

# Wheelrights

## Notes of AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Present: Dawn Aplin (DA), John Britton (JB), Phil Brophy (PM), John Cardy (JC), James Dewitt (JD), Allyson Evans (AE, Nick Guy (NG), Bruce Hanlin (BH), Constanza Hanlin (CH), David Judd (DJ), David Naylor (DN), Hamish Osborn (HO), Dareyoush Rassi (DR), John Sayce (JS), Chris Walsh (CW).

Apologies: Nic Bowler (NB), Caroline Carter (CC), Patricia Purcell (PP), Alice Saville (AS), Patrick Tribe (PT), Ben Wilson (W).

The Zoom link DR had set up was not used.

John Sayce chaired the meeting.

### 1. 2022 AGM

The notes of the last AGM on 30 Nov. 2022 were circulated and agreed as a correct record. Proposed by DN; seconded by BH.

### 2. Reports.

The Reports from the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer were presented and are provided as the appendices A, B and C respectively. They were unanimously approved.

### 3. Election of Officers and Committee.

DR reported that no nominations had been received for the Officers' positions. JS, DR and CW all indicated that they wanted to stand down as respectively Chair, Secretary and Treasurer but agreed to continue for the coming year. AE was happy to continue as vice Chair.

All having support the officers are therefore:

Chair:	John Sayce.	(proposed by NG; seconded: PB.)
Vice Chair:	Allyson Evans.	(proposed by NG; seconded: NG.)
Secretary:	Dareyoush Rassi	(proposed by JS; seconded: NG.)
President:	David Judd	(proposed by NG; seconded: DR.)

John Britton, Caroline Carter, David Judd, Nick Guy, and David Naylor were elected to serve on the Committee:

### 4. Discussion of recent developments.

#### (a) Gower Access Path (GAP).

Views were expressed on what can be done to get the Inspector's rejection of the Council's planning application overturned. DJ noted that the grounds for the rejection were largely spurious and many were contrary to road safety considerations, the aims of Active Travel Act and the wishes of the local communities in particular. He felt that we should be railing against it, supporting the Council and their design. JS expressed our appreciation of the key role PT has been playing. JS suggested that we meet with the Council to see how we could provide support. HO suggested that if it could be shown that a majority of the Commoners supported the GAP this could be key to getting the rejection reversed.

#### (b) Name and website.

JS invited NG and DN to respond. They had made statements at Wheelrights 13 September meeting (recorded in the Appendix to the notes of that meeting) They responded as follows, essentially reaffirming their earlier positions:

NG spoke in favour of a new website. He paid tribute to DN's hard work with the existing website, which should continue as source of information. He saw a new website as an important part of a new movement reaching out to a wider audience, especially younger cyclists. He agreed with DR that the high number of responses to the consultation supported the idea of a new website and new name, although there was no clear choice for it. As had DN, he had spoken to a few IT/website experts who supported a *wordpress*, based new website and had found several younger members willing to help administer it.

He suggested three options:

- Do nothing; ie keep current website and the existing name and subtitle.
- Launch a new movement (with new website, social media etc) as a *Wheelrights* project. (However he acknowledged that two websites might cause confusion.)
- Launch a new movement separate from *Wheelrights*.

To make progress he suggested a members only meeting in the New Year to discuss these options. JS proposed that NG arrange this meeting. **[Action NG]**

DN commented as follows:

New website. He would be happy if this was simply a 'gateway' to the existing website. ("WRgate" on the Sundry page illustrates what he had in mind.) However the mock up we have seen does not meet this requirement. Also he questioned if we have the resources to run two websites. He was therefore against it;. Others with IT experience agreed. They felt that a second website would confuse users and potential visitors. DN thought that we should stick with what we have but take measures to make it more effective.

Existing website. DN thought that the 'elephant in the room' was that the existing website was entirely dependant on him. He noted that there were two Wheelrights members, Bill Gannon and Tim Lewis, who were IT professionals, who have offered their services free of charge and who have already helped him with the site. Chris Carter has also helped, thanks to whom DN has made some changes to the website structure and code changes to help search engines find us. These it seems are having some effect. DN perceives the purpose of the site as a source of information for members and also for visitors in general. He does not see it as a marketing tool which is better done using social media.

The site has been criticized as not being 'modern'. He noted that if this means cluttering it with pictures (which he perceives it does) he would prefer it not to be. He has however provided pictures; eg on the home page a photo initially obscures the logo and menu and then after two seconds fades to reveal it.

Name. He defended our name: "Wheel" signifies who we are for and "rights" what we campaign for, and our sub-title: "Swansea Bay Campaign Group" the region we cover. The name has not been in existence long enough to be recognized by all whom we seek to influence. ("CTC" lasted for over a century before it was changed to "Cycling UK".) There is no good reason to change it.

## 5. AOB.

None.

## APPENDIX A Chairs Report 2023

There is much to be pleased about in the report from our Secretary. The City Council has again received significant funding from the Active Travel Fund, so that it now lies 4<sup>th</sup> among Welsh Local Authorities in Active Travel spending per head in the last 3 years. It was the top performing Welsh Council in the Climate action scorecards produced in October, albeit ranked 60<sup>th</sup> out of 182 local authorities in the UK. The Council is now starting to consult with Wheelrights again and is actively seeking our views about new schemes. There is every reason to be optimistic about the proposed Metro rail expansion that will see new passenger stations built at Pontlliw, Velindre, Morryston and possibly Winch Wen, hopefully meaning a reduction in car journeys.

The recent kerfuffle about the 20 mph speed urban speed zones shows how entrenched the car lobby is in Wales. The reduction in air pollution, deaths, injuries and collisions appear to matter not a jot to the half million that signed a protest petition. One is reminded of the campaign against cigarette smoking when there was a strong commercial and smokers' lobby to undermine and defeat any changes. It has taken 60 years and endless campaigns to produce a large reduction in smoking and the consequential lung cancer. Will it take this length of time to produce the modal shift away from car use that the Welsh Government is calling for? The omens at the moment are very mixed. The National development Plan clearly lays out an ambition even if a strategy to achieve it remains elusive. Wales has, for instance, seen a large reduction in bus transport funding and user numbers over the last 10 years. Swansea must be one of the few authorities that has

actually taken out bus lanes in its city centre! Commuter cycling figures from the last two censuses indicate little increase in cycling. As overall carbon emissions in Wales have been reducing year on year, transport's share of the total has actually increased!

Clearly, despite the welcome words from our national government and the commitments to stop further road building, there are gaps all over the places in trying to reduce greenhouses gases. We will await the Welsh Audit Offices' verdict on Active Travel policy, but here are some issues that we highlighted.

- No requirement for a sustainable transport policy and strategy in every Council.
- Some authorities like Neath Port Talbot not even applying for AT funding.
- Those who want to ditch the car feeling unsafe on the roads.
- The need for clear incentives and sanctions to drive a behaviour change programme at community and Council level, rather than focusing on individuals' travel choices.
- The need for a much improved alternative to the car focusing on buses and trams to deliver the modal shift.
- Using the example of other Councils like Nottingham's workplace car levy to raise funds for improved services. Consider an Ultra Low emissions Zone like London's.

For Cycling in Swansea, there remain issues that are stubbornly resistant to change and improvement.

The first one concerns an area in Swansea which is the size of Llanelli, but has no cycle provision at all! Fforestfach, Gendros, Cwmbwlra, Blaenymaes, Penlan, Clase and Treboeth contain more than 40,000 people and have two industrial estates, a large retail park, eight primary schools, two comprehensives and no safe cycle routes. On the other hand, almost every high income neighbourhood in Swansea can access a cycle path. And from my memory, no application for funding to reduce this inequality has ever been made!

The second one focuses on the missing links with which our local cycle network is riddled. As money became available to Councils to build the network, the incentive was to get the easily built sections finished first without any coherent plan of how the network should evolve. The one that has been longest in gestation is the link between Penclawdd and Gowerton which has been talked about for at least 20 years. But there are to my knowledge another seven links of under half a mile which are needed to join recently constructed cycle routes onto the network to avoid cyclists having to use busy main roads. We badly need a local strategy to outline the priorities for improvements.

The third issue is the fact that we need to make alliances with other non car users. The issues of pavement parking, air pollution, traffic congestion around schools, more exercise, better bus facilities and more green footpaths are ones that the majority of the population would support. Interestingly the largest ever poll in Swansea about a cycle lane produced a huge vote in favour. Harnessing that force lies the future of everyday cycling in Swansea!

Lastly, it remains for me to say thank you to so many people who have helped me personally during my tenure as Chair. None of our progress would have been possible without the stalwart efforts of all the committee who have done so much over the years. It will be my turn to pass on the baton of the Chair at our next AGM.

Cofion gynnes!

**John Sayce**  
Chair

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Secretary's Report 2023**

The Active Travel agenda continues to progress in Wales and we as cyclists are both advocates and beneficiaries of policies that redress the balance between different modes of travel. For over a century, travel by private car has been a central tenet around which transport policy and urban design have evolved. As with all entrenched ideas, it is difficult to change minds and hearts on car

dependency but change them we must as the case for a rebalance becomes stronger by the day. The recent lowering of the urban speed limit to 20mph is an example of the rebalancing needed, and the furore that followed it illustrates the difficulties that need to be overcome. We in Wheelrights continue to engage with policy makers on the one hand, and the public on the other, to support and promote this agenda for change.

Since our last AGM in November 2022 we held two public meetings. In April we hosted Professor Ian Walker (Swansea University) who gave a presentation entitled "Challenging our Car Addiction" and in September our guest speaker Mark Youngman (Transport for Wales) led a discussion on "Bikes on Trains". During 2023 the Wheelrights Committee met on three occasions and the Routes Group held six meetings. Four editions of the quarterly Wheelrights Newsletter (Nos. 63-66) were published this year, once again thanks to the efforts of David Naylor. Copies of the newsletters, as well as the notes of all the meetings can be found on our website. Wheelrights officers continued to attend various meetings including the Active Travel Stakeholders (organised by Swansea Council) and the Cross-Party Group on Active Travel (organised by the Welsh Government), as well as ad hoc meetings organised by different organisations to address specific issues.

The Cappuccino rides, led by Allyson Evans, continued throughout the spring and summer and were generally very well attended. As in previous years these rides are paused in winter but they will resume as usual next March or April, depending on weather. Keep an eye on the "Rides" page of the Wheelrights website for announcements of these (and other) rides.

Whilst Wheelrights membership has been steady for quite a few years, with a modest increase in the last couple of years, it remains small in the context of the huge increase in cyclist numbers in the last few years. This has led to a discussion within Wheelrights of how we can reach a wider audience, particularly younger people, women and families. Last July I sought our members' views on modernising our website and a possible name change. The large number of responses I received was indicative of our members' awareness of the problem and their desire for improvements. A related issue is the fact that our current website is entirely dependent on David Naylor who has the necessary expertise and devotes a great deal of time to running and maintaining the website single-handedly. With this in mind, Nick Guy led an initiative to build a demo website using a modern system (Wordpress) which allows non-experts to update the website. Since then, three of our younger members have stepped in and offered to help maintain the current website, and also to increase our social media presence. Another idea being explored is to use the new website to build a broad coalition of groups whose aims are aligned with ours (environmental campaigners, rambles etc.) and also to widen our geographical reach. All ideas and suggestions are welcome and I particularly urge our younger members to get involved.

I am happy to report several positive developments. Swansea continues to attract a sizeable share of the Welsh Government's Active Travel funding. This has led to several new cycle routes being built and developed including the 'missing link' between Gowerton and Penclawdd for which several of our members have been campaigning tirelessly. It is hoped that the funding for the construction of this route will be included in the next round of bids. The lighting on the foreshore path has recently been extended all the way through the 'dark section' opposite Sketty Lane, making it much more pleasant (and safe) for the many users of this cycling thoroughfare.

Many of us were greatly disappointed to learn that an inspector appointed by the Welsh Government has rejected Swansea Council's plans to build the long-awaited shared use path over the Clyne Common linking the Mayals Road cycle path to Bishopston. We are in discussions with the Council on how best to overcome this setback and we will consider all options in campaigning for this much-needed route and questioning the inexplicable decision of the inspector.

Jack Palmer (Swansea Council's Active Travel Officer) has left his post and we await the appointment of his replacement. We wish Jack all the best; he was very supportive of our aims and ideas and we hope to build an equally productive relationship with his successor.

Finally, I wish our members a Happy Festive Season and I thank you for your continued support. Please step forward and join our meetings and activities; all ideas and suggestions are welcome.

**Dareyoush Rassi**  
**Secretary**

## APPENDIX C

### Treasurer's Report

Year ending 31 October 2023.

#### Summary:-

Expenditure exceeded income by £68 and we have a year end bank balance of £710.11.

Membership increase to 88, 3 of whom joined during 2023.

#### Subscriptions for 2024 now due.

We will accept cash at our AGMs, otherwise refer to our website link for current payment options:- <https://www.wheelrights.org.uk/joinus.htm>.

Standing Order is our preferred method as once set up this simplifies things considerably and reduces the 'nag-mails'.

### Wheelrights Financial Report

Year ending 31 Oct. 2023

**Opening balance: £77.97.**

<b>Income</b>	<b>Amount £</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Amount £</b>
Membership subscriptions	320.00	Website design.	200.00
Donations	10.00	Subscription to Cycling UK	88.00
		Environment Centre (EC) sub.	20.00
		EC Meetings Room hire (3)	40.00
		EC 'Bike Week' party donation	50.00
Sub Total	330.00	Sub Total	398.00

**Income less Expenditure**    -£68.00

**Closing Balance: £710.97**

Membership on 31 Oct. 2023:        88

New members joining this year:    3

**Chris Walsh  
Treasurer**