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The joy of the wind in your hair...

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The media (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/apr/08/cycling-minister-refuses-bike-helmet>) has recently reported that road safety campaigners are criticising Norman Baker for not wearing a helmet while cycling.

On behalf of campaigners for road danger reduction, we want to say thanks, Norman!

Rather than criticising him for not wearing a helmet, we want to congratulate him for being one of the minority of the population who actually gets out on a bike, which is good for his health, and for the health of others and our environment.

The fact that Norman Baker is a member of the Government and has responsibility for cycling is even better. RoadPeace believes that if more government officials, policy makers, magistrates, local councillors and senior police officers used a bicycle as a way of getting around then we would have a very different and much safer road environment.

Norman Baker is also supportive of 20mph as the default speed limit in residential areas. If you really care about the safety of cyclists then slowing the speed of traffic is vital. And of course this benefits us all; we are all pedestrians at the end of the day. Slower speeds reduce the severity and likelihood of collisions, and they also create a road environment which is less dangerous and intimidating, and one where more people are likely to walk and cycle.

On helmets, we take issue with the claim that the majority of deaths and serious injuries to cyclists involve head injury. Even the Department for Transport is unable to come up with any estimate of the number of deaths that would have been prevented if the cyclist had been wearing a helmet.

And to be sure, wearing a helmet will offer little protection to a cyclist in a collision with a multi-ton lorry, which for London cyclists is a key concern. Our Chair Cynthia Barlow has been campaigning to reduce lorry danger since 2000 after her (helmet-wearing) daughter was killed by a lorry in 2000.

It has also been incorrectly stated that many of our international and European partners have already introduced compulsory helmet wearing. In reality, very few countries have this

legislation, and where they do, the legislation has either failed through lack of enforcement, resulted in a drop in cycling, or been repealed.

So, thanks again Norman, and enjoy that wind in your hair.

Notes for journalists:

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RoadPeace

RoadPeace is **pro-choice** on cycle helmets and against mandatory helmet wearing legislation. No cyclist should ever be penalised, either by criminal prosecution or civil compensation, for not wearing a helmet.

RoadPeace is an independent national charity, providing emotional and practical support, and advocacy to those affected by road crashes; as well as campaigning for justice for road crash victims and for road danger reduction, with a focus on reducing the volume, speed and dominance of motorised traffic and promoting cycling and walking.

RoadPeace was a winner of the Guardian Charity Award in 2008:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/video/2008/dec/04/guardian-charity-awards-roadpeace>

Road danger reduction

RoadPeace was founded in 1992 on the principle of road danger reduction (RDR). RDR focuses on making the road environment less dangerous by tackling danger at source through reducing the speed, volume and dominance of motorised traffic. It also takes into account the other negative consequences of inappropriate and excessive motor vehicle use such as fear and intimidation, environmental impact and public health issues. RDR differs from traditional road safety in that it adopts a wider approach that considers not only the quantity of death and injury by crashes, but also the effects of excessive and inappropriate motor vehicle use on the quality of life and the environment. It places a greater duty of care on those that pose the greater threat and argues for danger to be controlled at source.