



SAFE CYCLING GUIDELINES

15 January 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

- a. This guidance has been prepared for members of Llandudno Area U3A who have joined one or more of the Cycle Groups or are interested in doing so. Please note that much of what you will read here will already be very familiar to you and simply acts as a reminder in support of your existing good practice whilst cycling.
- b. All U3A members who join a Cycling Group must recognise that all cycle rides involve an element of risk. Whilst Ride Leaders will exercise caution in their role to minimise risks, members are reminded that they have a major role in taking responsibility for their own safety whilst on cycle rides or cycling to and from the start or finish of the ride. Nothing in this guidance is intended to undermine this basic principle.
- c. U3A Insurance covers Public Liability only and does not insure individuals undertaking a ride for their own injury or loss or damage to their equipment. If an individual member wishes to have personal insurance for injury, loss or damage to equipment we ask that they make their own arrangement for this. This Public Liability (Third Party) Insurance also covers litigation of one member to another based on negligence and litigation from general members of the public who may suffer injury or damage to property ostensibly caused by a member.
- d. The guidance covers 5 broad topics:
 - Good cycling practice
 - Clothing/lights for safe cycling
 - Communication before and during cycle rides
 - Personal fitness for cycling
 - Making sure your cycle is in good mechanical condition and is well-equipped.

2. GOOD CYCLING PRACTICE

- a. Cycle routes will use designated cycle paths and quiet 'B' or unclassified roads wherever possible. Nevertheless, some cycling on main roads will be necessary on occasions and this may include busy roundabouts.
- b. In all cases, cyclists should ensure that they maintain constant awareness of each other, motor traffic, pedestrians and road conditions. It is important that they position themselves so that, as far as possible, they are clearly visible to other road users whilst allowing motor traffic to overtake. Front and rear lights help with this.
- c. Unlike some other cycling groups, we do not cycle in tight "peloton" style formation. Instead, we cycle in single file or two abreast depending on road or path conditions. Overtaking traffic and busy roads must be given special consideration in this respect with cyclists in single file and keeping well in and stable. Particularly on fast 'A' roads, cyclists should be well separated out to assist the passing traffic and not be bunched together.

Sufficient space should be left between cyclists to allow a safe stopping distance. Cyclists should be well-separated out on steep descents. This is covered in more detail in section 3.

- d. Virtually all cycle paths have joint use with pedestrians which can include dog walkers, joggers and groups of walkers. As cycles are relatively quiet, it is important to use a bell to give a prior warning of your approach.
- e. Even on quiet roads, it is important to watch out and listen for approaching motor traffic in front and behind and 'single up' as necessary. Cyclists should always be in single file and ride well in at severe bends and blind corners where risks are increased.
- f. Special care is required on main roads. Be particularly careful if you decide to 'slipstream' queues of stationary

traffic i.e. overtaking on the inside. Take particular care also when turning right, taking advantage of breaks in the traffic flow to position yourself in the centre of the lane a short distance in advance of the turn whilst making a clear hand signal to indicate your intention to turn. If in doubt **always** stop on the left-hand side and wait for a break in the traffic before starting up again and turning right. Getting off the bike and walking across or through hazardous areas is always a good idea. Fitting a mirror to your handlebars on the right can be very helpful in assessing and adjusting your road maneuvers. We strongly recommend the fitting of a mirror.

- g. You may on occasions pass the Ride Leader. This can happen on a steep hill if the Ride Leader is on a road bike and you need to maintain momentum on an electric bike. If this happens, either wait at the top for the Ride Leader to pass or carry on until the next junction. Do not go past the next cross roads or turning unless you are certain of the route being taken.
- h. If there is an occasion when no rider is visible in front of you, assume that when you come to a road junction, the route is straight ahead. If this is not so, the Ride Leader is instructed to wait at that junction or to leave someone there to point the way.
- i. Please follow the instructions of the Ride Leader. If you become separated from the group, do not take any risks in catching up - the group will wait for you.
- j. Shout warnings e.g. "car back!" or "horses ahead!" and signal riders if there is a danger in the road. Let other riders know well in advance if you intend to stop. Shout "Stopping" loudly. Please note that we all have a general 'Duty of Care' for each other.
- k. Steep ascents and steep descents are frequently encountered. In both cases, riders should be well-separated out. Great care is needed on steep descents and to suit conditions with a very slow speed sometimes demanded. Grit or loose surfaces on corners present a high danger risk and it is not unheard of for cyclists to walk **down** a hill. More details follow.

3. CARE ON STEEP HILLS

Steep slopes up: here are some things to consider -

- a. Our judgement when ascending hills is affected by the fact that we don't want to stop because we may not be able to get started again.
- b. We try to keep up a reasonable momentum if we can in order to make it to the top.
- c. Riders will have different natural paces when cycling uphill. We all recognise having to slow down on hills sometimes to accommodate slower riders in front of us. This can cause bunching, loss of control, stopping suddenly and falling. To mitigate against this, a gap between riders will allow time for those behind to stop under control, to pass safely if they can or to alter their speed to suit.
- d. The situation is better on a wider track but we may have to face fast moving traffic coming down the hill against us. Traffic behind us can also cause a problem.
- e. Electric bikes have an additional problem in that the rider must keep going at a reasonable speed, since power delivered is proportional to cadence. A sudden drop in pedal revolution speed often means that the rider must stop suddenly because the motor dies. They then may have to push a heavy bike the rest of the way up the hill.
- f. Because electric bikes are heavier, going slowly uphill makes control more difficult.

When the Ride Leader indicates a steep upward hill approaching, riders must:

- change to a lower gear
- be well-separated
- be mindful of all the issues raised above.

A Ride Leader, on a particularly difficult steep uphill slope, may decide to stop well in advance of such a hill. They may then ask electric bike riders to go first, to leave a gap before asking energetic and very fit non-electrics to proceed next followed by a further gap for the slowest riders to continue at the back.

Steep slopes down: falling off whilst going fast downhill is likely to cause a severe injury.

When a Ride Leader indicates a steep slope down, riders must:

- separate out by at least 10m

- control their speed on the descent
- not pass another rider if the track is narrow
- if passing on a wide track, shout "passing on the right". Try not to pass on the left.

4. CLOTHING/LIGHTS FOR SAFE CYCLING

- We strongly recommend that all cyclists belonging to any cycling group wear a cycle helmet. We also advise the wearing of a high visibility/reflective jacket and a high visibility vest for occasions when the jacket is removed in warm weather.
- Given the vagaries of the weather, members are also advised to bring a waterproof jacket and to consider waterproof over-trousers. If cycling in a T-shirt/vest in warm weather, it is also advisable to carry a second layer to guard against unexpected temperature drops. Cycling gloves are usually essential for temperatures below 10 degrees C. We always aim to cycle in daylight.
- We ask all cyclists to consider fitting a red illuminated rear light and a white front light to make them more visible at all times. Multi-function versions are available at low cost and setting the light to the flash function is particularly effective.

5. COMMUNICATION BEFORE AND DURING CYCLE RIDES

Please also read the paragraphs on 'Ride Leaders' within 'Operation of the Cycling Groups', although some of the detail there is repeated below.

- In advance of the ride, the Group Leader will provide: ride date and time; name of the Ride Leader; start point; length; height gained, ascent/mile; various route details; details of the lunch stop and any special safety considerations. This will be published on the U3A website. Please contact the Ride Leader with any queries about ride suitability or any other issues or suggestions relating to each ride.
- In conjunction with the Group Leader, Ride Leaders will make a decision in advance of the ride about cancellation in the light of predicted weather conditions on the day. We ask that riders whose intention it is to ride on that day, consider informing the Ride Leader in advance. This will assist the Ride Leader in informing members at short notice if the ride is not going to take place. This is achieved via the corresponding Cycling WhatsApp Group and via email. Riders are asked to quickly check WhatsApp just before setting out to join a ride in case there are last-minute changes.
- Ride Leaders include their telephone number within the ride details so that anyone joining a ride may also phone the Ride Leader if they have any doubts about the ride taking place on the day.
- Riders are advised to record the Ride Leader's mobile phone number within the contacts list of their own mobile. This can facilitate communication should an unexpected situation arise during the ride. Please carry your mobile fully charged.
- If for any reason a member decides, during the ride, that they cannot continue, for example, as a result of a mechanical problem or a health problem, they should contact the Ride Leader immediately and discuss the best course of action. This might include telephoning a relative or friend for assistance, locking up the bicycle and catching public transport home, telephoning for help, etc.
- We often cycle in remote locations. If you need to telephone the Ride Leader and there is no response, please send a short text message since this will be received when the signal strength improves on the route. However, please note that one of the responsibilities of a Ride Leader is to ensure that all riders come together again at various points along the route.
- On the day, the Ride Leader will brief members about the route, special safety issues, possible stops etc. and any changes necessary to the original plans.
- It is common practice to appoint a Backmarker where numbers are greater than 6. Walkie-talkie radios are available to facilitate communication between the Ride Leader and the Backmarker.

6. PERSONAL FITNESS FOR CYCLING

- a. You do not need to be very fit to join one of the cycling groups. Our members have a range of fitness levels and they all enjoy their experience of cycling. Please remember that we have a variety of groups offering different levels of challenge. Increasing numbers of our riders in all groups now own electric bikes. This is a great leveler of riders of varying fitness.
- b. If you are unsure about your competency or your fitness, one of our Group Leaders will be happy to talk to you about this and to suggest, especially for beginners: how to progress, bike suitability, building confidence and to answer any other queries or doubts you may have. Please note that Group or Ride Leader may advise you NOT to undertake a ride and you must take their advice.
- c. All rides approved by each Group Leader can be accessed on the U3A website and will have the following details provided: a link the route on the 'plotaroute' website, start time, start point with parking, length, height gained, height gained per mile, description, refreshment stop(s) and any special safety aspects to be noted along the route. Please give consideration to your fitness in relation to ride length and particularly to height gain and if there are any particularly steep sections.
- d. Judging ride challenge: the most important figure when making a judgement about your ability to cope with the challenge of a route is the height gain per mile. This is simply the total ascent divided by the total distance. On a non-electric bike and as a general guide, a figure of < 40ft/ml could be regarded as 'leisurely'; 40 - 70ft/ml as 'moderate'; 70 – 100ft/ml as 'challenging', and above 100ft/ml as 'strenuous'. In addition, it is often very useful to look carefully at the 'hills' profile chart which can easily be displayed within the plotaroute website

7. MAKING SURE YOUR CYCLE IS IN GOOD MECHANICAL CONDITION AND IS WELL-EQUIPPED

- a. Please make sure that your cycle is in good mechanical order before coming on a ride. If you have doubts about the roadworthiness of your bike, take it in into your local cycle shop for evaluation.
- b. Punctures are a common problem on a ride. The chances of a puncture, however, are reduced by making sure the tyres are not badly worn.
- c. All cyclists should carry a spare inner tube for the size of tyres on their bike. The Ride Leader will always carry tyre levers and a pump.