

## HBAM Group Rides Policy & Guidelines



**Group riding has its own special demands and rewards. A good group ride making rapid fluid progress, riding as one, can be a definite high, as well as providing good conversation of the shared experiences at the stops. For this reason, a briefing will be given by the Ride Leader prior to all group rides. Please listen carefully even if you have heard it many times before as it is intended to provide information that may be of use to you during the day.**

1 All riders are responsible for maintaining their own safety and complying with the Law at all times.

2 Group rides are managed by a Ride Leader and a Tail End Charlie (TEC). (A Ride Leader is someone who has demonstrated that they have achieved a required level of competency to effectively lead a ride, and TEC is always an Observer, Local Observer, Senior Observer or National Observer.)

Under normal circumstances the leader must remain at the front and TEC must remain at the back. Everyone in the group should endeavour to ensure that this is the case. HBAM normally use the Marker System on group rides to indicate where the route changes from the current road.

### **3 Starting the ride**

3.1 If the group is large it may be split into two or more separate groups, (subject to sufficient approved Leaders and Observers being available).

3.2 Observers will be identified (and may wear HBAM vests to aid identification).

3.3 You should always make sure that you know who the Lead and TEC are, and how they can be identified on the road.

3.4 Pay attention to the pre-ride briefing and before setting off on the ride, you should satisfy yourself that you know how to recognise the Leader's signal to stop, how to act as a marker and how to recognise the signal from TEC that you may move off when safe to do so. If you are not sure, ask the Leader / TEC before the ride starts!.

3.5 Riders may be issued with an armband which should be worn on your right arm. The purpose of the armband is to identify you as one of our group in the event that we meet other riders en route who pass through the group.

3.6 When riding in a group it is always advisable to ensure that other members are ready to go. HBAM group rides are no different. Be prepared to give the Leader a nod or thumbs up to indicate that you are ready to go. (Your Observer will certainly expect this on your individual training rides.) Make sure that you are aware of the place/location of rest stops, which will normally be approx. every 90mins / 60 miles, whichever comes first and the finish point. You should also ensure that you have the mobile # of Leader or TEC in case you are separated from the group. (This information will be made available during the pre-ride briefing)

3.7 Ensure that you are aware of the number of bikes within the group and if anyone is riding together (e.g. some observers may ride with their associate on a ride and stop with them as markers).

3.8 If you are a new or prospective member please identify yourself to the Leader or TEC who will arrange for you to be 'supervised' by an Observer for the 1st part of the ride (probably until the first rest stop / regroup. If they are happy with your riding, you will be invited to continue unsupervised.) Members who have not been on a Group ride before are recommended to start at the back so they can see how the marker system operates.

***3.9 Any rider who is not riding appropriately within the group may find themselves having a 'conversation' with an Observer! Any rider who blatantly refuses to abide by this group ride policy may be taken aside by an Observer and could be requested to leave the group ride.***

## **4 On the Road**

4.1 Remember: Safety first!

4.2 At all times, each and every rider is responsible for their own safety, their own actions and any consequences that those actions may have. RIDE FOR YOURSELF – DON'T JUST FOLLOW THE BACK WHEEL OF THE BIKE IN FRONT!

4.3 The leader is responsible for navigation only, and every rider must use their own judgment about each and every course of action that they personally take.

4.4 Always obey traffic laws.

4.5 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 or sudden braking or changes in direction. As always, before changing position on the road, you need to be aware what's around you and that the space you're going to occupy is clear!

4.6 At junctions, take the obvious straight ahead route unless a marker bike indicates otherwise.

4.7 At roundabouts the marker will be on the exit route, if you cannot see the marker on the approach be prepared to completely circle the roundabout to confirm the correct exit (mainly large roundabouts)

4.8 If you are uncomfortable with the pace of the ride, slow down and let other riders pass and then continue at a pace you are comfortable with in front of the TEC.

4.9 If you overtake another rider within the group, do so safely and legally, leaving the overtaken rider as much room as is possible.

4.10 When riding along straight, don't ride in a single line but stagger the sequence of riders in tyre tracks 1 and 2 so that not only can you maintain a clearer view ahead (to improve your response times) but the leader & TEC can more easily see how the group are progressing. Obviously, as you approach a corner you may break the stagger and move to your optimum line but revert to the stagger once straight. When approaching traffic lights or junctions, close up in pairs in line abreast and try to stay together to increase the probability of getting the group through on a single light sequence. Anticipate changes and maintain the ride order once you move off.

4.11 Allow other road users to overtake the group if they wish. Make space for them to do so if necessary and if it is safe to do so.

## **5 Overtakes**

5.1 Plan ahead and although everyone is 'responsible for their own ride' it is good to consider the others in the group and think what you can do to help them through. When you are overtaking don't back off as soon as you have passed the vehicle, think of the rider behind, keep the speed on and move into a position that will leave room for them to complete their manoeuvre and slot in beside you. Be aware of the capabilities of the bikes and riders around you and make the appropriate allowances for them, thereby demonstrating your advanced riding skills.

## **6 Radios**

6.1 The use of radios can be a positive addition to any group ride. In particular radio contact between the Leader and TEC can keep the group moving smoothly – for example; if the entire group are together and in sight of one another the TEC could call ahead to the Leader to let them know that there is no need to mark the next junction. If the TEC reports when all are clear of the junction/lights etc it can allow the leader to open up the pace, conversely if the group is getting separated because they are baulked by traffic or lights etc, a call from the TEC can allow the Leader to cut the pace until the group has reformed. Radios can also be used to warn of obstructions and hazards, road conditions or non-group riders overtaking. If

you think you or those behind you are dropping back, call before you/they drop out of range and be prepared to act as a relay between dispersed members of the group.

6.2 Make sure that if you are using voice activated transmissions (VOX) rather than Press to Talk (PTT) that you have adjusted the levels correctly. It can be very annoying for other members of the group if your VOX cuts in with just wind noise above a certain speed. Test the radios before the start and after each fuel/coffee stop – don't assume that if the radio worked before the stop it will work after! The first part of a transmission is the most likely to be missed as transmitters and receivers align so it is good practice to repeat directions (e.g.: "Left, Left, Left") or make an initial noise before speaking.

6.3 While on a group ride please restrict transmissions to information relevant to the ride.

6.4 Please note, however, that it is not required that you have a radio, and in fact most riders do not have them.

## **7. Filtering through traffic**

When filtering in a group, all the precautions for solo filtering apply with some important additional considerations:

Be aware that some drivers may resent the fact that they have been passed and could 'shut the door' to those following.

Some drivers may be un-nerved by a bike passing close to them and may behave erratically.

Be aware that riders' perception of how big a gap is will vary (particularly if some have panniers and others don't!) Don't just assume that the rider in front is going through.

On a multi-lane carriageway filter between the same lanes as the bikes ahead. Passing on both sides of a row of cars could cause a driver to pull over to allow a rider to pass on one side and in doing so he will have effectively 'shut the door' for the rider on the other side.

## **8. Leaving the ride**

8.1 If you plan to leave the group other than at a pre arranged stop, you should inform the TEC of your intentions and should leave from the back of the group, in front of TEC, to avoid another rider in the group following you in error.

## **9. If you get lost**

9.1 The most common causes for getting lost are either failure to see a marker / a marker not marking, or someone leaving the group while on the road and the bike behind follows. Both causes are avoidable if everyone follows this guideline document. If you do get lost and after at least 10 minutes no one has found you, proceed to the destination point or contact the Leader.

## **10. If there is a problem**

10.1 If the Ride Leader realises that there is no-one behind them it will normally indicate that all riders are marking junctions OR that there has been an incident that has caused TEC to stop.

10.2 The Leader (or an appointed rider) will then, if necessary, retrace the route to investigate the cause of the delay and take appropriate remedial action. This is why it is imperative that markers stay where they are, until advised otherwise, so that the route indication remains intact. Remember that this may take some time, and time seems to pass very slowly when you are sitting at the side of the road.

## **11. When you are behind the Leader**

11.1 Be prepared to stop and act as the marker when indicated to do so by the 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.

11.2 If, as a new rider to the group, you don't feel comfortable in marking a junction and you realise that you are getting near to being number two behind the Leader simply wave one or two riders through past you. No-one will mind!

## **12. When You are the Marker**

12.1 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.

12.2 When the Leader signals for you to stop, do so only where you are safe and visible to the following riders.

12.3 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.

12.4 Remain on your machine with your engine running and point the direction to turn to riders from the group as they approach. This is not the time to take your helmet off and take a stroll along the road to stretch your legs, or even decide to have a quick cigarette.

12.5 Make sure that you are as visible as possible to riders approaching you. This can be greatly enhanced by waving your arm to indicate the route to take. It's surprising how even black leathers are far more visible against the dark background of a hedge by a little movement.

12.6 If the Leader has indicated for you to stop prior to a cross roads or "T" junction, and it is safe for you to do so, don't sit there with your left hand indicator on whilst pointing right. It is often confusing and could possibly cause a hazard.

12.7 At the beginning of the ride, the total number of bikes in the group should be identified, alternatively you should make a mental note yourself. Once you have stopped as the marker, count passing riders and be prepared to move off as soon as you see TEC so that you can maintain smooth progress. If you cannot pull out into the traffic cleanly and safely the TEC may pass you but will allow you to pass them as soon as it is safe to do so, and enable you to take up your position in front of them.

12.8 Do not move until the TEC appears – and be ready to move off safely as soon as the TEC signals you to do so. If the TEC fails to appear, still do not move. If something has gone wrong, someone will return for you. REMEMBER. YOU ARE ALL THAT'S GOING TO HELP THE FOLLOWING BIKES FIND THE CORRECT ROUTE.

12.9 If you see other riders from the group take the wrong direction do not attempt to chase after them.

12.10 Make sure that what appears to be the last bike is really the TEC who will slow down as they approach to enable you to pull out safely in front. To enable this to happen smoothly, you need to be on your bike and ready to go.

## **And Finally.**

If you follow these relatively simple guidelines then our experience is that we will all enjoy our HBAM group rides and get the most out of them. After all we're there to have FUN.

HBAM Committee.  
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