

## **Ride Leader Notes – Penge Cycle Club**

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The purpose of these notes is to help ride leaders to plan and enjoy a good ride and to provide some hints and tips to help the ride go smoothly. It's not definitive and there are few hard and fast rules.

### **The Key Points**

Our leaders do not need to be qualified to perform the role, so we ask all of the riders to be individually responsible for their own safety and for being properly equipped. The leader is there for 2 main tasks; 1) To follow a route 2) To make sure no one gets lost and that everyone gets home.

That said, riders will look to the leader to make decisions if things go wrong, so it is no bad thing for leaders to have thought through some of the possible hazards.

The only mandatory rules are:

- Everyone must wear a helmet
- No one gets left behind

### **Before the ride**

The Leader should prepare for the ride by getting familiarised with the route. The routes are published on the website and there is a different route for each week in the month. Occasionally routes are replaced. Ideally, the leader will know the route well enough not to have to rely on a Garmin, and competence with a Garmin is a distinct advantage. Nonetheless, it is not unheard of for the leader to lose his/her way and there is usually someone in the group who knows the route, so do not be afraid to admit being lost and asking for help.

Check the forecast and consider options for varying the route to suit the conditions. If it is especially cold or wet, work out some 'bail-out' options in advance. If you want to add some miles, be very careful to ensure that every rider is genuinely happy with the idea as often a single person may be reticent to object but may not feel up to extra miles or may just need to get home.

Make sure you bring the right gear, including a pen and a waterproof bag to keep your phone and the sign-on sheet dry.

### **At the meet**

Arrive a few minutes early and your ride sign on sheet should be ready for you on the appropriate sign board. The list will have the names and contact details for all riders who have signed up in advance via Rider HQ. There is an upper limit of 12 riders per group, including the leader. If we have lined up a second leader to cope with an oversubscribed ride, there will be two copies of the list and all the riders registered on the same list. If this is the case, you will need to split the riders between you and check off your riders on your list.

Your own name will be at the top of the list with your phone number. Ask riders to photograph that or make a note of it so that they have your number if they get lost.

Riders at the meet will be looking out for you and some riders may be new to the club. New riders will need to write their details onto the sheet, including an email so we can prompt them to join once they have completed 3 rides

Welcome new riders and introduce them to the group. Check they have the right kit – and point them at Winnie for tubes etc if needed. Speak to them about their riding experience and make a call if you think they are in the wrong group. It's much better for them to try a group that is easy for them to start with and to move up than it is to have a ride where they struggle and hold everyone else up.

You will find it much easier to lead if you have a backmarker to ensure that no one gets left behind, and make sure the backmarker has your mobile number. It doesn't have to be the same backmarker for the whole ride, but give clear instructions as to what you want to do.

It is often a good idea, particularly if you have a number of new faces, to have a quick briefing before you set off. Introduce new riders and explain clearly any particular points you want to make. If you

are more comfortable leading at the front, tell people you want them to stay behind you and that you will indicate when it is ok for them to go ahead. A short description of the route is helpful, in case people get separated.

Ensure that all riders are wearing an approved cycle helmet

### **On the road**

Your main roles on the ride are:

- To regulate the pace of ride to that of the slowest rider and be prepared to adjust the route accordingly. Once you have accepted someone to come on the ride, it is your responsibility to make sure they stay with the group, even if it means holding others up. If there is a total mismatch, consider splitting the group into two or, if one person is significantly slower, try to allow them to drop back to a slower group. The routes are such that this is usually possible, but don't just ditch them.
- To follow the route. Ideally, you will know the route well enough to manage with your Garmin just as a back-up. That way, you can anticipate places where it is ok for some of the quicker riders to go off the front and a good place to re-group. If you are trying out a new route, just make sure riders don't go off the front and be firm in asking them to stay behind you
- To keep the group together and make sure everyone makes it back from the ride. Pacing is key to this. Also, be careful to check that riders are 'all in' after lights, junctions and at stops.
- Try to keep stops relatively short, particularly if it is cold or wet and let people know when they have time to have something to eat. Give a little warning when it's time to move and wait until everyone is ready to go.
- Be clear at the start of the ride if there will be a café stop during the ride. We tend to not have these other than the steady, where it is traditional (if not obligatory!). If you do stop, be aware that some riders may need to get home and make arrangements accordingly.

Some other points to note:

- Indicate well in advance changes in direction or a stop.
- Check for presence of Backmarker at changes of direction.
- Highlight particular hazards to the group e.g. steep descents, very bad road surfaces.
- Avoid stopping on bends and brow of hills.
- Make sure that bikes and riders are off the road, not obstructing pedestrians, when a group stops by the roadside to resolve mechanical problems and punctures.

### **End of ride**

Some riders may drop out before the end because they live close to the route. Make sure you know this is what they are doing. The leader should usually return to the shop to make sure that everyone knows their way home and there is usually an opportunity to go to the Blue Belle café.

Remember to email details of any new riders to Graham Blackwood [grahamblackwood652@gmail.com](mailto:grahamblackwood652@gmail.com) after the ride so that he can keep tabs on new riders.

### **If the worst happens on the ride**

Riders do fall off, particularly when it's wet or icy. Bikes break and people get lost. We ask all of our riders to be responsible for their own safety, so it is not the leader's fault or responsibility if something goes wrong. However, other riders will look to you if there is a situation. This is not an exhaustive list of instructions, and it is a good idea to think how you might react given a certain set of circumstances rather than finding yourself on the spot. Some basics:

#### A faller:

- If someone falls off, one of the first things to make sure of is that other vehicles do not make the situation worse. If someone is down on the road, quickly have someone front and back checking and warning vehicles.
- Don't immediately try to move the faller until you know there are no injuries that would be worsened by moving them. Better to inconvenience the odd driver.
- Make sure everyone else is out of the way and off the road if possible
- If required, see if you have anyone with a first aid qualification in the group
- Call for an ambulance if necessary and give them clear instructions as to where you are
- Call the police if there are other vehicles involved
- Make sure everyone, especially the injured person puts on any spare clothing. When in shock, you are particularly vulnerable to cold and quickly start to function badly.
- Alert others, including the faller's emergency contact and make arrangements for getting people and their bikes home.
- Make notes of what happened, the conditions, time of day etc, particularly if a 3<sup>rd</sup> party is involved and take details of any witnesses just as you would for a normal road accident.

#### Losing someone:

If you lose a rider, do everything you can to re-locate them while you are out on the ride:

- Call their mobile and leave a message if you get no response. Text them with an instruction where to meet
- Retrace your route to the point you last saw them or an obvious landmark that you can guide them to
- Ask other cyclists if they have seen them – the Penge colours are especially noticeable so it helps if they are in club kit
- Check after the ride if you can't find them while you are out

#### Mechanical and Punctures

These are inevitable, though can be minimised with good maintenance and careful riding. Riders should be responsible for making their own running repairs, though it is the friendly thing to do to help out. Make a note if someone is obviously incapable of mending their own puncture and ask them to learn how to before their next ride. If the bike is unrideable, locate the nearest railway station or call for a car. (Uber take bikes and sometimes so do partners!) Don't just ditch a rider with a broken bike to make their own way home. Make sure that any debris, such as old inner tubes, is disposed of.

One thing you should always have with you as a ride leader, better than any tool or set of instructions, is your common sense. Prevention is always better than trying to fix something after the event and most hazards can be anticipated. You should also bring plenty of patience and a sense of humour and you will enjoy it.