

## Seacroft Wheelers Cycling Club – Group Riding Etiquette (Oct 2022)

**This information is to make club rides safe and enjoyable for members. By riding with Seacroft Wheelers, members agree to adhere to these guidelines and to ride in a considerate manner.**

### Code of conduct

- All riders must wear a helmet (no helmet, no ride) and carry a basic toolkit including a multi-tool, tyre-levers, spare tube and pump. At least one water bottle, two for longer rides, gloves, lights (where necessary) and weather-appropriate clothing are advised.
- Behave in a manner which represents the club in a positive way at all times.
- Obey the Highway Code, avoid conflict with other road users and ride with consideration towards others. Riders are responsible for their own safety at all times. Disregard for the Highway Code and behaviour that endangers yourself, other members or road users may lead to disciplinary action.
- Riders should carry membership cards, emergency details completed, on every ride.
- Check your bike before each ride. Check tyres are fully inflated and in good condition, brakes working, chain lubricated, and nothing is loose or about to wear out.
- Bring a mobile phone and ensure you have the number of the ride leader(s).
- Safety is paramount. Don't let Strava or keeping up with others encourage you to take risks.
- Listen to the ride leader, respect and accept what you are asked to do. If the ride leader deems you to be riding and/or acting in a dangerous or anti-social manner, you are expected to take the advice given.
- If unhappy with the pace of the group (too fast or too slow), you are welcome to speak with the ride leader. They will endeavour to match the group's pace to you, within the speed parameters of your chosen ride.
- If the pace is too slow and you then ride off the front, the group is not obliged to re-route, chase down or wait for you to return if you don't stay with the group (discretion will be made for young/inexperienced riders).
- **Keep tight** - no big gaps front to back or side to side.
- **Ride two abreast maximum** where traffic and road conditions permit (this means the width of two riders with a small gap, not one in the gutter and one in the middle of the road). See additional notes below on drafting.
- **Ride directly behind, or alongside other riders,**  
Look over your shoulder before overtaking, pulling in/out or making any kind of change in direction or line. Pull out in plenty of time if overtaking or turning right. Do not cut corners, especially on faster descents – hold your line relative to the kerb / centre line of road and be aware of overtaking riders.
- **Pay attention.** Be aware of traffic conditions, upcoming hazards and familiarise yourself with the route (village names, roads signs etc) in case you get separated. Don't assume that you can 'switch off' and chat just because you're in the middle of the group.
- Avoid braking suddenly.
- Point out or shout about hazards in the road (e.g. potholes) to those behind you.
- When pulling out of junctions, let riders behind know if it is safe to do so (responsibility still lies with individuals to ensure it is safe).
- Everyone should try to keep the group tidy and together, and remain with the leader whenever possible. Surges in pace and riding off the front breaks up the group. If on the front, it is your responsibility to set a suitable pace to keep the group together. If the group splits on a hill or after a junction, ride slowly until the group re-forms or stop in a safe place (without obstructing traffic).

- Waiting for people: see above regarding keeping the group together; unless otherwise agreed, rides start, continue and finish as a group. No-one gets left behind. Be aware of who is behind, and inform the leader if anyone is struggling, dropping off or has a mechanical.
- **Tell others if you are struggling or if you have a mechanical.** If you hear a call, e.g. hazard, or question, e.g. "which direction?", pass it along - don't assume others have heard.
- Inform the leader if you intend to leave the group before the end of the ride.
- No personal music players to be used during our rides.
- Dealing with accidents and injuries: the club does not provide first aid cover or medical support on rides. In the event of an accident, fellow riders must do all they can to support any injured parties. Call emergency services if necessary.
- If the leader considers anyone acting in a way that conflicts with any of the above, they are entitled to speak on behalf of the club and request that person leaves the ride.

### **Group Ride descriptions (names and descriptions changed in Sep 2022)**

We provide rides for various abilities, experience and preferences.

The information below is a guide only – riders must determine their own abilities and fitness when deciding their preferred group – make sure you can match the quoted ride speeds. If choosing a group slower than your ability/fitness, be prepared to ride at the pace of the slowest rider or, again, the group will not stay together. This is to aid everyone's enjoyment and group unity.

Group rides and destinations may change at short notice to take account of road conditions, weather forecasts and availability of leaders.

- **D'Huez** (previously 'Short Social'): 20 – 30 miles; 10 – 12 mph average speed (no changes)
- **Ventoux** (previously 'Social'): 35 – 45 miles, 12 – 14 mph average speed (adding up to 10 miles on the pre-4 Sep version, depending on attendance)
- **Zoncolan** (previously 'Elementary'): 45 – 55 miles, 13 – 15 mph average speed (adding up to 10 miles and 1 mph on the pre-4 Sep version, depending on attendance)
- **Mortirolo** (previously 'Intermediate') 60 -70 miles, 15 – 17 mph avg (adding up to 1 mph on the pre-4 Sep version, depending on attendance)
- **Off Road Rides:** The club has an active off road contingent, with various mountain bike rides, Cyclo Cross (CX) friendly rides and CX training.
- **Wednesday Workout:** Summer chain-gang, average speed usually exceeding 18mph
- **Saturday Training:** figure of 8 circuit through Tadcaster and Askham Richard. Flat-ish terrain; 35-40 miles. Steady pace (a faster group can also run if required).
- (note: Wednesday and Saturday rides, and off-road rides are seasonal. Check website and Facebook group for updates on when, generally Spring/Summer)

### **Group Communication**

It is helpful for riders to give warning calls and hand signals to others. This helps smooth riding and helps keep groups closer together.

#### **Calls:**

- **"Car back"** for cars behind
- **"Car front"** for one travelling in the opposite direction or parked ahead. **[NOTE: CHANGED FROM UP/DOWN several years ago, to assist newer members]**
- **"Slowing"** when slowing down, e.g. approaching junctions or obstacles - can be combined with waving your right arm up and down slowly.
- **"Stopping"** when riders need to brake. This prevents you taking the rider behind you by surprise.
- At junctions, **"Clear"** means the road is clear; **"watch your left/right"** means the immediate junction is clear but there is some approaching traffic; **"car (etc) left/right"** or **"wait"** means

it is not safe to pull out (responsibility still lies with individuals on whether it is safe to proceed).

- Other hazards can include: "**gravel**"; "**(pot)hole**"; "**cattle grid**"; "**oil**" etc.
- "**Standing**" when getting out of the saddle to climb, as you may slow down while doing so. Don't let your rear wheel drop back as you stand.
- "**Out**" to let the group know and when riding two abreast to let the outside cyclist know to allow more room to avoid a hazard **e.g. a parked car**
- "**Single Out**" when riding two abreast to revert to riding in single file. The rider on the outside falls back into line.
- "**Easy**" when a rider has seen something that may be dangerous. A sharp bend, slippery surface or traffic bottleneck would be examples of when a call would be useful.
- "**Knock a Mile off / Mile off**" reduce the pace of the ride by ~1 mph. DO NOT slow significantly, as this causes bunching behind.
- "**Off the back**" a rider/riders have been dropped, slow down to allow them to catch back up.
- "**On your inside**" a call made from behind another rider to advise them to be aware you are approaching / undertaking them on their left
- "**On your outside**" as above but approaching / overtaking on their right.
- "**Below**" used to indicate there is a pothole/obstacle coming up. Sometimes used in lieu of hand signals if both hands are needed on the bars at that time.

### **Signals**

- Pointing at specific hazards
- Arm signals for turning left and right
- Left hand pointed across your lower back to indicate to those behind to move out for hazards or parked cars
- Flat hand on appropriate side, shaken/waved from side to side – several spaced hazards (e.g. series of potholes or gravelly section)
- "Patting" motion up and down with hand, to indicate slowing.
- A right elbow flick is a traditional request for the rider behind to take the lead.

### **Weather and seasonal notes**

- Front and rear lights are compulsory at night and on dark rides. If riding in dull conditions, lights are recommended. A rear flashing light is worth having on all but sunniest rides.
- Suitable mudguards should be fitted when a ride is expected to be wet. This is for the consideration of those riding behind you. Without mudguards, spray and debris from your rear wheel is thrown into the face of the rider following, affecting visibility and therefore safety.
- In any event, full-length mudguards, ideally with a rear mudflap, should be fitted from October to March, normally starting and finishing when clocks change. Those without suitable mudguards or flap may be asked to ride at the back of the group.
- In the dark, when the roads are wet, or whenever grip or visibility are compromised, we will reduce our speed accordingly.

### **Drafting**

- Drafting is an effective way to save energy and share the workload among a group of riders.
- The group should ride side by side, or in a single line, directly behind the one in front.
- Never overlap wheels with the rider ahead, i.e. your front wheel overlapping a rider in front's rear wheel – any sudden movement by either rider could bring you both down. Leave a gap of approximately six inches.
- The lead rider is the 'eyes' of the group, and should alert others to approaching hazards, e.g. potholes and traffic.
- The lead rider should take a smooth line around hazards to allow others to follow safely.
- When lead riders have done their turn, the most efficient way to rotate (i.e. change the front two riders) is using the chain-gang or 'through-and-off' method – see relevant section below. When

moving to the front, do not increase the pace and make sure the group remains together during the transition.

- It is important that lead riders maintain a constant speed (with allowance for alterations in terrain) and takes care not to break the group up with surges of acceleration. (also known as "half wheeling", maintain an even pace and stay level with the person next to you. Do not constantly up the pace whenever a rider draws level to you).
- The rider at the rear is the group's 'ears', and should alert others of traffic approaching from behind.

### **Riding Two-abreast**

- It is legal to ride two abreast where road/conditions allow, but never more than two.
- Riding two abreast makes the group more compact and easier for cars to overtake.
- When 'single-out' is called, you must revert to riding in single file. The rider on the outside falls back into line.
- If the inside rider needs to change course (potholes, parked cars) please say 'out' to others to advise them to do so.
- When the front riders have completed their turn, they should advise that they plan to rotate the lead.

### **The Chain Gang aka "Through-and-off"**

The purpose of the Chain Gang is both a training tool and to maximise shelter to the group from prevailing wind, so that workload is shared. Unlike the typical Sunday ride formation of two lines of riders, changing position as required, the Chain Gang formation is in constant motion. It requires 100% concentration all the time 🚫 to avoid clipping wheels and collisions. The Chain Gang is used depending on wind/road conditions, in training, to practice close group riding skills, or sometimes just for a change.

Those not confident in this formation can stay at the back of the group without taking turns, to observe how it works.

The signal for changing to Chain gang formation could be verbally or a raised arm, pointed finger and a circular hand motion, in the intended direction of rotation of the chain (though less-experienced groups would be brought to a halt and advised verbally in full at first).

### **How the Chain Gang is formed.**

- Two parallel lines of riders in close formation. One faster line sheltered from the wind (by the slower line) will be the pace setting line... line 1. The slower line we will call the recovery line... line 2.
- As each rider gets to the front of the pace line, they move over to the recovery line and similarly when at the back of the recovery line they move over and join the back of the pace line. The pace line travelling faster than the recovery line creates a circular motion of the group. The length of time spent on the front of the pace line is dictated by weather/road conditions and size of group; it can vary from a few seconds up to a minute or so, depending on group dynamics.
- The chain goes clockwise or anti-clockwise depending on wind direction, to give shelter to the faster line.
- When changing lines, you change your speed – slowing down (by 1-2mph) once you've moved over from the pace to the recovery line; you accelerate the same when re-joining the back of the pace setting line.
- Basically, the pace line will be moving forward and the recovery line will be moving backward in relation to each other.

**Get it right...**

1. When moving from the pace to recovery line, do it on a gradual angle ensuring you clear the front wheel of the rider you are moving in front of. If unsure, wait for a shout of "clear" so that there is sufficient room to move across. Don't suddenly swing across, make a smooth transition. Don't look over your shoulder as this can be hazardous in a close group – if necessary look down under your elbow to check position of inside/outside riders behind by looking at their wheels
2. Don't increase pace or accelerate, just ride through maintaining the pace of the line you are in. Increasing the pace at the front is strictly a no-no – all it achieves is disruption.
3. Ease off at the front when you have changed from the faster line 1 to the slower line 2 – don't brake - just take the pressure off the pedals slightly and continue to soft pedal. The next rider coming through in front of you should not need to increase pace in order to come past you! If you ease off too much, the rider behind needs to take corrective action and even brake sharply, while the rider at the back of the line will have to accelerate hard to get back into line 1... so just ease off slightly.
4. Do not accelerate through... the only acceleration is at the back of the line from line 2 back into line 1. **Do not** surge at the front.
5. When you are about to re-join the pace setting line, line 1, the last rider in the pace setting line should call "last man" as he is about to pass the last rider in the recovery line. This prepares the rider to start moving across into the pace line, and get onto the wheel of the previous rider by accelerating slightly.
6. Don't fall asleep at the back - if you miss the last rider and have to jump lanes and accelerate to close the gap, then everyone behind you will also be making a needless effort - and you'll end up having to buy the coffees at the end of the ride!
7. If this sounds complicated - it actually isn't. It's great fun, and if you put this advice into action you'll soon be working like a pro in the chain-gang.
8. Generally, a Chain Gang or a Pace Line will ride at constant effort - rather than constant speed. If you're the rider going through at the front, don't try and maintain speed up a hill – just maintain the effort.

### **Chain-Gang Communications**

If unable to go through and you want to sit at the back to recover, inform others.

Warn others if you intend to re-join the chain after sitting off the back.

Whichever line you're in, don't allow gaps in front of you – always stay on a wheel.

### **Chain gang Dos and Don'ts:**

DO concentrate 100% of the time.

DO maintain tight group spacing and consistent pace.

Don't do anything suddenly.

DON'T DO ANYTHING SUDDENLY ! 🚗 - in other words, be predictable! Don't brake heavily or make sudden changes in direction etc.

DON'T accelerate off the front.

**Pot-holes/road hazards** Lead riders should warn of pot-holes etc, and this should be passed down the line. A gentle line should be taken around potholes, rather than a quick switch.

**Note: Not everything in this document will happen each time it is practised, but it is what Seacroft Wheelers aims for as a club.**

[With acknowledgement to Alba Rosa and Valley Striders clubs for some sections of this document; and to Seacroft Wheelers members that also contributed.]