



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 15 Spring 2011

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Work starts at Loughor

Excavation for the ‘missing link’ in the new section of NCN 4 east of Loughor Bridge started in February. The new section will connect the south-east end of Culver Road to the Loughor Bridge. Much of it runs close to and on the north side of the A484. The picture is looking west from the end of the completed bit to Culver Road constructed in December 2007.

This work should have been completed four years ago shortly after the westerly part of the link (through the park to Bwrw Road) had been constructed. But land ownership issues prevented further work and the deadline for spending the money passed. (See the report on p.5 of the Spring 2008 Newsletter.) Nothing happened since then, that is until last December.

Then *Wheelrights* sent a key letter to Elan Homes, requesting the necessary transfer of land ownership to allow the work to proceed. It succeeded!



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Editorial

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by mid May

I was privileged to be a delegate at the *Sustainable Transport* conference in Westminster on 16 Feb. *Wheelrights* it seems is known nationally as somebody in government offered me a free place. Whereas cycling didn’t feature in the titles of any of the papers it kept coming up in the questions from the floor. Significantly three of the key speakers: Norman Baker (Minister of Transport), Christian Wolmer (Chairman) and Sir Richard Leese (Leader of Manchester City Council) all claimed to cycle to work – at least sometimes. Cycling is certainly a significant mode of transport in London – up 90% in the last 10 years – as it is in other parts of England. This underlined to me how far we have to go here.

In this issue we have a cross-section of articles ranging from local activities – at last things are happening on the ground! – to guidance on how to cross ice wearing cleats. See p. 5.

David Naylor

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Local news

Gowerton – Gorseinon link

We are still a long way from actually constructing this important link but at least some preliminary actions are being taken.

The first is to get the land ownership sorted. This will involve the Commoners as the route will cross Stafford Common. So far we have been offered support from cllr Will Evans in whose ward the route lies. Hopefully this legal process will soon be underway; but then there is the money to build it to be found!

The railway line through Gowerton Station is apparently to be made two track. This means that a bridge to link the two platforms will be needed, and clearly the cycle route should pass over it. It will presumably use the existing abutments. The southerly of these is close to the car park west of the Commercial Pub. The north end of this car park being a stone's throw from the bridge, is the logical starting point for the link.

Rob Wachowski (CCS Walking and Cycling officer)

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Wheelrights instructors to be trained.

While nobody suggested that we were not doing a good job teaching adults to ride bikes at our beginner's classes we have decided to get some formal training. The motivation for this is to make sure that we are covered by the Council's insurance. CCS are being very supportive in that they are covering the cost of a two day course to be attended by those of us who do the instruction. It is scheduled to take place at the end of March, in time for our first class on 9th April.

Adult Beginners Classes

Classes take place from 9.30 – 11.30 in the Civic Centre east car park on the following Saturday mornings.

9 April; 14 May; 18 June; 16 July; 10 September.

If you are interested in attending phone Veronica on 01792 206617 or Rhian on 01792 510470.

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New Sustrans Rangers.

Two new Rangers have joined the band of Rangers covering NCN 4 and 43 in the Swansea area. They are Simon Eastwood and Tim Cross. Simon will join John Roach, Rhian Evans and Dave Croxall on NCN 4 between the Loughor Bridge and Blackpill, and Tim will join Allyson and myself to cover NCN 4 east of Blackpill.

Their arrival was an excuse for a pint in the Railway Inn where the photo was taken.

**David Naylor
(Sustrans Liaison Ranger)**



Simon Mike Rhian Eifion Allyson Tim

The Boulevard – an update

In the last issue we reported that a cycle route was to be constructed ahead of the main Boulevard work between the Civic Centre and the bottom of Wind Street. Plans for this have progressed and it is now established that the route will follow the south side of Oystermouth Road from the West Way metro bus crossing to Cambrian Place by Swansea Museum. I have been involved in the detail of the consultation with the Council and it is pleasing that they are at least making an effort to accommodate the needs of cyclists.

We are concerned however about the lack of vision in the plans and we are trying to get them to widen this (the vision that is, but, as I will come to in a moment, also the path). The priority it seems is to maintain the traffic flow with the needs of pedestrians and cyclists coming second. This is the reverse of the so called *hierarchy of provision* which features in the handbook *Manual for Streets (version 2)* which LAs are supposed to follow. In other words we are concerned that the Boulevard will not be like a proper European boulevard .

But the Council are still working on their final plans and we have been invited to continue our consultation with them. Key issues here are the establishment of satisfactory north – south links and also links to the ends of the soon-to-be-constructed path. These need to incorporate a decent west – east cycle route; at the west end linking with the foreshore path west of the Civic Centre (we have long been lobbying for this), and at the east end to SA1 via the Sail Bridge and, importantly, to the Railway Station and Parc Tawe area. We believe that a west – east route will be used by a variety of bicycle users: commuters, utilitarian and leisure cyclists, so the Boulevard has to provide for through traffic for them as well as for motor vehicles.

With these people in mind we are concerned that the path as planned so far will not be adequate. A 3m wide unsegregated shared use path is planned. While this would be adequate for a two-way cyclists-only path or lightly trafficked shared use it will not be if the Boulevard serves its intended purpose. At least 4m is needed or even better a separate path for cyclists. The photo shows how this has been achieved in Portsmouth. The path runs along the sea front Note the buffer area to safeguard cyclists from opening car doors and the kerb separating the path from the footway.

David Naylor



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A *Wheelrights* 1 in10 campaign

I believe a public campaign to change behaviour would complement our work on providing better cycling infrastructure. To get it underway I propose this *1 in 10 campaign*.

The campaign

The idea for this arose from a lunch time conversation with Reena Owen (CCS's Director of Environment). She told me she mostly drives but would be willing to commit publicly to cycle to and from work at least once a fortnight.

Last year *the Guardian* and *Friends of the Earth* led a 10/10 campaign which asked supporters to reduce their energy consumption by 10%. Some people have told me that 1 in 10 is too modest and we ought to ask people to commit to 1 in 5 journeys. While no problem for committed cyclists I think it would be a huge step forward if a significant number of motorists were to cycle to work for one in ten trips. Hopefully on seeing the advantages they would do it more often; but it's the first step that's important.

Some ideas

- In addition to Reena Owen we could ask other high profile people to make a public commitment. These could include existing bike commuters like Colin Charvis.
- We could ask *Wheelrights* members who currently commute up to five miles by car, and also our work colleagues, friends and families, to make the commitment (or should we say "take the pledge"?)
- Organise group rides to work, photo shots, *Evening Post* articles, etc. to promote cycling.
- Develop a campaign strap line such as: "Cycling is fun, healthy and cheap". Or ???

With the present high price of petrol such a campaign could generate support for *Wheelrights* and, if successful, reduce rush hour congestion (especially of single occupancy cars).

I had general support for this proposal at the 17th January *Wheelrights* meeting. Hopefully it can be discussed further at our 28th March meeting, but if you have any suggestions or comments please let me or David Naylor know. [Contact details on p.1.]

Nick Guy

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Me and My Bike

An unfinished film script by Dylan Thomas

During the 2010 *Gower Cycling Festival* I made the intriguing discovery of the existence of this delightful but incomplete film script, written in 1947 and published in 1965.

The film was intended to cover the whole life of a man who loves bikes. In the first fragment we are introduced to Fred as he experiences the excitement of his first ride on a penny-farthing. The story is set in a manor house in the 1880s when horse power provided the main form of transport. The reader is introduced to a range of characters (from the lord of the manor to the servants and stable lad) many of whom are given songs to sing in the manner of an operetta.

Unfortunately only the first section appears to exist. Dylan Thomas planned this to be the first of five sequences each covering successive decades during which Fred would ride tandems, tricycles and racing bikes.

I first heard about this film script on the *Dylan Thomas Trail* ride from Jeff Thomas (a local Dylan expert) who mentioned recent interest in filming it. Subsequently I was delighted to find a hardback copy of a book about the film by Dylan Thomas titled *Me and My Bike* (Publisher: Triton; 1965; ref. 52936/791.43), The Civic Centre Library has a copy.

If anyone is interested in researching this and other links between Dylan Thomas and bikes please contact me. [Contact details on page 1.]

Nick Guy

Saint Monday

We've got it all wrong, this work thing. It breeds no end of resentment. It's enough to drive you crazy if you let it. A new Working Time Directive organised according to the weather is needed.

Cyclists see the weather differently to other folk – our wish-list is a modest one and our tolerances are high. We ask little more of our gods than that the clues they give us in the morning are honest ones, that the wind favours us for just a little more time than it frowns upon us, and that they will reward every lung-bursting climb with a stupendous descent.

With changeability being the week's weather watchword, Monday had little going for it on paper, except that it was a better bet than the rest of the week. Well, that and a liberating tradition of worker absenteeism. Work had stolen a glorious Saturday from me, and I wanted it back. Monday morning was grey and the temperature was sub-zero, but it was *dry* and almost *still*.

A direct train took me and my bike to Abergavenny. After a circuitous acquaintance with the town-centre traffic-flow system I got myself on to the Llanthony Road, and from then on directions are superfluous for twenty-something miles.

Some cyclists are bumbling sightseers, for whom the bicycle is a means of getting to places, or finding cake. Others are motion addicts, oblivious to everything but the rhythm of the road and the things passing by. I'm caught in the middle, and it niggled me to pass the contorted church of St Martin at Cwmyoy, with its weeping chancel and leaning tower – but not as much as to make me pause. There's a peculiar satisfaction in roads that follow rivers. Travel upstream and you climb imperceptibly, travel downstream and you race the river. But for all the joy of motion it is a rare person who can pass Llanthony Priory without stopping to drink it in. Or to drink in so much that one never makes it any farther North, for the vaults are home to an enticing pub!

As far as Capel-Y-Ffin I'd been complacent about ice. The sun is warming my back and the road, and it hasn't rained for days. Someone more alert would glance at the ridge to the left, remember the temperature, and think "run-off!". The sight of an ice sheet before me snapped me out of my reverie just in time to slam on the anchors and skid to a halt. If there's a way to look cool crossing twelve feet of ice in cleats with 23mm tyres, then I'm convinced I would have found it, for the road ahead gave me at least eight further chances to refine the technique.



Gospel Pass is the only tough climb, with a cattle-grid placed at optimum insult-to-injury location on the gradient. It's worth it. One of the joys of hills (you read that right) is the brief moment at the summit where the effort ceases and you hang in the air for a moment before the wheels start to roll again. The full enjoyment of this instant demands that the transition to downhill is uninterrupted, and sits uneasily with touristy fumbling for cameras and flapjacks, or hasty rethinking of your layering system

Plummetting downwards on the drops and worrying that your numb hands are no longer capable of operating the brakes, it is hard to believe that only minutes ago you were berating yourself for failing to remember the sunblock. Though North-facing, the slope is just gentle enough to catch the afternoon sun, so ice fears could rest until one treacherously shady dip, which I deemed too dangerous even for the mincing routine I'd perfected. A brief homage to cyclocross was the only option, and the only interruption to the long descent into Hay-on-Wye.

After lunch a large loop into England via B roads and on to the busy A465. The wiser route back to Abergavenny is probably the one without the HGVs and the high speed traffic. The faster one, however, is the now-suddenly-attractive A465, but it was the worst time of day to have a puncture. I am pleased to report that the Lezyne Road Drive Mini Pump is worth every penny. After a puncture-free year I thought I'd never get to test the bloody thing.

Claudine Conway

Stricter liability

Stricter liability, also referred to as “strict liability” or “proportionate liability”, identifies a legal system which makes the stronger party liable by default in the event of an accident. Thus if a cyclist is knocked over by a car the driver would be assumed to blame unless it can be shown otherwise. Similarly if a cyclist injures a pedestrian the cyclist is liable by default. The important difference from the law in this country as it presently stands is that the onus is on the stronger party to prove their innocence rather than the other way round.

The UK is only one of four countries in Europe which do not have stricter liability. The other three are Ireland, Malta and Cyprus.

The CTC have had stricter liability on their agenda for some time but have held back because they felt it would get nowhere due to opposition from the motoring lobby, but there are two recent developments which make them think that now might be a good time to take action.

The first is that the Commons Transport Select Committee has an enquiry underway on motor insurance costs and that this committee is willing to consider evidence of the effect of stricter liability laws. Proponents argue that such a law change would cut compensation claims as it would lead to more careful driving with a consequent reduction in accidents

The second is a letter from the Secretary of State for Transport, Norman Baker, to Richard Burden MP who had received a letter from a constituent of his (Clive Chapman) making the case for *stricter liability*. Baker’s letter is telling in that in essence he accepts the case, but notes that it is “likely to be very contentious” and that “strong evidence” is required before the law can be changed.

A further indication that there might be support for such a change in the law came out in a parliamentary debate on 19th January when the MP for Cambridge, Julian Huppert, spoke in favour of such a change. He was speaking to promote cycling in England (but what he said applies to the whole of the UK) and expressed his support for “proportionate liability” along with a number of other pro-cycling measures. His speech was replied to by Theresa Villiers MP (Transport Minister for rail and aviation). While she was positive about a number of measures Huppert had proposed she was non-committal about this one.

We discussed this at *Wheelrights*’ meeting on 17th January when I read out a draft of a letter to my MP, Martin Caton, asking him to support such a change in the law and which I wanted to send on behalf of *Wheelrights*. This was approved and I sent the letter. It appears as an Appendix to the notes of the meeting which can be viewed on the ‘Various’ page of www.wheelrights.org.uk. Others were encouraged to write to their MPs.

I have since had a reply from Martin. After thanking me for my letter he went on to say:

“I believe that you make a very strong case that appears to be accepted in large part, by the Minister on the evidence of his reply to my colleague Richard Burden MP.”

“I will add my voice to those calling for this change and let you know what happens when I get a response.”

The website www.stricterliabilityforus.org.uk provides further information. Finally I note that such a law change would arguably be the single most effective measure to improve the safety of cyclists and pedestrians – outweighing infrastructure changes, much as these are also needed.

David Naylor

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Connect2 – work starts at Clydach



Work is well underway on Phase 1 of the Clydach-Glais Connect2 scheme and we hope the canal towpath section and the new link through the Depot will be completed by mid March. We have waited patiently for this; it is all very exciting and so rewarding.

A planning application for Phase 2 will be submitted in the next fortnight and if all goes well, the construction work for this section will take place this summer.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to making this possible and hope that they will come along to the route opening event planned in May [Ed: keep an eye on the events page of www.wheelrights.org.uk for details of this opening.]

Helen Davies (Sustrans Connect2 Coordinator)

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The CTC eat cake (again!)

It was such a success last year that the CTC had to once more hold a cake competition as the last item on the agenda of their 7 February meeting.

Whereas the cake made by yours truly last year won it, his cake this year didn't even get a mention. The worthy winner was a carrot cake baked by the Chairman. (The cream covered circular cake at the far end of the table.)

This was somehow appropriate as the competition is really in memory of Trevor Boylan, late Chairman of the Swansea and West Wales Member Group, who was particularly partial to carrot cake. He died on a CTC ride up the Taff Trail in November 2007. It was on the way back from a very happy lunch in Aberavon in celebration of his 73rd birthday. A description of this memorable ride can be found in the 2008/9 Winter Newsletter (No. 6).



David Naylor

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Bikeability spreads west

Now that Spring is definitely here, wheels are gently starting to spin again at the *BikeAbility* track by Duvant Rugby Club.

The organisation was set up seven years ago to enable people of every age and level of physical and mental ability to enjoy the pleasures and health benefits of cycling. We have a great collection of specially designed or adapted bikes, trikes, hand cycles, kick bikes, go karts, quad cycles, tandems and wheelchair transporters. Something to suit pretty well anyone. We take the bikes out for fun days for various groups. Sometimes we supervise group rides; but generally the cycles are available to ride on the safe cycle track by the Rugby Club, and, for those that want to go for a longer ride, on the neighbouring Clyne Valley path.



Over the last year we've been working with Pembrokeshire County Council to set up a similar project at an all weather facility at the County Showground in Haverford West. A great deal of interest and funding has been generated, and the project, called *BikeMobility*, is now up and running. Another similar project, supported by the local authority and Carmarthenshire Association of Voluntary Services, should soon be starting at Parc Scarlets, Llanelli with *BikeAbility Wales* being employed to set up the projects and run the sessions. Staff at *BikeAbility* sometimes feel under-supported in their home town and it has been refreshing to work with the enthusiastic and dedicated staff in these South West Wales organisations.

The project is not core funded and so we are always insecure, always pursuing funding possibilities, always open to new ways of using our resources. As we have the necessary instructors we hope this year to run National Standards cycle training courses at all levels,

If you are interested in classes, in hiring our venue or our bikes or our expertise, or if you'd like to volunteer with us, please drop in at *BikeAbility* Wales, Duvant Rugby Club, Broadacre, Killay, Swansea SA1 1RY (Monday to Friday from 10.00 to 15.00 and Sat 11am to 13.00) or call Livvy on 07584044284 or me on 07968109145 or email: bikeabilitywales@ymail.com

Mike Cherry (*BikeAbility* Wales)
www.bikeabilitywales.org.uk

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Forthcoming events

3rd and 28th March: *Wheelrights* meetings

7.00 pm in the Environment Centre, Pier Street. All welcome; an agenda will be sent to members.

26th March: Nick Guy's birthday ride

Start 11.15am from the Railway Inn, Killay. This will be the classic North Gower circuit cycled clockwise, ie out via Three Crosses (to get the climb over early) returning along the North Gower coast on the Marsh road. A lunch stop at the Dolphin in Llanrhidian is planned. Nick welcomes all. (His 60th birthday is actually earlier in the month.)

10 – 17th September: *Gower Cycling Festival*

We are working on the programme and will update www.gowercyclingfestival.org when we can. Meanwhile it provides a pictorial record of last year's Festival.

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