



# Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



**Newsletter** No. 20 Summer 2012

[www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk)

## Swansea to hold its first *Cycle Challenge*



Cycling in North Gower

The **Swansea Cycle Challenge** has been confirmed for 2-22 July. There will be two other challenges in Wales at the same time: one in Cardiff and one in North Wales. The *Cardiff Cycle Challenge* last year was the first in Wales.

There is clearly scope for a lot more people to cycle to work in Swansea. The proportion of cycle commuters in Swansea at a little over 1% is less than the Wales average and less than half that in Cardiff (according to the 2001 census). So it is clearly timely for a *Swansea Cycle Challenge*.

*Wheelrights* are asking all Swansea cyclists to sign up to the Challenge. How to do so is explained in the article on p.2. We are particularly keen to involve new and occasional cyclists. The more work colleagues and friends that you encourage to take part the better. And there is a chance of winning an amazing prize!

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### Editorial

In this issue we cover a range of topics: first the all important *Swansea Cycle Challenge*. In July. This is preceded by Bike week in June. No specific article about that but see page 8 for a summary of the events taking place during it.

Then on pages 3, 4 and 5 there are articles about a variety of local developments.

And on page 6 the story of our successful Adult Beginners classes by a co-founder.

I then share my enthusiasm about cycling on the Continent with the hope that someday their way of doing things will spread over here..

Nick Guy has volunteered to be guest editor for the next issue. This means that he will be responsible for the content. My role will be just to produce it..

**David Naylor**

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### Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to our guest editor Nick Guy (e-mail address below) by mid August.

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## Swansea Cycle Challenge (2-22 July)

To register go to the Challenge website: [www.swanseacyclechallenge.org.uk](http://www.swanseacyclechallenge.org.uk). This you can do either as an individual or an employee (if working for an organisation already signed up – see the 'Organisations' page on that website). You will then be invited to record your cycle rides. Registration makes you eligible for various prizes. These are aimed not at those who do the most miles but at newcomers to cycling who make the most progress.

The Challenge is gathering speed with 20 organisations signed up at the time of writing. Its great to see the Liberty Stadium signed up, as well as the large public services of Swansea Council and the ABMU Health Board.

The Swansea Challenge Co-ordinator, Ceri Griffin, said: *I am delighted with the response so far, and the support I have received from Wheelrights. Being a Swansea boy I am determined to beat Cardiff's Challenge and to put cycling firmly on the map in Swansea. My priority is to target new and occasional cyclists and its heartening to see that a third of participants who have registered trips so far have been new cyclists! However the Challenge is also open to experienced cyclists and I urge all Wheelrights members to register now and spread the word.*

During my own chats with friends I have been amazed how many have bikes in their shed which either have punctures or haven't been used for years. If we can all encourage two friends, family or contacts to sign up this would give the Challenge a big boost. They only need to cycle for a minimum of 10 minutes, and you never know, you may win a prize too!

*Wheelrights* has agreed to help arrange several "Try a Bike" sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays in July during the three weeks of the Challenge. Easy lunch time rides and also an evening ride on 12 July are planned. These events should be great fun, and one way of spreading the word about *Wheelrights* to new members. It's fascinating to ask new cyclists what the barriers are which discouraged them from cycling, and these discussions can help inform our negotiations with Swansea Council.

So please help us beat Cardiff and make the Swansea Cycle Challenge the best in Wales!

Ceri will be speaking at our next *Wheelrights* Meeting about the Challenge on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> June at 7pm at the Environment Centre. All are welcome.

**Nick Guy**

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### Boulevard update

For many years *Wheelrights* have been pushing for the footpath on the south side of Oystermouth Road, which links the Civic Centre to Route 4 (Foreshore path) to the west, to be upgraded to shared use. (We had a meeting with Cabinet member John Hague about this on 4 October 2007.) At last this has been put on the formal agenda. It will link with the yet-to-be-constructed shared path which will run east from the Civic Centre. This is a desire line for cyclists, and it is heartening to see CCS agreeing to create it at last!

As ever the devil will be in the detail. CCS held a series of "Drop In" sessions in late May which provided information about the Boulevard and displayed plans which no doubt some of you will have attended. *Wheelrights* should be involved in consultations about the detail during the summer. If you have specific suggestions to take forward – perhaps arising from the Drop In sessions – please pass them on to David Naylor, Colin Fielder or myself; soon please as our next meeting with CCS is scheduled for early June.

**Nick Guy**

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## Sustrans Connect2 progress

### Clydach

The latest construction work on Phase 2 of the Clydach-Glais walking and cycling scheme, which forms a new section of path linking the Swansea canal towpath to NCN route 43 to the south of Vardre Playing fields, is well underway. The final layer has been laid along most of the new section and the art work on the Afon Tawe bridge is due to be completed by the end of July.

The scheme has recently secured funding via the Welsh Government's Strategic Regeneration Area along with funds from WEFO, the BIG Lottery and VALE EURO.



An official scheme opening event will take place on 12<sup>th</sup> September. We would be delighted if *Wheelrights'* members and supporters could join us on the day for the cycle ride and festivities.

**Helen Davies**  
(Connect2, Clydach manager)

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### Afan Valley



The Afan Valley Connect2 scheme is almost complete with just a few remaining sections left. The overall scheme will become Route 887 of the National Cycle Network and will link from Route 4 near Aberavon seafront through Port Talbot, Cwmafan, Pontrhydfen and Afan Forest Park and then onwards to Dyffryn and Cymmer. From Cymmer it is proposed that Route 887 will then continue northwards to Glyncoerrwg using an existing route which will link to Route 47 (High Level Route) in the north.

At Cymmer there will be the option to join Route 885 (Llynfi Valley) which provides a link to Maesteg. This route is also almost complete.

It is proposed that the route will be officially opened in September. (Date to be confirmed.).

**Fraser Arnot**  
(SW Wales Sustrans manager)

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## More cycle stands

New stands have recently been appearing in the railway station with the original ten or so on platform 1 increased – I think last year – by ten on platform 4 and then more recently by another ten outside the station. A further ten to bring the total to 40 are due to be installed, I assume close to the area being dug up by the normal entrance at the time of writing.

The picture shows new secure cycle storage in the St David's multi storage car park between Oystermouth Road and Wellington Street by the bus station,



The blue circles on the map below show bike parking spaces in the City Centre.



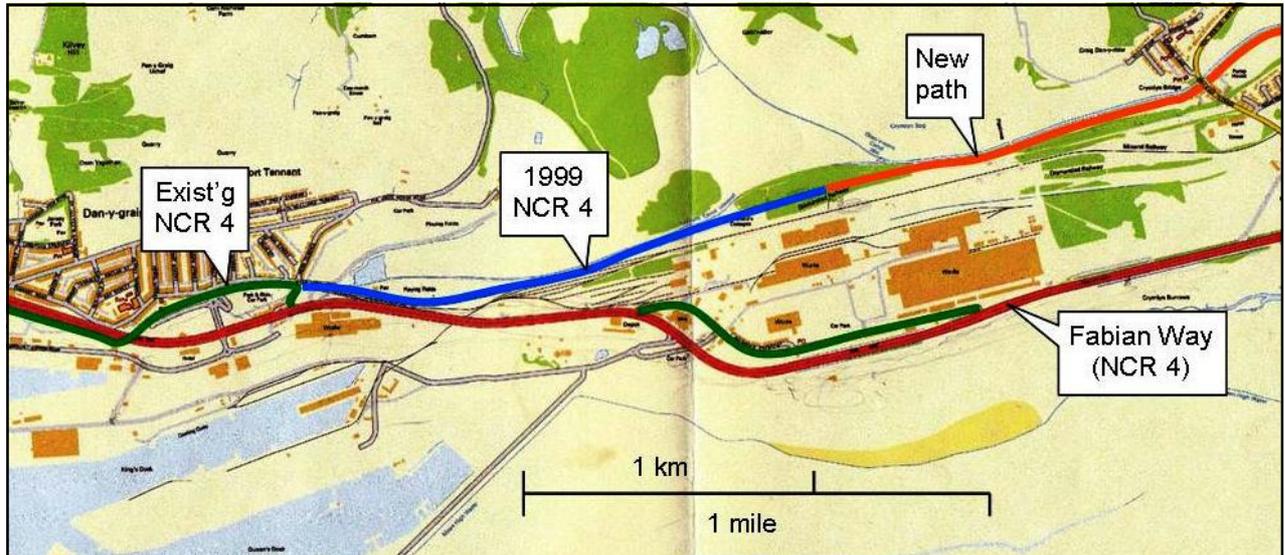
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## Sail Bridge barrier

We fronted the winter edition with a picture of this barrier and reported that we had asked Swansea Council to arrange for its removal. We learnt that they had been installed by the Welsh Government without the approval of the Council. Since then the Council is in the process of adopting this bridge and rather than waiting for the WG to remove them they will carry out the work themselves. They have designed an alternative barrier consisting of staggered bollards. These should discourage speeding while at the same time allow legitimate traffic, ie recumbents, bikes with trailers, wheelchairs, etc. to pass without difficulty.

David Naylor

## Fabian Way developments



For several years *Wheelrights* have been aware of the need for quality cycle access to the extensive developments planned for the Fabian Way corridor: Coed Darcy to the north and the University campus to the south. Things are now happening. We were pleased to attend a recent meeting with Neath Port Talbot Council representatives where we learnt about their plans for cycle provision in the County. These include incorporation of a cycle route along a new access road to be built to link Swansea with Coed Darcy (This will be separate from NCR 4 but will need to link with that route somewhere in the region of the Fabian Way Park and Ride.) and, eventually, a new route south of Fabian Way to link with the proposed University campus.

A recent development is the extension of the path constructed by Sustrans in 1999 from where it ends near the NPT/Swansea county boundary to Jersey Marine. It is shown by the orange line on the map above. It follows the Tennant Canal and forms part of the new Wales Coast Path. (Visit [www.ccw.gov.uk](http://www.ccw.gov.uk) for details.) The 1999 path was asphalted and now, apart from some encroaching vegetation, is as good as new. The new section is gravel and intended for walkers, however cyclists are using it even though it is bumpy. This is a clear desire line for cyclists. The path continues NE of Jersey Marine (at the top r.h. corner of the map). There is scope here for a future link along the Tennant Canal to join NCR 47 near Neath.

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### Cycling Manifesto

The *Wheelrights* Cycling Manifesto which we prepared last Autumn (See p. 5 of Issue 18.) was formally launched on 15<sup>th</sup> March at the Civic Centre. It was attended by candidates from all five political parties. All committed to supporting the objectives of the Manifesto.

Before the election we had approached candidates to present them with the Manifesto and seek their support. We now plan to contact the new Councillors to once again ask them to:

1. Develop more cycle routes so that the estimated **third** of Swansea's population who live within half a mile of a dedicated cycle route is increased to a **half**.
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.

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David Naylor

## Adult Cycle Training for complete beginners



In 1999 Bob Burn, a founder member and then treasurer of *Wheelrights*, suggested that we should organise cycle training and cycle maintenance sessions.

Two pilot courses were run, but we found that the demand was not from cyclists wanting to practice road riding skills or bike maintenance, but from adults who had never been able to ride a bike and had always wanted to try.

With a £650 sustainability grant from the Environment Centre, we bought six new bikes, as well as begging and borrowing small bikes that seemed to suit our (mainly lady) riders.

In the early days the bikes were stored in the Environment Centre and with the help of David Judd's car and trailer had to be ferried back and forth to County Hall, until the City and County of Swansea kindly allowed us to keep our bikes in their store.

What started off as just a few trial sessions are now – thirteen years later – an established part of *Wheelrights* programme. At 9.30 on a Saturday morning you will see a group of very nervous ladies (and just a few men) in County Hall car park waiting for the class to start. Two hours later most of them will be cycling around the car park with huge smiles on their faces – they have *LEARNT* to *RIDE* a bike!

For the instructors it is really a most enjoyable and satisfying morning. The trainees start on bikes without pedals, hobby-horsing around the car park and gradually learning to balance and freewheel. Within an hour most graduate to bikes with pedals and they are off! The majority of them will be riding in the two hour session, though we always emphasise that they need to get a bike straight away and practise the skills they have just learnt.

Over the thirteen years we have had groups of over 15 trainees, but recently numbers have been lower. If anyone can think of new ways to advertise our classes, please get in touch. We have sent posters out on line, so if you could put them up in your area it would be a great help. We are quite sure that there are a lot more non-cyclists out there!

And it is very satisfying to think that thanks to Bob Burn's idea and *Wheelrights* organisation, over 500 more Swansea people can now ride a bike!

**Vee Wood**

Note: Adult Beginners Classes are planned for Saturdays 16<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> July and 1<sup>st</sup> Sept.. Applicants should telephone Vee on 01792 206617, or Rhian on 01792 510470.

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## Cycling on the Continent

I suspect that not many of this Newsletter's readers will have had the enjoyable experience of cycling in Northern Europe so let me pass on a few impressions from a recent holiday there. The holiday centred on a five day ride down the Danube from Ulm to Regensburg with my wife on an organised tour, but to get there and back I cycled bits while Isla went by train. We don't like flying; travelling by boat, train and bike makes the journey part of the holiday.

Train to Cambridge, a night there with my cousin, a cycle ride to Harwich and a night on the Stena ferry to the Hook of Holland got us to the Continent. From the ferry it was about 100km to Utrecht where we were booked on the sleeper to Ulm. I cycled and Isla took the train.

The weather was kind for the Hook to Utrecht ride, both on the way out and on the return at the end of our holiday. I had done this ride before so knew what to expect, but I had not expected quite so many cyclists. This was in part because it was a bank holiday (Ascension day) on the way out and a Sunday on the return. There were thousands of them – ladies old and young, often in skirts, couples on a single bike with the girl on the crossbar or the back carrier, and roadies, singly or in pelatons overtaking me at speed with minimal clearance. (Helped me understand why pedestrians are touchy about cyclists on shared paths.) You rarely hear a bell in Holland. But whether you're a cyclist or on foot you get used to being passed closely. As for motorists they just have to be patient. Only once did I hear a gentle toot from a car driver trying to pass a couple riding two abreast. Cycling rules in Holland, and, for that matter, in Germany.



This holiday reinforced my earlier perception as to why cycling on the Continent is safer than in the UK. It is a combination of safety-in-numbers (See article on p.5 of the last issue: No. 19.), good infrastructure and 'stricter liability', ie that the stronger party is by default liable in the event of a collision. (See article on p.6 of Issue 15.)

The picture on the left, taken in Holland, shows how the cycle path is given priority across a not-so-minor junction. This continuity is ubiquitous here; unfortunately not so in the UK. Note the destination signs on the far side of the crossing. The left one in red is for cyclists and the blue for motorists.

Another interesting feature, this time in urban areas, is the widespread use of shared space, ie road space shared by pedestrians, cyclists and other vehicles. We encountered these in the "Altstadt" districts in the historic cities we passed through in Germany. The picture on the right shows the signs used to identify them. These are usually the only signs; eye contact is the way collisions are avoided – apparently it works. In these areas restaurant tables are not cordoned off, and cyclists wander where they will.



The Danube trip was great fun. We were a jolly crowd of 14, all English speaking. We had lovely weather and the cycling was gentle, averaging about 30 miles per day. The tour company, *Mercurio*, treated us proud and I have no hesitation in recommending their tours (all are in Germany) to anybody who would enjoy easy cycling in lovely country and the comfort of nice hotels. I have to confess an interest as *Mercurio* have promised financial support to *Wheelrights* for anyone joining one of their tours having previously attended a *Gower Cycling Festival*. Details are on the 'Links' page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk).

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David Naylor

## Forthcoming events

(See the 'Events' page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk) for full details.)

### **Wheelrights meeting**

A meeting to firm up what we need to do for the **Swansea Cycle Challenge** will be held at 7.00 pm on 11 June in the Environment Centre, Pier Street. All are welcome.

### **Bike Week (16-24 June)**

On 16 June there is an *Adult Beginners Class* in the morning (See below) and also a *BikeAbility Wales* open day. This takes place at their Dunvant RFC HQ from 11.00 to 3.00pm.

On 20 June *Wheelrights* should have a stall at the Liberty Stadium for the **Everyday Cycling for Everyone** event. This is an opportunity to cycle laps of the stadium. It runs from 9.00 to 5.30pm.

And on 21 June we have *Wheelrights* annual North Gower evening ride starting at 6.00pm from Dunvant car park..

### **Swansea Cycle Challenge (2-22 July)**

*Ride-a-bike* and *Dr Bike* sessions at lunch time on Tuesdays and Thursdays at places of work (to be announced). Easy rides on Wednesday lunch times and one evening ride (See below..)

Also on 6/7 July a *Friday night ride to the coast*. This leaves Cardiff at midnight and follows the coast to Swansea. Prior registration is needed. Details on our website.

### **Evening rides**

A Thursday evening ride starting at 5.45pm from the Caffe Americano in SA1 overlooking the Prince of Wales Dock will be held on 12 July, ie during the *Swansea Cycle Challenge*. This is in addition to those already scheduled for 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.

### **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:

16 June; 14 July; 1 September. (Note that the 28 July date has been advanced to 14<sup>th</sup>.)

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

### **Gower Cycling Festival (15-22 September)**

Details are on the 'Cycling Festival' page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk) which can alternatively be accessed from [www.gowercyclingfestival.org](http://www.gowercyclingfestival.org). We are asking people to purchase the £5 Festival Passes in advance. Provision for ordering these now, either by cash, cheque, credit card or bankers order, is on the Cycling Festival page.

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