

RideLondon-Surrey Case Study

Joel Pyke, landlord, The Old House, Dorking

The town of Dorking, which sits between the 60- and 70-mile points of the RideLondon-Surrey 100 and RideLondon-Surrey Classic routes, proved to be a popular destination for spectators, who flocked to see both amateur and professional riders cycling through its streets in August.

The Old House pub on West Street was a particularly popular venue for cycling fans and charity supporters to gather on event day. Landlord Joel Pyke ensured his staff and customers were able to get into the spirit of the day by using the RideLondon celebration pack, provided by the event organisers, to dress the pub on the big day.

“We’re directly on the route,” says Pyke. “The professionals came past three or four times so, combined with the amateur riders in the morning, we were seeing cyclists come past pretty much all day.

“The organisers of RideLondon gave us a really good pack of bunting, balloons, flags, posters, little snap bands to hand out; all sorts of stuff. This pub stands out anyway because we have an amazing floral display out front, but once we’d filled that full of Union Flags and RideLondon flags, you really couldn’t miss us.”

The Old House was also paired with charity St Catherine’s Hospice, who added their own splash of colour to the soggy morning as they based

themselves at the pub to cheer on their cycling fundraisers.

“They brought a lot of their own flags and banners to add to what we had put out,” says Pyke. “They had a really good day.”

Pyke didn’t encounter any challenges as a result of event-day road closures as he had no deliveries scheduled for the day and had spent plenty of time planning ahead to ensure he was ready. “Being a Sunday we don’t get

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any deliveries anyway, and in any case, this is a once a year thing; a special event. For us there were no problems at all and we were prepared long in advance.”

As morning turned into afternoon, and the skies improved, the pub grew busier in anticipation of the professional race.

“Everyone knew that the Old House would be a good place to come because we are literally right on the corner as the riders come into Dorking, but we also put on some live music and a barbecue and hog roast on the day. We situated the hog roast right

at our gates so passers-by could see it from the road and as a result we were unbelievably busy all day!

“The whole day went really well for us. We had a big crowd who would leave the pub and stand out front along the barriers every time the riders came through, then come back in as soon as the pros had passed.

As for the impact of the event on the pub and the local area, Pyke views RideLondon as a positive

thing and was delighted to be part of the event’s success.

“I think it brings the ‘wow’ factor,” he says. “It’s a special event, and it created a really

great atmosphere. I think it’s more about that than focusing on making a huge amount of money.

“You will get an upturn in trade, no doubt, but it was just great to see people out to celebrate the event. Since the Olympics in 2012, Dorking has really cottoned on to cycling and it’s become massive in the area.

“I can’t imagine why you wouldn’t want to be involved if you are a pub or a business on the route; there is no reason not to join in the fun and get behind the event. We’ll do exactly the same in 2015, only make it even bigger and better.”

