



## WEST WILTS VMCC

### A Guide for Ride Leaders and Tail End Riders planning & conducting Section Rides

#### Introduction

The purpose of this document is to set out a series of guidelines to help those organising and conducting formal group rides. A formal West Wilts VMCC ride is any Section Midweek, Wandering, Green Lane or Weekend ride listed in the VMCC calendar and therefore covered by VMCC 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability insurance.

#### 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.**

#### Planning the ride

In planning the Section ride calendar for the year, the Committee will seek volunteers as the leader of each scheduled ride.

In planning the ride, the Run Leader will consider the distance to be covered, types of roads, variety of motorcycles that will be ridden, fuel range of machines, location of refreshment stops etc. No on-road section between breaks/debriefs should be planned to exceed 90 minutes.

It is the responsibility of the Ride Leader to appoint a tail end rider.

The ride leader must prepare a signing on sheet for the ride. All participants in the ride must sign on in order to be covered by the VMCC 3<sup>rd</sup> party liability insurance. A template signing on sheet is attached.

A planning checklist is attached at Annex 1 and a generic Social Runs Risk Assessment at Appendix 2.

### **Size of group**

Be aware that large groups of motorcycles riding together can disrupt the flow of traffic and should be avoided.

Where the number of participants is large [more than 20], there is a considerable variation in the speed/braking ability of motorcycles, riders are of mixed ability, the route complexity or required skill level justifies it, consideration should be given to splitting the run into smaller groups.

Alternatively, where splitting a large group is not possible, the Ride Leader should consider appointing a support rider behind the back marker, providing more capacity to assist a stopped rider or assist with any other incident and/or to communicate an issue to the lead rider.

The ride plan needs to take account of these possibilities.

### **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 be avoided when riding in a group and a well-established method exists that makes both unnecessary. This is the leader and tail-end rider system otherwise known as **The Drop Off 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 there is a deviation from the obvious straight-ahead route, 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 never a need to ride in convoy with all bikes in sight of each other.

The Ride Leader and Tail-end rider will wear distinctive coloured HiViz or coloured vests to denote their roles. These vests will be provided by the Section.

### **The Pre-Ride Brief**

The briefing before setting off is conducted by the Ride Leader;

- Check that everybody has officially signed on for the ride
- Make sure that everyone is familiar with the lead & tail-end rider system – **The Drop off system**. If the group is large, consider riding in two or more separate groups.
- All riders should be made aware who the lead and tail-end riders are and how they can be identified on the road. Also the identity of any other support riders in the case of large groups.
- Ensure every rider knows how to recognise the leader's signal to stop and act as a marker.
- A rough outline of the route including petrol stops, rest stops and the final destination.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of the number of bikes within the group and who are riding together and any sub groups. .
- Remind participants that if any rider is planning to leave the group other than at a pre-arranged stop, they should inform the lead or tail-end rider of their intentions.
- Although no rider is expected to become separated from the group, it may be advisable to have a plan

- All riders should have the mobile phone numbers of the lead and tail-end rider.
- Remind all riders that they are each responsible for maintaining safety and complying with the law at all times.

### **The Leader's role**

- Plan a route that will be achievable for the abilities & motorcycles of the expected riders, with suitable refreshment stops and refuelling opportunities.
- Brief all riders before setting off
- Ride smoothly and at a steady pace.
- If you do not have a bike behind you to act as a marker for a change in direction, stop in a safe place or slow down until one arrives.
- A change of direction at any junction should always be marked as should the exit from any roundabout. Otherwise, the assumption is that the obvious straight ahead route will apply. If in doubt it is better to place a marker to provide certainty.
- Always leave a marker at a change in direction even if you think all the group are in sight of each other.
- The ultimate responsibility for the safety of markers is their own, but you can help them mark the route effectively and safely by giving them plenty of warning that you require them to stop.
- Be aware that sensible regrouping during a ride can be beneficial. Often during the ride the group can become spread out over several miles, resulting in the marker having a long wait for the back marker to arrive. Particularly with older machines, this can result in overheated engines and/or stalling and then refusing to start. Keeping the ride flowing but at a slower pace for a mile or so without stopping can help the group to catch up and avoid such problems.

- If it becomes apparent that the Group has come to a halt because a rider has had problems, consider retracing the route until you discover the cause of the hold-up and take appropriate action. Ensure that those who have stopped beyond the hold-up are kept informed of the situation.
- If in the opinion of the ride leader, any participant who through their attitude or actions, endangers others within the Section ride, or members of the public, or whose riding would bring VMCC into disrepute, should be advised by the ride leader to rectify their riding immediately or be excluded from continuing within the Section ride. If any rider is excluded a report must be created detailing the incident and is to be submitted by the ride leader to the Section Secretary.

### **The role of the Tail End rider**

- As you approach the marker bike, slow down to enable the rider to pull out. If it is necessary to stop and wait, then do so in a safe place. Try not to pass the marker as this is how they will know you are the tail-end rider.
- Watch for any rider who feels that the pace is too quick and is signalling for other bikes to overtake. Allow such a rider to stay at the rear of the group in front of you. Such riders should be nurtured and not encouraged to ride faster.
- Keep an eye out for riders in front of you that are clearly riding inappropriately or may be struggling. In conjunction with the leader, identify appropriate actions to address the situation.
- Watch for any bikes that have pulled over for any reason, if safe, stop to find out what the problem is and agree appropriate action e.g. the rider leaves the ride to ride direct to home or to summon a break down service. As tail-end rider, do not stay longer than 10 minutes with a rider who has mechanical problems.

### **VMCC Public Liability Insurance**

Official West Wilts Section events are covered for Public Liability by insurance cover arranged by the VMCC nationally. Official Section events are those listed in the VMCC Calendar and those listed in the periodic Section Notes compiled by the Section Secretary.

## **Acknowledgements**

Developed with thanks to IAM Roadsmart and its manual of guidance for Group Organised rides and in accordance with the relevant sections of the VMCC Secretary's Handbook.

## **Further information**

This YouTube video developed by the North East England Triumph Owners Motor Cycle Club describes the Drop Off system in practice....

[https://youtu.be/hQ4OR-b68xI?si=Y44eBu\\_zbjRmXuUK](https://youtu.be/hQ4OR-b68xI?si=Y44eBu_zbjRmXuUK)

Please also refer to the Section Rides Guidelines for Members.

**A Guide for Ride Leaders and Tail End Riders planning & conducting Section Rides**

**West Wilts Section of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club**

**January 2026**

### Run Leaders Checklist

	Action	Completed
1	Ride plan developed	
2	Ride included on Section Calendar	
3	Venues identified and where necessary booked	
4	Tail End Rider[s] identified	
5	Route designed	
6	Risk Assessment reviewed	
7	Pre ride brief prepared	
8	Signing on sheet prepared	
9	Route check ride carried out	
10	Pre event publicity issued	
11	Pre ride brief carried out	
12	Ride conducted	
13	Post ride review carried out	
14	Ride report sent to Section Secretary for inclusion in Section Newsletter	

### West Wilts VMCC- Social Run Risk Assessment Template

Safety issue	Measures needed	Action from Run Leader
1. Breakdown of the Drop Off System	Check understanding of all in pre ride brief - Confirm action if a rider is detached from the group.	Pre ride brief
2. Variable speed/stopping distances	Divide ride into faster and slower groups?	Consider likelihood before ride Identify additional leaders Pre ride brief
3. Specific narrow lanes	Proceeding with caution.	Pre ride brief
4. Rough unsealed or muddy roads	Check route week before Roads to be selected that can be ridden safely on road tyres.	Ride leader Pre ride brief
5. Stopping	Safe places to be identified.	Ensure sufficient space, at any planned stops including start , refreshment and end points.
6. Hazardous junctions	Care and attention.	Pre ride brief
7. Motorways/Dual carriageways	Route to avoid unless absolutely necessary	Plan to avoid unless absolutely necessary eg M48 Severn Bridge
8. Rider fatigue/feeling unwell during ride	Tail end rider to agree action with rider affected	Pre ride brief
9. Poor machine condition	Advice to riders.	Question on the signing on sheet
10. Adverse weather	Ride to be cancelled or course to be altered.	Event organiser to check weather forecast.



**The Vintage Motor Cycle Club Ltd.,**  
Allen House, Wetmore Road,  
Burton Upon Trent, Staffordshire.  
DE14 1TR  
Tel: (01283) 540557

**West Wiltshire Section**  
Event:  
Date:  
Start Venue:  
Start Time:

Run Organiser:  
Tail end rider:  
Event Type/Description: Social Run  
Machine Type: Any Machine.

**Signing on form for non-competitive events  
(in terms of speed or performance) on public roads.**

**PLEASE READ THIS:** In signing this sheet, you confirm:

1. that you are suitably licensed, physically and mentally fit to take part in the event, you are not under the influence of drugs or alcohol and competent to do so;
2. that the machine which you participate on is insured as required by the Road Traffic Act or equivalent legislation and that your insurance covers participation in this type of event;
3. that the machine you are using is suitable and appropriate for this event, that it is roadworthy, has a current MOT Certificate where this is required and that it is taxed for road use; and
4. that you will follow the instructions or event organisers, officials and marshals.

*Today's route\* follows a mixture of main roads and country lanes. There may be dangerous junctions at which extra care should be taken, and sections of narrow lanes with loose surfaces or poor visibility. Please be careful and ride according to the conditions. (\*Adjust text to include any specific points from the rider's fact sheet/briefing.)*

Name (Print)	Signature	VMCC Membership No./ Guest	Rider Pillion, R/P	Motorcycle Make and model or description	M/C Reg Number	Mobile Phone Number



