

Wheelrights

Notes of AGM on 10th December 2024

Present: Dawn Aplin (DA), John Britton (JB), Phil Brophy (PM), Caroline Carter (CC), Chris Carter (CC), James Dewitt (JD), Allyson Evans (AE), Nick Guy (NG), Bruce Hanlin (BH), David Judd (DJ), Joe Muldoon (JM), David Naylor (DN), Pat Purcell-Rassi (PR), Dareyoush Rassi (DR), Owen Roberts (OR), Patrick Tribe (PT), John Sayce (JS), Chris Walsh (CW).

Apologies: Ben Wilson (BW)

John Sayce chaired the meeting.

1. 2023 AGM

The notes of the last AGM on 12 Dec. 2023 were circulated and agreed as a correct record. Proposed by AE.

2. Matters arising.

None.

3. Reports.

JS, DR, CW and JB (who took over as Routes group Chair from DN early in the year) presented their reports, provided as the appendices A, B, C and D. They were unanimously approved.

4. Election of Officers and Committee.

DR reported that no nominations had been received for the Officers' positions. JS and DR indicated that they wanted to stand down as respectively Chair and Secretary but agreed to continue for the coming year. JB and JM agreed to then take over these respective roles, meanwhile they would serve as backups to JS and DR. AE was happy to continue as Vice Chair and CW as Treasurer and Members Secretary.

The above having unanimous support the officers are therefore:

Chair: John Sayce (with John Britton as back up).

Vice Chair: Allyson Evans.

Secretary: Dareyoush Rassi (with Joe Muldoon as back up).

Treasurer and Members Secretary: Chris Walsh.

President: David Judd

John Britton, Caroline Carter, David Judd, Nick Guy, and David Naylor would continue to serve on the Committee (which is also open to active members).

5. Programme for next year.

NG reported progress with facebook: our use of it is effective with currently over 600 viewers. PB JB, JD and others are working on it. DJ noted the potential role of facebook to communicate with the local community. NG proposed we delete the WR Group and concentrate on the WR Facebook page.

6. Proposal to join Swansea CVS

JS proposed WR affiliate to Swansea CVS, which can help with expertise, training etc. This was supported. Chris Dale was mentioned as a contact.

7. AOB.

Gower Access Path. PT has been in touch with Cllr Lyndon Jones about what needs to be done. It appears that to get the necessary planning permission environmental groups need to be satisfied that any disturbance caused will be mitigated.

APPENDIX A

Chairs Report 2024

This time last year, we were waiting with baited breath as to whether the Welsh Government's nerve would hold in the wake of a petition with over half a million signatures calling for the Senedd to overturn their own 20 mph. speed limit. As ever in life it was a case of good news and bad news. The statistics came in and showed us all that the new speed limit significantly reduced the number of traffic collisions and helped save lives as it was predicted to do. However, the bad news is that the one 'casualty' of this '20 mph campaign' has been Active Travel. The minister leading from the front for the last 5 years, Lee Waters, resigned and another everyday cyclist, First Minister Mark Drakeford, kept his promise to finish his tenure this year.

And what emerged as a result of this rumpus? A First Minister and Transport Secretary, neither of whom are regular cyclists. Truly the personal is the political and omens are already looking grim for the next financial year when it is predicted the Active Travel budget will be slashed by 50%. This risks putting the whole issue of sustainable transport back at least five years. The Government's own 2030 and 2040 targets for a reduction in Wales' carbon emissions from transport now look like 'pie in the sky'. The case for change hasn't been helped by the Active Travel Board's own critical report and the Welsh Audit Office's recent paper highlighting again the Government's dire record of delivery for its own plans and strategies.

The government in Cardiff, of course, is heavily dependent on Local Councils to deliver their policies. Local politicians have spotted the way the wind is blowing down at the Senedd and have been emboldened to listen to the motor lobby as if there were no issue of climate change affecting the city. Just four months after signing an agreement in May this year that would have brought £4M into the city through the construction of cycle lanes on Walter Road, the Cabinet has backtracked! As if any further evidence was needed, the Transport section told its own consultants last month to pull out the cycle lanes that had been proposed for the St Helens Road. upgrade!

This is not just bad news for the residents of Uplands, Sketty and Killay, it means that Swansea will be hard pressed to change from the 2nd most car dependent city for commuting in the entire UK. Next year, we should have the first set of figures from the new Welsh Transport survey. This will show how Wales and Swansea are doing in reaching the goals set out in Llwybr Newydd: the Government's 20 year strategy to produce a modal shift towards greener transport.

As ever, it is the Chair's job to look into the tea leaves for signs of hope in the next year! Last year we wanted to make links with others in the sustainable transport sector to build a campaign with those who use and support bus and train travel as well as pedestrians. We discovered that *Wheelrights* is by far the strongest transport organisation in a city where there are only a small number of active individuals advocating for other forms of sustainable transport. Next year, we will also see the publication of the first Regional Transport Plan for South West Wales. We have already responded to the first call for feedback on their background paper. There is a school of thought that predicts that the Active Travel budget may well be devolved to the Regional Committee in 2026-27.

The Senedd election campaign over the next 18 months is one that we must get involved with particularly as we know that survey after survey shows that there is strong support for sustainable transport amongst the general public. It looks fairly certain that local bus services will be run by most local councils in Wales starting in 2026. We need to support this as just one stepping stone on the way to a reduction in Carbon emissions. At the same time, the motor lobby will be seeking more subsidies for those switching to E vehicles – a subsidy that would allow at least two ebikes to be given away free to those wanting cheap transport and a healthier lifestyle!

As ever, no organisation exists without support from heaps of people and *Wheelrights* is no different. It is good to see John Britton step up to take over the chairing of the Routes group. David Naylor continues to edit the newsletter and run our website, and provide lots of helpful comments and feedback. Chris and Dareyoush are so reliable in their roles and my thanks especially to all committee members who have to receive my never ending e-mails asking for comments!

Diolch yn fawr I bawb!

John Sayce
Chair

APPENDIX B

Secretary's Report 2024

Lowering of the urban speed limit for cars to 20mph appears to have caused a furore (particularly on social media), causing the politicians to step back from continuing to challenge the dominance of private cars as the main mode of transport. A significant reduction in the Active Travel budget will no doubt mean fewer new cycle routes being developed. Indeed we have already seen an abrupt halt to of one major Swansea scheme (on Walter Road) and far fewer new proposals have been submitted for funding. It is therefore all the more important that cyclists rally around and make their voice heard at all levels of government. We in *Wheelrights* continue to engage with local and national government on the one hand, and the public on the other, to bring about a more balanced and sustainable transport policy.

Since our last AGM in December 2023 we held a well-attended public meeting in April in which Christine Boston of Sustrans Cymru gave a presentation entitled "Sustainable Transport for a better Life". We also took part in the 'Pier Street Party' organised by the Environment Centre to mark Bike Week and the Great Big Green Week. This is now becoming a popular annual event for community and environmental groups and we look forward to continue our cooperation with the Environment Centre in 2025.

During 2024 the *Wheelrights* Committee met on three occasions and the Routes Group held seven meetings. Four editions of the quarterly *Wheelrights* Newsletter (Nos. 67-70) were published. These and earlier newsletters, as well as the notes of all the meetings can be found on our website.

This year we celebrated the 90th birthday of David Naylor who single-handedly edits *Wheelrights'* much-loved newsletters as well as maintaining our website. Whilst we very much appreciate the enormous amount of time and energy he puts into these tasks, it is incumbent on all members with the relevant skills to lend a hand and lighten David's burden.

Wheelrights officers continued to attend various meetings including the Active Travel Stakeholders (organised by Swansea Council), the Swansea Bay Sustainable Travel Planning Group (organised by Swansea University) and the Cross-Party Group on Active Travel (organised by the Welsh Government), as well as ad hoc meetings organised by different groups to address specific issues.

The Cappuccino rides, led by Allyson Evans, continued throughout the spring and summer and were popular as ever. 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.

Notwithstanding the cut-back in Active Travel funding, several new schemes are under way. These include reconfiguration of St. Helen's Road and a cycle-friendly route through the Sandfields (something that *Wheelrights*, and Nick Guy in particular, has been campaigning for years.) The Gower Access Path (GAP) across the Clyne Common which was halted by an inspector is awaiting planning approval after design modifications; and Swansea Council seem keen to proceed with construction as soon as approval is given.

NGAP (the 'missing link' between Gowerton and Penclawdd) on the other hand does not seem to be a priority for the Council despite the popular support for this much-needed 'safe passage' for cyclists wishing to access north Gower. The lighting on the foreshore path has been extended further to the east and now reaches all the way to the Secret Café.

Stephen Williams has replaced Jack Palmer as Swansea Council's Active Travel Officer. John Sayce and myself have met with Stephen on several occasions to discuss various issues relating to Swansea's cycle route network, including removal of barriers, improvements to maintenance, signage etc. I plan to establish a quarterly ride with Stephen during which ongoing work can be monitored. It would be good if other members wishing to highlight specific issues relating to their local area, participated in this activity. Please contact me with your proposals.

Finally, I wish our members a Happy Festive Season and I thank you for your continued support. I also extend a cordial invitation, particularly to our younger members, to get involved in our meetings and activities. Your ideas and suggestions are always welcome.

Dareyoush Rassi
Secretary

APPENDIX C

Treasurer's Report

Year ending 31 October 2024.

Summary:-

Expenditure exceeded income by £135.00 and the year end bank balance was £845.97.

Membership was 74, with 3 joining during 2023.

Wheelrights Financial Report

Year ending 31 Oct. 2024

Opening balance: £710.97.

Income	Amount £	Expenditure	Amount £
Membership subscriptions	345.00	Environment Centre meetings (3).	72.00
Donations	5.00	Environment Centre subscription	20.00
		Cycling UK Annual Subscription	88.00
		DN's 90 th birthday cake	35.00
Sub Total	350.00	Sub Total	215.00

Income less Expenditure £135.00

Closing Balance: £845.97

Membership on 31 Oct. 2023: 74

New members joining this year: 5

Subscriptions for 2025 now due.

Refer to our website (<https://www.wheelrights.org.uk/joinus.htm>) for our current payment options.

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

Chris Walsh
Treasurer

APPENDIX D

Routes Group's Chair's Report 2024

Summary of Achievements in 2024

As Chair of the Routes Group I am pleased to reflect on our efforts and achievements throughout the year. 2024 has been a productive year, thanks to the dedication and collaboration of our members. I would like to particularly acknowledge David Naylor for his meticulous organisation of meetings and preparation of notes, and extend my gratitude to all who have contributed their expertise and enthusiasm.

I'm not claiming any credit for what follows as Chair of the group, rather it tends to be a place where we come together and exchange information and plan, and individual members have then shown a lot of drive in taking things on themselves, and making progress.

Key Achievements

- Gower Access Path (GAP)
Patrick has advocated for progress on the revised route south of the fence, which now has the support of the Commoners. While challenges remain, he has been instrumental in keeping momentum on this vital project.
- Penclawdd-Gowerton Missing Link
Joe's advocacy has maintained pressure on resolving this missing link. He and colleagues have worked persistently to address concerns about path width and to push for a land agent to negotiate with stakeholders.
- Active Travel Initiatives
John Sayce has led this. Engaged in consultations and provided feedback on local and regional development plans, such as the Swansea Local Development Plan and Tawe Riverside Corridor. Our input has consistently emphasised the needs of cyclists and the benefits of sustainable transport. We are making our voice heard in the right places.
- Community Events and Engagement
Supported events like the Pier Street Party with organised rides from various locations, fostering community cycling.

Promoted awareness of accessible travel options through initiatives like the Ripples Café information board.
- Infrastructure Improvements
Identified issues with cycling provision in key areas such as Sandfields and St Helen's Road, advocating for better designs that accommodate all road users. Our contributions have influenced discussions on sustainable urban planning.
- Representation and Advocacy
Member of the group have continued to represent cycling interests in forums such as the Swansea Local Access Forum and at stakeholder meetings. Our advocacy has highlighted the importance of incorporating cycling into broader transport and accessibility strategies.
- Barriers Reduction
Wheelrights have successfully updated barriers, reducing substandard barriers from 18 to 9, thereby improving accessibility for cyclists.
- Campaigns and Partnerships
Strengthened ties with other sustainable transport advocates, positioning Wheelrights as a leading voice for active travel in Swansea (e.g. Swansea Bay Without A Car, and Urban Foundry). Collaborative efforts aim to promote cycling, walking, and public transport as integrated solutions to transport challenges.

Acknowledgements

This year's accomplishments would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of our members. Special thanks go to David Naylor for preparing documents and facilitating meetings, and to all individuals who consistently contribute their time and ideas. Your commitment is what drives our progress.

John Britton
Routes Group Chair