

CROSTON VELO WINTER RIDE ETIQUETTE

So the clocks have gone back and there is certainly a notable change in the temperature this weekend. It always becomes that little bit more challenging to get out that door and go for a ride. Group cycling in winter can be a great way to stay motivated and it certainly pays dividends when spring arrives (which feels a long way away at the minute!).

However riding in a group when it is dark and the weather is often worst can create some additional hazards but if we all watch out for one another and follow some simple tips we can ensure we all have a pleasant and safe winter's cycling. This time of year always throws up these challenges as we all still have our summer legs on but are suddenly plunged into darkness.

- **Group Size** – In the dark/wind/rain it is often more difficult to communicate with one another, by having smaller groups it becomes easier to know whether riders have become separated from the group. Maximum group size will vary dependant on the weather conditions however 8 would seem a sensible starting point (less if it's particularly grim and perhaps a couple more if it's a nice still night).
- **Speed** – In winter potholes and other hazards are identified/signalled a lot later than normal. Therefore to ensure safety it becomes necessary for the group to reduce the speed a little and leave a bigger gap to the wheel in front to allow more time to react.
- **Be aware** – It is everyone's responsibility to look out for one another, take note of how many are in our group and check to ensure people are still there frequently and when it is safe to do so. If someone is becoming separated from the group please check they are ok, it is possible they may have had a mechanical/medical or other issue and no one wants to be left by the side of the road with a problem in the dark/cold/wet.
- **Follow the route** – Please follow the published route, if the worst should happen then at least we can narrow down where you could possibly be. The winter routes have been narrowed down to just 4 so we can become familiar with the directions and hazards. Thursday will always follow Winter CV1 and Tuesday will publish one of the other 3 routes the day before. As a reminder the winter routes can be viewed/downloaded from www.crostonvelo.co.uk
- **Rider ability** – In winter numbers naturally drop off and having a full range of groups becomes more difficult, as a result you will often find that groups can be more mixed ability and we need to adapt the pace accordingly. Please continue to try and set up different pace groups at the start of the ride if numbers allow as this will ensure those present continue to have a ride to suit them.

And a few useful tips on bike's and gear

Mudguards – There is nothing worst on a bike than being sat behind someone without mudguards when the roads are wet. Out of courtesy to your fellow club mates in these conditions please fit some mudguards to ensure that they don't end up with a mouthful of whatever is on the road.

Punctures –are more common in winter as the debris on the road increases. Make sure you are self-sufficient and able to fix a puncture, it is worth carrying a minimum of 2 spare inner tubes, tyre levers and a pump/CO2.

Tyres – Linked to the above. Proper winter tyres serve 2 purposes firstly they are more durable and secondly they have more grip for when it is wet, also consider a wider tyre diameter 25mm or 28mm if your bike frame allows. Remember to check them more regularly as a poorly maintained tyre can lead to more moments stood fumbling around in the dark by the side of the road with frozen fingers.

Maintenance – Unfortunately the weather does take its toll on your bike, a lot of cyclists have a cheaper bike they use though winter for this very reason. Worst case though making sure your steed is in cleaned on a regular basis will prolong its lifespan, pay particular attention to moving parts such as the chain/groupset as well as the braking surfaces and brake pads.

Lights – Get some decent ones, being able to see the road in front makes it easy to react to potholes and other obstacles that the British highways present us. Where possible keep a 2nd small light on front and back as backup if your main light was to run flat or fail. Ensure they are fully charged when leaving the house as its pretty dark out there when they fail on you.

Clothing – Being cold and wet is the reason most people suffer on winter rides. If possible invest in the best quality kit your budget permits. When out in tough conditions you will certainly appreciate it! It is always recommended that you carry a waterproof (you just never know!)