



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 3 Spring 2008

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Living Streets and Swansea City Centre

Thursday, 20 March 2008

7.30pm

Environment Centre
Pier Street Swansea

This is an open meeting at which Gordon Gibson, of Sylfaen Cynefin Ltd, will give a presentation entitled 'Living Streets and Swansea City Centre' followed by a discussion.

All are welcome and admission is free (except 50p for coffee/tea).

Gordon Gibson is a Swansea-based Urban Designer, working with communities towards 'sustainable living environments' throughout Wales and beyond. He is a prominent local campaigner on our City Centre and will focus this session on the pedestrian and cycling environments there and in local neighbourhoods.

Re-Cycle Swansea

The Re-Cycle project takes in unwanted bicycles & supplies them to low waged people, asylum seekers & refugees. According to research, the British throw away 1.2 million bicycles every year. Re-Cycle put 400 back on the road in 2007.

Re-Cycle can rescue about 80% of bikes, the rest are recycled into spares or scrap. All bikes are refurbished and safety checked by trained volunteers.

Re-Cycle is based in a lane on Catherine Street between Bryn-y-Mor Road and St. Helens Avenue and is open Monday Wednesday, 0930-1700.

Contact for Re-Cycle is Ian Williams Tel: 078 47 47 48 80.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be e-mailed to John Roach (j.a.roach@btinternet.com) by 2nd June. 2008.

Wheelrights

We campaign for improved facilities for cyclists in the Swansea Bay area. We help get people on bikes by, e.g. providing beginners' classes; we also provide information about rides and other matters of interest to cyclists and their supporters. We are an umbrella organisation, separate from the CTC and Sustrans and other cycling groups, but whose activities we seek to both support and complement.

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Letters

Personal experience

Having been involved recently in a hit and run accident I can state that my cycle helmet saved me from a serious head injury. I went over the handlebars and my head hit the bonnet of a car and then I bodily bounced onto the road. Apart from being dazed for an hour I escaped relatively unscathed, though the plastic cover of my helmet was split.

I read the cycling press and the 'whether to make wearing a helmet compulsory' debate. Apparently research has shown that cycle usage decreases when compulsory helmet usage is enforced.

I cannot understand how any cyclist could or should venture out without a helmet. If it was not for wearing a helmet I would probably not be writing this letter.

John Roach

Another viewpoint

Cycle helmets is a contentious issue. John gives a good reason why he wears one. I would like to explain why I don't.

In January 1992 I was knocked off my bike while free-wheeling down the Mayals Hill by a car coming out of a driveway. I woke up in Morriston Hospital a few hours later. There was some damage to my face but this healed in a week or two. My most lasting injury was a stiff neck, caused by the jolt as my face hit the road. I was not wearing a helmet but figured that if I had been my neck injury would have been worse.

For me visibility is a more important safety issue. I wear a bright yellow jacket and either a white cap or coloured woolly hat.

I have met others who, like John, say that they wouldn't be around but for their helmet. Yet there is a lack of evidence that helmets reduce accidents, at least as far as ordinary cyclists are concerned. (I concede mountain bikers and racers should wear them.) But it is well established that compulsion significantly reduces the number of people who cycle, and it is claimed that the resultant health loss more than offsets any safety benefits helmets may provide.

I hope this, John, will help you understand why some choose not to wear helmets. But of course it is up to the individual to decide.

David Naylor

Swansea Explorer Rides 2008

These have been planned as a natural follow up to the very successful adult cycle training sessions that Wheelrights has provided for several years. It has always been a satisfying experience watching the smiling faces of the participants as they finally mastered the technique of cycling and rode unaided around the County Hall car park. But at the end, they made their various ways home and we lost touch, never knowing whether they ever took to the saddle again.

So last year we thought we would try to interest them in the joys of more regular cycling and offered a couple of short Saturday morning off road rides as a progression. We managed to interest just one of the successful learners and wondered why. Was it poor communication, competition for prime Saturday morning family time, our very last minute arrangements or what? We still don't know to be honest.

Hence the Explorer Rides. Similar evening rides have been in the programme of COGS, the local cycling group in Salisbury for many years and we unashamedly stole lots of their

ideas. Thank you COGS! All the rides are short, in the evening, on gentle and safe routes that explore Swansea and pass close by hostelries where we can stop for a quiet drink and a chat. The programme has been worked out well in advance of our first adult training session so the information can be distributed when the new riders are feeling extremely proud of themselves and wondering where to go next.

We were also aware that Wheelrights does not offer much in the way of social activities for its existing members and the Explorer Rides were seen as an excellent opportunity for us to meet occasionally to enjoy an evening together. We very much hope you will join us.

David Croxall

The planned rides for early summer 2008 are:

May

- 7th Wed** Jersey Marine. Meet at Sail Bridge car park at 6.30pm – NCN 4 to Jersey Marine via SA1 and visit the Tower pub (8m/12km) Leader: Eifion Francis.
28th Wed Duvant. Meet at Blackpill car park at 6.30pm – NCN 4 to Duvant, practise road drill at Duvant Rugby Club - visit The Railway Inn. (5m/8km) Leader- Claudine Conway.

June

- 16th Mon** North Gower. Meet at Duvant car park at 6.30pm – NCN 4 via North Gower Hotel (15m/24km) Leader: David Naylor
18th Wed Three Bridges. Meet at Sail Bridge car park at 6.30pm – Marina, explore SA1 - visit the Victory pub (4m/7km) Leader: David Croxall

Please note

- Just turn up at the meeting point. If in doubt, check the Wheelrights web site (www.wheelrights.org.uk), call Veronica Wood on 01792 206617 or Sustrans office on 01792 454490.
- Destinations are subject to change depending on weather conditions or other circumstances beyond our control.
- Participants must be over 16 years of age unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- Personal accident insurance is the rider's responsibility. Wheelrights cannot accept responsibility for individual rider's safety or possessions and reserves the right to refuse participation to anyone who endangers others or rides irresponsibly.
- It is each rider's responsibility to follow advice from the Highway Code at all times.
- Your participation is acceptance of these terms.

Crossings

As the local CTC Right-to-Ride rep. I have access to their e-mail forum. There are many fascinating threads and I thought a recent one on crossings of interest.

It started with someone posing the question: "What is a *puffin* crossing?" to which came the reply: "Isn't it a crossing one encounters when cycling up a steep hill?".

Subsequent posts explained what a *puffin* crossing really is and what distinguishes them from *zebra*, *pelican*, *toucan* and *tiger* crossings. A *puffin* is a smart *pelican* -- see below.

A *zebra* is the familiar black and white banded crossing which, when a pedestrian so much as puts a foot on one, brings the traffic to a screeching stop.

A *pelican*, like the *zebra*, is for pedestrians only but a time-switch triggers a green light to let them cross and a red to stop the road traffic. The *puffin* is an intelligent form of *pelican*. Once the green light is given for a pedestrian to cross a sensor recognises that someone is on the crossing. This allows the road lights to be changed to green as soon as the crossing is clear.

The *toucan* — 'two can cross' — is the cyclist's equivalent of the *pelican*. The NCN 4 crossing at Blackpill is an example.

The *tiger* crossing is the cyclists equivalent of the *zebra*. The bands are however yellow rather than white. Unfortunately these crossings are not yet official although I understand that at least one has been installed in the UK. They are the cyclists dream, but will our car-dominated authorities approve them?

David Naylor

Swansea's European Boulevard

A central feature of the proposed one billion pound redevelopment of Swansea's City Centre is the conversion of Oystermouth Road between roughly County Hall and the Tawe into a European style boulevard. This recently taken aerial photo (reproduced by kind permission of Accent-ADC.co.uk) shows most of the area in question.

This note presents some of the highlights about it gleaned from a workshop on 30 January which I attended on behalf of *Wheelrights*.

The meeting was chaired by Rowland Launchbury of CCS. It started with presentations by speakers from *Gillespies*, the Consultants involved. A question and answer session followed and then further discussion was held in groups.

The general idea is to 'bridge' the Oystermouth Road corridor – not literally, as actually only at-grade crossings are proposed – so that Swansea City Centre is perceived as being linked to rather than cut off from the sea.

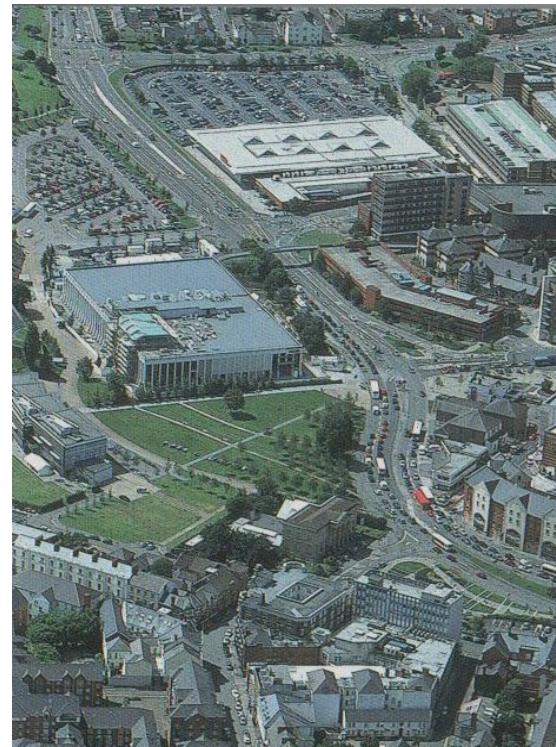
Coupled with this is the idea that the corridor should include boulevards with lots of space for pedestrians.

That pedestrians were a priority came across loud and clear, but what about cyclists? I listened carefully for the 'c' word and thought it was not going to be mentioned but then as the last presentation neared its end it came up twice, but with no indication of what provision there would be. In the ensuing discussion I asked about this and was assured that there would be provision – just what they could not say at this stage.

The plan sounds almost too good to be true. The carriageway is to be reduced in width to allow space for wide pedestrian boulevards – ten metres was mentioned. There would be a 20 mph speed limit, yet the same traffic flow as at present would be maintained. How come? Surely these measures would reduce the traffic flow. Not so, we were informed; traffic flow would be maintained by phased lights and a reduction in the number of controls.

Yet another rabbit out of the hat: improved access for pedestrians (and we trust cyclists) across this busy road. This will be achieved by straight-through crossings with a large central refuge between the carriageways. I was assured that these crossings would also be for cyclists.

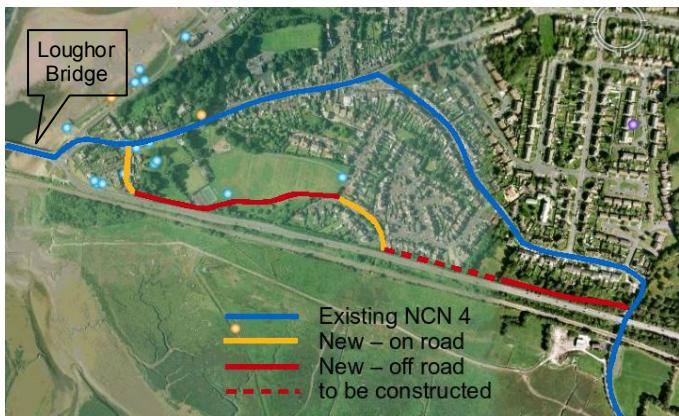
There is a great opportunity here for proper provision for cyclists. Just how this can be achieved lies in the detail and *Wheelrights* will do what they can to ensure this happens.



David Naylor

New NCN 4 E. of Loughor Bridge

Last November work started on a new section of NCN 4 immediately east of the Loughor Bridge. It is approximately 1 km in length and will provide a shorter and less lumpy route than the existing one along the A4240 and Culfor Road.



It has been in the pipeline for some years and should have been completed at least a year ago, but it is still not finished. The marked up *Google Earth* picture shows the situation as at the beginning of March. It is complete except for the short stretch shown by the broken line.

Why the delay? This is due to planning delays associated with the developer McClean who is building housing in the area. Due to this the deadline for spending the original *Objective 1*

money has now passed and the funds have been redirected. Separate funding is being sought. No work is going on at the time of writing, but when it does restart it should only take a week or two to finish the job – by this summer hopefully.

David Naylor

A Sustrans work day

Saturday, 23 February saw a crowd of us clearing litter and cutting back vegetation on NCN 43. We started at the Liberty Stadium and worked our way northwards. The photos were taken near the Stadium where the litter was at its worst. We moved up the valley to Asda for lunch and in the afternoon cleared the A48 underpass and cut back vegetation north from there.



Despite a gloomy day with intermittent drizzle nine worked in the morning and seven in the afternoon; four the full day. We were a cross-section of Sustrans rangers, CTC and *Wheelrights* members. It was good to have some from outside Swansea County: Dave Channon and his ten year old granddaughter Mady (who worked very hard) from Briton Ferry and Chris Barnes with two lads who were working for their Duke of Edinburgh bronze awards from Bridgend. Dave and Chris are Sustrans rangers.



Strictly the Council should have been doing this work. They did however pick up the bin bags (around two dozen) and they have agreed to cut back the vegetation on which we could only make a start.

I borrowed David Judd's bike trailer (shown in the picture). It was most useful for transporting tools/ferrying bin bags to a pick up point. I was very well exercised by the end of the day having towed it from his house on the other side of Swansea, made a few trips up and down the work area and towed it back again – 26 miles in all.

David Naylor

Highway Code

Most experienced road users are confident that their skills can prepare themselves for any road situation yet most would not correctly answer all questions given in the current theory driving test. For the sake of road safety, we should always look to update our understanding of the Highway Code and review the current wording of the Highway Code that affects cyclists. In this edition we list rules 63 -67. noting the use of 'should' and 'must'.

63 Cycle Lanes.

These are marked by a white line (which may be broken) along the carriageway (see Rule 140). Keep within the lane when practicable. When leaving a cycle lane check before pulling out that it is safe to do so and signal your intention clearly to other road users. Use of cycle lanes is not compulsory and will depend on your experience and skills, but they can make your journey safer.

64 You **MUST NOT cycle on a pavement.**

65 Bus Lanes.

Most bus lanes may be used by cyclists as indicated on signs. Watch out for people getting on or off a bus. Be very careful when overtaking a bus or leaving a bus lane as you will be entering a busier traffic flow. Do not pass between the kerb and a bus when it is at a stop.

66 You **should**

- keep both hands on the handlebars except when signalling or changing gear
- keep both feet on the pedals
- never ride more than two abreast, and ride in single file on narrow or busy roads and when riding round bends
- not ride close behind another vehicle
- not carry anything which will affect your balance or may get tangled up with your wheels or chain
- be considerate of other road users, particularly blind and partially sighted pedestrians. Let them know you are there when necessary, for example, by ringing your bell if you have one. It is recommended that a bell be fitted

67 You **should**

- look all around before moving away from the kerb, turning or manoeuvring, to make sure it is safe to do so. Give a clear signal to show other road users what you intend to do.
- look well ahead for obstructions in the road, such as drains, pot-holes and parked vehicles so that you do not have to swerve suddenly to avoid them. Leave plenty of room when passing parked vehicles and watch out for doors being opened or pedestrians stepping into your path
- be aware of traffic coming up behind you
- take extra care near road humps, narrowings and other traffic calming features
- take care when overtaking

The current Highway Code is online at <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/index.htm>.

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