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Risk Control Cycling Events



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Introduction

According to statistics published by the Department for Transport¹, cycling has been increasing in popularity within the UK since the 1990's onwards. And while most forms of travel within the UK was severely impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic, miles cycled per person increased by 62% to the highest levels since 2002, from 54 miles per person to 88 miles per person².

While some people may use cycling as an economical and environmentally friendly means of commuting to and from work or to access local amenities, others may engage in the activity for reasons associated with health and fitness. Organised events such as the London to Brighton Cycle Ride offer opportunities for mass participation in highly organised events for every category of cyclist ranging from the novice right through to the cycling club enthusiast.

This article seeks to review some of the good practice that may be applied to organised cycle events. It does not address the risks associated with lone cyclists using the public highways on an individual basis.

Planning

Many smaller scale cycling events do not require authorisation from the Police or local Highways Authority. Larger scale events, if held on the public highway, should have a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) in place that involves consultation with the local Highways Authority. These plans will include details on how the event will be managed (e.g. using marshals or stewards). However, the local Highways Authority cannot prohibit an event taking place except in exceptional circumstances.

An internet search may identify a number of professional cycle event management companies that can provide everything from logistics and start-line set-up to health and safety risk assessments and pre-ride checks and evaluations. Advice can be acquired from national bodies such as British Cycling³, which promotes cycling within the UK.

Most Local Authorities will operate a Safety Advisory Group (SAG) as an essential forum for safety planning. This reflects legislative requirements on authorities in respect of certifying sports stadia and licensing public events⁴.

Whilst it is the event organiser / management team that is ultimately responsible for the health and safety planning of a cycle event, the SAG provides independent advice to event organisers. This may include co-ordination with the emergency services, Emergency Planning and other key Local Authority officers such as Environmental Health

(Health and Safety), Highways, Building Control, Licensing and Waste Management.

The SAG and Events Management team should have a single point of contact for the event to ensure consistent professional advice and support.

SAG Procedures

The SAG may have access to an Events Management Co-ordinator, who will be consulted on all proposed events, even when there are anticipated to be fewer than 500 participants. At the outset, the organiser should approach the Local Authority and other landholders with proposals for the event. The proposals may consist of the following items:

- **Event Management Plan:** which the Joint Resilience Unit within Emergency Planning departments will request sight of and consider it in conjunction with the provided risk assessments.
- **Traffic Management Plan:** which may include details of a street plan, use of surrounding roads, land-closures (to prevent trespass), and consideration of car parking and traffic issues.
- **Demountable Structures:** the use of, and necessary checks, on any demountable structure – such as marquees, tents, temporary seating, that fall within the requirements of the Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015⁵.
- **Signposts:** The use or installation of roadside banners and signposts, requiring approval of the Principal Highways Officer.
- **Street-works:** Consideration of street-works, and other activities that might impede the smooth running of the event.

A First Aid provider should be commissioned, who will be responsible for certificates and the medical plan. Organisations such as St Johns Ambulance should be familiar with the process of providing the medical plan, and this should be confirmed locally with the First Aid provider.

Where licencing is required, such as donation collections, the selling of alcohol, food or other activities, these activities should be notified to the relevant Environmental Health Officer. Occasionally Health and Safety and Environmental Health teams may be consulted at the discretion of the event organiser.

Legal Contract

A legal contract should be drawn up between the parties. The authority's Events Management Application Form should be completed and forwarded to Environmental Health, Licencing, Emergency Services and the multi-agencies who may require an input into the application. For larger or higher risk proposals, the organiser may be called to the SAG to make a formal presentation of their plans and to present any supporting documentation such as risk assessments and Risk Assessment Method Statements (RAMS).

Cycle Route Plan

The race provider should supply a Cycle Route Plan, and complete land checks with any neighbouring estates. This may involve walking of the route in order to identify significant risks and engage with the Highways and Health and Safety teams.

Whilst there is nothing within legislation requiring event organisers to liaise with the Police or Local Authority, best practice dictates that this should take place. Both of these parties have designated teams who can examine, support and guide plans providing reassurance to organisers that they are both operating safely and not in competition with any other use of the designated route such as other events, abnormal loads, or scheduled road works by other agencies.

Risk Assessment

The route should be risk assessed and any particular hazards pointed out on the entry form or route sheet. Hazardous features should be avoided if possible or alternatives given.

Risk assessment should consider the obvious risks such as terrain, adverse or extreme weather, highway design or maintenance, other road users, riders' equipment, riders insurance requirements, and health and fitness. Where the route inspection reveals severe potholes, quantities of gravel or other loose surfaces, and fixed hazards such as dangerous junctions or severe descents, then warning signs or marshals will be expected to be provided by the organiser if that part of the route cannot be avoided.

Consideration should be given to those who are not legitimate participants (that is, those not having paid an entry fee and / or signed a declaration). Whilst the event organiser can have no contractual responsibility for such participants, their presence cannot be unexpected, and therefore must be considered under legislation such as sections 3 and 4 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974⁶.

Insurers' Liability Cover

The SAG must ensure that the Event Organiser has the appropriate Insurance Cover – Public Liability of £5m is sometimes acceptable, but more commonly cover is set at £10m. It is not thought that there is any other insurance cover necessary for this type of event for the organiser, although some events, such as club rides, may require that cyclists maintain their own liability insurance cover for bodily injury or property damage in order to participate.

Conclusion

In normal circumstances, most if not all Local Authorities will wish to support and promote sporting events that encourage community engagement and wellbeing. The application of key risk management principles including risk assessment and effective planning, co-ordination, communication and co-operation between all relevant parties is necessary to ensure that these events are well-managed and the risks effectively controlled.

References

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3. British Cycling, available at: <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/>
4. Safety Advisory Group Information: [Event safety - Local Authority Safety Advisory Group \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/sag/)
5. Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2015: [Construction - Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015 \(hse.gov.uk\)](https://www.hse.gov.uk/cdm/)
6. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974: [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/75/)

Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

Get in touch

For more information, please contact your broker, RMP risk control consultant or account director.

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