



TAKE THE LEAD

*Great group rides need an organiser to make them happen, which is why CTC ran a series of free ride leader workshops. **Julie Rand** explains*



● Club rides by Devon CTC (left and this picture)
● (Below) Ali Baker (L)

THINK BACK to some of the best group rides you've been on. What made them memorable? Was it the scenery, the company, the destination, an enjoyable refreshment stop, or a combination of all of these? Chances are, your favourite rides didn't happen by luck: somebody planned the route, thought about a nice place to stop, and brought everyone together. That person was most likely also the ride leader, without whom group rides wouldn't take place.

Leisure cyclists may take the services of a ride leader for granted, but a good one is much more than a flesh-and-blood GPS. Ride leaders are the largely unsung heroes who exemplify a long-standing CTC tradition: bringing people together in like-minded company to cycle and explore interesting parts of the UK and beyond.

Ride guidance

CTC's series of free workshops last autumn sought to identify and share the best ideas for leading groups. Participants looked at ways of planning a ride, taking into account the terrain, the weather, and the ability and requirements of the group. Topics included where ride leaders should position

themselves, how to use a back-marker, and when to single out or ride two abreast. The workshops also examined why people choose to go on a group ride rather than riding alone.

Forty workshops took place throughout the country. They were funded by part of the £1million CTC received from the Department for Transport for the Big Bike Revival 2015, a two-week festival of cycle renovation and rides at bike recycling centres across the country. The Big Bike Revival was aimed at lapsed cyclists, inspiring them to get back on their bikes. The ride leader workshops were funded to improve the amount and quality of led rides available through CTC's network of over 800 groups.

Workshop attendees included experienced and novice ride leaders from over 400 CTC Member Groups and affiliated groups. The workshops were seminars more than lectures; many participants praised their interactivity and the opportunity to share tips with each other. Group activities included looking at a variety of unexpected situations that can occur on a ride, such as what to do if a rider disappears, or if the ride leader is unable to continue. While common sense is often more useful than having a prescriptive solution to every problem, in the case of a major incident, it's useful to have a set of Emergency Operating Procedures to fall back on. The workshops drew up a recommended checklist of actions to take in the unlikely event of a serious situation arising.

Insurance and liability issues are important for ride leaders these days so a whole unit was devoted to the 'legal, moral and insurance requirements of ride leaders'. Participants were reassured that as long as ride leaders are registered with a CTC



Left & above: Graham Brodrie. Right & overleaf: Selim Korycki

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◆ More leaders means a wider range of rides. This is the New Forest Cycling Week group

» Member Group or an affiliate group, they are covered up to £10million by our Organisers' Liability Insurance. The caveat is that rides are run in accordance with our guidelines, which are based on a common sense approach as to what constitutes leisure riding; massed start races, for example, are not covered.

Another area ride leaders are often worried about is that of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Again, the workshops looked at CTC guidance to set minds at rest. As long as a few basic procedures are borne in mind, there is no reason to disallow young people from taking part in group rides. The workshops also covered issues surrounding data protection.

More leaders, more rides

There was on-the-road advice for ride leaders as well. What equipment should leaders carry? What should others on the ride bring? Most groups had similar ideas when it came to group-ride communication, although the language differed; apparently it's only us southerners who use the traditional CTC terms 'oil up/down'!

One of the main goals of the workshops, apart from reassuring existing ride leaders that they were doing an excellent job, was to empower new riders to take on the role by demystifying the issues involved. Afterwards, 92% of the 751 people who took part said they would feel more confident leading rides in the future, while 81% said they actually intended to lead more rides in the future.

Ali Baker is an experienced ride leader from Southampton CTC, a group which has made great strides recently in catering to a wide variety of riders. 'I really enjoyed the ride leader workshop,' she said. 'We had plenty of time to go over things with each other. I feel more confident in ride leading because now I know all the guidelines and have a copy of the documents. I can answer questions from riders regarding insurance, and I can explain the reason for a policy. It is all good and leads to an enjoyable and safe club ride. When I am leading now, I will remind the riders that the ride is a team effort and the aim is for the group to arrive at the destination together, having all been looked after and had a great time.'

Like the more relaxed, sociable types of rides CTC is well-known for, the workshops were conducted in a friendly atmosphere. There was no test or qualification at the end of them as CTC recognises the voluntary nature of the ride leader role and does not believe a formal assessment process is necessary. However, participants did receive a certificate of attendance. Those who wanted to learn more about how to ride in a peloton or how to manage a group on the road were pointed in the direction of CTC's range of Group and Club Leader courses.

A Ride Leader handbook accompanied the workshops, containing all the documents a ride leader might need. This will be made available to download later in 2016. Until then, see bit.ly/ctc-group-event-resources for more information for ride leaders. ◆

“Ride leaders registered with a CTC Member Group or an affiliate group are covered up to £10million by our Organisers' Liability Insurance”

LEAD STORIES

40

Workshop locations in England, Scotland & Wales



401

Different CTC groups represented by participants



80%

CTC Member Groups with a participant at a ride leader workshop

50%

CTC affiliate groups with a participant at a ride leader workshop



351

People who registered for a workshop had never led a ride



20%

People who registered for a workshop do not currently ride with a group

ALMOST HALF
Proportion of those registering who ride 1-3 times per week

