



## WEST WILTS VMCC

### Section Rides

#### Guidelines for Members - The Drop Off System

##### Introduction

Riding with a group can be great fun but riding safely with others requires a degree of discipline – and sometimes restraint too. The advantage of using a standard approach to riding in a group is that all riders will know what is expected of them and understand what other riders in the group are likely to do, and what is expected of them while they are riding.

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.**

Traffic laws must always be obeyed when riding on the road and the content of the Highway Code <https://www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk> observed. Do not worry if you fall behind, there will be a marker rider waiting to show you the route. Ride your normal ride within your capabilities and don't be tempted to change this.

##### The Drop Off System - basic principles

The basis of the **Drop Off 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.

Whenever there is a deviation from the obvious straight-ahead route, the leader will indicate to the rider travelling behind him/her to pull 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.

The Ride Leader and Tail-end rider will wear distinctive coloured HiViz or coloured vests to denote their roles.

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)

**The Ride Leader will conduct a briefing before setting off;**

The briefing will cover the following points;

- A check that everybody has officially signed on for the ride
- A check that everyone is familiar with the lead & tail-end rider system – **The Drop off system.**
- The identity of the lead and tail-end riders and any additional support riders and how they can be identified on the road.
- 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 – please start the ride with a full tank of petrol and make use of petrol stops!
- Arrangements for leaving the ride
- Safety and compliance with the law at all times.

### **On the road**

- Safety first! - At all times, every rider is responsible for their own safety, their actions and any consequences that those actions may have.
- The leader is responsible for navigation only, every rider must use their judgement about every course of action that they take.
- Always obey traffic laws.
- 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, sudden braking or changes in direction.
- At junctions take the obvious straight-ahead route unless a marker bike indicates otherwise.
- At roundabouts, the marker bike should be on the exit route, if you cannot see the marker on the approach be prepared to circle the roundabout to confirm the correct exit (mainly large roundabouts).
- Overtaking within the group is permissible, **when safe and legal.** A rider should not be pressured into going any faster than they feel safe and the following rider should not pressure the rider in front. The following rider can make their intentions known and where appropriate the rider in front can yield allowing for a safe and courteous overtake. The tail-end rider will not overtake others in the group.
- If you intend to leave the group, allow all riders to pass you and indicate to the tail-end rider your intentions.
- When on the open road, ride in staggered formation when near other group riders.

- Leave adequate space between yourself and the rider in front bearing in mind braking effectiveness can vary depending upon the age of the machine - Remember the two second rule and double this in adverse weather conditions.
- Allow other road users to overtake the group if they wish. Where it is safe make space for them to do so.

### **When behind the leader**

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

### **When you are the Marker**

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

When marking, point in the direction to be taken by following riders and, if you have them, use your indicators to reinforce that direction.

Do not move until the tail-end rider appears. If the tail-end rider fails to appear, 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. If you see other riders from the group take the wrong direction do not attempt to chase after them. Wait until the tail-end rider arrives and inform them. If the riders return in the meantime, then you don't need to inform the tail-end rider if you are sure that all riders that took the wrong direction have returned to the junction you are marking. Make sure that what appears to be the last bike is really the tail-end rider who will slow down as they approach to enable you to pull out safely in front.

Always remain on your machine and be ready to move off. Lookout for the arrival of the tail-end rider and pull out safely and smoothly in front of their motorcycle.

If you do not want to be a marker, stay in the group and do not move up into the second person position.

### **If you break down or run out of petrol**

Safety first - Pull over to one side and find a safe place to stop. Wait for the tail end rider/other designated back up rider to arrive and decide with him/her the action to take.

### **If you get lost**

The most common cause of getting lost is a failure to see a marker or someone leaving the group while on the road and the bike behind follows. These are avoidable if everyone follows this guide.

If you arrive at a junction and there is no marker it is likely that you have made an incorrect turn. Retrace your route to the last place you saw a marker where the tail-end rider may be

waiting for you. Note that the tail-end rider will wait 10 minutes and then proceed on the route, so as not to hold up the ride.

### **Rider competence & fitness**

Every rider must ride within their capabilities and exercise judgement when determining the safety of their actions. If at any time a rider feels that they are not capable of continuing, perhaps the ride exceeds their skill level or they feel unwell, then they should pull over at a safe and legal position until they are joined by the tail-end rider, who will discuss & agree the action to take.

**Guidelines for Members - The Drop off system**  
**West Wilts Section of the Vintage Motor Cycle Club**  
**January 2026**