**VC Venta Women’s Update**

Bit of a mixed year on the women’s front with weather & injuries hitting regular rides.

At the beginning of the year, weekly Zwift banded rides took place while dark nights & bad weather hit and have recently returned since change of BST.

In September, rather than joining Sotonia zwift racing, encouragement was directed for members to join the current Venta Zwift teams to make a mixed group.  There were also some new faces (as well as old) attending Intro to Zwift at South Downs Social, but regular Zwift racing attendance continues to be elusive.

Fortnightly road rides have also been less well attended, but there has been an increase in take up on Sunday club rides.

WhatsApp seems to be the preferred method for ride communications, with the facebook page being used for information reviewing/sharing opposed to commenting or engaging.

A regular Tuesday Chaingang womens group has been running since May, and while initially there weren’t quite enough to run a chaingang ride, this has been successful in getting a faster paced women’s ride group together. They are now on a roll and regularly arrange ad-hoc rides around 17/18mph, as well as joining Sunday club rides.

The introduction of CityLights no-drop Tuesday pm as a social rider instead of a Chaingang, also initially provided a relaxed mixed group ride option.

With lower attendance at the Saturday bi-weekly rides, these have shifted more to monthly options with attendance at the monthly gravel ride also encouraged. We have also introduced rides starting out of central Winchester to provide different route options and more variation. With the weather impacting a lot of Saturdays, several of these have been gravel or mtb based.

Evening Socials continue to be reasonable well attended and a lot of fun!

In terms of Venta women membership numbers - this hovers around the 160 mark. Some are parents/family/child membships, but only around half follow the facebook page.

The facebook page has around 205 followers,  approximately 80 of these are members (combination of adult/family & child) but in general there are only around 10 regular contributors to the facebook page - so this appears to be used as an information site.

Aside from the numbers, the positive is that people still seem to be riding under their own steam with some members taking part in epic endurance events, trips away, days out exploring on mtb, gravel and road, a bit of zwifting and of course cyclo-cross!

The one area we haven’t focused on is racing. While  Goodwood ran women only events and consideration to running women’s race was raised, we have received no or very limited responses when these options have been raised & don’t appear to be a priority for majority of the current membership group.

During 2023, disciplines, interest and attendance have varied and seem to be impacted by weather, family and/or job commitments (in no particular order).

While the grand plans for 2023 may not have turned out quite as expected, one underlying message is that enjoy the rides and cycling you can do - whatever form it takes.

One of our challenges continues to be increase participation of women in cycling within the club. While this has remained elusive, we continue to keep the womens side rolling - whatever form that takes.

For 2024, the plan is to continue to encourage and highlight cycling opportunities and events for all forms/levels of cycling.

To encourage a fluid ride structure with the approach of “If you’re going for a ride, reach out and see if anyone else is around/available”  Sometimes there will be, sometimes there won’t, but always be kind, support and respect your fellow cycling friends.

The overarching message of the Womens groups is that for those who engage, some fantastic friendships have been formed, there are lots of opportunities and adventures to be had, albeit small or extreme ones! And don’t be afraid to ask if anyone is around for a ride!

Plans for 2024 include:

Continue with quarterly socials

Encourage more regular Zwift during winter season

Encourage sharing of ride plans

Review communications strategy - use of WhatsApp & Facebook mediums