

## Minutes of a Meeting of the WNBR London Collective

Sunday 28 July 2019

### Debrief, Lessons Learned and Celebration

(Action items in *red*)

**Present:** Barbara, Cy, Graeme, Harvey, Luigi, Natasha, Paul H, Richard, Simon My, Simon Mr, Sophie

**Apologies:** Dave S, Ian

#### Stories from group leaders

Several people sent feedback comments in advance, which have been collated and shared separately. We also collated all the feedback from participants on social media.

Numbers were down this year, partly due to the poor weather forecast. Anecdotally, some people thought the gender balance and diversity was less good because of the weather.

**Kew Bridge** group didn't manage to join up with **Clapham Junction** group.

**Deptford** start was new for 2019. Pre-ride activities and body painting went well. Disappointed by the gender balance - expected better. Confusion set in when part of the group got caught up with the **Tower Hill** group and followed the bigger group. **Learning point:** *where routes coincide, the groups should plan to follow the same route thereafter* (whether or not they merge).

**Hyde Park** group had a good, secluded place to start, which had been agreed with the Royal Parks. More marshals would have been useful. They had problems with flamboyant exhibitionism and sexual behaviour which had to be challenged.

**Regents Park** group had some problems with teenagers who were cycling dangerously. We couldn't allow them to ride with the group. Simon Mr had to drop out with bike problems.

**Tower Hill** encountered an obstacle where the road was completely shut off by a mobile crane at the Tate Modern. There was a slow trudge over the grass to get around it. One rider couldn't keep up, which was a problem for rear marshals. Dave S failed to keep up on his unicycle. We doubt whether you can be a marshal and ride a unicycle! One new marshal didn't seem to do any marshalling. Both lead marshals have dropped out as they were offended by remarks from other collective members.

Groups passing through **Whitehall** encountered demonstrators. At first the road was blocked. It was not clear whether they were there because of the ride or just by coincidence. We think these were the Football Lads Alliance, the same people who mount the violent pro-Brexit demonstrations. We were grateful for the police action in cordoning them off to allow the ride to pass. *We should seek better intelligence on these thugs.*

Rest stop rendezvous points worked fairly well this year, but there can still be a long wait for early arrivers. *As well as trying to minimise the wait, we should do more to make participants realise that the rest breaks are intentional and also important for bringing people together.*

Outsourcing people for the **onward ride** to the Afterparty worked reasonably well as the marshalling was effective and they had all been given specific instructions as part of the ticketing.

The main finish at **Green Park** was not fully successful. A significant number of participants didn't get marshalled into the park and up the hill. The iBikeLondon sound systems led many people across to Wellington Arch, where it seems they had a good unmarsalled party. This was due to them not being aware of the plan. We keep the finish plan confidential to reduce the number of spectators and photographers (so maybe a diversionary action at Wellington Arch was useful). **Learning point: iBikeLondon need to be better briefed and/or take part in the planning.**

The **afterparty** was poor due to the venue having licensing problems and cancelling our booking with only a week to go. We partially rescued the event by agreeing to use the main public area and not allow nudity. This was communicated to ticket holders, many of whom cancelled or didn't attend. Those that did go had a reasonably good social time. Bike parking and security were good.

We have already booked Brixton Jamm for next year and want to have our own area, entertainment, food, drink, bike parking, security.

**Feedback from participants** was positive about the ride and marshals. The afterparty was a disappointment for everyone.

### **Marshalling**

Overall the marshalling this year was the best it has been, with more people and better guidance than previous years. Nevertheless, there were issues and a belief that we need to be more professional.

#### **Key areas to consider:**

- Dealing with bad behaviour such as inappropriate interaction with spectators and sexual behaviours
- Dealing with riders who don't want to keep up with the ride
- Dealing with riders who ignore the marshals
- Effective "corking", ie holding traffic to allow safe and rapid passage through a junction
- Being an active marshal throughout the ride (not just the first section)
- Handling the finish
- Briefing riders (eg behaviour, rest breaks, end points, trouble handling)
- Handout for riders
- Guidance, briefings and training for marshals
- Buddying for new marshals

One important point for marshals is that they should not jeopardise themselves or the riders by sticking with troublemakers when they should be staying with the ride. If someone is deliberately ignoring instructions to keep with the ride, tell them they are now at risk and on their own, then ride on. Always consider the option to call the police if behaviours are dangerous and illegal. Of course, if someone is having real problems a rear marshal might need to stay with them - eg, to wait for an ambulance or help with a broken bike.

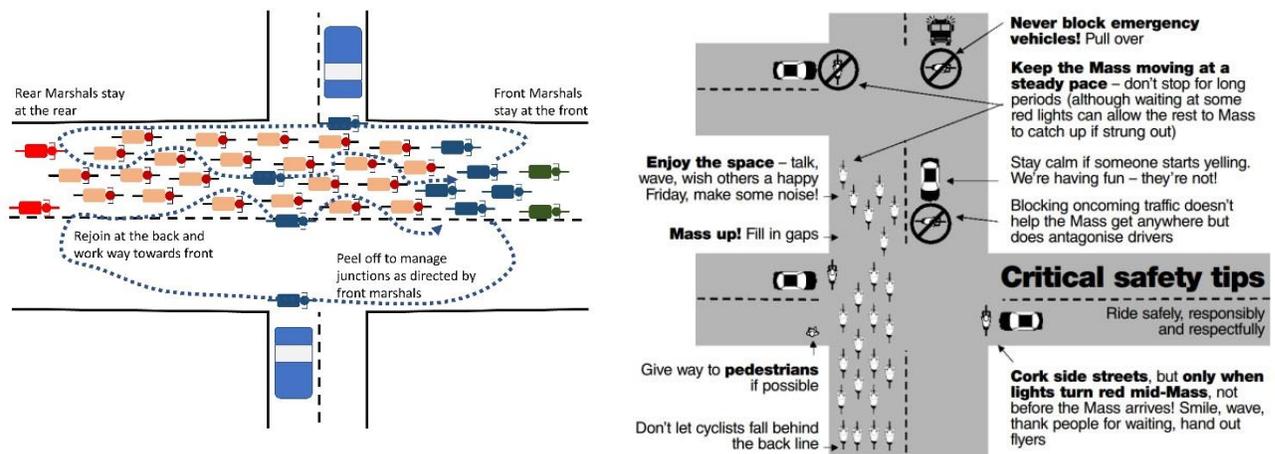
Where we used proper corking it was very effective. This was particularly evident at the Strand where holding the junction kept the ride together for the last leg of the ride. We need to define the rights and wrongs of corking for WNBR London. Note, however, that this has always been a controversial subject

because we do not have the legal power to direct traffic and riders are not exempt from Road Traffic laws such as stopping at red lights. WNBR London always intends to operate legally, so this presents a dilemma.

Some suggested corking rules were:

- Front marshals decide whether and where to cork.
- Front marshals stay at the front, rear marshals stay at the rear, other marshals get to the front then cork until the ride is past then make their way back to the front.
- Cork the right on roundabouts.
- Keep going at traffic lights (block both sides).
- Side roads get blocked by their own cars.
- Take the whole of the lane or road.

Here are a couple of explanations that were circulated:



Using messaging apps for comms has its problems but is probably the best approach. 2-way radios have been hard to use and expensive. Conference call was far too noisy and killed batteries. The problem with all of these is that the ride leaders rarely have the time to stop and use them. The recommended approach is for **each ride leader to have a comms person** with them who will regularly check for messages and send out updates - then catch up with the leader.

We thought it would be **useful to have location tracking** for some marshals, so that Hub can see where all the groups are. Telegram can do this. We should experiment.

It was suggested that we could **design and deliver some pre-ride training or guidance**. Some suggested that only trained marshals could be allowed to do the role, although we also have the challenge of recruiting enough volunteers and mandatory training is likely to be a barrier. Likewise, making it compulsory to attend the test ride could improve understanding of the route and its marshalling but also become a barrier.

For the past three years we have produced detailed marshals' packs. **Learning point: Feedback suggests many people are not good at accessing information in written form, so we need to support this with other forms of communication.** Cascaded briefings are not that reliable. Possibly we might have a conference call or video. Ideas to be considered.

Wherever possible, ride leaders should brief their marshals at the start.

## **Other activities**

- Route planning and the test ride went OK.
- Some good pre and post ride publicity, but maybe less than last year
- Bike hire arrangements were successful, although they sold out before the ride.
- Facebook and Twitter campaigns built to a crescendo. Much less activity on Instagram.
- We used the mailing list at key times.
- We don't know whether the UK-wide insurance was in force! Apparently, we had a quote and paid for it, then the insurers asked further questions about the ride.
- Royal Parks liaison went OK for Hyde Park but they still won't agree anything for Regents Park.
- Police liaison seemed to be OK - but they didn't warn us about any situations, such as the demonstrators on Whitehall.
- Afterparty and donations mean funding is healthy.
- A planned naked dining fundraiser was dropped due to lack of (gender balanced) interest, but we are still looking at how to make it work.
- Seat cover sales were patchy - some starts sold out, some sold very few. Other rides have bought stock from us.
- Merchandise sales were bad, mainly due to the low numbers who bothered to go to the afterparty.

## **Meetings**

Attendees were happy with meetings on a Wednesday evening.

There was interest in starting the meetings from an earlier date as there was a lot to do. It would be good to fit in extra meetings. We might get started in November.