

in advance, so people are more likely to wait at the top of a hill or junction to check where to go.”

Gus’s Dunoon Bothy rides are free and open to anyone, whatever their skill level. Some take part on traditional bikes and some are on e-bikes, so Gus always asks the group to cycle at the pace of the slowest. He finds loops on fire roads are easiest for everyone as the gravel surface is perfectly rideable and, as someone with a Level 2 Mountain Bike Leadership certificate, he is only qualified to lead on trails of a non-technical nature within a half-hour walk of a road.

On CeCe’s rides, “miles are not as important as smiles”, she says. For her, the ideal group ride would have “lots of familiar friends, along with new people. I’d make sure new people were happy and felt welcomed to the group and there would be lots of chat and laughter. Everyone will support each other and there will be cake!”

Cycling UK’s own recommendations include:

- Finding out the names of everyone on your ride – not just for insurance purposes but because it’s friendlier.
- Giving a short briefing at the start to include likely distance, terrain, planned stops and time of return. This will give everyone an idea of what to expect and prevent grumbles later on.
- Explaining how you will lead the ride and any jargon and hand signals you might use; when and where you will wait for stragglers; how you will deal with traffic and so on. But also reminding each rider they are responsible for their own safety.
- Pointing out any likely hazards in advance.
- Avoiding blocking roads and trails by choosing stopping points carefully.
- Keeping the ride flowing smoothly but stopping occasionally and giving stragglers a rest before restarting.
- You have a duty of care to the riders and the public, so if you think someone may endanger themselves or others, have a quiet word with them. If their behaviour persists, you are entitled to ask them to leave the ride.
- You should lead by example and remain courteous and considerate to all road or trail users and fellow riders.
- Ensuring anyone who wishes to leave the ride is happy to make their own way home.
- At the end of the ride, thanking people for coming and letting them know details of the next one, if you have them.



Before you set off, let riders know the likely distance, terrain, pace, planned stops and time of return

### TAKING THE LEAD

Khalda Begum from Share Calthorpe community cycle club in Birmingham recommends volunteering as a ride leader to everyone. She explains: “It’s a way of giving back to the community, as well as a way of making new relationships and building confidence on a bike. You have the perfect excuse to get exercise out in the fresh air and challenge yourself – sometimes being a ride leader means learning to be patient! But you’ll also surprise yourself with how much you can achieve. It’s very worthwhile.”

If you would like to give ride leading a go, speak to your group’s secretary or rides coordinator. The group may provide an induction and even a mentor. Cycling UK strongly recommends that our member and affiliate group ride leaders undertake training in ride leading and first aid but doesn’t insist on them. (Other organisations may do so, however, especially if a payment for the ride is involved.)

For member groups, we ask that ride leaders are proposed and seconded by at least two committee members who can vouch for their suitability to have duty of care for others as well as plan and lead safe and congenial rides. All member group ride leaders should be registered with us for insurance purposes. Affiliate groups are strongly encouraged to submit names to us as well.

If you are delivering skills training as part of the role, either on or off road, you will likely need a professional qualification such as National Standard instructor training or Technical Mountain Bike Leader. You may also need to undertake a first aid and/or bike mechanic course. In this case, you should also think about Cycling UK’s Cycle Activity Provider insurance policy (see ‘You’re covered’). This provides indemnity for individuals rather than groups. ●

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As a registered ride leader for one of our groups, you will be covered for up to £10m  
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### You’re covered

Many people think they don’t need to worry about insurance if they are ‘just a group of friends’ going out together. Yet there is usually someone who has planned a route and is at the front of the group showing the way. If what you’re doing could be construed as a ‘led ride’ or formally arranged, it’s well worth your group being affiliated to Cycling UK (assuming you’re not already a Cycling UK member group).

As a registered ride leader for one of our groups, you can have peace of mind that you will be covered for up to £10m should anything occur during a ride that could lead to a claim against you or the group. Cycling UK’s insurance guidance makes it clear that ride leaders should be aware of who is on their rides in order to be covered by our organisers’ liability cover. Such cover is valid as long as the ride is led in accordance with our policies. Our online guidance and FAQs set out what is and isn’t covered: [cyclinguk.org/insurance](https://cyclinguk.org/insurance).

Above: Peter Cornish