



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 32 Summer 2015

www.wheelrights.org.uk

What's to become of Swansea's Kingsway?



Following a number of accidents to pedestrians crossing this road and a fatality this spring the knee-jerk reaction of the Council has been to erect the barriers shown to prevent people crossing where they shouldn't. This is a temporary measure while a long term solution is sought.

Wheelrights considered this at a meeting in April and are adding our support to Sustrans and others who are asking for a revamped Kingsway to be a 'peoples place'. It would incorporate the 'Hierarchy of provision'

whereby pedestrians and cyclists come first and motorists last. A letter from us was published in the S. Wales Evening Post on 18 April. It suggested that the 'shared space' principle should be applied, referring to precedents in Poynton in Cheshire and New York. The traffic lights would be removed – and the barriers!

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Editorial

Lets hope for a continuation of the lovely spring weather we've been enjoying and that the sun will shine on the cycling events planned for this summer, summarised on p. 8.

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Copy deadline

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

In this issue we first describe some encouraging developments in Swansea and then on p.3 the progress being made to link Pontarddulais with NCR 4 in Gowerton. The article on p.5 describes a very significant Welsh event, hence the Welsh title. It is followed on p.6 by a description of a precedent from 'Down under' which could usefully be applied here. Then on p.7 the full story of Llethrid, the outcome of which we await.

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Local News

Morfa

Work which should result in significant improvements for cyclists has just started in this area . There are two schemes: a new NCR 43 Tawe crossing on a restored Bascule Bridge, and the construction of the Morfa Distributor road

The new Tawe crossing.

Old timers (of whom I am one) will remember when one could cross the Bascule Bridge on foot. It was closed, I believe, in the 1980's. It being an important part of Swansea's heritage it is to be restored as a footbridge, and , sensibly, NCR 43 will cross it. The picture shows it viewed from downstream with the Liberty Stadium in the background

The NCR 43 approach will go along the top of the retaining wall on the right of the pic. This is accessed from the south via the old route under the Cross Valley Link.

On the west side of the restored Bascule Bridge NCR 43 will cross Brunel Way by a Toucan crossing to link with the existing route alongside the Liberty Stadium.



Morfa Distributor Road.

This is essentially a Hafod bypass. It will extend Morfa Road – currently a cul-de-sac – north to Landore. It will run between the railway and the river. It is to include a 3m wide two-way cycle path.

If a satisfactory crossing of the busy Cross Valley Link Road to NCR 43 can be provided this will be a useful route for cyclists which will avoid the existing rather tortuous route through Hafod (along Maliphant St and Neath Rd).

Bay Campus cycle link

The interim cycle link from Swansea to the new campus will follow NCR 4 to the County Boundary and then, to get back to the south side of Fabian Way, will double back under Baldwin's Bridge. A widening of the currently very unsatisfactory section of path on the north side of Fabian Way is due to start on 1 June. This work is scheduled for completion by September when students and staff are expected to use it to commute between the two University of Wales campuses. Meanwhile NCR 4 will follow the alternative (and very pleasant) route to the north along the Tennant Canal.

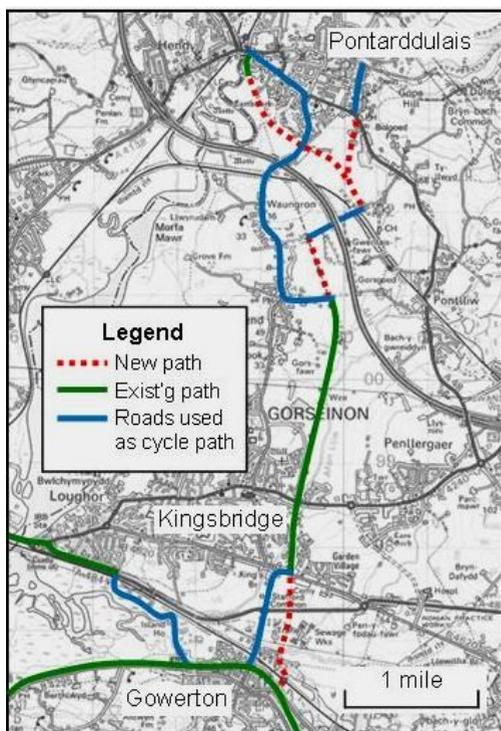
City Centre

Odds and ends are happening which affect cyclists. Some work in the neighbourhood of the Kingsway is on hold pending a decision on it.

David Naylor

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Gowerton – Pontarddulais: a cycle link



Wheelrights is stepping up the pressure on Swansea Council to complete some missing links on this key cycle route to the north of the city. The proposed routes are loosely based on the disused LNMR original Heart of Wales railway line which connected villages with proud and unique industrial histories, eg Gorseinon and Grovesend. (See map.) They are now thriving with several schools, leisure and employment centres and the two remaining train stations of Gowerton and Pontarddulais.

There are two missing links which pose dangers for cyclists as they have to use main roads:

The first is the Kingsbridge section which would go over Stafford Common. The Council is currently undertaking legal work in preparation for negotiating an off-road cycle path. This route could also incorporate part of the long distance Gower Way footpath, and we have started talks with the Swansea Ramblers about this. First indications are that they would be supportive.

The second is in Pontarddulais where there is already a short section of shared use path near Tescos, along the line of the disused railway. This could be extended southwards to the B4296 which links with the existing cycle path between Grovesend and Kingsbridge. We have also explored another disused railway line from Allt y Graben road going northwards parallel to Goppa road up towards Cefn Drum. There are plans to build hundreds of new houses in this area, so now is the time to establish new routes.

Thanks to Alun Evans we are in touch with a key community activist, Jason, who has canvassed schools and local Councillors, who are supportive of this new cycle path. We have also been in correspondence with the Pontarddulais Town Council and on 17 March had a meeting in Pontarddulais with town and county councillors, Sustrans and Ramblers representatives to progress these ideas.

A key outcome is that Sustrans agreed to help with a local “participation campaign” to involve local residents in discussions about the route options. This route could open up cycling into Mawr, (a lesser known part of the Gower area) and eventually link with the Amman Valley cycle path, as well as connecting south to Swansea Bay and Gower.

All these routes share the advantages of providing routes to communities, schools, stations, employment centres, as well as being key leisure and tourism routes.

Nick Guy

Cwmtawe Cycle Group win award



I am pleased that following our submission the Cwmtawe Cycle Group won a 2015 Community Award in recognition of their huge contribution to the community, organising in particular the 43-2-C charity ride each year for the last eleven years, but also for other events indicated below.

The 43-2-C ride is in my view one of the best Bike Week events in Wales (and the UK!) with a whole cross section of the local community taking part. People of all ages and ability having a real fun day out followed by a party afterwards. Those that do not ride provide essential back up in organising it, providing refreshments and food before, during and after the ride. It is wonderful to see the children progress from being strapped in a child seat with Dad, to learning to ride their own bikes themselves and eventually being proficient enough to cycle ahead of Mum and Dad and be the first to get to the Marina!

Over 100 riders take part each year (max so far is 250) and they have raised thousands of pounds for local charities. The emphasis is on a family outing, and the achievement shows on the young and not so young completing the ride, enjoying the exercise, fresh air and above all the fun of the ride alongside the beautiful Tawe River to the marina and back (after refreshment).

The group also organises bike doctor maintenance sessions, litter picks and other fund raising events: ie quizzes, BBQs, do pop up events promoting cycling and have also been involved in the Safe Routes to schools campaigns and other cycle promotion and road safety activities.

They are an outstanding example of what a local group can achieve, and in my view are thoroughly deserving of recognition in this Community Award competition.

This year's ride will be on June 14th, details on the 'Events' page of *Wheelrights* website.

David Judd



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Gwlad Rydd a Mynydd i Mi * **A Free Country and a Mountain for Me**

A forgotten piece of local history surfaced last summer when I discovered that on a farm in the Amman Valley north of Swansea, the first (and only) bicycle manufacturing company in Wales was thriving in the late 1880s, with shops in Llanelli and Swansea and as far afield as Johannesburg. It was the *Defiance Cycle Works*, and on Easter Monday, 1885, Arthur Williams, one of five brothers involved, took the very first ride on a chain-driven bicycle in Wales from Glanamman to Swansea and back - about 36 miles - and was cheered on the way by vast crowds who came out to line the route.



Exactly 130 years later to the day, 200 riders from all over South Wales and beyond gathered at the farm, still belonging to the Williams family, to recreate Arthur's ride and to celebrate his family's achievements.

Easter Monday dawned a beautiful day – how lucky were we! Riders began to gather from early morning to see the exhibition of memorabilia - original ledgers and photographs, and an actual Defiance bicycle on loan from Carmarthen Museum. A catering van, cake stalls, flags and bunting everywhere contributed to the carnival atmosphere, and Shane Williams, Wales and International rugby legend, set us off and did the ride himself.

The route followed most of Arthur's original ride down to Swansea, using main roads, country lanes and the NCR43 cycle path. After lunch riders then had a choice of returning the same way or – for those with an adventurous spirit – taking the spectacular scenic mountain route back. All arrived back safely after a full and enjoyable day. And, as well as having a day to remember, we also raised over £5500 for the local dementia care charity, so giving something back to the community that gave rise to such a pioneering venture so long ago.

*The motto of the Defiance Cycle Works.



Rose Pritchard

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On the right track

It's one of those memories that won't go away. 'I can do it, I can do it.' I shouted as a 6 year old riding off down the slope on my bike without stabilisers. But as the blackberry bush loomed up, I realised my skills were not yet complete as I screamed for my mum and dad.

Nowadays of course, we have car parks and other areas to practice on. But the council folks in New Zealand have gone one step further by providing a junior bike training area, complete with all the features of a normal road like traffic lights, stop signs, pedestrian crossings.

After school and weekends this area, pictured in Napier, is packed with kids practising their skills... and without a blackberry bush in sight! Mums and Dads sit in picnic areas by the side with a café dispensing hot and cold drinks. And all of this is next door to a new play area and skate park.



John Sayce

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FACEBOOK – YOUR HELP NEEDED

Thanks to Gordon , Alice and Dale our Swansea *Wheelrights* facebook page has got going and we now want to promote its use amongst the wider public especially to publicise the many summer cycling rides and events coming up.

So we are asking members to *like* the page and spread it to your friends and contacts please. Also please post anything of interest to Swansea cyclists.

Nick Guy

Llethrid

A process is underway to get a section of footpath in the middle of the Gower Peninsular upgraded to a **restricted byway**. Let me explain.

The path to Llethrid (aka Llethryd) through Park Woods, which starts at the small car park at the north end of the road from the Gower Heritage Centre, is a key link between south and north Gower for cyclists, and also for walkers. It goes past the Parc-le-Breos prehistoric burial chamber and Cathole Cave; then, emerging from the wood at a gate, it continues for a further 200m across a field to Llethrid. I refer to this 200m as "Llethrid Cwm" and the Forestry land through Park Woods to the south as "Green Cwm".

For decades cyclists have used this route, not in great numbers but enough to establish it as a necessary link, usage of which is likely to increase in the future. A few of the Gower Cycling Festival rides use it. As well as being a desire line for these rides we have chosen this route to show visitors this lovely and interesting part of Gower.

In 2012, shortly before the start of our third Festival, I received an email from the Council advising that taking our bikes through Llethrid Cwm would be illegal because a local farmer – whom I'll refer to as "P" – who the Council thought was the owner didn't want us to. This posed a problem as the rides through Green and Llethrid Cwms were important for the Festival. There lacked a satisfactory alternative route.

I then made enquiries and found that the owner was not P but his cousins, a brother and sister whom I'll refer to as "D" and "A" respectively. I contacted D and he was happy for us to cross their land, but with the proviso that we pushed our bikes. This we did in 2012, and in the subsequent Festivals.

Then after the 2013 Festival the Council received a complaint from P (The grounds for which I never did learn.) I again sought permission from D but this time it was refused, apparently for no better reason than to please his cousin.

Having found out that the illegality of pushing bikes across a public footpath through private land without the owners permission is questionable we decided to continue to go through Llethrid Cwm in 2014. Again P complained. We then discovered that if the path were upgraded to a *restricted byway* cyclists would have the same rights as walkers on public footpaths. An upgrade would open up this route, not just for the Festival, but for cyclists in general.

Accordingly, last autumn, I set in motion an application to get the path upgraded. This required evidence of the path having been cycled on in the past 20 or more years. I was delighted to find 29 'witnesses', ie people prepared to fill in a form to provide this evidence.

The application plus the 29 forms were delivered to the Council in January. The legal process, which could take a year or more, is now underway. Meanwhile this year's Gower Cycling Festival will go ahead as planned with some lovely rides through this valley. It is from 8-15 August. Details are on the 'Festival' page of *Wheelrights* website.

David Naylor

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Forthcoming events

(See the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk for more about these events.)

Adult Beginners Classes from **June to September** on

Saturdays: 13 June, 18 July, 22 August, 19 September.

9.30-11.30 in Civic Centre East car park click. See the 'Beginners' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk for how to register, etc.

June 2015

Saturday 6 June: *Wheelrights Routes Ride*

10.00am in the Civic Centre café.

13-21 June is BIKE WEEK

Saturday 13 June: *Sustrans Party on the Path*

9.00am – 4.00pm. This event is based at the 360 Beach and Watersports Centre.

Sunday 14 June: *C-2-C annual ride*

11.00am Heritage Centre, Coed Gwilym Park, Clydach SA6 5NR. Popular family ride along NCR 43 to the coast and back. Simply turn up. (Cost £2.)

Sunday 21 June: *Wheelrights Summer Solstice Ride*

Meet at 6.30pm at the Railway Inn, Killay (on the Clyne Valley path). A ride to an appropriate North Gower hostelry. All welcome..

July 2015

Saturday 4 July: *Wheelrights Routes Ride*

10.00am in the Civic Centre café.

Sunday 19 July: *Action Bikes event*

12.00 – 4.00pm in Castle Square.

August 2015

1-8 August: *Paris – Swansea ride.*

See box below.

8-15 August: *GOWER CYCLING FESTIVAL.*

Full details on www.gowercyclingfestival.org (which links to the Cycling Festival page on our website). Note that we would like you to register in advance (It is only £5.)

PARIS to SWANSEA

Five *Wheelrights* members have committed themselves to this sponsored ride. The aim is to raise sponsorship for the Environment Centre, which has seen some of its funding cut. Alan Kreppell, Helen Davies, John Sayce, Brian Pawson and myself are all getting practice in to do the 50 – 60 miles a day. We hope to arrive in Swansea on Sat. 8th August to be welcomed at the launch of the Gower Cycling Festival at 2pm at Blackpill.

We would be grateful for support from *Wheelrights* members by:

- Sponsor us by visiting www.environmentcentre.org.uk/support-us/donate.
- Joining us at the Uplands Market on 30th May and 27th June, (9am -1pm), where you can ride our static bike to raise funds, and promote our Gower Cycling Festival.

Nick Guy