



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 19 Spring 2012

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Foreshore closure for motorbike races

Learning that the foreshore path – National Cycle Route 4 – was to be closed between Sketty Road and the Marriott Hotel at the beginning of March for the beach motorbike races *Wheelrights* decided to take action. This was to write to Jack Straw, Chief executive of Swansea Council, to ask for one lane of Oystermouth Road to be reserved for cyclists over this stretch. The reply was that they had considered this but were sorry they could not close a lane on the road, instead they would provide a diversion. This is shown by the red line. *Wheelrights* were not happy with the Council's proposal to route the diversion round the back of the St Helen's ground and car park (shown dotted.) Instead we felt it should follow the footway. An alternative favoured by some of us was a temporary 20mph speed limit on Oystermouth Road along the affected length. This would make a diversion unnecessary as the main road would then be relatively safe



Since considering this matter we have learnt that the races are to be postponed on "Environmental grounds". The question therefore arises whether they will be held at all.

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

On p. 2 we highlight a problem for cyclists on a new crossing and describe a proposed new cycle route. Then on p. 3 Nick describes an important campaign initiative: the *Swansea Cycle Challenge*. All being well this will take place over three weeks in June.

Recently the media has focussed on cycle accidents, which have slightly increased in recent years. To balance the picture I present on p.5. information which highlights how safety increases with numbers.

Elsewhere a story about the challenge of taking a bike on a bendy-bus, an account of a ride in last year's Gower Cycling Festival, an article about the splendid work Re-Cycle are doing and on p. 8 details of our beginners classes and new evening rides programme.

David Naylor

Chairman

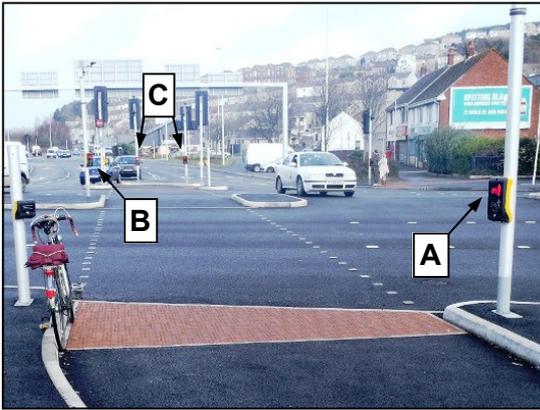
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Tawe Bridge Toucan

The Toucan crossing of Fabian Way on the east side of the south Tawe Bridge is now operational. It is novel in that it links islands in the middle of King's Road to the south and East Bank Way to the north. This means that while crossing Fabian Way traffic can be streaming down East Bank Way splitting to the west across the bridge and to the east on to Fabian Way. It is claimed that this allows pedestrians and cyclists to cross with less delay than a more conventional alternative.

The information on whether it is safe to cross is provided by waist high boxes at the ends of the crossing rather than by a green cyclist/pedestrian appearing on a conventional traffic light. This is fine if the appropriate boxes are clearly visible. There is however a problem, making this crossing dangerous for the unwary. It is best explained by reference to the photo.

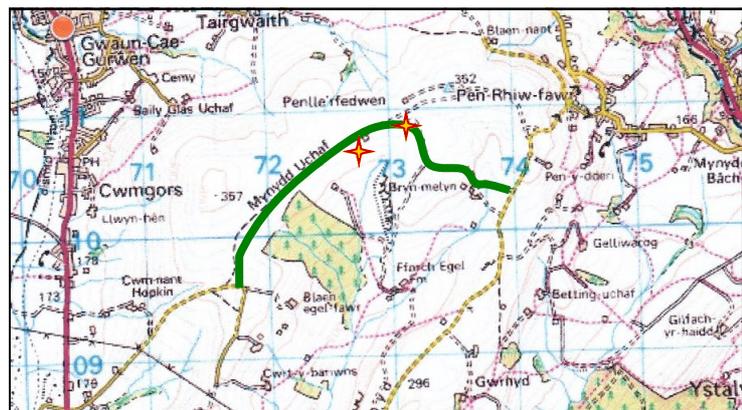
This is taken from the position of a cyclist about to cross from south to north. The light A is the one which indicates if it is safe to cross. The danger is that lights C, which actually relate to an east-west crossing of East Bank Way, are clearly visible and if green can easily be mistaken for a signal to cross Fabian Way. The mid-point light B is also a source of confusion. I was nearly caught out by this and have reported the matter to the Council.

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Gwrhyd Common cycle path

Wheelrights were approached by Dan McCallum, manager of the community energy charity *Awel Aman Tawe* with a request for support for their plans to create a new cycle path across Gwrhyd Common. This lies north of Pontardawe, east of the A474 and west of Ystalyfera.

The proposed cycle path is shown by the green line on the map. It would double as an access road to two wind turbines (shown by the stars).



Planning permission for the wind turbines has been granted but, although agreement with the landowner has been obtained, section 194 consent is needed for the path.

This was discussed at a *Wheelrights* meeting on 23 January and, it having been made clear that it was just the cycle path and not the turbines for which support was sought, unanimous agreement to provide this was obtained. We subsequently sent a formal letter to the relevant authority and some individuals sent emails. Sustrans and the CTC also added their support.

The cycle path, much of which follows existing tracks, will be 2.2 miles in length. As can be seen from the map it will link via minor roads to the A474 in the west. To the east it ends on Gwrhyd Road which goes south to Pontardawe and the other way links with Ystalyfera. NCR 43 runs through both of these villages.

This is an upland area and this new route will open up the possibility of challenging cycle rides for ordinary cyclists – at least for those who need a few hills to work off excesses (of whatever kind). Dan has informed me that, if they get the 194 approval, there are plans for an annual *Gwrhyd Cycle Challenge*.

David Naylor

Swansea Cycle Challenge

This promises to be the biggest new participatory cycling event in Swansea since *Wheelrights* founder members (David Judd, Bob Burn and Veronica Wood) helped set up the BHF Gower Bike Ride in the 1980s.

What is the Challenge?

Essentially a high profile public campaign aiming to get more people cycling. It is a website based campaign which allows participants to sign up and log their individual journeys online. By having a minimal initial commitment to cycle for ten minutes, the Challenge targets the many new and occasional cyclists who need enticing to get their bikes out of their sheds. Obviously the hope is that once they appreciate what a great experience cycling offers, this will encourage many to keep it up on a regular basis.

The company *Challenge for Change* has a good track record of successfully promoting these challenges throughout England (and some in Australia and New Zealand) with excellent results. Their first one in Wales took place in Cardiff in September 2011, and we are learning lessons from this in planning the Swansea Challenge. (See box.)

Workplaces involved:	63
people signed up:	1319
New/occasional cyclists:	419
miles cycled:	60,843
Kg CO ₂ saved:	12,833

Cardiff Cycle Challenge stat.s

Why Swansea, why now?

NCN routes 4 and 43 embrace the west, south and east of Swansea. These mainly off-road routes can provide an excellent introduction to cycling for new and occasional cyclists.

Wheelrights have now had two years of successfully organising our annual *Gower Cycling Festival*, which has helped us develop close links with bike shops and other businesses who are recognising the economic benefits of cycling to the local economy.

Wheelrights has established a good reputation and credibility with public bodies including Swansea Council (CCS), Tourism and some health organisations, so I believe we now have the capability of co-leading this challenging venture.

Thus 2012 seems a great opportunity to launch a *Swansea Cycle Challenge* (we are trying for June). Initial talks indicate that the four organisations of *Wheelrights*, CTC, CCS and Sustrans could take the lead, with other stakeholders such as Public Health, private businesses involved. We have already discussed the possibility of a “public launch” with the Liberty Stadium people, who seem keen.

How can you help?

1. We would ask each member (yes that’s you!) to sign up at least two colleagues, friends or family to the Challenge. With around 100 members this would give us some 200 participants, a great launch to a possible target of 1,000.
2. We are looking for “Cycle Champions” who will actively promote the Challenge, and may be willing to become cycling mentors to cyclists living in their areas.
3. The Challenge is open to anyone working or living in Swansea. We are particularly interested in making links with employers (who will be our main sponsors, offering prizes, incentives etc), so if you know any we could contact please let me or Colin know?

Lets see if we can beat Cardiff’s figures and make the Swansea Challenge a bigger and better one.

Useful Links: www.challengeforchange.com, www.cardiffcyclechallenge.org.uk

Any queries or offers of help , please contact Colin Fielder or myself

Nick Guy

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Bendy-buses and a folding bike

Possessing a folding bike can be a a mixed blessing. Being a member of the 2 metre club [*Ed: that's how tall he is.*] means that I seem to defy gravity when I'm riding it; only serving to emphasise the apparent absurdity of such small wheels. It doesn't help when you get comments from car-drivers along the lines of "You've stolen that from a hobbit".

Nevertheless this is offset by its portability, particularly in tight situations or on public transport.

So, imagine my relief on a rainy day, when I board the orient express of our local transport service – the No.4 bendy-bus complete with conductor/customer relations operative. Yes I know you should regard the rain as part of the joys of Swansea, but there is a limit

'You can't bring that in here.!'

Despite telling him that I had done so on many other occasions, it moved him or his driver not a jot.

"Get that off this bus"

I appealed to reason, perhaps not the wisest idea! . The bus is only half full, there are no buggies using the designated space, the bike is clean.

Back into the rain and a thorough soaking by the time I arrive at school. A quick letter to *First* will surely do the trick; back comes the answer:

"You have my assurance that *First* will not tolerate any staff member failing to carry out their duty correctly. Subsequently an interview has been arranged to ensure that this situation does not occur again."

Well that's alright then: a mighty company instructing its staff to carry out company policy. Until they have to put it into operation.

'You can't bring that in here'

"But it folds down and doesn't take any space!" How little had I learnt, time to try another tack. The company manager, Mr Lyn Harvey has said that it's fine. Surely they've heard of him. Apparently not on the bendy-bus.

"You'll have to take it off. You can see the passengers looking at you. You're holding the bus up."

I'm fuming but it has no effect and the rain is even harder this time.

As it appears that *First* do not communicate with their drivers the answer from *First* was to issue me with a letter to show to them!

Where does this leave us? Back in the dark ages when cyclists were to be seen but definitely not welcomed.

John Sayce

—o0o—

Some tips to counter John's sad experience.

TIPS

Bikes on Greyhound Buses

It's possible to take bikes on the fast new Greyhound buses between Swansea and Cardiff. Ordinary bikes (not just foldups) are carried in the luggage bays under the bus.

Tip thanks to Grant (working for Groundworks at Environment Centre) who uses this service regularly.

Cyclists can use Park and Ride in Swansea

They have not publicised this, but cyclists can now park their bikes – just like car users – and use the Swansea Park and Ride bus services to/from the City Centre, .

Tip thanks to Councillor Paul Meara (Sketty ward).

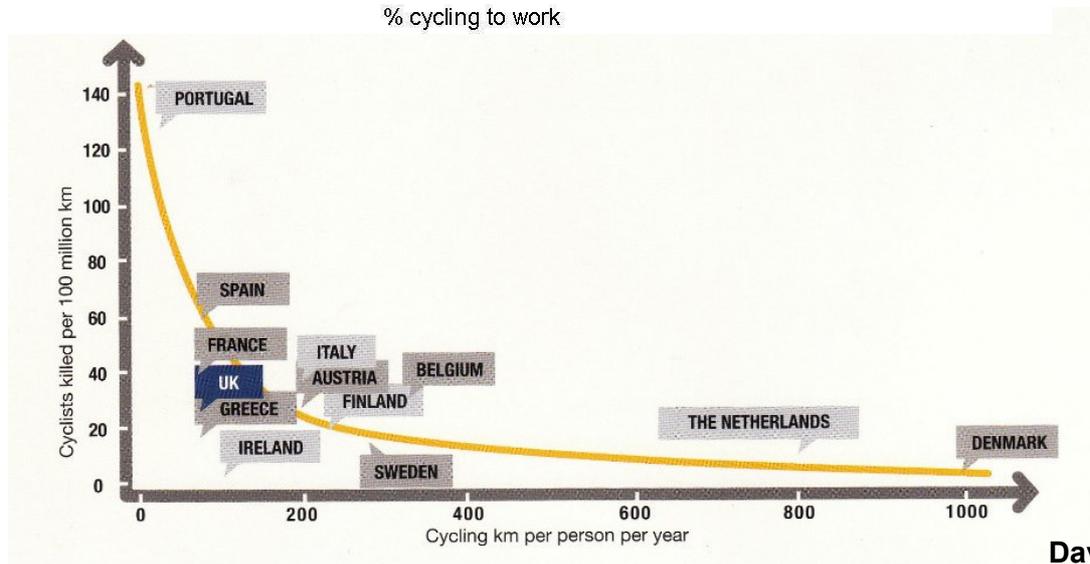
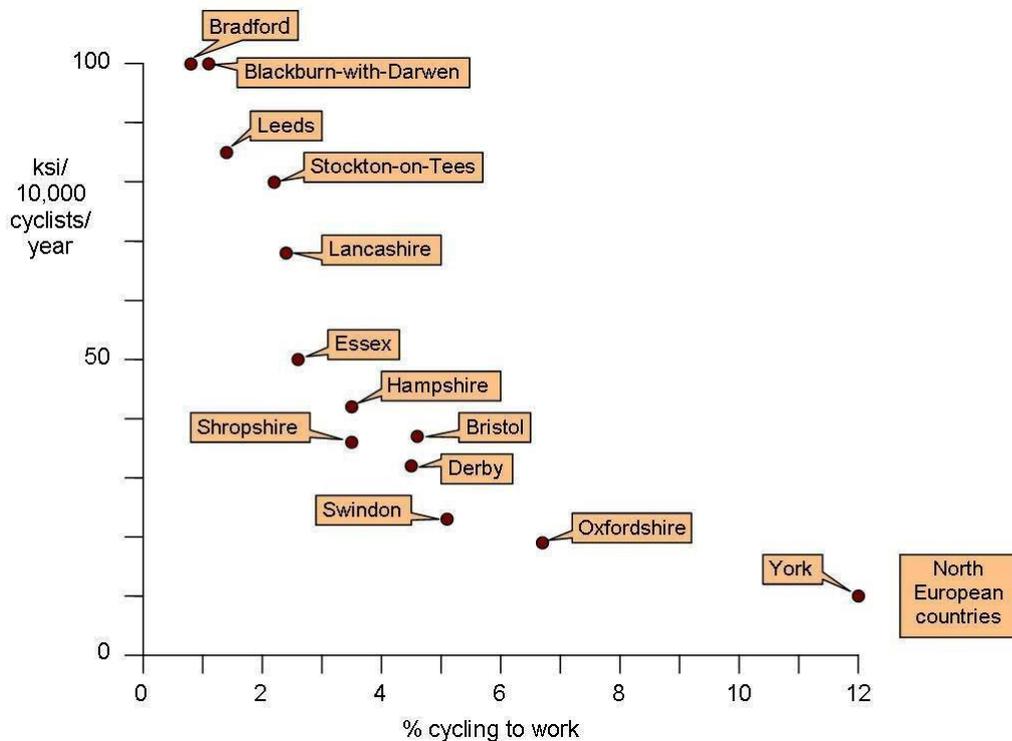
Safety in Numbers

In January I attended a CTC "Roadshow" in Cardiff. This turned out to be an interesting and inspiring conference. The focus was on cycle training – particularly of youth – and promotion. The matter of safety in numbers came up and the information below comes from CTC's leaflet **Safety in Numbers** which was a conference handout.

While it has been known for some time that cycling gets safer the more people do it, to be convincing one needs statistics. This leaflet struck me as one of the more important outcomes from the conference so I have reproduced the data from it here. (Courtesy of the CTC.)

The upper graph shows the relation between the number of killed and seriously injured cyclists (ksi) and the percentage of cycle commuters in England. I have added the box to the right which applies to most of the large towns and cities in Northern Europe. In these the percentage cycling to work is typically well into double figures. The lower graph shows the same trend although relating different measures.

The 2001 census gives the proportion of people who cycle to work as 2.76% in England and Wales, 1.38% in Wales and 1.16% in Swansea. While the Swansea figure has very likely increased since then it is clear that we need to be much further to the right on the graph.



David Naylor

A Gower Cycling Festival ride

I moved to Swansea recently and decided to take part in the Gower cycling festival, as I thought that it might be an excellent way to explore Gower and meet new people. The North Gower route was chosen because it was on Saturday; it also had a moderate level and promised amazing Welsh landscapes.

I met up with the ride leaders and other participants at the Railway Inn. Some people were local, but others came from Cardiff and even Bristol. Some participants decided to enjoy the ride by themselves, while others decided to share it with family and friends. It was great seeing adults, children and their mature parents joined in their efforts.



Before we began our journey, we took a group photograph. We soon left and took off in the rain, tackling a steep hill. One participant's bicycle broke down; but nothing was going to stop us that easily. The hill was conquered, the bicycle was fixed by our experienced team members and we continued our ride. In spite of the initial hitches, all the members of the group were in high spirits. And our reward came! After around 10-15 minutes, the rain stopped, and we were able to enjoy the amazing Gower landscape of fields and hills, old churches and mining sites. We were also able to experience stunning panoramic views of inland Gower and Carmarthen Bay. Along the way there were also several historical sites and appealing traditional villages with plenty of old-fashioned charm. One of them was Crofty, a small village famous for its cockle industry.

On our way back we visited another interesting place, Penclawdd Local Market, where I tasted the best sticky toffee pudding. Penclawdd Market opened back in 2003 with eight stalls and has grown gradually to over 30. Today, it is an amazing venue where local residents and visitors can meet in a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. It was great to have a chat with locals about their neighbourhood, while enjoying a warm cup of tea and a handmade dessert.

Arriving back at the Railway Inn, we were tired but very happy. We stayed in a pub for a drink, sharing our impressions and exchanged contacts for our next ride. The ride helped me to try things I had never tried before; it gave me the opportunity to visit places I had never been to before, and it enabled me to meet some interesting people from a variety of backgrounds. As a result of the ride I have vivid memories, amazing pictures and the contacts of great people.

The festival was excellent and exceeded all of my expectations. Next year I am going to invite my friends from London and Manchester to take part in this great event. I would like to thank David and all of the organisers and hope to see you again next year!

Jelena Kiselova



View west on the quiet road between Three Crosses and Llanrhidian.

Re-Cycle your Bike

Throwaway Economics

Bicycles stand out among the other items dumped at recycling centres. The sheer volume of waste plastic, fridges and computers is striking enough, but the sorry sight of good bikes amidst the scrap gives many a pause for thought.

The throwaway economy of bikes is driven by the bottom line: if you are a cyclist watching the pennies and your bike grinds to a halt, you might be tempted by the supermarket bikes that sell for less than your repair bill. Unsurprisingly, these tend to be destined for a rapid trip to the tip, and so the cycle goes on...

1600 Bikes Back on the Road

The *Re-Cycle* workshop off Bryn-y-Mor Road in Swansea was set up five years ago to be part of the solution. Since then 1600 bikes have been donated by people who would see them used rather than dumped. These have been serviced and repaired by qualified mechanics with the support of hundreds of volunteers.

About 10% of the bikes are given to volunteers on the work-for-a-bike scheme, while the rest are sold to sustain the social enterprise. The combined support of bike donors and volunteers helps keep prices very low – bikes with a two-month guarantee start from £30. The showroom offers a choice of over 50 bikes, from classics to cutting edge.

Re-Cycle also runs evening and day training courses in cycle maintenance up to Open College Network level, and a 'bike kitchen' where cyclists can find support in fixing their own bikes. So why spend your money on the throwaway economy when you can keep it in Swansea?



Re-Cycle Swansea is open Thursdays to Saturdays from 10am – 6pm
Catherine Street Workshop, SA1 4NE
(Behind Mill Pub off Bryn-y-Mor Road.)
Phone: 07847 474880
www.recyclesouthwales.wordpress.com



Ian Williams

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Congratulations!

Wheelrights member Claudine Conway has been elected to the Chair of CTC-Cymru.
Well done Claudine.

Forthcoming events

Wheelrights meetings

The next two meetings are on 27 February and 26 March at 7.00 pm in the Environment Centre, Pier Street. All welcome; an agenda will be sent to members.

Evening rides

It has been decided once again to give evening rides a try. In 2009 and 2010 we laid on a programme of *Explorer* rides but because they were poorly supported we discontinued them. Since then there has been a significant increase in cycling in Swansea, so we have decided to reintroduce them, but with a difference.

Then we had pre-planned routes which started from different locations. This time we are making it both more flexible and simpler. All the rides will start at 5.45pm at the Caffe Americano (E. of Sail Bridge, facing Prince of Wales Dock). The route will be decided by the leader on the day to suit whoever turns up. The rides are intended to be both social and a means of giving beginners/returning riders confidence. Consequently they will go at the pace of the slowest and over a distance to suit the least experienced. They should end by dusk.

The timing has been chosen to suit office-hour workers so that they can go straight from work. We hope that experienced riders as well as beginners will take part, and that they will hold back as necessary and pass on their knowledge to newcomers.

The rides are on the following dates from April until August. (All on the fourth Thursday of the month.):

26 April, 24 May, 28 June, 26 July and 23 August.

As there are three evening rides in the *Gower Cycling Festival* (on 9, 14 and 17 September) no rides are scheduled for September.

Gower Cycling Festival (15-22 September)

Details are now on the 'Cycling Festival' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk which can alternatively be accessed from www.gowercyclingfestival.org. Note that, as last year, to persuade more people to join more than one ride and to encourage people to come from afar to make a Gower holiday of it, the price of a Festival Pass is just £5. The price of a single ride is £3. It therefore pays to buy a Pass if you take part in more than one ride. Passes can be bought from now up to the start of the Festival. (See the booking section on the web page.) For logistical reasons we don't want to sell passes at the start of rides.

Adult Beginners Classes

These will be held from 9.30 – 11.30 in the car park on the east side of Swansea's Civic Centre on the following Saturdays:

14 April; 12 May; 16 June; 28 July; 1 September

If you wish to attend please phone Veronica Wood on 01792 206617 or Rhian Evans on 01792 510470. The charge is £5.

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