



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 18 Winter 2011/12

www.wheelrights.org.uk

A new use for cycle stands?



These appeared in October. They are at the east end of the Sail Bridge. Their purpose is apparently to slow speeding cyclists. But because the gaps between them are so narrow – less than a metre – they will not only slow cyclists but also prevent, or at least hinder, the passage of recumbent tricycles, tandems and mobility scooters.

They were apparently installed by a developer with the approval of the Welsh Government; Swansea Council were not consulted!

While cyclists going too fast in a shared use area cannot be condoned we would like to know if this measure was a knee-jerk reaction to an isolated incident or if there is a problem. If so measures to solve it must not close the bridge for authorised users, in particular the disabled.

Wheelrights have formally asked Swansea Council to remove the hoops, ie to leave just the bollards as before, so by the time you read this they may no longer be there.

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Editorial

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to the Secretary (address below) by mid March.

Paranoia about barriers features in two articles. On this page it is about speeding cyclists and on p. 6 about motorbikes. This appears to be a peculiarly British phenomena.

I was pleased to have some correspondence for this issue, albeit just one letter. Don't bottle up your views – I can usually find space for them

I hope some will comment on the draft Manifesto on p. 5. Since its purpose is to solicit the support of candidates in the forthcoming Council elections, its content is important.

Elsewhere you can read about cycling feats ranging from Paris to Brest and back almost non-stop, to Gower Cycling Festival rides: one challenging and the other a tour of the fleshpots.

David Naylor

Chairman

Nick Guy, 5 Belgrave Gdns,
Walter Road, Swansea SA1 4QF
Phone: 01792 476178
Email: nick.bike@hotmail.co.uk

Secretary

David Naylor, Copper Roof, 45 Pennard Rd,
Southgate, Swansea SA3 2AA
Phone: 01792 233755
Email: davidjohnnaylor@tiscali.co.uk

Treasurer

Colin Fielder, Ddol Farm,
Dunvant, Swansea SA2 7UD
Phone: 01792 208571
Email: colin.fielder@btopenworld.com

Your ideas needed

The City and County of Swansea are at last taking cyclists more seriously. They have recently established a new "Cycling Action Progress" (CAP) group which meets quarterly. The first two meetings have been extremely positive and I believe it has a lot of potential for tackling many of our long standing concerns.

The last meeting (30th Sept 2011) mapped out several areas for consideration over the next few months, and *Wheelrights* was asked for our ideas across a range of CCS actions:

- 1. The Boulevard:** Work has already started on this important scheme, and detailed route information is on the agenda. *Wheelrights* has raised the vital importance of continuation west and east, so that the Boulevard links the city centre with routes 4 and 43 more effectively. So far CCS is actively considering our route suggestions, which bodes well for the success of this exciting new development. [Ed: see the next page for the latest on the Tawe Bridges.]
- 2. A "Cycling Action Plan".** CCS plans to draft this important public document which will hopefully provide concrete commitments, with timescales. Indications are that it will include addressing missing gaps: eg Gowerton – Penclawdd, and Gowerton – Gorseinon as well as other Infrastructure routes which have been on *Wheelrights* wish list for several years. In addition there is scope for "behaviour change items", so ideas are welcome!
- 3. Other Ideas.** Other issues which have been discussed include:
 - **Advanced Stop Lines:** CCS have asked *Wheelrights* to indicate potential sites for these and a criteria for deciding which roads should have them.
 - **Destination Signs.** CCS have asked *Wheelrights* to submit priorities for installing more of these on existing cycle routes.

I believe these developments indicate a new willingness by CCS to become more cycle-friendly. However we need to educate them and represent the broad range of cyclists' opinions.

Thus we need your ideas on any of the above, and if you have a new route suggestion, we are eager to hear from you.

Wheelrights officers represent us at these CAP meetings ie David Naylor (Secretary), Colin Fielder (Treasurer) and myself as Chair, so please e-mail or contact us with your thoughts.

We will also put the CAP meetings on the agenda for the next few meetings so your officers can represent our members views.

Nick Guy (Chair)

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***Wheelrights* meeting**

Note that our next meeting is on Thursday, 1st Dec. at 7.00pm in the Environment Centre, Pier St. An agenda will have been sent to members All are welcome.

***Wheelrights* Christmas Dinner**

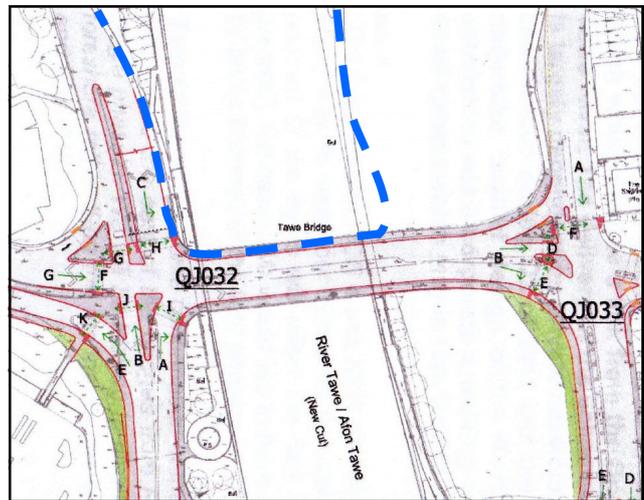
This is planned for Thursday, 8th Dec. at 7.30pm in the *Mumbai* on Mill Lane, Blackpill. If you intend to come please phone Claudine on 07918 140124.

Tawe Bridges – recent developments

I reported in some detail in the last issue on what was happening in this area. I explained how east-west road access across the North Bridge was discontinued, and that the provision of a decent off-road link on the north side of Quay Parade between Wind Street and the bridges has been agreed in principle. Since then there have been a couple of new developments.

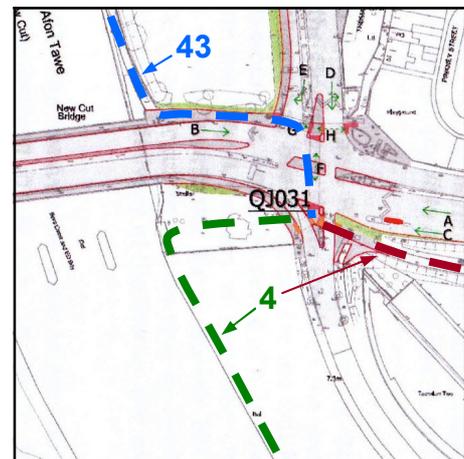
Link across the North Bridge.

We have re-opened negotiations with the Council for an east-west link across the North Bridge. It is to provide a direct link from NCR 43 to the west side of the Tawe using the footway across the bridge as indicated by the broken blue line in the picture. This has the merit that it does not involve the road. It remains to persuade the powers that be to ignore the guideline that bridge parapets should be at least 1.4m high. To insist on this would be a nonsense when there are various stretches of path – eg along the foreshore – where there is no protection at all.



NCN alignment changes.

With the coast path now extended eastward from the old observatory to link with the Trafalgar Bridge it has been decided to make that the official Route 4, thus replacing the zig-zag route across the swing footbridge. From the Trafalgar Bridge it will continue on the east side of the Tawe past the Sail Bridge (green broken line) before turning sharply to the east to join the existing path (red broken line) south of Fabian Way.



The start of Route 43, instead of being at its junction with the north side of the South Bridge, will now be at the Kings Road/Fabian way crossing. A single stage Toucan across Fabian Way will link it with Route 4. The blue broken line shows the location of the Toucan.

David Naylor

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LSE Report: UK cycling in rude health

A new report from the London School of Economics has shown that cycling generates nearly £3 billion for the UK economy. Cycling provides 23,000 jobs and other major benefits such as improvements in public health, reduced pollution and congestion.

The LSE report cites the main health benefits from cycling as reduced absenteeism (by 10%) lower risks of stroke, heart disease, obesity etc. It highlights bike-friendly measures that have been successful in establishing cycling in some northern European nations, namely:

- Preferential traffic signals for cyclists at junctions;
- Traffic calming and lower speed limits;
- Stricter liability laws;
- Cycle storage facilities.

The report also highlights poor safety on British roads as a major barrier to cycling, but lacks recommendations to rectify this.

With the increase in cycling in Swansea this surely applies here.

Nick Guy (Chair)

Correspondence

In the last newsletter [Issue 17, p.7.] David Naylor gave us the many virtues of the hub gear design vis a vis the derailleur. Here are ten disadvantages.

1. Considerably less efficient
2. Gear range is limited
3. Cost more
4. Non standard spokes/wheel
5. Can't monitor wear and condition.
6. Can fail catastrophically without warning.
7. More difficult to remove wheel.
8. More difficult to remove and tension chain.
9. Special lubricants have to be used.
10. Don't appear to be the gear of choice by any professional cyclist road or mountain biker.

Hub Gears and Derailleurs: is there going to be a battle on akin to VHS and Betamax? We wait with interest.

[Ed: with so many disadvantages surely no one would nick such a bike! But that's an advantage isn't it ?]

John Cardy

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French Impressions

A maximum of 300 words to write about the Paris-Brest-Paris trip! That's not even one word for every km, the entire trip being 2430km, and now I've wasted precious space writing this!

PBP itself is 1225km, and to save the hassle of squeezing onto crowded trains I decided to cycle from Swansea and back, camping along the way, thus nearly doubling the distance.

I had a three day leisurely ride to Newhaven stopping at friends in Bristol en route to empty their cupboards of food. On the overnight ferry to Dieppe I bumped into fellow Audaxers I'd met on qualifiers. You have to complete rides of 200, 300, 400 and 600km to take part in the PBP .



The ride itself got under way on Sunday and I was one of the last of the 90 hour group to start at 8.20pm, there were also 80 and 86 hour options. You must complete the ride in your chosen time.

I set off with fellow Swansea cyclists Simon Spooner and Ian Sharp and we sped along empty dual carriageways at 40km/ph. I knew things were going too well and punctured, watching as everyone disappeared into the distance. I sprinted to catch up and was directed the wrong way by a marshal, ending up on what looked suspiciously like an Auto Route! Retraced my steps back along the hard shoulder and after another frantic hour got back on route. I had to belt overnight to make up for lost time and got to the first proper control in Villaines la Juhel at 6am Monday morning. By the time I slept on Tuesday at 2am I'd been awake for 39hrs.

The rest of the ride is a foggy mist of merging memories, being treated like sports stars by the French public and hallucinating in the middle of the night in pitch black woods where people sprang out into the road to 'force' wine and coffee on you!

All in all it is a brilliantly surreal experience that I would recommend to anyone.

Brian Croft

[Ed: to put this into perspective Brian averaged 212 miles per day over 3½ days cycling from Paris to Brest and back.]

Cycling Manifesto

Introduction

With Swansea Council elections coming up in May 2012 I think it's an excellent opportunity for Wheelrights to raise the profile of cycling with both existing Councillors and new candidates .

My proposal is for Wheelrights to present a **Cycling Manifesto** that would provide a platform for us to talk to both the general public and each candidate standing in the elections. We should ask both the public and candidates to support our programme.

To launch this manifesto we need to have a small public event to generate publicity and hopefully get support from the *Evening Post*. We would then ask our members to contact candidates in their ward or existing councillors that they know to ask for their support. This would enable us cover the whole of the city.

John Sayce

A draft Manifesto

The following draft is based on input from a number of *Wheelrights* members. It would be sent in the form of a letter to councillor candidates with a short introduction inviting them to support the four objectives

Wheelrights is the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group. Our aims are:

- *To encourage and assist potential cyclists to take up cycling and use a bike as a means of transport.*
- *To campaign for better provision for cyclists in the Swansea Bay area.*
- *To provide information about cycling related activities.*

We believe our activities support City and County of Swansea objectives including:

- *An increase in levels of exercise thus reducing obesity and cutting NHS costs.*
- *Promotion of a modal shift from car to bike thus reducing traffic congestion.*
- *Reduction of stress.*
- *Reduction of carbon emissions.*

Wheelrights is asking all local Council candidates and political parties to sign up to the following four key objectives, and ask that you pursue them if elected:

1. *Develop more dedicated cycle routes so that half the population lives within half a mile of a traffic free route. Currently we estimate that about a third of Swansea`s population live within half a mile of existing cycle routes.*
2. *Ensure that new cycle routes, both on and off road, meet strict quality and safety criteria. And update existing routes where they do not meet these criteria.*
3. *Extend the existing policy of 20 mph zones in residential areas so that where possible these can link destinations – in particular schools. Integrate this with the development of safe routes to schools, universities and colleges, and places of work.*
4. *Promote cycle training in particular for school children but also adults.*

Your comments are invited. Please send them to one of us or our Secretary (David Naylor).

Nick Guy (Chair).

Cyclepath Barriers

They are ubiquitous on the NCN. Most are the A barriers through which a small skilled rider with drop handlebars can just squeeze without stopping but those with wider bars have to stop and wiggle their way through. Tandem riders have even greater difficulty and some tricycles, bikes with child trailers and mobility scooters cannot get through at all.

They are there of course to stop motorbikes. But is this not a case of the cure being worse than the disease? Continental cycle paths do not have such barriers. There are bollards. These when appropriately spaced (to provide at least 1.2m clearance) keep cars out but are permeable to legitimate users, but also to motorcyclists.

In the Continent – at least in the Netherlands – low powered motorbikes are allowed. There does not appear to be a problem with them speeding. So why is there one here, and is it as bad as it is perceived to be?

There certainly has been a problem with speeding motorbikes on parts of the local NCN, but I have not heard of incidents recently. A significant factor seems to be the extent to which a path is used. If you are young (or not so young for that matter) and want to let off steam on your motorbike you look for long straight empty sections of path. If it is cluttered with cyclists and walkers you will think twice. Have you ever seen motorcyclists on the Swansea foreshore path? I haven't. And I think that they are pretty rare on the Clyne Valley path. Both these paths are barrier free. Also there is the almost barrier free Millenium path between Loughor and Pembrey Park. I have never heard of motorcyclists on this wide path. They have been a problem on NCR 43 in the Swansea Valley, but then is not this path less used?

This has been the subject of a recent thread on CTC's Right to Ride email forum and a suggestion here is that enforcement is the answer, not physical measures. If indeed the problem reduces as path usage increases, as the evidence seems to suggest, then time is on our side.

Fortunately most of those A barriers have gates alongside them which can be opened to allow maintenance vehicles to pass. On the Clyne Valley path for example these gates, where there is not a way round them, have been left open. On other paths they have not been; local examples are on the Swiss Valley path (NCR 47) between Llanelli and Tumble, and that lovely new extension of NCR 43 between Ystradgynlais and Coelbren. Also the Taff Trail has lots of these barriers north of the M4. The photo shows one of them. The pleasure of cycling on these paths is marred by them, and for some barred altogether.



So please, Sustrans, can we have these gates left open, or where there is a need for them to be closed to prevent livestock passing through leave them unlocked with a "please close the gate" sign? If there is a problem then look at ways of enforcement: perhaps local communities and/or youth groups working in collaboration with the police.

David Naylor

Loughor Bridge link

Our front page story in the last issue was that the east end of the new NCR 4 route leading to the Loughor Bridge was still blocked by a concrete barrier although the route had been open since the Spring. Well, thanks to the efforts of CCS's Cycling Officer, it was removed just about when the Newsletter came out and in time for the *Gower Cycling Festival*. But the signing remains to be altered. Will this be done by the time you read this?

Gower Cycling Festival

Next year's Festival is to be from 15-22 September 2012. Already we have produced a provisional programme which can be viewed on www.gowercyclingfestival.org (or on the Cycling Festival page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.)

I hope you will enjoy the following descriptions of two of this year's rides written by participants.

David Naylor

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A ride to remember

It was September and the Gower Cycling Festival had come round again. For most of the rides I either was not available or already knew the route. One ride looked particularly intriguing – Carreg Cennen via Ferryside. It was 70 miles and I had not done any long rides since May but decided that if necessary I could let the others go on and make my own way back.

So at 9am on Friday 16th I joined the group at the Railway Inn, Killay. We started on the cycle track through Gowerton then quiet roads to Llanelli. Our leader, Claudine, took us through the back streets, avoiding the heavy traffic, to rejoin the cycle track at the North Dock café. During our coffee stop there Claudine received a call – a cyclist had arrived at the start who wanted to join us. No problem – we would meet him for lunch at Ferryside.

Away we sped, cycle track to Pembrey, quiet roads to Kidwelly and even quieter roads to Ferryside. The scenery was changing. It was much more “West Wales”, with a different type of building and more native trees. The café specialised in locally caught mullet – a firm textured fish with a delicate flavour. Soon we were joined by our extra cyclist, just in time lunch.

The large lunch was followed by a steep hill out of Ferryside but soon we were bowling along country roads via the National Botanic Gardens at Llanarthne. We sped down into the Towy valley for the (relatively) flat ride to Fairfach. It was here I first had difficulty keeping up with the group. The next section via Trapp to Carreg Cennen, although beautiful, had several steep sections. With my tired legs they were “get off and push” hills and for these I was joined by our extra cyclist whose earlier exertions must have taken their toll.

Carreg Cennen café was a welcome refreshments stop, with spectacular views through its huge windows. I suggested to Claudine that as I was now so slow I would make my own way back, taking the easy route from Ammanford to Pontardulais. Her reply was that we would all take the easy route. Our stop was extended as we waited for a shower to pass, but soon we were speeding down to Trapp, then along country lanes to Ammanford. After Ammanford came the “easy” side of the Loughor valley, through Pontardulais and back along the cycle track to the Railway Inn.

Did I regret going? I regretted slowing down the group, although they were very generous about it. However I did not regret the ride. An imaginative route, super views and a great group of cyclists – but I must get in some training before next year's festival.

Dave Bird

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The Wetlands/Gower ride

It was billed as "A gentle ride along the flat Sustrans route 4 (almost all on cyclepaths), with time to explore the Penclacwydd Wetland centre".

Nick had been badgering us about the Gower Cycling Festival for months, so we decided we'd better humour him and try it out! The tail end of Hurricane Katrina had passed, and the weather looked quite promising for September. We joined about 15 cyclists at Dunvant where one of them gave an informative talk about the area's industrial past.

Continued on p.8

Then off at a steady pace through Gowerton and over the marsh road towards Loughor, where the Sustran's staff were keen to show off their new stretch of cycle path. At the wetlands we had a lovely cup of tea/cakes etc and slumped on their comfy settees for a nice snooze/chat/ look at unusual geese & birds whilst the keener members of the group took off for a sprint stage to the ice cream parlour further along the coastal path!

After a relaxing hour Nick woke us up to get the ride moving once more; then headed off gently back towards the Gower when an impromptu stop at the Loughor Boat Club for a pint was a very welcome surprise – we began to wonder if riding a bike was incidental to all the day's other pleasures! Sitting outside with a view over the Loughor Estuary, and some banter about whose bike was best it was hard to drag ourselves away to the next destination. We discovered that John Roach sang sea shanties at the Boatclub's Folk evenings (a possible Festival ride there next year)? [Ed: that indeed is planned.]



Then off to Colin`s smallholding (Ddol Farm) hidden away behind Dunvant on the edge of the Gower – there was a slight climb to get there which just sharpened the appetite! However, Colin gave us an enthusiastic tour of his garden and vineyard and afterwards there was a table laden with the most delectable homemade cakes and tea, all in the bright September sunshine. The climb had been worth it! It was a delicious treat to round off a splendid day 's cycling.

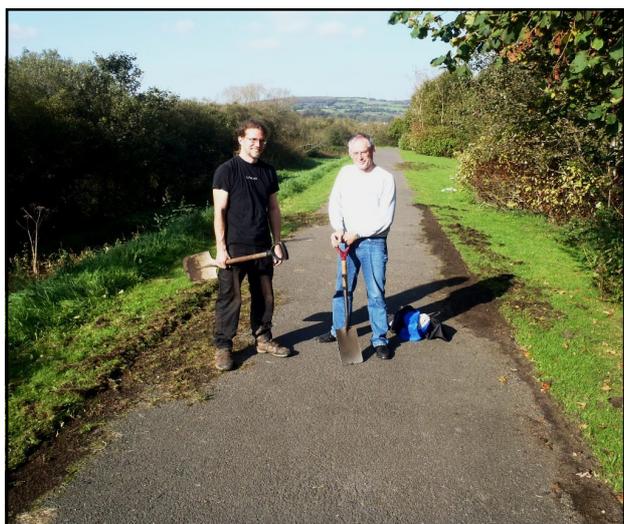
Many thanks to Colin and Hilary for making it a terrific day.

So roll on next year for some more cakes/pints/culinary delights and a little light enjoyable exercise!

Ian & Jill Stapley

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A Sustrans Workday



Saturday 15th October saw five Sustrans volunteer Rangers have a go at clearing the vegetation encroaching on NCR 43. They started at the A48 underpass and worked northwards . The easy bit was cutting back encroaching bushes between the underpass and the chicanes. Further north, where the route runs on an embankment before passing under the motorway, the hard work began. Here the task was to scrape the grass off the asphalt. We used square ended spades. This proved harder than expected because the grass had routed itself into the tarmac. The photo shows Tim Cross and Mike Lewis taking a brief break. But we made a start, and hopefully the Council will now pick up the baton.

David Naylor

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