

Activity: Mountain Bike Riding

General

This risk assessment covers all off-road cycling activities in all UK wilderness areas including all UK national parks. It also covers off-road cycling activities for all times of the year. Leader to client ratios need to be based on the area, terrain, weather, and leader level of experience / qualification.

Risk Subject	Method of Mitigation
Suitable staff	All staff will be suitably qualified by MIAA or British Cycling. All staff must ensure that their personal and professional skills remain current. All staff must ensure they remain up to date with best practice regarding their professional skills.
Assessing clients' ability	Fitness - Leaders to monitor the team throughout. Team should progress only at a sensible pace. Clients' previous experience should be explored upon meeting, using a range of questions. Where possible, clients' general mobility should be subtly assessed prior to setting off; and a continued dynamic assessment conducted when moving gradually onto increasing challenging terrain in a safe manner before the team are committed to the mountain. Team members should be made aware on what to expect before the activity takes place and thus given the opportunity not to take part.
Suitable objectives	Clients are given ample opportunity to self-assess the level of challenge they are undertaking from pre-course/event information such as the Will4Adventure website, gallery, social media and joining instructions.
Suitable routes	Leaders should choose routes that they feel confident to lead as well as always working within the scope of their experience, knowledge, ability, and equipment. Route choice is key in ensuring a safe and appropriate activity, and therefore leaders will ensure careful planning goes into route selection, including if necessary, a route reconnaissance.
Group management / getting lost	Group should be kept engaged on where they are and where the route will take them. Everyone should be given the leader's telephone number so that if they get lost or separated from the group they have a means of getting in touch. Riders should be given clear boundaries on how far they can go on each leg of the route.
Equipment	The leader should carry kit appropriate to the day's ride, terrain and challenge. For example this may include water purification tablets on hot days, or extra layers on cold days for when leading groups who have limited or no previous experience. Leaders should ensure they have a suitable first aid kit including a group shelter and/or bivvy bag.
Mechanical failure / equipment damage / pre-ride	Participants will need briefing before the event that bikes need to be in good working order. In particular they should be referred to this M-Check video tutorial. Additionally all bikes are to be checked by individuals before use. Specifically, that all bicycles have front and rear brakes that they are in full-working order. Additionally all handlebars must have plugged ends, and not just be taped over. If hiring, bikes should only be hired from reputable organisations. Repair kit and spares need to be carried. Remoteness of route choice needs to be carefully considered.

Client equipment	Before meeting with clients joining instructions will be shared with clients advising them of suitable clothing and equipment to have. Consideration must be given to weather for the day, head, eye and hands protection. The benefits of wearing gloves and glasses need to be discussed at some point. Leaders should have available at the start of every day, a spare pair of glasses. Clients will also be briefed to carry sufficient food, snacks, water to complete the route.
Riding accidents / falling from bikes	Clients need to be asked for previous experience and the planning of suitable route choices need to take this into consideration. Escape routes should also be considered. Specific notice needs to be taken of footwear, laces and trouser ends. Helmets must be checked and fitted correctly. Appropriate briefings to cover the terrain that will be covered including practice of appropriate techniques required. Throughout rides there should be instructor observation. Group speed should be controlled on more technical sections. Leaders to dynamically risk assess surroundings and 'run outs' and to always consider previous assessment of group's ability. On down-hill sections riders need to be briefed not to overtake each other and to allow for at least three bikes space between riders. To avoid collisions with pedestrians, front riders should be briefed to call out and/or to use a bell. All riders must be briefed that pedestrians and horses have priority. Riders must be aware of pedestrians and/or horses that may appear around blind bends. A first aid kit needs to be carried at all times. Clients should know where this is too. Clients need to be briefed on where they are riding that day with a view to being able to coordinate a rescue for the leader if necessary.
Collisions with motorised vehicles	In order to reduce the effects of fatigue, riders will be encouraged to take natural breaks during the day. Joining instructions will cover the possible need for high-vis clothing and lights should the weather conditions on the day of the event lead to reduced visibility for drivers and cyclists. Riders will not be allowed to take part on our courses who are not wearing a suitably fitted helmet. All riders must be briefed to follow the Highway Code at all times including obeying traffic signals and signs. All riders to continually assess traffic conditions, driver attitudes and take appropriate safety action such as getting off and walking; using a pedestrian crossing to cross a major road. Should the need to stop arise e.g. through puncture, then a place must be found sufficiently off the road for team to wait safely and the bike be attended to. Consider using person(s) at strategic points to warn oncoming traffic.
Encountering animals	Avoid grazing cattle in fields and on tow path side, especially when in any areas with calves. Slow down whilst approaching dogs to allow walker to gain control of dog before group draws near. Riders approaching horses from behind must allow for plenty of space to overtake and to call out a friendly "hello" so as not to startle the horse.

Adverse weather conditions	Leader should check up to date weather forecast for the area paying attention to wind speed and direction, precipitation, temperature, and UV exposure. Alternative plans which could include cancellation or postponement should be considered in the planning stages. In warm weather leaders should encourage clients to drink plenty of fluids, give them opportunities to remove excess layers and consider carrying water purification tablets. Team should be briefed to take effective measures to protect themselves from the sun: sunscreen, sunglasses and hats, shade for breaks. Leaders should brief team members on signs of heat exhaustion and dehydration and how to treat it. Before the day, the leader should consider replenishment locations/opportunities. Team should not be outside during lightning storms where possible. If the team are caught in a lightning storm leader should take best course of action to get team to safest location away from high ground and trees. Leader should be prepared to abort route if weather conditions make risk untenable. Leaders must carry suitable navigating equipment (such as map, compass, mapping apps, GPS) to prevent getting lost; particularly when weather conditions reduce visibility.
Understanding the risk	The level of risk acceptance of course participants should be explored. The basic risks and levels should be made clear to clients.