



# Riding COVID Safe

Vintage Motorcycle Club / British Motorcyclists Federation /  
Motorcycle Action Group / Trail Riders Fellowship



14<sup>th</sup> May 2020

# Riding COVID safe: a discussion paper

## Foreword

Aspects of the Government's COVID 10 crisis lockdown advice and rules are starting to change. It is important that motorcyclists play their part in: Stay Alert, Control the Virus and Save Lives.

Continuing to maintain effective social distancing of individuals - and also households - from one another will remain the key to halting the spread of the virus. Because of its ability to ensure isolation while traveling in the current lockdown, motorcycling, like cycling, has a key role in ensuring good social distancing for those who still need to travel safely for whatever reason. In this context it will continue to have an important part to play in the emerging lockdown exit strategy in which travel for recreational and not just essential purposes is once more being allowed.

This paper is authored by Public Safety expert, Roger Bibbings MBE CFIOSH, at the request of the UK's four largest motorcycle clubs that are directly involved in interpreting Government guidance for 1.2m motorcyclists.

It examines the following:

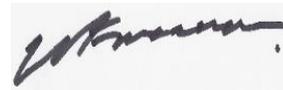
- how motorcyclists can continue to ride safely by fully observing social distancing and other necessary public health measures in the current phase of the crisis and beyond;
- the ways in which the crisis is affecting motorcycling;
- the case for a simple code of guidance endorsed by the some of the largest Motorcycle Organisations including the Vintage Motor Cycle Club, the British Motorcyclists Federation, the Motorcycle Action Group and the Trail Riders Fellowship: and
- how motorcycling can contribute to the future of transport as the country emerges from lockdown.

Signed

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MSc, FMA, FSA Scot  
**Chair VMCC**



Jim Freeman  
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## About the author

Roger Bibbings MBE CFIOSH was RoSPA's occupational safety adviser for nearly 20 years, retiring from the role in 2014. Prior to this, he was, for 17 years, a health and safety adviser at the Trades Union Congress where he worked closely with the then Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive, and also with the European Commission (DGV).

Roger's role at RoSPA was to advise the Society on all matters associated with work related risk, helping it to expand its contribution to the British 'health and safety system'.

He developed a number of RoSPA's Key Campaigns including:

Managing Occupational Road Risk (MORR);  
strengthening the role of accident investigation in health and safety management;  
promoting director action on safety and health; and  
improving health and safety help and assistance to small firms.

He is a trustee of 'Safety Groups UK' which supports the work of RoSPA's affiliated Health and Safety Groups, and President of the Herefordshire Health and Safety Group.

Originally published in RoSPA's flagship journal 'Occupational Safety & Health', Roger's ideas and thinking that helped shape the world of health and safety were brought together as 'Parting Shots – Reflections on occupational health and safety policy and practice from 1996 to 2014'.

In 1990 Roger received the MBE for his services to occupational safety and health. He is a Fellow of the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health and has received the RoSPA Distinguished Service Award for services to health and safety. In 2006 he received the IOSH President's Distinguished Service Certificate. In 2011 he received the IOSH Lifetime Achievement Award.



## Current legislation

To stem the spread of COVID 19 infection in the population, all persons have been restricted from leaving the place where they live. Under legislation introduced at the beginning of the lockdown an offence might be committed by any person who left the place where they lived unless they had a reasonable excuse to do so. Legislation and guidance provided a list of reasonable excuses, although the list was non-exclusive. Other reasonable excuses that could be relied upon were not necessarily listed in the guidance. (See <https://www.gov.uk/.../.../coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>)

The objective of the law and guidance was to minimise travel beyond the home and secure physical distancing between persons, to reduce the opportunities for COVID 19 to be transmitted. The way the restrictions were initially constructed and applied was mindful of the need to still allow some reasonable movement outside the home for purposes that were either desirable or essential, whilst ensuring that those involved still complied with effective social distancing and necessary hygiene measures.

As of 13<sup>th</sup> May the Government's advice remains essentially unchanged, except that those workers who cannot work from home are encouraged to return to work where it is safe to do so (but avoiding public transport wherever possible) and there is no restriction on the length of time that can be spent outside the home for exercise, so long as adequate social distancing is observed. Meetings with members of other households are currently limited to one person at a time, provided that the meeting takes place in open public space and at a distance of not less than 2 metres.

## Motorised travel

At the beginning of the crisis, unreasonable and excessive motorised travel was discouraged because of the assumption that, if they had been infected by it, drivers/riders and their passengers travelling to somewhere other than their home, might pass COVID 19 on to others; or, they might become infected by those they encountered or through contact with contaminated surfaces.

From the start of the lockdown, motorcyclists (and all Powered Two Wheel users) have been allowed to use their machines for commuting if they are a key worker or for permitted travel purposes such as travelling to their place of work (if they could not work from home), for essential shopping and to meet their and others' care/health needs. They needed to be prepared, however, to justify their journey purpose if challenged. Since 13<sup>th</sup> May, motoring and motorcycling for exercise and recreational purposes is now allowed if those involved are from the same household, they observe suitable social distancing (and other hygiene measures) and they return to their home the same day. Staying in hotels, B&Bs, hostels and camping are forbidden, as are visiting and staying in second homes.

While previously motorcycling beyond the area within which the rider would normally be expected to travel for essential journeys was likely to be regarded as excessive and thus in contravention of current restrictions, this is no longer the case in England, although the situation remains unchanged in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



## Separation

Government guidance continues to recommend that remaining a minimum of 2 metres apart in open air is sufficient to reduce the chances of people inhaling exhaled droplet borne COVID 19 from those nearby who may be shedding the virus. The science and safety margins behind this advice are not well understood by many members of the public: many people seem to prefer to stay further apart than this and are wary of those who pass too close to them. The scientific consensus seems to be that by observing appropriate social distancing in open air, the risk of infection from someone shedding the virus is in general exceptionally low. Keeping a safe distance from and limiting the amount of time spent with other people in enclosed spaces is regarded as far more critical, as is regular and thorough hand washing and avoiding touching one's face. The use of non-medical face coverings is also now actively encouraged to help cut down the risk of droplet borne transmission, particularly from 'pre-symptomatics' and 'asymptomatics' who may not realise they are infected. Screens are being erected increasingly to protect customer-facing staff and alcohol hand gels are being provided in many situations.

## Daily exercise

The Government has been advising people during lockdown to take reasonable periods of daily exercise such as walking, running, and cycling, but in doing so to maintain adequate social distancing, not to linger and to observe good hygiene. Initially they were advised not to spend an excessive amount of time outside their homes. Now that has changed, except in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where different rules still apply. What counts as 'exercise' in this context is defined by law as activities that require sufficient levels of physical activity to maintain and improve physical fitness and mental well-being, but it excludes things like team sports and other activities where adequate social distancing cannot be maintained. In this respect, motorcycling is held to be a form of exercise since it is defined by Sport England as a sport. Initially, provided that they were from the same household, people could drive or ride a short distance away from their homes for the purposes of taking exercise. Now these restrictions have been lifted (except in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland) but those involved must be from the same household and must stay well away from others to prevent transmission of the virus. Several police forces have been taking action to discourage larger numbers of people visiting popular beauty spots simultaneously to take exercise and it is not clear whether this policy will continue.

## Over 70s

Persons over 70 are classed as "vulnerable" persons by the legislation. From the beginning, journeys taken to visit vulnerable persons, for the purposes of caring for or assisting them, were classed as essential travel. This remains the case, but essential social distancing must be observed as far as is practicable. Throughout the crisis there have been examples of people using motorcycles as volunteer responders helping to meet the needs of the frail and vulnerable.

Those aged over 70 are advised to maintain strict isolation as they are deemed to be at higher risk of a more serious outcome if they become infected. It is accepted however that



this age limit is only a rough indicator and that there is no 'cliff edge' risk threshold between 69 and 70. Some 70-year olds still possess levels of health and resilience of those much younger and vice versa. Older people are encouraged therefore to think about their overall health and the extent to which their ability to survive a COVID 19 infection might be compromised by their age, general fitness, and any underlying health conditions that they may have. (If you are older you need to make a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, particularly if, for example, you suffer from diabetes, a respiratory or heart condition or are undergoing treatment for cancer.) Older motorcycle riders and those with pre-existing conditions will need to continue to bear this advice in mind very carefully.

## Recreational pastimes and injury risk

Initially, activities like purely recreational motorcycling or walking/climbing in the uplands (which for most people were likely to involve substantial travel away from home) were not encouraged because, even if those doing this were to be quite self-sufficient, and take all their supplies with them and not make contact with others, they might still, it was argued, have an accident or mishap and have to call on the services of mountain rescue, the ambulance services, A&E, the breakdown services etc. However, the risk of injury while on the road also applies to cyclists, and very substantially indeed to staying at home which is where most A&E level injuries occur. (Over 6,000 people die as a result of home accidents every year.) In normal times accidental injury accounts for about 30 per cent of A&E attendances. Overall attendance at A&E departments is currently said to be down, allegedly because of people's fears of becoming infected with COVID 19 in NHS settings. It has been pointed out by senior NHS figures that, apart from the rescheduling of many elective procedures and other treatments, the NHS remains fully capable of meeting the health needs of the population, including treating accidental injury.

The fact that any recreational activity might carry an injury risk should not automatically render it unacceptable during the current crisis. On the other hand, to avoid the close interactions which inevitably follow an accident, it does mean that additional attention needs to be paid to safety, which is thus now even more important than in normal times.

## Goal setting versus prescription?

The Government will be continuing to revise their advice about isolation, social distancing, and other protective measures in the context of essential travel by public transport, education, activity in the workplace, retail and leisure. They have announced a five level COVID 19 alert regime in which reductions in the disease reproduction rate (R) will be used to trigger further relaxations in current controls but only when it is deemed safe to do so. (Controls maybe re-imposed if R rises.) It can be expected that as lockdown is eased, if life for many is to become more tolerable, a more 'goal setting' as opposed to a strictly 'rule based' approach to social distancing and protection is going to be necessary. And it, together with more hand washing and the use of masks and screens, should have other infection control benefits. Key messages are likely to shift from the need to comply with blanket, 'black and white' stay-at-home rules to the use of risk assessment and good judgment to find flexible solutions that maintain adequate social distancing and good hygiene and which are effective at stopping the spread of the virus. (But there is also an argument that both

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citizens and the Authorities feel happier with the apparent certainty of prescriptive rules, with a fear that flexibility may lead to lack of clarity as well as providing the unscrupulous with excuses to exploit apparent loopholes.)

The key point, however, likely to be emphasised in continuing public health education during the crisis, is that it is the distance that each person maintains from others and the steps they take to limit potential points of transmission which are critically important, not necessarily the amount of time they are actually spending outside their home.

Going to exercise by having a brisk walk or a run in a crowded city park and not lingering there may still have to be the rule, but riding on your own to a remote location in the hills on your motor cycle, for example, and de-stressing there by sitting alone to eat your sandwiches and drink from a flask of coffee which you've brought with you, will be perfectly acceptable.

## Benefits of motorcycling as an active travel mode.

Motorcycling is an efficient form of personal transport, for example, for commuting. It reduces congestion, takes up less space for parking and is better for the environment and air quality. There is also substantial research evidence <sup>1</sup>to show that it has major benefits in helping to promote good physical and mental health and well-being among riders and their passengers.

As restrictions are gradually relaxed, it will be important for all motorcycling organisations to emphasise the benefits for riders' mental health and well-being of being able to enjoy riding for leisure reasons as opposed to purely 'essential' journeys' - but only, of course, if they do so safely and responsibly in line with the kind of guidance suggested in this paper. As we emerge slowly from the current crisis, riding one's motorcycle responsibly, preferably alone and preferably away from centres of population, needs to be recognised as potentially very beneficial for both mental and physical health, in the same way as other pastimes like hill-walking, horse riding, cycling etc..

## PTW COVID safety

Those who have been using their powered two wheelers (PTWs - motor cycles, scooters, mopeds etc.) for permitted purposes have been having to think carefully about the practical steps needed to keep themselves and others safe. As COVID 19 crisis rules are gradually relaxed, now allowing recreational as well as 'essential' motorcycling, all riders and passengers will always need to think carefully about how to maintain required standards of social distancing and good hygiene. In general, as the current lockdown is gradually eased, Authorities will need to be satisfied that people can be trusted to be responsible and use their good judgment as they get out again into the outdoors to enjoy the countryside. Group riding (other than with other members of one's own household) is currently forbidden. But in due course, properly socially distanced group riding, for example, for safety training purposes, will have its place too.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1 Core Principles - Economic Value & Exercise



In this context the VMCC, BMF, MAG and TRF wish to come together and consult widely on some simple guidance, including by seeking views from bodies such as Public Health England, the College of Policing and others concerned with safety in the current crisis. Attached at Annex one is a first draft that is aimed not just at those currently riding for reasons such as commuting, but at those who are now able to resume riding responsibly for exercise and leisure purposes. It is also designed to help inform public health and enforcing authorities about good practice identified by the PTW community.

## A lock down exit strategy for motorcycling

As well as giving advice to their members during the current lockdown, the major motorcycling organisations listed above have been giving consideration to the longer-term lockdown exit strategy for PTW riders. In this context they are collaborating to advance motorcyclists' interests, including by jointly:

- looking for recognition that leisure motorcycling is an active mode of travel as the lockdown proceeds;
- continuing research, confirming facts and clarifying the current position for motorcyclists;
- watching closely what is happening in other countries (see Annex Two);
- highlighting case studies of best practice for gradual lockdown exit; and
- making representations to Government and other bodies.

They are not arguing, however, that motorcycling should be treated as a special case, but that the PTW community is keen to work with other organisations whose members want to get out again - but safely - into the countryside: for example, organisations representing walkers and cyclists, all of whom in future, like motorcyclists, are going to have follow their pastimes in a much more disciplined way than hitherto.

Longer term, organisations representing motorcycling want to work with key players to make it easier, safer and cheaper for people to use PTWs as daily transport as part of the solution to congestion, air quality, CO2, well-being, and so on. Important initiatives here include: ensuring that CBT's are readily available for new riders; injecting funds into Wheels-To-Work schemes; helping hire companies to gear up with a ready supply of scooters for those new to riding; introducing an electric scooter hire scheme similar to bicycle schemes such as those in London and other major centres; and funding refresher training for those returning to motorcycles after a break.



## The way ahead

The COVID 19 crisis is highly dynamic, requiring all organisations to think creatively and responsibly about the challenges it is throwing up as we move through each new phase. The views expressed in this paper need to be seen in that light. Further views and comments are invited so that, as new information and ideas are fed in, the proposals in this paper can be developed further.

Roger Bibbings MBE CFIOSH

Convenor,

**Regulatory Advisory Group,  
Vintage Motor Cycle Club**



## Annex One

DRAFT GUIDANCE 15th May 2020

### COVID 19 riders' safety code

COVID 19 will remain a serious public health emergency for many months. The timescale for full relaxation in current restrictions is still unclear. But whether at work or not, we will all still be operating in a 'socially distanced' way for some time. Too many lives have been lost and too much has been sacrificed to allow transmission of the virus to take off again. So whether you are only using motorcycles for essential journeys or for leisure riding to get the huge mental benefits that this provides, this all needs to be done with suitable 'social distancing' and observance of good hygiene measures.

The Vintage Motor Cycle Club, the British Motorcycling Federation, the Motorcycle Action Group and the Trail Riders Fellowship, have developed the following advice for members:

At the moment, you can be confident that, under current guidelines you can now ride your motor cycle both for essential purposes (such as commuting, for example, if you are a key worker or cannot work from home, or for essential shopping and meeting your and others' care/health needs), and also for recreational purposes (except in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland). You must not, however, ride with others who are not part of your household. You must maintain suitable social distancing and you must be able to return home the same day and not stay away. Holidays on motorcycles, or long multi-day tours are still not allowed under the guidelines.

You will need to consider the following points:-

- Plan your route carefully (using maps and navigation aids) to avoid busy locations, traffic congestion and crowds.
- Preferably ride solo, and only with a pillion if they are part of your household.
- Aim to be as self-sufficient as possible by taking all food, refreshment and other essentials with you.
- Avoid travelling in groups. Follow Government guidance on groups and when you stop, make sure that you stay sufficiently socially distanced from any who are not part of your household.
- Agree in advance what you are going to do if you have problems. Agree, for example, how to deal safely with any breakdowns or emergencies.
- Do not gather in large numbers with other motorcyclists. (There will be time for that when the present crisis is over.)
- Avoid cafes, but try to establish in advance where there will be essential facilities en route such as public conveniences.
- Try to limit the number of stops you make and wherever possible, stop in isolated places. Do not stop or park in public car parks where you cannot be sure of maintaining adequate social distancing.
- Know the COVID 19 safe procedures to follow at filling stations or shops. Try to limit the number of fuel stops you make.



- Know what COVID 19 safety kit you are going to take with you, such as alcohol hand gel, masks, gloves, tissues, plastic bags, etc. Use it appropriately and safely.
- Make sure that your route is not so long and difficult that you cannot return home safely if things like the weather change suddenly.
- Encourage other riders to be COVID safe at all times.
- Ride sensibly and with consideration for others.

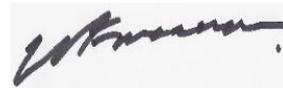
Obviously, don't go riding at all if you or a member of your household shows symptoms of COVID 19 and has to self-isolate. If you are an older rider or someone at higher risk because of a pre-existing condition, think very carefully before riding until the infection risk has been reduced sufficiently.

But don't let the present crisis stop you maintaining your mental well-being by riding your bike whenever you can legally and safely, whilst complying at all times with Government guidelines.

Bob Clark MA (Oxon), MSc,  
MA, FSA Scot  
Chair VMCC



Jim Freeman  
Chair BMF



Selina Lavender  
Chair MAG



Mario Costa-Sa BSc(Eng), MBA  
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## Annex Two

### Case studies and links

#### 1.) Core Principles - Economic Value & Exercise

Motorcycle Industry Association - Economic Value of Motorcycling

<http://motorcycleguidelines.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Motorcycle-Industry-Manufacturing-Public-Policy.pdf>

Trail Riders Fellowship (TRF) - Health benefits of motorcycle trail riding – Dr Sean Comber

<https://www.trf.org.uk/what-are-the-health-benefits-of-trail-riding/>

Other Motorcycle & Exercise evidence

<https://www.express.co.uk/life-style/cars/1259945/exercise-is-riding-a-motorcycle-exercise-lockdown-coronavirus>

<https://www.bikerandbike.co.uk/motorcycling-burns-between-170-and-600-calories-per-hour/>

#### 2.) Motorcycles as Community responders & supporting the Police:

Motorcyclists supporting the community

<https://bikeshedcommunityresponse.com/?fbclid=IwAR3XK5fjWXs3tKMwALBbKifMuvisYBmYx1SEgFv5SqMwbj-iHgaJuLwKluA>

Motorcyclists supporting the Police

<https://www.trf.org.uk/police/>

#### 3.) Motorcycles during Covid Lockdown in the UK

Bennetts - <https://www.bennetts.co.uk/bikesocial/news-and-views/news/2020/april/motorcycles-coming-back-stronger>

<https://www.bennetts.co.uk/bikesocial/news-and-views/news/2020/may/motorcycling-classed-as-exercise-in-new-south-wales>

Visordown - <https://www.visordown.com/news/general/what-could-easing-lockdown-mean-motorcyclists>

Spyder Motorcycles <https://www.spydermotorcycles.co.uk/2020/05/05/social-distancing-travel-solutions>

MCN - <https://www.motorcyclenews.com/news/coronavirus-impact-motorbikes/?fbclid=IwAR2AVa4k3wRiLD5zduO3zXmid3m54AwMspsDHAM9LrECJtukc5pYfr9Ddo>



#### 4) Lockdown exit & motorcycles around the world

##### Australia:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-52525721>

<https://www.bennetts.co.uk/bikesocial/news-and-views/news/2020/may/motorcycling-classed-as-exercise-in-new-south-wales>

##### Belgium:

<https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/faq/#009> (Belgian govt. website) :

Belgium, that has a more restrictive lockdown than the UK, specifically mentions motorcycle rides to be undertaken for exercise purposes

“Members of the public must stay at home in order to avoid contact with people other than their family members, as much as possible. Only essential journeys are allowed: The following are considered as essential journeys:

- *walks and physical activities including motorbike rides that do not involve physical contact provided that they are;*
- carried out alone;
- are carried out in the company of persons living under the same roof, which also includes residential groups and their supervisors from youth facilities staying under the same roof;
- and/or in the company of a maximum of two other persons, who are always the same two persons, at a distance of 1.5 metres between each person. These activities are permitted for the time necessary to do them. Once these activities are completed, it is compulsory to return home. To avoid gatherings, it is not allowed to sit in parks. Tolerance must be shown towards pregnant women and the elderly. This measure does not have to be strictly applied either to people with reduced mobility or mental disabilities. For the same reasons, picnics and sunbathing are not allowed in parks either. The use of a motorised vehicle to carry out a physical activity or walk is only allowed to travel to the destination (e.g. a forest at a reasonable distance) or the necessary sports infrastructure of the sport or walk in question. Moreover, it is reiterated that tourist activities or excursions are not allowed.”

##### Italy:

<https://acem.eu/ancma-and-eicma-launch-campaign-to-encourage-the-use-of-two-wheelers-to-cope-with-deconfinement-mobility-challenges>

From Federation of European Motorcyclists Associations (FEMA)

Greece , Sweden, Europe.

<https://www.femamotorcycling.eu/free-motorcycle-parking-stockholm/>

<https://www.femamotorcycling.eu/greece-turned-to-motorcycles/>

<https://www.femamotorcycling.eu/after-coronavirus/>

