

# ***Ride Safe with Lewes Wanderers Cycling Club***

Cycling is generally very safe, whether you are commuting to work, enjoying a club run or participating in a race. However, we share our roads with an increasing number of motor vehicles, and so accidents do occur from time to time. There is also a rise in incidents of conflict between cyclists and vehicle drivers due to impatience, lack of respect and not knowing the Highway Code - as cyclists we need to know our rights, cycle within the Code and not antagonise drivers in the first instance - the roads are there for us all to use safely in unison. In view of the large number of new cyclists now on the roads, Lewes Wanderers Cycling Club have prepared this short guide to safe cycling as a way of encouraging new riders to Ride Safe, and perhaps to offer some reminders to more experienced cyclists.

## **SAFETY**

**Be Seen:** You need to be clearly seen by drivers so try to wear light coloured clothing. Black looks cool (and makes you appear slimmer...) but, unfortunately, on those darker days you are almost invisible. By the same token, a flashing rear light is particularly effective in making your presence known to drivers and you might also consider a similarly flashing front light if the visibility is poor.

**Be assertive:** You have a right to be on the road, so you should not need to ride in the gutter where you are more likely to pick up punctures and where there are the additional hazards of drain covers and so on. More importantly, if an inconsiderate driver does squeeze you off the road, being too close to the kerb means that you have nowhere to go. In general, you should ride about a half metre from the kerb or road edge, moving in or out to avoid the inevitable potholes and other obstacles. However, caution and courtesy dictate that there will be times when you need to 'kerb hug' due to other road users.

**'Take the lane' when necessary:** From time to time you will need to 'take the lane', that is ride in the middle of the traffic lane, for example when you are turning right or passing parked cars. Some motorists may object to you behaving as if you are a car, but in many situations this will be the safest thing to do and is recommended by the by the Government-approved cycle training scheme *Bikeability*. A particular hazard is that of drivers opening the door of a parked car into your path. Always assume that this might happen and be prepared to move out and 'take the lane'.

**Make eye contact with motorists:** You need to anticipate drivers' actions and ensure that you have been seen. If, for example, there is a car waiting to turn into your path from a side road, assume that you have not been seen until it is clear that you have made eye contact with the driver. Ride positively and decisively with clear hand signals so that other road users know your intentions.

## **COURTESY**

We share the road with other users and it is incumbent upon us, and in our long-term interests as cyclists, to create an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and respect. We must obey the Highway Code – no jumping of red lights, riding at night without lights or going the wrong way down one-way streets. If we want motorists and other road users to accord us respect, then we must ensure that we act appropriately.

Horses and their riders are common in our Sussex lanes and they demand particular care since some horses appear to be distrustful of bikes. Always slow down, and if necessary stop, making your presence known to the horse riders before you pass. In most cases there will be no problem, but sometimes horses can be spooked, which clearly can be dangerous to both horse rider and cyclist.

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Riding two abreast is legal. However, considerations of safety and courtesy demand that if riding in company we 'single up', perhaps to let cars pass, or when riding on a particularly busy road.

Most other road users are considerate. However, from time to time we will all experience verbal abuse, dangerous driving or even physical threats from motorists. If this does happen you are advised not to respond, but if possible to take note of the perpetrators registration number and to report them via Operation Crackdown ([www.operationcrackdown.org](http://www.operationcrackdown.org)), the Sussex Police anti-social driving website. In our experience, the Police take such reports seriously and will follow them up.

## ***ETIQUETTE***

If you are new to cycling, riding in a group or bunch can be intimidating. However, there are some conventions, or unwritten rules that can help. We provide guidance for new members joining a Lewes Wanderers' club run, which is available here: <http://www.leweswanderers.co.uk/13pages/clubrunetiquette.pdf>.

All things being equal, a group of cyclists can generally ride faster than a single rider because in a group riders can take advantage of riding in the slipstream of the cyclist ahead. This can save around 20% of effort for the riders behind, rising to 30% or even 40% in the case of racers in the middle of a large bunch or peloton. So, in order to share the work, the riders at the front will periodically move over and let the next riders take over. If a group of cyclists want to keep up a good speed, they may opt for a quick change of riders at the front. This is often called 'through and over' as each rider will only spend a few moments at the front of the group before moving over to let the next rider take over at the front.

## ***RIDE SAFE WITH LEWES WANDERERS***

Cycling has never had so high a public profile in Britain, thanks to our Olympic teams and the success of Sky in the Tour and elsewhere. However, this does not necessarily translate into greater consideration for ordinary cyclists on the roads of Sussex. We need to make sure that we stay safe, and that we nurture a climate of courtesy and mutual respect on our local roads.