



OPERATION OF THE CYCLING GROUPS

23 January 2025

1. AIMS

The aims of the cycling groups are:

- a. To provide experiences through cycling and socialising that members find enjoyable and rewarding.
- b. To have appeal to cyclists whose ride preference ranges from moderate to challenging to strenuous.
- c. To undertake activities that impact positively on and help maintain or improve the fitness and the health and wellbeing of members.
- d. To produce 'Safe Cycling Guidelines' that all members are asked to read and adhere to.

2. TYPES OF RIDES and FREQUENCY OF EVENTS

There are various Cycling Groups. Each group has a Group Leader(s). Each Ride Programme is published on the u3a website. These groups are:

- a. Moderate Rides - coinciding with British Summer Time i.e. April – October although dates will vary. In 2025 they take place once a month.
- b. Challenging Rides – generally no more than 100ft/ml. In 2025 they take place fortnightly on Thursdays from March to mid-December.
- c. Strenuous Rides – these also take place fortnightly on Thursday from March to mid-December.
- d. Sunday Cycling – these take place every Sunday between March and mid-December. They can be Moderate or Challenging in nature.

In addition to these Cycling Groups, overall coordination is facilitated by a Cycling Overview Group. All members of any group also belong to the Cycling Overview Group. This allows communication to Cycling Group members at once relating to policy and planning, the rides programmes, safety issues and other items of common interest to all members.

3. CYCLE ROUTES

Routes are devised by Group Leaders but suggestions from members are always welcomed. The Group Leader will publish details of each ride on the u3a website with the following information: ride date and time; name of the Ride Leader; ride start point; ride length; height gained, ascent/mile; various route details, details of the lunch stop and any special safety considerations. Members can always bring a packed lunch if they prefer.

If a participant is concerned about the route or have any other queries about the ride, they can contact the Ride Leader. Ride Leaders can be contacted by email or by the telephone number they will have provided. If a Group Leader or Ride Leader has advised an individual member who has chosen to participate on a particular ride, NOT to do so, then that rider should withdraw. Please read 'Safe Cycling Guidelines' section 6: 'Personal Fitness for Cycling'.

4. FUNCTION OF LEADERS

Group Leaders

[A Deputy Group Leader assists the Group Leader with the tasks outlined below but this is dependent on their interests, experience and their wishes]

A Group Leader:

- a. Is the main point of contact for members of the group.
- b. Chairs any specially arranged meetings of the group. Decides on the venue, produces the agenda and ensures that all supporting documents are available.
- c. Devises ride routes and all associated information but also receives ride suggestions from members and approves them. Carefully evaluates each route with a special emphasis on safety.
- d. Enters all the ride details and all policy and procedural documents onto the u3a website and keeps them up-to-date.
- e. Publicises activities of the group to members, prospective members and others, largely via email and WhatsApp.
- f. Contributes to publicity material such as information to be included in Newsletters and also to 'Showcases' where many u3a groups participate centrally to attract new members.
- g. Receives minor and major Incident Reports from Ride Leaders regarding any issues that have arisen on a ride. In the case of a major incident, action is taken as defined within the procedure on page 2 of the Incident Report document.
- h. Assists in the identification of Ride Leaders and Backmarkers.

Ride Leaders

The Group Leaders and Ride Leader are often the same person. Material has been devised to support the training of new Ride Leaders who will soon gain confidence with experience.

Ride leaders:

- a. Will be familiar with the route of the ride they are leading and will have recce'd the route in advance if they feel this is needed. As an alternative, will carry a fully-charged and reliable navigation device, having carefully studied the route by some means such as Google Street View.
- b. In studying the route, will make a note of any special hazards e.g. busy 'A' roads, steep slopes up and down, green lanes, gravel tracks, etc.
- c. Will be provided with members mobile phone numbers and their emergency contact phone numbers for those who have agreed to share this information.
- d. Will consider carrying a first aid kit. Will carry tyre levers and a pump. All members are asked to carry a correctly-sized inner tube.
- e. Will have communicated via the published ride description and verbally at the start of the ride, any particular points of safety in relation to the route.
- f. Will communicate at the start of the ride, any alterations to the details which may have already been published.
- g. During the ride, as far as is feasible and practical, forewarn riders of a potential hazard in the near distance ahead. Of special benefit is a warning of a steep hill up or down (see 'Safe Cycling Guidelines').
- h. Will have undertaken an initial head count and checked on this number at various points along the route. Generally, will wait at the top of hills for those who are slower and give them a chance to catch their breath before carrying on.
- i. Will take care not to 'drop' people when the route turns left or right. Will consider appointing a back-marker. The back-marker's function is to ensure that no one gets left behind. The back-marker will contact the leader if needed by making use of the 'walkie-talkie' handsets provided. Failing this, by ringing the Leader's mobile or if this fails, by text message.
- j. Will promptly report any issues arising to the Group Leader and especially if an accident occurs.
- k. Prior to all rides, will have consulted a weather prediction agency on-line such as the Met Office or BBC Weather for the area they will traverse. Based on these predictions and on the weather on the day, they will make a decision, together with the Group Leader, on whether to cancel or alter the ride. Members will be informed by email by the Group Leader and by a message left on the appropriate Cycling WhatsApp group.
- l. Will answer queries from members about the nature of the ride, etc. but not advise a member that a ride IS suitable for them. A member's decision to undertake a ride is their own based on all the information available to them.
- m. Conversely, if a Ride Leader is confident that a ride IS NOT suitable for a member, they have a right to say so. Please remember though, that a member has joined a ride having read and agreed the 'Declaration' document. Part of this asks them to confirm their competence for any ride they will attend. Additionally, the

Group Leader will have checked a member's cycling experience before accepting them as a group member.

- n. Will observe the competence of new riders during their first ride with the group and provide advice if necessary.

Role of a Backmarker

- a. To stay at the back so that the ride leader can be assured, on sighting the backmarker in the distance behind them, that no-one has been 'dropped'.
- b. If a rider suffers any accident or bike problem, the backmarker will arrive at this incident and will need to stop the ride by contacting the ride leader. Backmarkers should therefore ensure they have recorded the leader's mobile number. Our Walkie-talkies also serve this purpose.
- c. It is, of course, helpful if the backmarker is familiar with the route. Additionally, it is helpful if the backmarker has downloaded the route on their navigation device e.g. garmin or mobile phone. However, members should not be put off making an offer to backmark, since there will be some rides that no-one is very familiar with, other than the Ride Leader.

5. REFRESHMENTS and SECURITY

- a. Route descriptions will include the location of the café lunch stop. Occasionally, a picnic packed lunch will be necessary.
- b. Riders may have particular dietary requirements and **always** have the option of bringing their own lunch. All riders should carry sufficient water for the day and are advised to also carry a few sugary snack items.
- c. All riders are advised to carry a security device to protect their bikes at stopovers, especially where a break at a café or other indoor area has been advertised within the ride description.

6. CANCELLATION OF A RIDE

- a. A ride may have to be cancelled at short notice due to weather conditions predicted in advance, weather at the start or due to unforeseen circumstances.
- b. Members should look at the WhatsApp for their group on the day of the ride shortly before they set out for the start point just in case last-minute changes have occurred.