. In particular, that it would jeopardise the success of the sustainable transport policy by discouraging people from continuing to cycle, or take up cycling. A healthy zero emission pursuit, their help with reducing congestion and contributes to sustainable transport. The U.K. (United Kingdom) Government also considered the matter in 2018 and similarly concluded: "The cost and complexity of introducing such a system would significantly outweigh the benefit." It was also noted there was evidence that in other countries that have trialled these schemes have withdrawn them.

3.7.1 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

We have to avoid the intermingling of cyclists with pedestrians, especially on our high streets, like King Street and Queen Street, where accidents are inevitable. The separation of cyclists and pedestrians would be a way of avoiding this. Ensuring some form of identification would be beneficial but, more importantly, ensuring all cyclists would ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

Deputy, this has every flavour of a speech and not a question.

Deputy S.M. Ahier:

Yes, OK, Sir. Does the Minister agree that we need to put measures in place now before a serious accident transpires?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I agree with the sentiments of the Deputy. It is already, obviously, illegal to cycle in King Street and Queen Street. We are pressing ahead with as many cycle routes as we can. We have not long opened the one up through St. Peter's Valley. We are continuing to expand. We have just finished the bridge area down at La Collette. I would love to get the eastern cycle route sorted as soon as possible; that work is ongoing, but it is not easy. I would echo the Minister for Home Affairs' sentiments that we should be courteous to each other. Where there are shared areas I know the Constable of St. Helier and myself have had messages regarding Havre des Pas. It is priority to pedestrians and I ask people just to ring the bell and be courteous to one another.

3.7.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

A cycle path in King Street and Queen Street would be an excellent idea and I thank the Minister for that suggestion, certainly early in the morning.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

It was not a suggestion.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I may have misheard. But does he think that maybe we should go one step further than Deputy Ahier wants us to go and just require pedestrians to have registration and personal insurance? Because there could easily be a situation where a pedestrian is not looking where they are going, or they are running very fast and they knock over an elderly lady. It relates to ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

You have made your point, but I am afraid that is not a relevant part of an answer to the question that is ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

If I can make it in order, I think I can make it in order in the sense that ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think we do not get various bites of making it in order. It is either in order at the beginning, or it is not, Deputy. If you have a succinct 5-word question, please do.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I think the question is in order, I just have not got round to the conclusion of it, which proves that fact. In order to give cyclists registration and insurance, if everybody was automatically insured in our society and then that was automatically seen by the cyclist as well, would that not be the better solution in our new totalitarian state that Deputy Ahier wants?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Does that require an answer, Sir?

The Deputy Bailiff:

You can answer it in any way you think is appropriate, Minister, provided it is parliamentary, of course. [Laughter]

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would encourage every cyclist to check their insurance. Many cyclists are covered on their home insurance, some may not be, but I would encourage all cyclists to have third-party insurance and indeed liability insurance for pedestrians, as well, should they cause an accident.

3.7.3 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I just wanted some clarification on the answer: is the Minister saying that he does not believe that registration should happen on this Island? If he is not saying that, is this not, effectively, a bicycle tax when we do not even have a car tax?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

No, I am not advocating bicycle registration in any way, shape or form. I think it would be unworkable and also it would discourage many young children from cycling, which is something we are trying to encourage. [Approbation] I believe it was taken up in Canada; I believe Toronto had a scheme at one point, but it was withdrawn and I believe for that very same reason.

3.7.4 Deputy S.M. Ahier:

I understand that some of the Constables have encountered problems with discarded bicycles in the Parishes. Would not identification of these bicycles allow the Constables to return them to their owners and enforcement by collecting a fee to offset the cost of return?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

The Deputy makes a very interesting point. In fact, most cycles are stamped by the States of Jersey Police and that is something that I would encourage. It is a small stamp on the cycle frame, so when a bike is found lost, abandoned or stolen, they can be returned to their rightful owner.