Club Handbook – Part 2

Group Riding

November 2026

INTRODUCTION

Group riding requires ***concentration, cooperation and communication***. The essence of successful group riding is that changes of speed and/or direction are smooth and gradual and that every member of the group is aware of what is going on.

Communication is important, so group riders use a collection of hand signals and "*shouts*" to pass information or instructions through the group. Note that not all clubs use the same words or gestures; see ours below.

Riding at speed, in close proximity, can be dangerous; with extra speed comes extra risk. It is important to understand, and be able to demonstrate, the principles of group riding.

All rides are weather permitting, please see below for more information.

SAFETY

Riders must have their hands behind the hoods, or on the drops, at all times and be ready to operate the brakes (which should be applied smoothly, ***without sudden braking***). This hand position also provides firm control of the bike in the event of hitting the likes of a pothole.

Tri bars are not permitted on group rides. They are likely to cause significant injury to the rider in front, if you are unable to stop in time. Also, while being used, they do not provide adequate control or give immediate access to the brakes.

DISTANCE

Try to keep about two wheels distance from the rider in front, slightly to one side, so there is somewhere to go in the event of a sudden stop! This gap can be reduced with confidence and experience. ***Do not*** overlap wheels.

TWO ABREAST

The Highway Code allows cyclists to ride two abreast. This is our "*normal*" way of riding. The advantage is that the group becomes shorter, so making it quicker for other road users to pass (*https://youtu.be/OTGRQgw6PDA* explains the reasoning behind this). Also, by occupying the whole side of the road, it discourages impatient drivers from forcing their

way through. It is also more sociable. Never ride more than two abreast; this has been the cause of many complaints.

Riding two abreast through narrow lanes is acceptable providing the visibility of oncoming vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians and horses can be monitored. Consequently, bends ***must*** be approached in single file, at least until "*clear*" is declared from the lead rider. Always "*single out*" when vehicles approach from behind. If the group is large, it is courteous to leave a gap or two in the line to allow vehicles an easier opportunity to pass.

CHAIN GANGING

Group riding, two abreast, increases average speed by a technique known as "*chain ganging*". We generally use the "*double pace line*" version, which is explained here *https://youtu.be/WL3RmtAlVM0*. There is also a "*single pace line*" version.

Fast and medium groups will normally chain gang during a ride. It may, and occasionally should, be practised by the "improvers" group. Practising this essential skill will be beneficial when progressing to the faster groups.

On a descent, riding in close proximity can be dangerous. Speeds can increase significantly, so greater distancing is required. On ascents, the group may spread out as slower riders may need to ride at their own pace. When it levels out, riders at the front should "*go easy*" to allow all riders to catch up.

NO DROP

We endeavour not to drop anyone but occasionally mistakes do happen. Generally, groups follow the same route. This has an advantage – ***providing riders have a Satnav-capable device and have downloaded the route*** – faster groups usually take the lead, which means a faster group can be tried then, if tiredness sets in or a rider gets accidently dropped, they can be swept up by a following group. It follows that the slowest group on a ride must take extra care that nobody gets inadvertently dropped and left behind!

Should you get dropped – ***if you have not made a prior arrangement as to what should happen if you get dropped*** – if you have the route, make sure you follow it so you can meet up again with the group, once they realise you have been dropped. If you do not have the route, ***stop at the next junction***, and wait for a group member to return and find you, or await the following group.

What3Words

Riders are encouraged to download the free "What3Words" app for their phone and familiarise themselves with how it works. In short, the app provides you with three words that will identify your location to with three metres. Should you get dropped and need assistance, you could use it to inform someone in the group of your location – mobile

phone numbers, if required, can be found via the WhatsApp group. Emergency services are also set up to receive location information in this way should you need to call on them.

HAND SIGNALS AND "SHOUTS"

With regards to the following, you just need to draw attention to dangerous road problems and obstructions which may cause an accident or bike damage. There is no need to point too far off-line and only to those things that you would want to avoid yourself. Passing on pointing, as it comes down the line, is important to help those at the back.

Slowing/Stopping – a flat hand, motioned up and down, accompanied by "***slowing***" or "***stopping***". Most commonly used when approaching junctions or hazards such as horses, pedestrians, road works and the like. Sudden braking ***must*** be avoided.

Problems – shouts of "***puncture***" or "***mechanical***", together with "***slowing***" or "***stopping***", will alert the group.

Holes – a finger pointing at the road to indicate a pothole, drain cover or other hazard, accompanied by "***hole***". Intended to point out hazards that have the potential to cause damage or injury, not every small imperfection in the road surface! Try to make any change of direction as small and as smooth as possible. A substantial row or sequence of hazards is indicated moving the arm backwards and forwards whilst pointing.

Hazardous Surfaces – a flat hand, with fingers spread and waved, accompanied by "***loose***", indicates the likes of sand, gravel, mud and general detritus.

Move Out/In – a flat hand pointing behind the back, to indicate that riders should move in the direction shown to avoid pedestrians, parked vehicles, slower cyclists and the like.

Turning – indicate a turn ahead by calling "***left***" or "***right***", together with a raised arm.

Slowing the Pace – when the pace is too fast, "***easy***" or "***half-rev***", tells the front riders to slow down a bit to prevent the group fragmenting. Then, "***all on***", indicates the group is back together.

Vehicles – when a vehicle approaches, "***car back***" or "***car front***", ***may*** be called to alert the group. Do not call for every approaching vehicle, just when some form of action might be required. It is often followed by "***coming through***" as the vehicle starts to overtake.

Do not use "car up" or "car down". These are ambiguous and often miss-called.

Single File – if a vehicle is close behind and impatient to pass and when the road is narrow, particularly when there is a bend, call "***single out***". Riders should immediately, ***and smoothly***, initiate a move to single file. A reduction in pedalling should allow sufficient gaps to develop ***without braking***. Always check to make sure it's safe to move in. A rider may point to a position where they want to come in; the inside rider is encouraged to confirm it's safe with "***come in***".

Junctions – at junctions, "***clear left***" or "***clear right***" is often called to indicate that the road ***was clear*** at the instant the call was made **so should be treated with extreme caution**. It may be followed with the danger alert "***car***" or "***stop***". Always check for yourself that it is safe to proceed.

Repeats - it is important to make sure that all members of the group ***get the message*** so gestures and shouts should be repeated by riders from front to back and vice versa.

WEATHER

All rides are weather permitting and can be affected by strong winds, heavy rain and ice. A realistic judgement also needs to be made with regards to the state of the roads and their suitability for thin-tyred road bikes. Ice is a particular hazard, so to help make this judgement call, a minimum temperature has been defined.

> *If the overnight temperature falls below +3°C, at any point, on the preceding night, there will not be an official club ride.*

Having seen that a ride has been cancelled, it does not preclude individuals from organising an unofficial road ride via the relevant WhatsApp group, based on the understanding that they do so at their own risk. Consequently, there would be no need for a signing on form and technically, no ride leader as such. Please post any questions on either the WVC Chat or Sunday WhatsApp groups.

Often, when temperatures are low, an official off-road ride is organised instead. Also, some members might get together for a group ride on Zwift.

FINALLY

Riders are asked to mind their language, especially as volume is raised to cater for wind noise. Please do give a cheery wave of acknowledgment to patient car drivers as they pass and please **do not**, whatever the provocation, make inappropriate or rude gestures to impatient drivers!