

Routes Group

Notes of Routes group meeting on 14th November 2020

Online by zoom (due to Covid restrictions)

Present: John Sayce (JS), Nick Guy (NG), Dareyoush Rassi (DR), Patrick Tribe (PT), Chris Walsh (CW). David Judd (DJ), Bill Gannon (BG).

Apologies: . David Naylor (DN), Mike Lewis (ML)

JS chaired the meeting.

1. Matters arising

JS reported that DN has produced a hybrid list of concerns which is now ready to go (for Officers to share with the Council). See Appendix.

2. Routes being planned using AT money from 2020/2021

(a) Sketty Park. JS reported a new link from Singleton Park (near Sketty Hall) SUP along Sketty Park Rd to Gower Road with 3m width. This crosses minor roads with raised platforms and has additional links next to Parklands School to Rhyd y Defaid Drive. It would provide safe cycle routes to Parklands and Olchfa schools. JS and NG had met with design engineer Simon Jones which was very positive with Simon taking on board some suggested improvements.

(b) Olchfa route. JS reported this new route which starts next to Olchfa school going south along Olchfa Lane, then along a bridle way through Olchfa woods, over the old tip, and whole section being 3m wide. (Route CS on SW Swansea map.) It has some steep gradients and JS suggested some mitigation, (eg lessening a dip) but there are issues about the membrane covering the old tip. Simon Jones reported some surfacing details to meet needs of horse-riders. To reduce conflict between different users Simon liked the sign "Share with Care". JS and NG thought this would be a positive with potential links to Rhyd-y-Defaid Rd and at south end to the Clyne Valley car park. ACTION JS circulate Council plans with the group.

3. Broadway – Singleton Park route.

JS reported a meeting he and DR had with 5 local Sketty councillors and 3 Transportation staff (incl. Dave Hughes and Chloe Lewis). This is a challenging link through Sketty with some disappointment that CCS were not taking on WR suggestions to improve the existing bridge over Gower Rd for bikes. However there were positive discussions around possibilities of creating new bike routes along Eversley Rd (where JS suggested SUP away from local shops), and Frogmore Ave. DR said he was very impressed with high level of serious consultation and joint work, which was in stark contrast with the Mayals Rd discussions. DR also highlighted that Council plans for above routes are on the Council's website, whereas sadly the Mayals Rd plans are not!

JS felt a key message from the very good meeting was the focus on what's best for the area (Sketty), the benefits from building alliances and getting real "buy in" for future routes.

One Councillor (Cheryl Philpott) made a good point that Active Travel should include walkers, bus users, and people with mobility issues as well as cyclists. DR supported this and gave feedback about his recent BikeAbility session which was good on dealing with traffic but he felt it should include something about being mindful of pedestrians too.

4. Cockett Rd and Gors Ave

JS reported that the Cockett Rd SUP was almost complete between Broadway and the Cockett Inn. This was mostly 3m except around the trees.

JS reported on Council plans to improve the Gors Av SUP after the original construction breached AT guidelines (it was less than 3m wide on about a third of its length). Council engineer Simon Jones accepted our criticisms and shared plans to rectify most of them.

5. Mayals Road

JS summed up that our last routes group came to no agreement, except to compile a list of concerns which DN had completed. As the routes group couldn't agree a position the officers had agreed a statement.

Approx 100 residents had met with Alan Ferris (AF) (3rd Nov) but unfortunately (due to IT problems) JS couldn't read out the officers' statement. DN had put across WR views. JS said it was not good that AF was alone, plus his presentation could not be seen well. There should have been a councillor present too.

JS noted Nick's motion but asked for people's opinions first:

DJ listed his concerns about the Council's plans:

- The Council had not given evidence for future useage of this route, and disputed the idea that it was a crucial link to a future South Gower route (as better alternatives were via Fairwood rd and Murton lane).
- Hybrid tracks would destroy the ambience of Mayals Rd
- The damaging effects on trees and tree roots
- Many residents would prefer a longer SUP and DJ's preference is that it should go on the northside, possibly with a crossing near Southerndown Ave.
- DJ agrees with Council plans for SUPs on bottom and top end of Mayals Rd.
- DJ is against plans to narrow the carriageway, and instead advocating copying the Cockett Rd style SUP.

JS reported the points 1 to 6 agreed at the 22 Aug. meeting. (See meeting notes.) He noted that DN supported a wider hybrid track on the southside, (preferably 2.5m wide), and nothing on northside where cyclists would use the road. He strongly advocated carriageway narrowing, which would meet the critical width for cyclists safety as advocate in the AT Guidance and in other traffic regulations. DN was also open to SUP instead of hybrids but his preference would be for the SUP to go on southside.

PT thought the Council plans were a wrong scheme in the wrong place. His preferences were:

- Leave Mayals Rd as it is.
- Not sure it's our role to put forward alternative designs.
- Agreed desirability of a link between Clyne Common and the Foreshore bike path, but he felt the real issue was to cross Clyne Common.
- PT also stressed the problem of a lack of consultation, and pressed that at least the Council should publish their plan (eg on Council website).

DR agreed that the residents were very frustrated that the Council had not yet published their plans on their website, which was requested on 3rd November! However DR recognised that we should help the Council save face, seek some common ground, so he wished to second Nick's motion.

BG said from a personal perspective as a cycle commuter, he would stay on the carriageway, but he hadn't studied the Council's plans, and was struggling to understand them.

CW said that WR should push for provision that meets the needs of the wide range of cyclists including confident cyclists and less confident cyclists, which the AT Act particularly wish to encourage. He agreed confident cyclists would continue using the road, but less confident would be put off by the narrow width (1.5m) of the hybrid tracks. He agreed we should seek a compromise, and include the option of leaving Mayals Rd as it is.

NG then proposed his motion, agreeing with DR the importance of helping Council save face, and attempt to seek a sensible compromise. He stressed the safety aspect of narrow hybrid tracks on a slope, and feedback that many less confident cyclists would not use them. Instead NG advocated a longer SUP linking the 2 Council SUPs. He deliberately left the issue of narrowing carriageway out (due to lack of consensus in WR, and strong opinions on both sides). He was also mindful of the needs of pedestrians and said that the danger from fast downhill cyclists using a SUP could be mitigated by barriers and signage (Eg in Brynhyfryd, and Cockett Rd).

JS said it was important to recognise that the Council plans gave priority to cyclists over minor roads, which WR had been pressing for, unsuccessfully over several years. He felt the motion

needed specific issues highlighting why it was against the hybrid tracks, and proposed it be accompanied by a sketch map with the main alternative options we wished the Council to consider.

NG accepted these amendments and put his motion to a vote. The motion was passed by a majority with only JS not voting (as chair).

Following the meeting (with amendments from JS and DR) a final version of a new Wheelrights position was proposed which (if acceptable to all) now reads:

Wheelrights agrees that a new bike route be constructed along Mayals Road to link the foreshore bike path with a future South Gower (GAP) route across Clyne Common.

Wheelrights agrees with many of the Council's plans, including Shared Use Paths (SUPs) at the bottom and top ends, and having raised platforms over minor junctions.

However Wheelrights opposes the current hybrid track plans for 2 reasons. Firstly, they don't allow enough room for cyclists to overtake without going onto the road, and secondly less experienced cyclists and children will not feel confident cycling within 75 cm of motor traffic, on a steep incline, and would use the footpath. (See first point in post meeting note below.)

Wheelrights wishes to explore possible alternatives including a continuous SUP linking the 2 SUPs in the Council's plans.

There was more discussion about narrowing down the alternative options WR wished to explore, with agreement around (See second point in post meeting note below.):

1. SUP continuing from bottom SUP on northside up to Westport Av/Southerndown Av area, where it would cross and continue on southside to link with top SUP. NG, DR and DN had carried out a survey showing approx. 90% of this would be 3 m with 2 m around trees.
2. SUP through Clyne Gardens linking bottom SUP with Westport Av. (and continue as 1.)
3. Uphill bike lane – instead of uphill hybrid – which could be 2m or 2.5m wide, with white line. Thus a temporary trial which could be easily changed in future.

ACTION: NG and DR draw a simple draft sketch map with these options, to share with group.

6. Priority Routes for 2021/2022 bids

JS said that almost all 2020 funding was for routes in Swansea West so proposed WR prioritise the following route which were mostly in North west Swansea:

- Railway bridge on Pentre Rd to Pontarddulais
- Penllergaer -- Gorseinon
- Llangyfelach to Morriston Hospital and link to DVLA
- Penlan racecourse
- Cwm Level Rd to Clase
- Pont y Cob Rd -- new SUP around Elba playing fields

ACTION : JS to compile this list to pass to Council.

DJ asked about including Fairwood Rd, but JS/NG advised better to include it in the INM.

7. AOB

NG reported that the new INM would be compiled by early 2021. Welsh Govt accepted that the previous INM consultation was very poor, and had decided to give every Council money to pay staff to carry out a better consultation. NG outlined that INM was for a longer period (3 – 10 years). **ACTION:** DN to collate routes which WR would put forward for new INM.

John thanked participants for keeping discussions polite and courteous, despite people having strong opinions.

Post meeting notes (Relating to item 5.)

DN (who had not been able to attend the meeting due to IT problems) notes that there are other reasons why the hybrid tracks are not acceptable; these include failing to meet generally accepted guidelines and not meeting a critical requirement in the Cycle Audit.]

He would also like to know if there is some reason why the two alternatives he had previously proposed (a wider hybrid track as in the Bradford precedent or an SUP based on Cockett Road) had not been included.

A survey for possible SUP (half a kilometre) on north side from Clyne Drive to Westport Ave. was carried out by DR, NG and DN on 13/11/20 who found that: 90% of path is 3m wide, excluding the verge alongside the road).

Main points were that the path narrowed to 2 – 2.5m past trees, one electric box and one bus stop. At these points there is room to make the path wider by taking space from the boundary with Clyne Gardens. This is mostly an earth bank (with metal fence behind), but there is a 20m length of stone wall near Clyne Drive, which ideally could be moved closer to Clyne Gardens. Thus with path widening even more than 90% could be made 3m wide. If you add in upper south side SUP then 95% would be 3m wide.

Prepared by Nick Guy.

Appendix

Concerns about Mayals Road

Wheelrights welcomes the Council's intention to create a new cycle route along Mayals Rd to connect with Clyne Common and form part of a future South Gower route.

We welcome most aspects of the Council's plan, in particular the proposal to provide priority for cyclists across minor road junctions, the shared use paths at the upper and lower ends of the road, and off-road south side provision so that cyclists cycling slowly uphill do not hold up traffic. We have however a number of concerns, the main one of which is the north side hybrid track.

The following is a list of our concerns for the further consideration of Swansea Council.

General.

Safety is the overriding concern. This applies both to making the carriageway safer for road cyclists, particularly the downhill lane, and to off-road provision. As we expect that the majority of cyclists will use the downhill carriageway lane, the proposal to narrow the carriageway to 6m to take it out of the 'critical' range is welcome as it reduces the risk of close passing. However we are concerned about the hazard from cars emerging from driveways. Our principal concern with the off-road provision is the hybrid cycle tracks, as explained below.

Our other general concern is environmental: namely the extent of the take up of unpaved land and the felling of trees.

Hybrid Cycle tracks

We accept that hybrid cycle tracks are in principle a good way to make both up and down hill off-road provision for cyclists. We note that, because of the limited space available, the width of the proposed tracks has had to be limited to 1.5m and that this is less than the "desired" minimum given in the Active Travel Guidance. This, and because other guides are even more stringent, is a cause for concern. We also question that the tracks satisfy the requirements of the Cycling Audit (Active Travel Guidance, Appendix C.) as claimed by the Council. Safety is a major concern because the tracks are narrow, cross driveways and lack a buffer on the road side. Less confident cyclists, including families with children, advise us that they would not use the proposed hybrids because of their proximity to traffic.

Crossings

We accept the proposed crossings but would prefer that the toucans be replaced by parallel crossings.

Trees

While pleased that felling is to be minimised, we are concerned about possible damage to the root systems, and would like to know what mitigating measures are proposed, if any.

Consultation

We are concerned that there has been inadequate consultation both with local residents and with cycling organisations. (Cycling UK, Sustrans and Wheelrights.)