

Swansea Sustrans Rangers Newsletter

Issue 12, November 2006

The principal events since the last issue in July have been the Penclawdd work camp, some infrastructure development in Swansea and most recently a Liaison Rangers meeting in York which I attended. Cycling maps came up in passing at this meeting and also at the last Cycle Forum in Swansea. As I perceive maps to be of particular interest I will start off with them, then deal with the York meeting and follow this with the other matters, in more or less reverse chronological order.

Maps

The lack of good quality cycling maps in this area is something I have long been aware of and I am pleased to report on two new encouraging developments.

Sustrans strip maps with North pointing all over the place are at last being replaced by the *Discover* maps series maps in which N-S goes up and down the sheet. They are at the same 1:100,000 scale and use the same conventions, ie notation, contour intervals, colouring, etc. However, a problem which applied to the strip maps persists: it is that boxes are placed in various places on the map and these often cover up useful information such as minor roads. I had the opportunity to raise this with John Grimshaw at the Liaison Ranger meeting and he agreed that where possible the boxes should be moved. He suggested I write to him, which I have done. I have since learnt that this problem is being addressed in the new *Discover* maps being prepared for S. Wales, in which, I understand, the offending boxes will be placed in the Severn Estuary.

The other development is the production street cycle maps for major conurbations. Ryland Jones, Sustrans Celtic Trail coordinator, gave a presentation at a recent Swansea Cycle Forum in which he described these maps. They are at a scale of 1:20,000 (approx. 3" to the mile) and will be produced digitally so that they can easily be updated. An example he showed (not from Wales) had separate colouring for off and on road cycle paths and also highlighted minor roads suitable for cycling. This scale allows street names to be included. Hopefully a map on these lines will be produced for Swansea before too long.

The two types of map complement each other: the *Discover* maps for the cycle tourist and the street maps for local users.

Liaison Ranger meeting (York; 20/21 Oct.)

This year there was just one meeting as compared with the two we have had in previous years; consequently numbers were higher (85, excluding Sustrans staff) as representatives from all over the UK attended. Wales was well represented with in addition to me: Brett Kibble from Newtown, Powys, Alastair Rayment from Cardiff, Clive Paul from Pembrokeshire and Sustrans indefatigable Gwyn Smith. The meeting followed the usual format of a ride (actually two) on the Friday followed by a meal together in the evening and then the conference from 10.00 – 16.00 on the Saturday.

I joined the Friday afternoon cycle ride which followed NCN 65 south part way to Selby and then back the way we had come. This route along the old LNER railway is interesting for two reasons: It was Sustrans first venture into property: John Grimshaw bought it for £1.00(!) in 1984. It is also interesting because the artwork along it features the solar system. Scale models of the sun, earth, moon and other planets are located alongside the path with their distances from the sun – a yellow globe over a metre in diameter – also to scale. Thus the moon (a large ball bearing) is less than a metre from the earth (the size of a golf ball), whereas the two are around 400m from the sun.

John Grimshaw sat beside me at the dinner that evening; this was interesting as I learnt first hand some of his latest thinking which he elaborated on in his keynote address the next morning. His theme was how to cut back on CO₂ emissions. Interestingly he was not particularly anti-car but rather saw the first priority to be to cut back the need for travelling long distances. Thus places of

work and where people shop need to be near where they live. This coupled with car sharing and of course the provision of safe routes for walking and cycling was the key. He was against high speed trains because of the non-linear relation between speed and the power required, noting that the power to drive a train at 120mph is more than twice that at 90mph¹. Safe routes to schools and the need for the next generation to favour cycling was also high on his agenda.

The Saturday conference was opened by the Mayor of York, Janet Hopkins. Both her remarks and those of Ian Stokes, York's principal transport planner, who followed her, underlined how cycle friendly York is. They have spent £M 2.7 in the last five years; there has been a 16% increase in cycling and 10km of on and off road cycle paths have been constructed. One particular picture he showed which caught my fancy was a roundabout with a cycle path forming a green outer ring. I saw something similar two years ago in Denmark. Cycling to schools is a priority for them and he illustrated a school cycle shed – basically a roof without walls but with (I think) CCTV protection. York station has racks for 400 bikes, most of which were in use during my visit.

John Grimshaw's talk followed. In addition to the points made above he is looking for ways of using the skills rangers have: might we be involved in land negotiations? Or could use be made of our various professional skills? There was some discussion about this and I am not sure that any firm conclusions were drawn. Opinions expressed favoured a pragmatic approach and that a distinction needs to be drawn between the voluntary nature of ranger's work and that of Sustrans staff.

Further presentations included an update on the Ranger Programme by Tony Ambrose and talks by two Liaison Rangers: Miles Whitham from Dundee and Elspeth Cummings from Suffolk. Their achievements were impressive – more I think than most of us could hope to achieve. Amongst other things Tony gave us figures showing the steady expansion in both Rangers and Ranger Groups. These are expected to increase from the present 2100 and 170 to 2500 and 190 respectively in 2007. Another interesting statistic is that Sustrans owns 800km of the NCN, ie about 5% of the total.

There was then a group discussion followed by lunch. After lunch Paul Osborne, Sustrans *Safe routes to schools* director, gave a talk on this focussing on Sustrans' *Bike it* project. From him I learnt that this has led to a quadrupling of journeys by bike from 2% to 8% in the first year of the project. Nationally about half of all children walk to school, 30% travel by car but only 1% cycle. I also gleaned that the Welsh Assembly are piloting *Bike it* in part of Wales where a significant investment in *Safe Routes to Schools* has been made. He did not say where but thought that there had been significant progress in the Swansea area. This is encouraging.

The meeting closed with workshops. I left before the closing session which attempted to summarize these so am not aware what conclusions if any were drawn. One area of discussion was that of reporting. To whom should rangers report: their LR, the LA or direct to Sustrans? Should reporting be done on a regular basis, eg monthly? As one might expect the practice is varied. Personally I am against being too prescriptive.

Penclawdd work camp (19 Aug. – 3 Sep. and 7/8 Oct.)

This was to construct 400m of path midway between Pont-y-Cob Road and Penclawdd. I managed to attend a few days but there was a paucity of volunteers, except on the 7/8 October weekend. Many turned up then making light work of the labour intensive 'haunching' needed to finish off the job. Thanks to David Judd's team of professionals objectives were achieved despite the poor attendance. The final path consists of a 2m wide asphalt lane for cyclists with alongside it a 2m wide cockle shell surfaced strip for horses. Pedestrians I guess can choose either.

¹ On a technical note: the resistance varies approx. as the square of the speed so the power varies as the cube. However the former applies to the energy used for a given distance.



(Laura) David Morgan Rob Peter
Anne Tony



This camp was noteworthy for the excellent food served from the 'L & A Diner'. For the few days I was able to attend I was glad that there were not that many volunteers as I was particularly well looked after by these two ladies!

On my first day I was the only volunteer and having experience in the use of a level was given the task of setting up levels alongside the path. These were needed for the drainage. David Judd was my 'rod man'! I guess we made a good team as our levels closed to a mm, except that it was 1m and 1mm! The metre error was traced to the first reading and to put it right we deemed the level of the site bench mark (the reference level for the work) to be 11.000 m above an arbitrary datum rather than the 10.000 originally intended.

There must have been over twenty on Saturday 7th October to do the haunching. This involved spreading piles of cockle shells to form the 2m wide horse track and spreading top soil on either side of the 4m wide combined path. The asphalt had been placed in the intervening period. The day ended with a splendid meal in the *Sea Gardens*, the Chinese restaurant opposite the west end of the site which used to be the *Berthwyd* pub.. Considering it was Saturday, that they were expecting about 10 and then I think 23 turned up, they did us very well.

Infrastructure developments

I'll deal first with the NCN from west to east.

Loughor – new section

Although the Celtic Trail money has been allocated there appears to be some problem delaying the start of this km of new path. It will bypass Culfor Road to take NCN 4 to the Loughor Bridge by a more direct route parallel to and just north of the A484. I understand that the money needs to be spent by next Spring so hopefully the problem will be resolved soon and a start made.

Pont y Cob road

Measures are planned to slow traffic on this section of NCN 4.

Gowerton

A new cycle (Toucan) crossing has been installed by the Commercial pub at the east end of the Relief Road and a similar crossing is expected soon at the west end across Mill Street. The problem of the privately owned wall in the way here still however needs to be resolved.

Sketty Lane

Since I reported on the Mumbles Road crossing in the last issue the design has been changed so that the Toucan crossing will now be where the existing pedestrian crossing is on the east side of the junction. This change makes a lot of sense. The work is scheduled to be carried out next Spring.

Foreshore

A new cafe is to be built on the foreshore near County Hall and in the same area a kink in the promenade path straightened out. The Council have been asked to provide cycle parking for this cafe preferably located where those using it can keep an eye on their bikes.

Fabian Way and eastwards

Work on the construction of the Siding's Bridge should start before the end of this year and be complete by next August. Also work on improving NCN 4 east of the Fabian Way Park-and-Ride is expected to start soon. When the new bridge is installed there should be a quality route all the way to near the Swansea – Neath Port Talbot border. Eventually the km of path constructed in 1999 which ends just across the County boundary will be extended eastward to near the Tower Hotel and beyond, but I am told it will be 2009 at the earliest before this happens.

City Centre

Work on the Kingsway clockwise gyratory system is well underway and it looks as if the measures to facilitate the movement of cyclists, particularly from E. to W. are being implemented. As noted in the last issue the inclusion of cycle measures in the design before the work was actually carried out is perhaps a 'first' for Swansea Council.

Connect2

You will be aware from Sustrans literature that they are planning to put in an application for this multi-million lottery award. It will involve submitting plans for some 50 projects across the country. Proposals for this area are under consideration. Possibilities include: extending the existing (non Sustrans) cycle route which bypasses Grovesend to the east along the Lliw valley to form part of a Gowerton to Pontardulais link; continuation of the North Gower Penclawdd route; and providing an easterly alternative to the existing NCN 43 route S. of Clydach by taking it over the Mons Bridge. (Negotiations with the new owners are underway.)

Workday (Swiss valley, near Llanelli on Saturday 11 November)

Meet at 10.00 1¾ miles up NCN 47 from the blue cycle bridge over the B4304. Here there are two minor road crossings 200m apart with chicanes on either side. Meet at the second one. This is just before the Felinfoel brewery. Note that cycling up the path you pass two other crossings with chicanes on the way. By car: the A476 from Llanelli runs parallel and close to the path by the RV which is on the left just before the B4303 joins the A476. The first of the two minor crossings is named "Pleasant View" and the second "Tanyrddyn". They connect with the A476 and you should be able to park in the second.

The work involves clearing a culvert and I guess this involves digging and possibly vegetation clearing. Wear working clothes, preferably including boots and protective gloves. For details of the work contact David Judd (phones: 01792 467954/07967 613920). Please let me (phone: 01792 233755) or David J. know if you will be coming; hopefully most of you will. Bring sandwiches. When we finish – 4.00pm ish – David assures me we will find a pub nearby for refreshments.

New Ranger

A welcome Ben Ball who has joined our Ranger Group. He, together with Veronica, will be covering the south end of the Clyne Valley and also keeping an eye on parts of the foreshore path (just where has yet to be discussed).

David Naylor (Sustrans Liaison Ranger for Swansea area)