

Winchester Mass Ride 9, Saturday 25th April 2026

GUIDANCE TO RIDERS

Please read in full – the guidelines are aimed at helping you i) get the big picture ii) decide which route you'd like to ride iii) understand how things will run on the day so you can help make it as fun (and safe) as possible.

We hope you are as excited as us looking ahead to another mass ride, now something of a city institution, celebrating the pleasure of cycling - especially when cyclists are in the majority and take over the streets of Winchester with bells, bubbles and music.

It's great to see the size and diversity of our local cycling community and show how attractive the city is when two wheels are the order of the day!

Is the Mass Ride Suitable for Me?

There is no age limit or experience needed to take part.

A big part of the ride is seeing such a mass of young cyclists out and about.

You just need a bike in working order that you can ride, steer and stop.

Then choose a route which you are able to cover at a slow but steady pace.

All routes merge in the city centre for a grand combined loop around the one-way system so whichever way you come you won't miss out on the grand finale!

Which Route Should I Ride?

In general, you will want to ride in from the most convenient start point to where you live, but there are other options to consider if that route seems beyond your capabilities eg for a very young or new rider.

Read the route descriptions and then decide what will work for you.

Routes Overview

In all there are *six* route options into the city centre with start points distributed around outlying areas of Winchester.

All routes have *designated pick-up points* where you can join the ride *if more convenient or if you wish to cycle a shorter distance.*

And by looking carefully at the route maps and times it's fine for small groups to merge independently at other safe points as the ride passes by.

But one of the pleasures of riding from the start - if you are able - is seeing the numbers amass as the ride progresses, a bit like the pied piper!

Weather/cancellation

The ride will go ahead unless there is extreme weather or a major incident in which case there will be a notice on our webpage and on social media by 8am on the day.

Route Descriptions

There are four standard road routes, between 1½ and 2¾ miles in length and each with an uphill section or two.

- A Olivers Battery** - Badger Farm – Lower Stanmore – city centre
- B Kings Worthy** - Abbots Barton - city centre
- C Harestock** – Weeke - city centre
- D Highcliffe** – St Cross - city centre

Every year very young riders complete these routes with ease - some never having ridden on the road before, others having just learnt to ride a bike.

The ride proceeds at a very leisurely pace. However, it isn't possible to pause at an unplanned point or allow riders to get spread out if one rider is struggling to keep up.

If you have concerns about keeping up or if your child is still on a balance bike then you should consider joining our newest route "The Barton Line" – we are calling it that to publicise it and to attract funds for improvements.

The route is designed to serve the new community at Kings Barton and nearby areas of the city.

- E Kings Barton** – Abbots Barton – The Rec - city centre

It is of similar length to the other rides but a large part is on traffic free, shared-use paths with more locations and flexibility around rests and regroup. There is one short, steep hill near the start but otherwise it's flat or downhill.

The final route is a slightly different undertaking as it starts in the more distant community of Colden Common.

- F Colden Common** – Twyford – Viaduct Way – St Cross - city centre

This is the only ride which requires a reasonable degree of fitness, because it is longer – roughly 5 miles – and the first half, along the B3335, will be ridden at a comfortable but steady pace. As a bonus the ride usually has catering at the start and a long refreshment break in Twyford too!

City Centre Loop

The rides merge at North Walls / Park Avenue, proceed together around the one-way system and finally back to Abbey Gardens for refreshments and a mini-festival.

This loop is great fun as all the rides have joined into one large mass. However, it involves a further 2 miles and a steep climb on St George's Street. If that seems a bit daunting some options to consider are:

- Exit the city centre loop *as it passes King Alfred's Statue for the first time* and be first to the refreshments in Abbey Gardens;

- Only ride the city centre loop, by joining the Kings Barton ride in The Rec (10.20am, north end of Park Avenue);
- Use Parchment Street short-cut - see map – to avoid St George’s Street hill.

Making the Ride into the City as Safe, Smooth and Fun as Possible

- Each ride into the city will have at least three marshals. They will decide when and how the group moves, keep the ride moving at an appropriate pace, negotiate junctions in an orderly fashion and so on.
Please stay behind the front marshal who is carefully monitoring progress for a well-timed and efficient merging of incoming rides on North Walls.
There will be *a back-marker, so no-one gets left behind.*
- Parents/guardians must take responsibility for their children.
They should keep close, particularly at traffic lights or crossings so as not to get separated and *always stay on the traffic side of their children.*
- Many of you will be experienced riders and we hope that you will play your part in watching out for, protecting and encouraging younger or less experienced cyclists - acting as informal marshals, supporting our volunteer team.
- We want to make every effort to keep the ride as a single cohesive group without traffic getting caught up in-between. To achieve that:
 - *young riders:* be at the front of the ride with their responsible adult(s);
 - *all riders:* keep close together to prevent cars filling into gaps;
 - *all riders:* be ready to move off promptly;
 - *slow riders:* if necessary, consider dismounting and push your bike into town.

Merging on North Walls

The Kings Barton ride will stop at the north (The Rec) end of Park Avenue.

All other rides will merge *in the left-hand lane of North Walls* from about 20m behind the Park Avenue traffic lights.

[This gives cars turning left into Park Avenue space to pull in in front of us while we assemble].

Assuming the mass ride stretches back that far it is important that *we leave a gap for cars to enter/exit Hyde Abbey Road* again leaving 20m or so behind the lights.

There should be PCSO’s in attendance who, if the number of riders demands it, will at some point indicate later arriving riders to start filling the right-hand lane of North Walls from Park Avenue again. Please follow any directions from the PCSOs.

They aren’t connected to the Mass Ride but we are in regular communication.

They are very supportive of our aims and are simply carrying out their duties in the city centre to help things run smoothly for everyone.

The marshals and PCSOs will be managing the situation but it's helpful if all riders know the general plan!

Riding Around the One-Way System

As with last year's ride, we now have permission from the relevant authorities to briefly hold back traffic at nine key junctions around the city. This will significantly reduce the number of cars joining the one-way system. The aim is to give us more of a free passage around the city to minimise disruption.

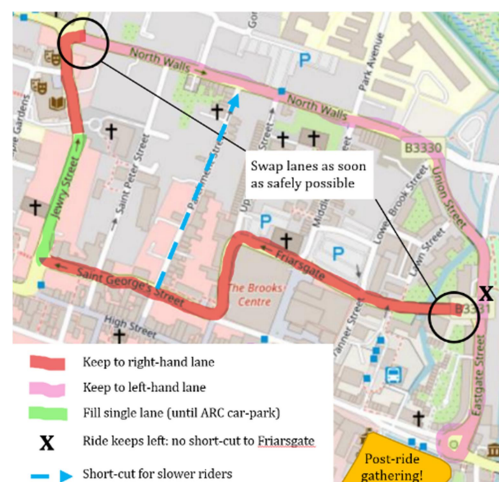
The authorities recognise that it's safer if marshals encourage pedestrians and drivers to let the group through *even when lights turn red* so that we keep together as a single column and our ride is completed more efficiently. In general, this is about pedestrians wishing to cross as in most locations, cars will be held back by our temporary road closures. It will be done good-naturedly with the help of the PCSOs, our marshals and - we hope - the street-skaters who did such a fantastic job last time around. It is about creating the right atmosphere and hopefully people enjoying the sight of a cavalcade of bikes passing by. As long as it is safe, pass through red lights with a big smile, a thank-you wave and a ring of your bell.

Of course, if there are individuals who insist on exercising their right to cross then we stop and let them do so.

Lanes

If we have had to occupy two lanes on North Walls, we will soon need to merge – with care - into the left-hand lane as we round the corner and head for King Alfred's statue. Thereafter the group should remain *in a single lane* as indicated in the diagram ie moving across to the right-hand lane when entering Friarsgate and moving back across to the left-hand lane when turning back into North Walls.

A van with hazard lights and signage will block the unused lane at the rear.



Abbey Gardens

The Mass Ride finishes on the Broadway *after one loop of the city centre*. Riders should aim to disperse quickly from the road to avoid congestion.

Please join us in Abbey Gardens for refreshments, children's activities and much more ... a chance to socialise and enjoy the moment!

The Mass Ride Philosophy

The mass ride is not anti-car: we are just very much pro-bike.

We aren't aiming to create disruption or annoyance. There will always be drivers who

hoot their horn whatever the situation. Our approach should be quietly determined but unfailingly good-humoured. We have every right to be on the road and would be causing far more disruption had we all driven into town. We look forward to a day when the sight of masses of bikes on the city streets is an everyday occurrence!