

Northumbria Advanced Motorcyclists

Group Rides

General Guidance

Safety

The paramount consideration when riding in a group is always safety. At no time should the safety of riders, or any third party be compromised. Whilst these guidelines should result in the elimination of undue risk for most circumstances, it always remains the personal responsibility of all riders within the group to exercise their own judgement about every course of action that they take. Each rider is responsible for their safety, actions, and any consequences that those actions may have.

The law

Traffic laws must always be obeyed when riding on the road. Do not worry if you fall behind, there will be a marker rider waiting to show you the route. Ride your normal ride within your capabilities and don't be tempted to change this.

Eligibility

Full Member Group Rides may only be joined by paid-up full members. All Member Group Rides may also be joined by Associates who have had at least one Observed ride, and with the approval of their Observer.

Rider ability

Every rider must ride within their capabilities and exercise judgement when determining the safety of their actions. If at any time a rider feels that they are not capable of continuing, as the ride exceeds their skill level, then they should pull over at a safe and legal position until they are joined by the tail-end rider, who will consider appropriate options to take, which may include:

- Organising 1:1 guidance for the rider separately from the group ride.

- Adjusting the pace of the ride.

- Agreeing that the rider should ride separate from the group.

Lead and tail-end rider basic principles

Riding in convoy and stopping on the road to allow riders to regroup are two practices that should normally be avoided when riding in a group. A well-established method exists that makes both rarely necessary. This is the leader and tail-end rider system.

The basis of the system is that the leader (usually the ride organiser) stays at the front of the group and the tail-end rider remains at the rear as the names suggest. Whilst not compulsory and depending on distance, communication via radio/Bluetooth/mobile phone can greatly assist both the leader and tail-end rider.

Whenever it is unclear which direction the route should take, the rider travelling behind the leader pulls over in a visible, safe and legal position to point all bikes in the correct direction. This bike is called the marker and when the tail-end rider comes along the marker re-joins the route in front of the tail-end rider. As the journey continues each rider will, in turn, become the rider behind the leader, and therefore become a marker before re-joining in front of the tail-end rider.

By following this basic system every rider regardless of ability within the group may ride their own ride, without the need to maintain a pace they are not comfortable with and without the risk of getting lost. There is rarely a need to ride in convoy with all bikes in sight of each other.

The briefing before setting off

Expect to be briefed by NAM's Ride Co-ordinator / Ride Organiser as follows.

- Remind all riders that they are responsible for maintaining safety and complying with the law at all times.
- Make sure that everyone is familiar with the leader & tail-end rider system. If the group is large, consider riding in two or more separate groups. For All Member Group Rides ensure that the group leader(s) and tail-end rider(s) are aware of any Associates present.
- All riders should be made aware who the lead and tail-end riders are and how they can be identified on the road.
- Ensure every rider knows how to recognise the leader's signal to stop and act as a marker.
- Every rider doesn't need to have full route details, but it may be beneficial that all are aware of the rest stops and final destination.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of the number of bikes within the group and who are riding together.
- Remind participants that if any rider is planning to leave the group, whether at a pre-arranged stop or elsewhere, they should inform the lead or tail-end rider of their intentions.
- Check that everyone has heard the briefing ok.
- Although no rider is expected to become separated from the group, it may be advisable to have a plan.

Suggestions:

Agree a rendezvous point and time. These will normally be the planned rest stops.

The lead and tail-end riders should have each others phone numbers.

On the road

- Remember- Safety first!
- At all times, every rider is responsible for their own safety, their actions and any consequences that those actions may have.
- Always obey traffic laws.
- Ride at a pace that is legal and at no time ride faster than you consider safe for the conditions, always ride smoothly and predictably, try to avoid harsh acceleration, sudden braking or changes in direction.
- At junctions take the obvious route unless a marker bike indicates otherwise.
- At roundabouts, the marker bike should be on the exit route, if you cannot see the marker on the approach be prepared to circle the roundabout to confirm the correct exit (mainly large roundabouts).
- Overtaking within the group should be facilitated where safe and legal. A rider should not be pressured into going any faster than they feel safe and the following rider should not pressure the rider in front. The following rider can make their intentions known and where appropriate the rider in front can yield allowing for a safe and courteous overtake. The tail-end rider will not overtake others in the group. Overtaking simply to regain a place at the front of the group is not permitted.
- If you intend to leave the group, allow all riders to pass you and indicate to the tail-end rider your intentions. Preferably this will have been communicated at the briefing stage if possible, however circumstances may change during the ride.

- Allow other road users to overtake the group if they wish. Where it is safe make space for them to do so.

When behind the leader

Be prepared to stop and act as the marker when indicated to do so by the ride leader. However, if you are the second bike behind the leader and you realise that the bike in front has not marked a change in direction when indicated to do so by the leader, then mark it yourself.

When you are the marker

Never compromise your personal safety or the safety of others by stopping in a dangerous location. No one in the group wants to get lost, but that is preferable to putting yourself at risk. When the leader signals for you to stop, do so only where you are safe and visible to the following riders. It is your decision where to stop but remember that to be an effective marker you need to be visible to the following bikes and point out the direction to follow. When at a junction and the route involves a right turn, if possible mark just after the turn rather than just before it. If it is safer to mark just before the turn, do not sit there with your right indicators flashing. Instead, as each bike approaches point with your arm at the direction they should take. In exceptional circumstances you might decide it is safer to leave your bike parked away from the junction and mark it on foot.

Do not move until the tail-end rider appears. If the tail-end rider fails to appear, do not move. If something has gone wrong, the tail-end rider should still appear eventually. It is suggested you give them at least half-an-hour. REMEMBER - you are all that's going to help the following bikes find the correct route. If you see other riders from the group take the wrong direction do not attempt to chase after them. Wait until the tail-end rider arrives and inform them. If the riders return in the meantime, then you don't need to inform the tail-end rider if you are sure that all riders that took the wrong direction have returned to the junction you are marking. Make sure that what appears to be the last bike is really the tail-end rider who will slow down as they approach to enable you to pull out safely in front.

If you get lost

The most common cause of getting lost is a failure to see a marker or someone leaving the group while on the road and the bike behind follows. These are avoidable if everyone follows this guide.

If you arrive at a junction and there is no marker it is likely that you have made an incorrect turn. Retrace your route to the last place you saw a marker, where the marker may still be waiting. The fall-back position is to make your own way to the next rest stop.

If you are familiar with the intended route and see that the group leader has taken a wrong turning, follow the leader just the same. The leader may not retrace their steps, in which case by not following them you will have split the group.