

# WORCESTER AND HEREFORD ADVANCED MOTORCYCLISTS



June 2024

## EDITORIAL – JIM ROLT

It's June! And it does start to feel like it.

This month's issue is full of the real meat and potatoes of advanced riding;

Chairman Tony Davis starts us off with an [in depth look at group riding](#). You may be aware that a WHAM team has been busy over many months dissecting and overhauling our own group riding policy. I think ours is now the best way for riders to take to the roads in a group.

Richard Hewitt, our Chief Observer comes up next with a great article on the [Position phase of IPSGA](#), in quite some depth.. watch out for the *double entendres!*

Regular Contributor Ant Clerici shares some more thoughts on the new group riding plan, expanding on his article from last month with [thoughts about keeping together](#), - legally and in safety!

Finally this month, new contributor Alan Anderson offers [Some Lines About Planning](#) - more specifically looking more deeply into SLAP, another really useful acronym to help achieve a polished ride.

So there we have it, lots of the TLAs that we often hear bandied about analysed and taken apart for you in this month's pages!

Keep up with club events and Sunday rides at <https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/events/>, this page is always up to date with the latest information and opportunities.

And of course there's always the latest news, gossip, and banter to be found at the Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/321150181285607>

Don't forget to please contact me with any opinions, ideas, or reports at [whamnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:whamnewsletter@gmail.com)

Jim Rolt, Editor



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## CHAIR'S NOTES – TONY DAVIS

Hi all.

This month I am going to bang on about Group Riding. It's a touchy subject amongst our members. WHAM hold a Sunday ride every week all year round and a few evening rides in the summer months. Some of our members turn up almost every week, some occasionally and some have never turned out. I get it. Some people love the idea of riding with a group and feel perfectly confident in such surroundings. Others just can't spare the time or are never available to ride on a Sunday and some riders would not join a group ride if their life depended upon it.



However, recently I am told by a couple of our members that another reason people don't turn up because the "ride is too fast". That statement puzzles me. Our group riding policy has been honed and fine-tuned over the years so that it accommodates all riders, from newly qualified Advanced riders to experienced Masters holders. It stands to reason that a more experienced rider will make quicker progress than a less experienced rider. He doesn't do this by riding at breakneck illegal speeds everywhere, he does it by executing efficient overtakes when the opportunity presents itself, filtering through traffic and probably riding at a slightly faster pace due to his improved positioning for sight.

In addition, regardless of the individual's experience the group leaders will inevitably open a gap on the followers as they will take overtaking opportunities that close for the following riders, if the following riders then try to catch the leaders they will need to ride at a much faster (and most probably illegal) pace. This is, obviously, unacceptable.

So how do we make sure a group safely stays together and those without knowledge of the route or a satnav don't get lost? Simple answer: Whenever the route strays from the straight ahead, each rider will always make sure that the rider following him has seen him turn. Stick to this rule and no one should feel the need to keep the leaders in sight at all times, which would lead to them riding out of their own comfort zone and probably breaking speed limits to do so.

Your Committee has listened to some recent feedback from some of our most experienced members and concluded that there does seem to be a lack of understanding of our Group riding policy, hence this column. We have also identified a problem with the ride-out briefing where we are not emphasising the policy and making sure all riders, even experienced ones, are reminded of the guidelines. We are determined to present a more comprehensive briefing before all rides, please make sure you pay attention.

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Our group riding documentation lays all this out in detail and can be found in our library page on the website here: - <https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/library/> please familiarise yourself with the articles, they have been put together by an experienced team to help our WHAM ride-outs to be safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

We will also endeavour to have an Observer available on every Sunday ride who will be there to mentor those who are new to our group rides and lead a group that is separated from other established groups to ensure they can participate in a completely non challenging environment.

The most important phrase of all is 'Ride your own Ride'. That means keep it legal, safe and always within your personal comfort zone.

I hope all of this will encourage a few new faces to turn up at our ride-outs. If you have any questions or are unsure about just turning up please reach out to me, your Observer or any Committee member and we will make sure you are included in a group with one of our Observers present and help manage any expectations you have.

See you on a Sunday ride!!

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## CHIEF OBSERVER – RICHARD HEWITT

### Position

This month we think about the second phase of IPSGA, position. A reminder that I'm writing these articles with the aim that the reader, the thinking rider, will be stimulated to have some critical thought of their own as to why they position themselves as they do.

Most associates that sign up for the advanced riding course, whether they can explain it or not, have gains to be made with some coaching around their positioning. Peculiarly, many Masters candidates also have improvements to make which whilst minor, maybe six inches to the left or right, bring an exponential improvement in the potential for safe progress to be made.



Whilst the importance of ongoing information collection and collation is central to our riding plan, the first thing the information is used for is road positioning; positioning consequently has an effect on all of our subsequent actions and when put like that it makes those six inches this way or that way, very interesting and important indeed.

So, with all the information you've gleaned when you're riding along, how do you use that to determine your positioning? What are the rules, parameters, and filters that you overlay to the information you have so studiously accumulated? Remembering, whether in town at 20 or 30, or out on the open road at 60, all these decisions need to be taken in milliseconds. In town settings there's so much that could unfold or change, and this means the decisions and positions taken in town need to be implemented just as quickly as when making good progress on your favourite A-road.

A Safety bubble is a space around you that you do not want compromised; yet is not just for your own safety. A short and fat safety bubble in town allows for hazards that might present horizontally to have the most amount of time to be dealt with. Whilst hazards on A-roads will mostly be identified as directly in front or behind you. Here, a thin and long safety bubble on an A-road, where increased speed is present, allows for more time for you to amend your riding plan. Yes, I did say behind you...

There was mention made on the WHAM Facebook page recounting last Sunday's ride where one of our groups were approached from behind on the fast Dolfor (A483) road into Crossgates by Captain Bellend on his GS Adventure and his mate wanting to show just how fast they were, overtaking over double solid whites, and with no regard to anyone else around them. To deal with this hazard our WHAMMERS slowed a little, moved over to position 1, and waved them through. Not what the captain wanted or expected, I think they wanted a race, but what we got out of it was idiots clearly in front of us, rather than on our luggage racks with their unknown, probably minimal skills. This is an example of managing your safety bubble. Whether it's Captain Bellend, or

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the local oik with his fail-pipe on his late 90's Subaru, get them in front of you; remove the danger. There'll be more great examples of safety bubble use, but for now, always remember it's you that has control over the safety bubble, no one else; and riding like you own it makes you look and feel in charge of your situation. Some other road users react well to this too. However, unless you find yourself in an emergency situation just don't use exaggerated jerky movements across the carriageway. Doing this will make you look unreliable.

Ok, so, SSV anyone? Remember that? Safety-Stability-Vision.

Those three little words, applied in the order they are written are your guiding principles when selecting a position on the road. On the basis there might be a mixed audience of readers for this piece I'll note the rest of the mantra, the rules:

Safety trumps all else – never compromise safety for a better view for instance

Once your safe, you need to be stable, before you get that better view

Practical on the road common situations where these things apply can easily be identified:

- If you are approaching a left hand bend and would quite like the best view by being in position 3, you cannot be in position 3 if there's an arctic coming the other way and at risk of straddling the centre line. Safety takes precedence, you slow, and adopt position 2 or even 1. If position 2 is dirty with gravel or oil, take position 1, for stabilities sake
- Let's now consider another left-hand bend yet this time we can see across open land and there's no arctic, or any other vehicle for that matter, about to come the other way. BUT position 3 is scarred with pot holes. So, for stabilities sake we're into the same thought processes as to whether position 2 or 1 is where we need to be

Once you've got these priorities firmly in your consciousness, decision making becomes partly autonomous. Your brain knows the right thing to do with minimal thought. That is where we want to progress to in order to be the best rider we can individually be. This goal is reached, like much else in life, with practice, practice, and yet more practice.

If after reading this you think you've some gains to be made, go out for a ride, forget making any sort of progress, and through the use of verbal commentary talk yourself into where you are going to be on the road and for what reasons. We all learn in different ways, but I've found a combination of that contained in this paragraph can bring most people gains. I guarantee you will find you are not in the right place all the time, or coasting in dolly daydream mode and again not quite in the right place. Busy lives, and the mitherings that come along with them affect our road positioning very clearly.

Lastly, don't make your deliberations on SSV long winded, and consequently compress the time between what you are thinking about might require a change of position. The quicker you are in the better position, the more time, the more chance, you'll have of dealing with whatever else might unfold. The worse that will happen if your quick decision is not needed quite as quickly as expected is that you will slow a little in avoiding something that wasn't quite as bad as you thought. Counter that with deliberating too long and striking whatever it was you had more of an inkling might be present. It's just a no brainer – see it – apply SSV – get it done and change position.

Don't underestimate the difference good positioning can make to your ride, increasing your safety and enjoyment. As we all know, those magical six inches can make a hell of a difference!

Safe riding.

Richard H

Chief Observer

Worcester & Hereford Advanced Motorcyclists

## GROUP RIDING – THE FINER POINTS – ANT CLERICI

### Keeping together

The second in the group riding series covers “keeping together” where you will need to consider how things differ from riding alone.

### Why is that relevant?

Keeping a small group of 4 bikes together as a coherent group takes both riding skills and an understanding of the tricks of the trade. There are good reasons for practicing this art:

- It's safer because 4 bikes are more visible than 1 or 2 bikes.
- It's safer because if anything goes wrong, from a puncture to closed roads you will have help at hand
- It's a shared experience and therefore more social, more fun
- It allows you to improve your riding by watching others and taking part in the inevitable coffee stop debates

The above is less likely if you are strung out and out of sight from one another.





A shared experience - this time Snowdonia

This is something that WHAM riders practice successfully on Sunday rides and trips in the UK and in Europe.

Some of you will have seen the BikeSafe video which explains the dangers of being fixated on the rider in front: leading to pressure to “keep up” and inevitable increased risk taking. But WHAM’s group riding approach turns this on its head: the lead rider should have an awareness of the group behind; in fact every rider should be aware of their following rider.

At its simplest there’s a duty to mark turnings for the following rider. More on this later.

There’s a balance to be had.

If the lead rider executes an overtake then rides off making progress (riding to the speed limit and conditions as appropriate) and the second rider has to wait for a safe overtaking opportunity; by the time they have got past the leader will be out of sight.

So what now?

Assuming everyone is following our ride briefing of a “safe and legal” ride then they won’t catch the leader unless the leader’s progress is delayed by traffic etc

**Question:** how can the second rider catch up?

**Answer:** they shouldn’t try!

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page7



I'll say that again – they should not try!

By that I mean don't take risks or exceed the speed limit to catch up.

Everyone should ride their own ride, making their own decisions.

So now the group is s t r u n g.....o u t.

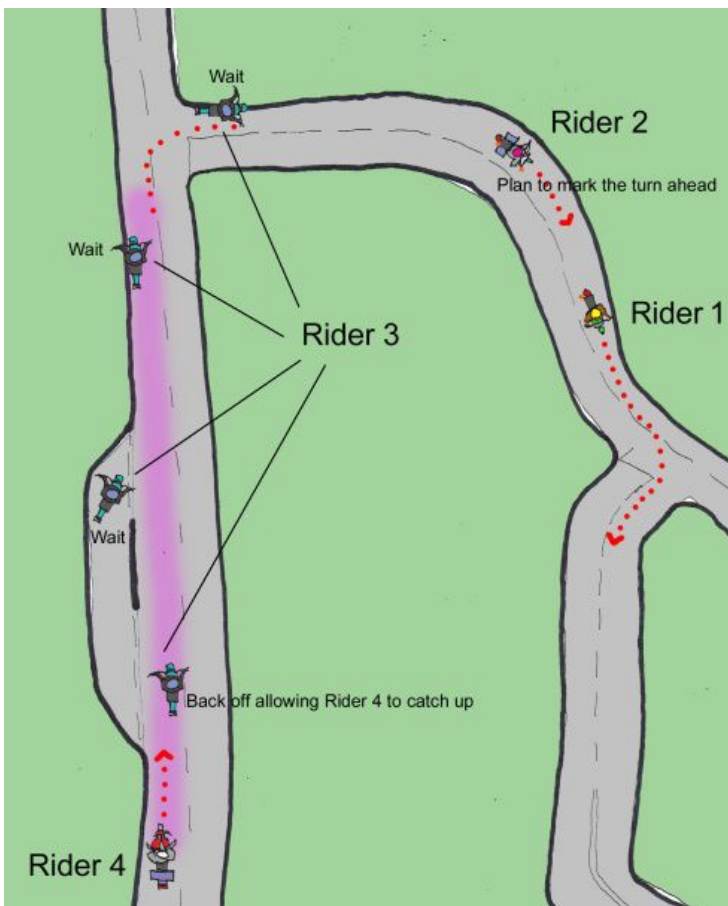
But it's easy to regroup if the leader slows a little and waits for the group to reform.

On the other hand the leader could remain progressive but in any case they'll need to wait to mark the next turn. However the group will be separated and will not experience the advantages listed at the beginning of this article.

## Marking the turns

You must ensure the following rider follows at every change in direction. For simple roundabouts and crossroads we always assume straight on unless marked.

Even if you think the following rider knows the route **you must mark the turn.**



How can you best mark the turn? The drop off system relies on riders stopping close to turnings to mark the direction. WHAM's group riding seeks to avoid this potentially dangerous and/or illegal action by running groups of 4 riders and encouraging those in front to gather the group together BEFORE any turning.

And crucially before any complex routing such as through town centres or motorway exits.

Consider this scenario – yes the turns can be marked (laboriously) but if the group arrives together, in sight of one another, the complex of turns is ridden without stopping.



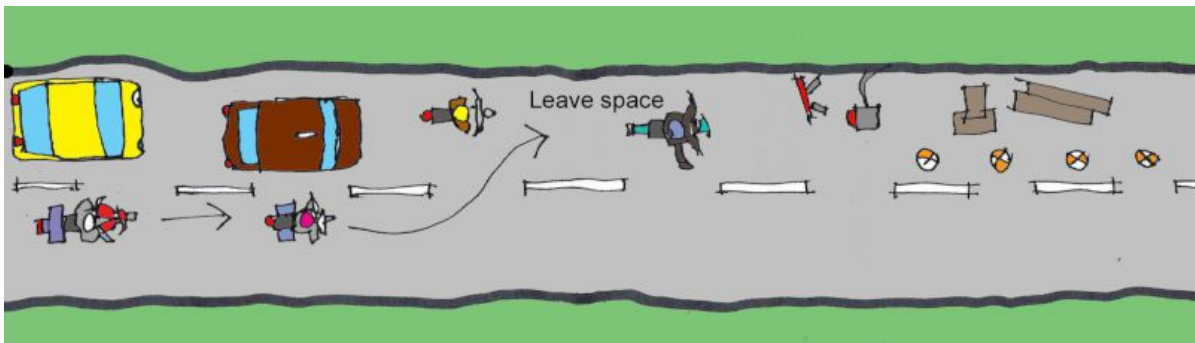
## Overtakes and junctions etc

Leaders should avoid trying to manage the group by delaying their own progress.

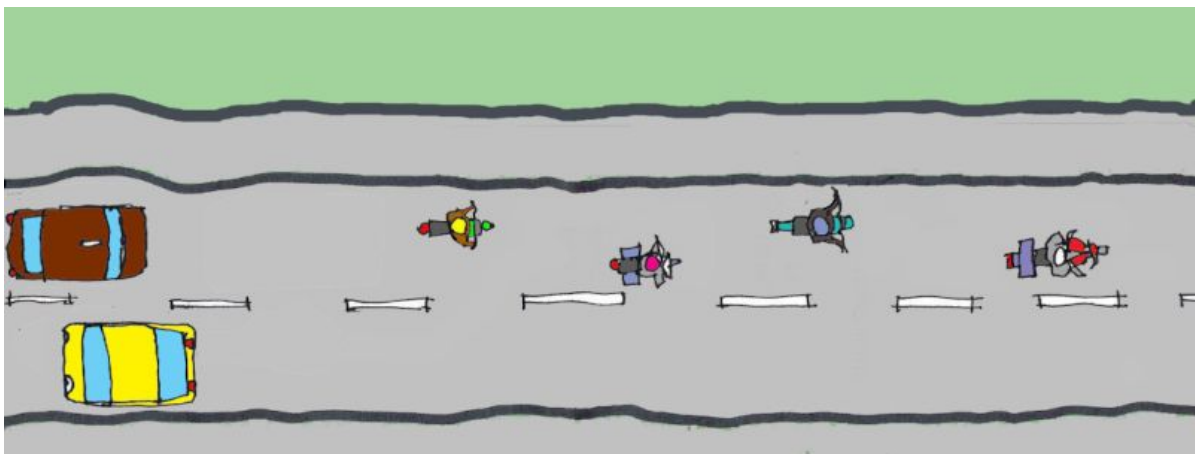
- If you have a safe overtaking opportunity then take it!
- If you can safely turn onto a main road at a “give way” then do so.

However there are techniques that help keep you together. At T-junctions and cross roads gather together, imagine as a single vehicle, this will enable the group to move as one.

If the lead is stopped at lights then leave space for the rest of the group to filter up so you reform the group. Following riders are still responsible for checking there's a space for you.



On urban roads practice a staggered formation.



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On rural roads try and maintain a 2s gap between bikes. Note observers are practiced at being closer when safe to do so.

## When it goes wrong?

I've started this with a "when" and not an "if"!

Inevitably there will be a time when your satnav will give a different route to your leader or you'll find yourself waiting for the following bike, waiting, waiting, waiting.....

Let's take routing first.

Always follow the bike in front of you, even if they are diverging from the route shown on your satnav.

It is more important to keep together.



There are so many variables that being "garmined" is commonplace.

On most occasions the leader will continue and eventually your route and theirs will agree.

Sometimes the leader will have missed a turn and they will recalculate the route or perform a U-turn. Some excursions can take you to interesting places!

Don't forget to take your time if performing a U-turn. Pick a safe place.

Let's all get lost!" (Awkward)

But what if the rider behind you doesn't appear?

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page10



You will know if they might have been caught by traffic lights or a slow vehicle. But if you are worried then turn back to where you saw them last or call them. The rest of your group will be waiting ahead and trying the same options.

Eventually you'll all get together with the stationery rider and be able to assist with zip ties, gaffer tape, puncture repair or whatever. Hopefully not first aid and a call to the emergency services.

## Other traffic

Large biker groups can be intimidating but our groups of 4 are designed to respect other road users. However we still encounter drivers who aren't happy with being overtaken. Use your advanced skills and don't rush. The leader might have overtaken a car but then the driver closes up to deter the rest of the group from following. Be patient.

Many drivers have dash cams! So assume you're being filmed!

Look good: ride well.

Be polite and consider a 'thank you' wave.

Our group riding policy takes care of the rest.

<https://www.wham-motorcycling.org/library/>

Want to hear more? Or to arrange for a practice session?

Then please contact our CO Richard Hewitt, [r70gbo@gmail.com](mailto:r70gbo@gmail.com)

Ant Clerici



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page11



## SOME LINES ABOUT PLANNING – ALAN ANDERSON



We often talk about different parts of “the System” and it is described in detail in the bible that is “Motorcycle Roadcraft.” However, whilst **IPSGA** describes how we enact a plan, it gives us little help with the formulation of that plan.

Bike control and application of the system are as nought if we are not trying to do the right thing in the first place. The “I” for Information expands to **TUG**, where the “U” tells you to use information to make your plan, but there is very little advice or guidance on how to do this, and what a good plan may look like.

Arguably, it is impossible to prescribe how to plan a motorcycle ride; we are continually planning and re-planning as our riding environment changes. However, there is an over-arching set of principles that I find useful to apply to this process, which is encapsulated in the **SLAP** acronym.

I first encountered **SLAP** with reference to “offsiding” (there is a good write up in that context here:

<https://www.iamroadsmart.com/groups/oad/road-tips/the-offside-rule>), and famously Ant recently wrote about it in these pages in the context of when to override (!) the paintwork so thoughtfully applied to our playground by the Highways Engineers.

I believe this useful set of rules is much more broadly applicable, having relevance to all our riding planning decisions, and am always surprised how little it seems to be talked or written about.

When planning our riding, the application of **SLAP** encourages us to decide whether what we are considering is **SAFE**, whether it is **LEGAL**, whether it would give an **ADVANTAGE** and what would be the **PERCEPTION** of other road users who may see us perform this manoeuvre.

Whilst superficially simple, the analysis required to use **SLAP** well is not trivial.

### Is our manoeuvre:

- Safe?
- Legal?
- Advantageous?
- Perceived well by others?

When we decide whether a possible manoeuvre would be **SAFE**, what is our baseline? We are all aware of inherent dangers in motorcycling, so this can only ever be a relative assessment of the risks of the manoeuvre in comparison to other options (assuming by this time it is too late to stay at home on the sofa!). Also, of course, our perception of how safe it would be is based on the quality of our observation and interpretation of the scene, as well as our anticipation of how that scene may evolve.

In theory, the **LEGAL** test is the simplest as it is a relatively binary decision; either something is, or is not, within the rules. All that should be required to apply this test is a thorough knowledge of

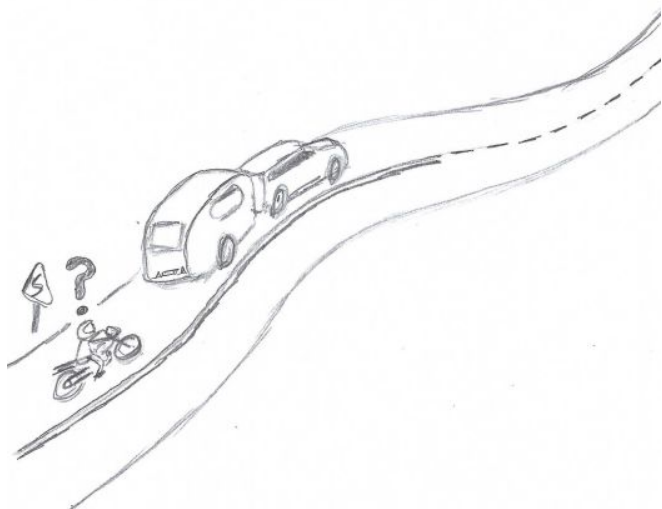
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the rules of the road as they apply to the situation we are facing. I recognise this is not really the case, and the rules can be open to a degree of interpretation, but this is beyond the scope of my argument here.



Assessing the potential **ADVANTAGE** of the manoeuvre can be another tricky one; advantage relative to what? In practice, we often know what we are trying to achieve in our ride – making progress, getting to that next set of bends with no other traffic in front, maximum comfort for our pillion, a simple bumble down the lanes, etc. – and so assessing the advantage will always be in this context. There can also be an element of risk vs. reward when combining this element with our assessment of safety; is it worth exposing ourselves to the “wrong” side of the road to make that overtake and get to those sweepers

before the caravan we are following?

Having navigated these first three stages, the sting of **SLAP** is very much in the tail.

What is likely to be the **PERCEPTION** of people seeing (or maybe hearing) the manoeuvre we are considering? It is maybe first worth considering whether we should care about this; if what we do meets the S-, L- and A-tests, then what does it matter what others think about us?

I think it is clear that many road users (not just motorcyclists) do not care; behaving with a near total lack of consideration for others. However, we are advanced riders, and I believe part of what that entails is seeking to help everyone to have a safe and enjoyable journey, and to create a better perception of motorcyclists amongst the general public. Also, again harking back to some of the points that Ant has made in his previous pieces, if we ride, for example, for Severn Freewheelers, we are (very visible, at least when we make a mistake!) ambassadors for that organisation, and should want to portray it, and motorcyclists more generally, in a good light.



We also need to be aware that how other road users perceive our actions may directly affect how they behave towards us; we do not want to instil “road rage” in others by doing something they feel is unreasonable.

Herein lies another of the difficulties of the **P**-test; it is not what we think is reasonable that matters, but how another observer perceives it. In addition to working out who all those potential observers may be, we must be able to imagine how they will perceive what we are considering. Our ability to do this may have immediate consequences for our comfort and safety, as well as longer-term effects on how our community of motorcyclists is viewed by the broader public.

As with all these concepts, **SLAP** is not a rigid approach. It works best when adapted to the situation we face. When we do this, I believe it provides a quick planning checklist that can help us

to plan well and, with good execution, deliver the confident, progressive ride that we seek.