



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 47 Spring 2019

www.wheelrights.org.uk

New cycle paths are being built

Work has started on spending the £2m awarded to Swansea for the provision of cycle routes in the county this year. The foreshore path between Blackpill and Sketty Road has been widened and resurfaced as reported on p. 8 and work is now underway in the Llamsamlet area as illustrated here and covered by Nick Guy on p.3.

This is a superb opportunity and it is to the Council's credit that they got such a large share of the £10m allocated to the whole of Wales by the Welsh Government. What is now important is that the infrastructure provided meets the guidelines spelt out in the Active Travel Act Design Guidance and elsewhere and is also in the right places. *Wheelrights* have a good relationship with the Council which should help ensure that quality cycle routes are provided where they are needed.



Contents

- P. 2. Walter Road.
- P. 3. A Swansea bike network.
- P. 4. Too close for comfort.
- P. 5. The Joy of Stopping.
- P. 6. Cycling UK's 2018 achieve...
- P. 7. Three Peaks race: ...
- P. 8. Foreshore path widening.

Forthcoming Events.

Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to David Naylor by mid May. (NB. email now: davidjnaylor@davidjnaylor.plus.com)

This issue

With the future of Uplands Road still undecided our Chairman on p. 2 offers some campaigning advice. Then on p.3 our Secretary updates us on how the Council are spending their cycling money. On p. 5 our President offers advice on where to drink coffee. And I on p. 4 & 6 pass on a bit of what's happening nationally, and on p. 8 locally. Then for an article that actually involves cycling (as well as running and sailing) turn to p.7. It was a most impressive achievement.

For those who have not yet paid this year's sub. there's a reminder on p. 8.

David Naylor

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Walter Road

The possibility of cycle lanes on Walter Rd. seems to have been on the agenda for years. Everyone knows that this road is the main means of access for the whole of Killay, Dunvant, Sketty and Uplands and as such is heavily used. Many cyclists can be seen using it as there are few other viable alternatives. Our campaign to get better facilities has now been rumbling away for at least two years and has consisted of three parts: firstly a public survey to find out the extent of any support followed by, secondly, a detailed survey of the businesses and offices that line the road, and, thirdly, throughout this time keeping councillors and officials fully informed.



So, what are the messages that arise from this campaign?

1. Understand that it will take time to move public opinion which often finds it difficult to accept change. The message needs to be a drip, drip scenario rather than a big bang approach. Do surveys, attend markets, talk to local groups – face to face not just on facebook!
2. Engage with Council officers early on as they will certainly have some opinions and will be feeding these back to councillors in response to any enquiries.
3. Speak to all the councillors involved in a proposed cycle improvement, even if you are unsure of their support. They cannot then at some stage express indignation at not being informed. Keep talking to them regularly as they will have much background information.
4. Try to understand where the power lies in the political structure. Find out who will have the key voice in agreeing aye or nay to your proposal.
5. Consult regularly with roads users and residents even if they may not be supportive. Listen carefully to what they say as you may be able to take on board their concerns. In Walter Road a key issue was not only the loss of parking but also the concern about cyclists using the pavements. This then became a message we were able to use to push for cycle lanes.
6. Lastly, when the improvement is delivered, don't forget to thank everyone and write an email/letter to the press, a higher officer or Cabinet member showing your appreciation. Their In-boxes very rarely contain letters of thanks. They all remember these positive notes and that will help you in your next campaign!

John Sayce

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A Swansea bike network

Building on last year's successful bids for new and improved cycle routes in Swansea, *Wheelrights* are delighted that Swansea Council plans to bid for a range of more bike routes in 2019/20. We are pleased that they are including several routes identified by *Wheelrights*, especially those linking less affluent communities in north Swansea with the city centre. The Council has also come up with the idea of a Swansea "North Circular" bike route, basically from Llansamlet in the east, via Morriston Hospital, Llangefelach and Penllergaer to Gowerton Station, so linking NCRs 43 and 4, following or roughly parallel to the A48.

There is also steady progress with landowner negotiations to complete the long awaited Gowerton – Pontarddulais route.

So the years of persistent campaigning by *Wheelrights* are at last seeing concrete (or should it be tarmac) results! The game changer is the huge increase in Welsh Government funding for Active Travel – up to £20m for the whole of Wales next year. [Ed: still less than what Scotland gets, see p. 6.]

Our Routes Group continues to do sterling work exploring possible new routes, especially using footpaths and disused railway lines where the Council already own the land. We have also started looking at some rat runs on desire routes which could easily be converted into "Quiet Streets" and bike routes. If you are ever in Cardiff there is an excellent new example of a Quiet Street on NCR 8 in Grangetown alongside the River Taff, well worth visiting.



If all these plans come to fruition they could result in a comprehensive network of good quality bike routes in Swansea. We are now keen to complete the many missing links and look for new routes especially linking Comprehensive Schools. If we can inspire (and enable) youngsters to cycle to and from school then hopefully they can pass on their enthusiasm to their families and friends. Less screen time and more Fun!

The Routes Group is keen to hear from you of any new route ideas you may have. We can then explore them in detail and evaluate them for passing on to Swansea Council. The new Active Travel money is a real game changer so lets press ahead and finish the job!

Nick Guy

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Too close for comfort

A recent initiative by Cycling UK has drawn the attention of police forces across the UK to the problem of motorists passing too close to cyclists. For the benefit of readers who don't receive CUK's magazine *cycle* I have drawn on the article titled as above in the Feb./March 2019 issue to write this.

The recommended clearance for vehicles passing cyclists is 1.5m. Few motorists it appears are aware of this and many pass too close. The need for at least this clearance is particularly important at higher speeds as the vortices created by the passing vehicle can destabilise the cyclist. The problem appears to be greater with slower cyclists, one project finding that three times as many cycling slower than 8 mph complained of being passed too closely compared with those averaging over 12 mph. The slower cyclists tend to be women and newcomers to cycling, and as it is these people we want to encourage it is timely that this issue is now being addressed.

An initiative by the West Midlands Police dating back to September 2016 did just that. In a joint operation with the local fire brigade they monitored a section of road known to be dangerous for cyclists and stopped motorists who had passed too close to cyclists. They laid out a 4m wide by 6m long 'too close' mat which they used to show the offending motorists what clearance they should provide. This mat has a mark 0.75m from the edge and another 1.5m further out to show the minimum overtaking clearance.

A year after the launch of this operation there was a 20% reduction in casualties amongst vulnerable users – presumably in the area targeted. This bucked the national trend which showed an increase in casualties during that year.

CUK launched a campaign in May 2017 to raise money to purchase close path mats for police forces. They raised £15k, exceeding their target of £12k. They used this to supply mats to 45 police forces. Since then they raised a further £17k to subsidise the production of a VR film which was shown at the Cycle Show in Birmingham's NEC in September last year. They are currently in the process of providing VR headsets for this film to police forces across the UK.

While close passing relates to cyclists riding in the secondary position, ie 0.5 - 1.0m from the road edge, it is appropriate here to draw attention to the need for cyclists to 'hold the lane' in places where overtaking would be dangerous. The photo illustrates me doing so on the downhill section of the B4436 between Kittle and Bishopston.

David Naylor

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The Joy of Stopping

The manifold benefits of cycling to health and wellbeing, transport, the environment and economy are well known, but I want to talk about the less publicised pleasure of stopping. We stop for all sorts of reasons: toilet, views, for a chat, to recover breath or to relieve pressure down below – but there is one other reason: the café stop for tea and cake. We look out for a friendly welcome in all weathers and the chance to chat with kindred spirits. Somewhere outside if it's fine, and inside if it is not.

We have on Swansea foreshore several to choose from, but one place stands out as incorporating all of these things plus the best view of the bay including both Mumbles and Swansea. It is **RIPPLES** at Norton. With no access from the road by car, its customers are walkers and cyclists on the foreshore path and from the beach.



The owner, Dennis, is a mine of information on all things cycling (and local gossip) who takes a very personal interest in all customers. The café has a good selection of snacks to go with tea, coffee and soft drinks, and a fantastic range of home made ice cream. Ripples showcases eclectic art including murals of local scenes by Japanese/Italian artist Nico Miyakawa, with quotations from a poem about the bay by Owen Sheers.

His staff share this enthusiasm, which makes a stop at Ripples something to really look forward to. They now employ young adults with autism to provide training for future employment. There is also a pump and some basic bike tools available at the café.



A fuel stop for some Santander cyclists.

Dennis organises evening charity film shows, supports BikeAbility, ReCycle and Environment Centre activities and was a fundraiser for the Santander cycle scheme now in operation in Swansea (with plans to provide a stand at Mumbles). He also supports many other local cycling events and activities.

It's a place to stop and for many a destination in itself, so why not call in and enjoy the craic!

The café has uninterrupted views out to sea and is located on the Swansea Bay foreshore between the West Cross Inn and Mumbles. It's open all week, rain or shine, 10am to 4pm.

David Judd

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Cycling UK's 2018 achievements

Cycling UK (erstwhile CTC) are arguably the most effective campaigning organisation for cyclists in the UK. As some of their lobbying affects us I have extracted highlights from their report on what they achieved last year. Comments added to them are mine.

Highway Code changes. Over the years CUK have lobbied for changes to the Highway Code, particular issues being guidance on how to overtake cyclists safely (See article on close passing on p. 4.) and promoting the idea of the 'Dutch reach'* to reduce the risk of 'dooring'. In March the Government launched a consultation on cycling safety. Over 14,000 people responded and CUK produced a 23 page report titled *Cycle safety: make it simple*. This resulted in the DfT announcing in November its intention to amend the Highway Code as well as other measures to support cycling and walking. It is not clear just when a revised code will appear but CUK think that this might not be until 2020.

Cycle safety proposals. Key recommendations made in the *Cycle safety: make it simple* report are as follows:

- Establish consistent design standards. In Wales we have the *Active Travel Act Design Guidance*. A new book *Designing for Cycle Traffic* by John Parkin, Professor of Transport Engineering at UWE Bristol, should complement it.
- Strengthen driver training, testing and awareness campaigns, and provide better road policing.
- Review road traffic penalties, in particular for 'dangerous' and 'careless' driving.
- Make 20 mph the default speed limit in built up areas.
- Improve lorry safety by reviewing their design and enforcing safety rules.
- Increase the proportion of transport spending on cycling, walking and safer streets.

Rural rights of way. 80% of the rights of way in England and Wales are denied to cyclists. CUK's *Beyond the Greenbelt* campaign is seeking to open up the countryside to the public and it is suggested that landowners might be paid to facilitate this. The situation is much better in Scotland. In Wales however CUK's *Trails for Wales campaign* has met with a rebuff from the Welsh Government who have responded with "now is not the right time for substantive reform". CUK plan to take this up again this year. Perhaps with the help of the newly formed Welsh Active Travel Cross-party Group?

Small claims victory. A move by the UK Government to raise the small claims limit from £1k to £5k has been overturned. This is to the advantage of cyclists most of whose claims are under £5k.

Funding. Noting that Scotland has doubled its annual funding for Active Travel to £15 per head CUK aims to increase the funding in England. To this I can add that Wales's annual funding is set to increase from very little to about £12 per head over three years. If not doing as well as Scotland, we are not faring too badly.

David Naylor

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* A driver in this country using the Dutch reach would open their door by reaching over with their left arm. They would then be able to see an approaching cyclist.

Three Peaks race: sailing, cycling and running.

Swansea University was the link that brought together a team of five Swansea based sportsmen in 2016 with the goal of competing in the 2017 Three Peaks Yacht Race.

Team Aurora comprised surfer/cyclists Will Harrison and David “Charlie” Charles plus skipper and keen cyclist Oscar Chess. Claudio Donofrio and his running partner John Cherry, both also experienced cyclists, were the running/cycling team. David Downs, who this year plans to cycle from Land’s End to John O’ Groats, joined us as shore support .

The Event

Established in 1977 the race involves teams of five sailing from Barmouth in Mid-Wales to Fort William, stopping on route at each of the tallest mountains in Wales, England and Scotland where two crew members run from the boat to the summit and back. The boats must stop at Caernarfon for the 24 mile run to the top of Snowdon and back, before racing through the Menai Straits and across the Irish Sea to Whitehaven. From here it’s a very tough round trip of 50 miles for the runners and cyclists to the summit of Scafell Pike via Blacksail Pass. From



Aurora sailing towards Mumbles

Whitehaven, the crew must sail up through the North Channel and along the West Coast of Scotland to Fort William for the final run to the summit of Ben Nevis and back. Typical race time is around 6 days but this can vary greatly depending on weather conditions. The race is non-stop with runners scaling the peaks at any time of day or night.

Our Race

Although Aurora was one of the slower boats we managed to keep her moving.

The first leg proved rough with big seas causing one competitor to go overboard and require lifeboat assistance. The Caernarfon sand bar at the entrance to the Menai Straits caused further problems with many boats (including us!) grounding. After an impressive run to the top of Snowdon for John and Claudio we had a frustrating sail through the Straits requiring rowing and anchoring to stem the tide.

Reaching Whitehaven John and Claudio set off on bikes towards Blacksail Pass and Scafell Pike at dusk and again reached the summit in the dark. In the meantime the boat was restocked and we headed off towards Scotland in a fresh breeze at dawn.

After a calm and then a gale off the Mull of Kintyre we eventually made it to Fort William and the final ascent of Ben Nevis. Weather conditions were now poor and darkness had fallen as Claudio and John dug deep and ran to the top. They made it back to a jubilant reception at the finish line on the bank of the Caledonian Canal as the Sun rose.

We finished second overall and first for the sailing. Not only that, we were in time for the end of race party in Corpach and were awarded the prize for the highest amount collected for charity, over £5000 for the MSF and the MS Society.

Oscar Chess

Foreshore path (NCR 4) widening

In the last Newsletter we noted that work had started on widening the shared use path between Blackpill and Sketty Lane. The first stage of the work involved excavating on either side of the path and backfilling with asphalt to the level of the existing central portion. This left a rough surface on either side of the old path which, as it stayed like this for a while, some of us were concerned that that was the way it would remain. But no! In mid January it was resurfaced to give a path which gets full marks, as the photo illustrates.



David Naylor

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Forthcoming events

(This information and more is provided on the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.)

Wheelrights Routes Group meeting/rides.

Meet 10.00am in Environment Centre café when route will be decided. (But check 'Events' page of website for possible changes.) First Saturday in month: **6 April, 4 May, ...**

U3A Rides.

10.00am starting at various places. Last Monday in month: **25 Feb., 25 March & 29 April.** See the 'Events' page for details and confirmation of dates.

April

Wed. 24 April: Wheelrights meeting with talk: "Rhondda Tunnel Campaign" :
7.00pm in the Environment Centre Café, Pier Street, Swansea SA1 1RY.

June

BIKE WEEK: 8-16 June.

Details on 'Events' page when available.

GOWER CYCLING FESTIVAL.

This is now under new management. At the time of writing the dates are not known, however it is expected that the Festival will take place over a long weekend rather than 8 days. Information about it will be provided on our 'Cycling Festival' page when known.

Wheelrights sub.

This will (if necessary) remind you that this year's sub. is now due. Our Treasurer/Membership Secretary, Chris Walsh will be pleased to receive your £5.00. Visit the 'Join us' page of our website to renew as well as to join.

Note that of the five options our first preference is for you to set up a standing order. We would also prefer that you don't pay by PayPal as this both costs you more and causes us extra work.