

Swansea's Countryside Access Plan (2023-33)

Comments on the draft CAP.

Members of Swansea's Local Access Forum (LAF) have been sent a copy of the above and have been invited to comment on it. The writer is a member and comments as follows. While these views are his own they are supported by *Wheelrights* and *Cycling UK*.

This plan while dealing in detail with the needs of walkers and horse riders has little in it for cyclists. The essence of this submission is that this needs to be addressed.

Cyclists can be grouped into three types:

- Mountain bikers who cycle off-road except for access. They cycle for leisure or to take part in competitions.
- A middle group comprises active travellers who use a bike to commute, shop or generally to get around; also for leisure and cycle touring. They include children and the elderly. They will use off-road cycle paths if convenient and perceived as safer than the road.
- Roadies who cycle almost exclusively on roads. They cycle for leisure, including cycle touring, and take part in events such as sportives and cycle races.

The CAP should cater for the first two groups. There is already an extensive network of bridleways suitable for mountain bikers, but it is principally the middle group for whom provision is inadequate. The Gower Peninsula in particular is where access is needed. It is needed for both local cyclists and tourists; the former for leisure, whether just to go for a ride or to get to, say, a beach; the latter to explore this lovely area. Provision is needed for them, especially for families with children who need traffic-free routes.

Wheelrights in collaboration with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) recently held two *Rural Routes* workshops; the first on 1 May 2018, the second on 12 March 2022. These led to the production of a map which shows a proposed network of routes on the Peninsula. This map and notes of the two workshops can be viewed on <https://www.wheelrights.org.uk/routes.htm>. They are under the heading "Rural Routes (on Gower Peninsula)". The map is provided overleaf. (NB: the website map has better definition, so is easier to read.)

A mix of mainly quiet roads and off-road tracks comprise the network. Much of it is on bridleways. All would be suitable for walkers and horse riders. Some, such as G01 to G05 on the east side of the Peninsula, would double as active travel routes, but most would be for leisure. In particular, G05, linking Penclawdd and Gowerton should be included in the CAP. The intention is that they would be suitable for every day bikes, not just mountain bikes. This means that some bridleways would need upgrading, eg by the removal of large stones, or with compacted gravel. A bituminous surface such as might be required for key active routes, would not be needed. Usefully there is guidance on the width of paths in 6.13 of the draft CAP.

The bridleway, G12, is an example of a model route. It skirts the west side of Rhossili Down for two miles between Hillend and Rhossili. It offers great views to the west across Rhossili Beach and can be expected to be popular with holiday makers, especially those staying in Rhossili or the Hillend campsite. It, together with other sections between Hillend and Llanmadoc, would provide a key link in a round Gower cycle route. At the moment G12 is just about cycleable on a non-mountain bike. To meet the desired standard for the proposed network a few large stones would need to be removed and gravel surfacing provided in a few places. For the most part it is OK as it is, even though much of it is across grass.

It is hoped that the CAP can be revised to reflect the needs of cyclists and in doing so include the routes on the map overleaf. While there are several mentions of cycling throughout the report they are mainly bracketed with walking or horse riding as being desirable activities for which access needs to be provided. There is a brief coverage of off-road provision at the west end of the Peninsula in 9.7 but otherwise I found nothing specific about cycling. A clear plan for cycle access, particularly in the Peninsula, is needed.

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- Key to routes**
- G01a: Mayals – Bishopston (B4436)
 - G01b: Bishopston – Southgate
 - G01c: Southgate – Penrill
 - G02: West Cross – Murton
 - G03: Fairwood Common
 - G04: Dunvant – Upper Killey
 - G05: Gowerton – Penrill
 - G06a: Penrill – Penrill
 - G06b: Penrill – Penrill
 - G07a: Penrill – Lefrid
 - G07b: Penrill – Lefrid
 - G07c: Park Woods – Clifton
 - G08: Clifton – Welsh Moor
 - G09: Penrill – Welsh Moor
 - G10: Moor Corner – B4247
 - G11: Muddston – Llengwrth
 - G12: Rhosall – Hillend
 - G13: Hillend – Broughton (Dunes)
 - G14: Broughton – Llanmores (Coast)
 - G15: Cum Ny – Llanmores (Coast)
 - G16: Llanmores – Llanrhos (Coast)

Gower Peninsula
 Potential cycle routes.
 (Updated: 14 Mar. 2022)

- Legend**
- Existing
 - Potential
 - Off road
 - Road with c. lanes
 - Cycle linkout on existing road