

Top Tips

Always have at least two 'leaders' on each ride; someone to back you up in case of emergencies and ensure that no one is left behind in the cafe or at the bottom of a hill. Make sure you have spare inner tube, snacks, a basic first aid kit and a pump between you too, plus an emergency number for each of your riders, just in case.

Encourage punctuality by starting on time; standing around in the cold is no fun for anyone.

Get some training; it gives you confidence! You don't need to be a mechanic, but being able to do a basic 'M' check on Belles' bikes before you set off will prevent disasters later in the day.

Be prepared; make sure every Belle has a spare inner tube, money if they need to get home on the train or bus, some snacks, plenty of water, appropriate clothing and a bike that is appropriate for the route - don't be too embarrassed to tell someone that their borrowed, ill-fitting shopper bike won't make a hilly 40 mile road ride pleasant.

Be more prepared; do the route yourself before the ride. Road works, path closures and floods can all make a good ride go bad if you don't know about them.

Everyone has something to contribute; get to know everyone that signs up for your group and use all their skills.

Offer a range of rides to suit all abilities and encourage people to try a beginner ride before they sign up for an epic adventure.

Just do it! You will make mistakes and emergencies will happen but you will be able to deal with them!



HOW DO WE GET IN TOUCH?

CTC Scotland Facebook - www.facebook.com/CTCScotland

CTC Scotland Twitter - www.twitter.com/CTC_Scot

Get in touch with Suzanne Forup, Assistant Head of Development (Scotland), on suzanne.forup@ctc.org.uk

HOW CAN CTC HELP?

CTC would like to support the Belles on Bikes network to grow all over Scotland. Depending on funding available, we can provide training, equipment, funding for insurance and 'MeetUp' subscriptions, resources such as logo and poster templates, mentoring from the experienced Belles group members and a helping hand to get started.



Cycling Scotland

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START UP GUIDE



Belles on Bikes is a developing network of women's cycle groups in Scotland. Supported by CTC, the national cycling charity, Belles groups are setting up all over Scotland to help women enjoy cycling together. Belles on Bikes aims to provide a supportive environment for women of all cycling abilities, with a focus on plenty of fun and cake.

The **'original Belles'** in Glasgow helped CTC put this guide together for anyone wanting to set up a cycling group for women - although it might help some chaps out there too. Check out the Glasgow Belles Meet Up page <http://www.meetup.com/Belles-on-Bikes-Glasgow/>



plenty of fun & cakes stops!

ROUTE PLANNING

You don't need to have a comprehensive knowledge of all cycle paths, off road routes and low traffic roads to get your group started. You'll find plenty of help online at places like www.cyclestreets.net and www.cycle-route.com. Other Belles will have favourite routes and you'll discover more as you get out and ride. Trains can give you some options when you want to go further (*just check their rules on cycle carriage!*) and it's helpful to know where the stations are along your route in case of breakdowns.

INSURANCE

CTC offers a comprehensive package of insurance for groups and individuals. Take a look at the CTC website for more information <http://bit.ly/CTCaffiliate>

TRAINING

From introductory **'Bikeability'** courses to help you ride more confidently on the road, to Cycle Ride Leader and Trail Cycle Leader to allow you to lead others on and off road, there is a range of cycle skills training that can make you feel a more confident and competent cyclist and ride leader. If you want to help novice cyclists improve their skills you might want someone in your group to become a Cycle Trainer. Cycling Scotland offers a comprehensive calendar of courses and have some great female tutors if you want to make it a girls' only affair.

You don't need to be a mechanic to run a cycling group but it helps if someone in the group can fix a puncture! Like cycle training, there is a course available for every level and interest. Some bike shops offer classes, as do some bike recycling organisations.

'Fix Your Own Bike' nights can also help you keep your Belles on the road. We're working with bike shops and bike recycling organisations to offer ladies' only sessions so you can get some help from a qualified mechanic with a decent range of tools. The Glasgow Belles work with the Glasgow Bike Station to help women start cycling and stay cycling by hosting social events, running FYOB nights and loaning out bikes to help women choose a bike suitable for their needs.



ORGANISING RIDES

Facebook and Twitter are great tools to promote your rides but you can also use a range of online tools to help you arrange your rides. Platforms such as 'MeetUp' are ideal for posting rides and allowing you to manage ride groups. Leaders can post their own rides up so there doesn't have to be just one person dealing with all the information. You can set maximum numbers, implement a reserve list and give a detailed route plan so everyone knows what they are signing up for. It also means leaders have an idea of who is going to turn up!

PROMOTING RIDES

Traditional methods like posters and leaflets can work really well in communities where everyone checks out the community notice boards - you could also try giving leaflets to the local school (great way to get a mums' and toddler group going), bike shops, community centre and the local supermarket. Social media, like Facebook and Twitter, are cheap and easy ways to get your group known if local women use them. Tell your local papers, MSP and radio station too - find a Belle that isn't shy and get them on the phone!

RESPECTING OTHERS

A simple guide to cycling etiquette can save cross words and bruises! Riding in a group can be a challenge for anyone not used to cycling with others. It doesn't have to be all 'rules and regulations' but a simple way of helping everyone get the most from the rides. Using standard signs, setting some behaviour guidelines and a 'what to bring' list ensures that everyone has similar expectations. We can provide you with a template guide so you don't have to start from scratch.

PARTNERSHIP

Arranging rides with other groups can be a great way to learn about new routes, find interesting destinations and meet other people (even men!) who love riding their bikes. It takes the pressure off if you're struggling to come up with new routes and means you'll be able to enjoy just riding if you are usually a leader. There are CTC member and affiliate groups throughout Scotland who might love the opportunity to link up with your Belles group. Have a look at the Scotland section of the CTC website to see what is in your area or post a request on the CTC Scotland Facebook page.