



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 49 Autumn 2019

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Why not more bikes on trains?



A long time ago trains used to have 'guards vans' with lots of space for bikes along with other assorted baggage. But no more: typically now there is just space for 2 or 4 bikes. As I reported in the last issue there is space for 8 bikes on GWR's new Hitachi trains but the bike compartments are hard to find and are badly designed.

With Transport for Wales (TfW) having taken over the franchise for the Welsh trains from Arriva now is a good time to lobby them for better provision. You will be pleased to read that our Secretary has plans to raise this with them.

The picture shows the bike provision on a train in Germany. It is on a rural line comparable with those in Wales. There are some 10 fold-up seats along the side of the carriage which can be used for bikes (as here), for wheelchairs, prams, etc, or of course to sit on. If properly marketed could not this be profitable? CTC Swansea could then use trains rather than cars to get to and from their rides.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to me, David Naylor, by mid Nov. (Email: davidjnaylor@davidjnaylor.plus.com)

This issue

First an article from our Chairman on recent dealings with planners which, despite the title, is a success story. Then articles from our Secretary, first about a forthcoming event in Cardiff, followed by an invitation for your views on whether or not we should change our name, and after that an update on the Environment Centre.

On p. 5 Ian Davies tells us about CTC Swansea's tour this year up north. Then Mike Lewis gives advice on e-bikes. Finally I tell you about how you can get to a remote Scottish island by bike.

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Planners ignore Active Travel

At the start of December 2018, I was at home reading the Evening Post when I noticed an article about the redevelopment of the Townhill Campus site by Pobl Housing which mentioned a consultation event at the Phoenix Centre. The old teacher training institute was to be transformed into 160 social housing units. I went on behalf of *Wheelrights* and was very worried to see no reference at all to active travel as the whole scheme seemed to be car dependent. Worse still, it proposed to cut off all access to the Penlan Crescent, Lon Cwmgwyn and the wildlife corridor below Pantycelyn Road, effectively penning in the residents. Their drawings and photo-shopped pictures looked lovely – the sun is shining and the trees are always in leaf in 'planners' world!. The planners from Asbri Planning listened patiently to me, but with a rather glazed look.

However, little did they seem to know about the new planning guidelines, as their application was submitted two days after the Planning Policy Wales edition 11 came into force in mid December 2018. This new document is full of references to active travel with new key words being 'connectivity' and 'permeability'. *Wheelrights* criticised Pobl's application and an amended one by heavily drawing on the new planning regulations. We also lobbied local councillors and planning officers, and spoke to people inside Pobl Housing.

At the start of August, the Council's Planning Officer's report recommended approval for the 160 units, but subject to an old access route to Penlan Crescent and Cwmdonkin Park being restored. Furthermore it said that a new East-West walking and cycling route was to be funded by £140k of monies from Pobl as their community contribution. On August 6th, I went along to speak in support of these new conditions at the Planning Committee. The Councillors then passed the application with the agreed stipulations – so that's a WIN for WHEELRIGHTS!

Sometimes it can feel as if we are banging our heads against the wall, but this example should give us genuine hope for the future. So if there is a proposed scheme in your area that lacks provision for walking, cycling or bussing, get out the new Planning Policy Wales guide to support you.

In the next newsletter, I will be focussing on this document to give you the ammunition for your own campaign!

John Sayce

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More Money for Cycling

There will be a big lobby of the Senedd in Cardiff at 1pm on Wednesday 2nd October 2019, and we are asking for support from Swansea.

The lobby is calling for the Welsh Govt to spend £20 per year per person on cycle provision, which is roughly in line with spending in London and Scotland, and fits well with Cycling UK's Space for Cycling campaign.

Next year the Welsh Government plans to spend £30m on cycle routes under the Active Travel Act – its biggest spend to date. However even this very welcome commitment only amounts to £10 per person (assuming a population of 3 million in Wales).

Wheelrights is linking up with Cardiff Cycle City (the organisers of the lobby) who are combining it with a bike ride along the Taff Trail (NCR 8) from Pedal Power to the Senedd. I assume they will start at Pedal Power at approx. 11.30am. They are encouraging AMs to join the ride. This builds on last year's lobby which attracted 200 people (including 7 from *Wheelrights*).

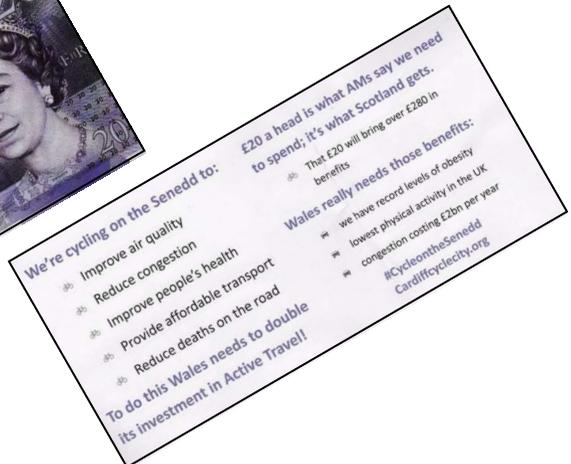
This is your chance to join the campaign, and meet up with our fellow cycling campaigners from across Wales, to get our message heard.

Should you wish to take your bike by train trains leave Swansea at 9.10, 9.29 and 9.55. The long (9 or 10 coaches) Hitachi trains can carry up to 8 bikes in 4 locations. However finding these can be a challenge! Pedal Power is about a 20 min ride north along NCR 8.

Pedal Power has a lovely café, and is situated just inside Bute Park, near Dogo St, off Cathedral Rd, Cardiff CF11 9JJ. For more details please e-mail me at

nick.bike@hotmail.co.uk.

Nick Guy



Bike Maintenance classes

Again *Wheelrights* are asking Julian to provide these on a low cost basis, and will let us know dates/times, which we will post on our website, and let members know.

Whats in a name?

In 2020 *Wheelrights* will celebrate our 25th anniversary. (Any ideas on how?) When *Wheelrights* was started by our indomitable President David Judd, *et al*, cyclists were often perceived as eccentrics, and *Wheelrights* was a pioneering protest group aimed at gaining publicity for cycling against the grain of public opinion.

However in recent years the tide has been turning, and cycling and sustainable transport is moving centre stage at last. *Wheelrights* has played an important role locally, and we are now reaping the rewards of our constructive partnership with Swansea Council. Local cycle routes are springing up, and many more people are switching to cycling and walking.

It may be time to change our name? Most new cyclists would probably not google “Wheelrights”, and if they did *Wheelrights* doesn’t come up first.

In Cardiff a new Cardiff Cycle City group has become the “go to” organisation for information about cycling in the city. It is attracting new members and has a “critical friend” approach to the council – a tactic very much like our own .

As well as giving money to cycling (at last) the Welsh Govt is seeking a Behaviour Change approach to Active Travel. Lessons can be learnt from the successful campaigns to implement safety belts in cars and reduce drink driving. Both these campaigns used social marketing techniques, and it could be time for *Wheelrights* to adopt some of these marketing methods.

So I am suggesting that we consider a change of name in 2020 so that people know what we stand for, and we become what we say on the bottle! How about a competition for a new name? [Ed: If you have any comments I would be happy to include them in the next Newsletter.]

Nick Guy

—oO—

A Cycling Café in the Environment Centre?

The Environment Centre’s is creating a cycling café in the Centre. As a first step they are trying out Saturday, opening their café from 10am – 2pm. Our Routes group holds its meetings there. It could be a great stopping place for rides through Swansea.

As well as teas, coffees and flapjacks, which are considerably cheaper than in other cafés, there will be information about cycling and other local environment campaigns.

Repair Café Wales is now holding sessions in the Environment Centre. The idea is to bring a range of items which are in need of repair/renovation to avoid the waste of replacing. They wish to include bikes, and are inviting Julian of Schmoos (and *Wheelrights* volunteers) to come along and assist. So if you have any old bikes in need of attention, or you are a dab hand at bike maintenance please come along. They will also have resources for repairing clothes, jewelry and other items. The next session is at the Environment Centre from 10.30 to 13.30 on Saturday, 21 September. There will also be one at the Phoenix Centre, Townhill on 7 September. See the ‘Events’ page of www.wheelrights.org.uk for the dates of subsequent sessions.

Nick Guy



Ian points the way

Hadrian's Wall by bike

Many tales have been told and articles written about cycle touring combining rough camping, site camping, hostelling etc.. Well, this isn't one of them. This is about a much more civilised way of cycle touring referred to as Credit card touring. I don't have to justify it because I can afford it!

I had been researching a route for some time; the obstacles were the locations and choices of accommodation, where to park the cars and the problem of getting back to square one at the end of the ride. To cut a long story short, these issues were solved by arranging a specialist cycle touring company to arrange a bespoke tour for us, us being six from Swansea CTC and the company being *Saddle Skedaddle*. They arranged the accommodation, luggage transfer, transport to the start and collection at the end and return to the cars.

We met at Newcastle City Centre and stayed the first night in the Hilton, Newcastle Gateshead. Far too grand a hotel for cyclists, but here we were anyway! We were collected in the morning and taken across country to Bowness on Solway where our adventure began. It stopped a few minutes and 500m later for the first puncture! We were soon away again and a little bewildered because the sun was still shining. This couldn't last, could it? We had been supplied with comprehensive route instructions, a cycle route map of Hadrian's Cycleway and the gpx files for the route as well. What could go wrong? Very little as it happened, the instructions and gpx files were very accurate. Apart from the odd occasions where the NCR 72 signs were hidden, all went according to plan, the gpx files alerted us within 20m if we had missed a turn.

On day two, we enjoyed a sunny lunch in Carlisle and after some climbing in the afternoon, a pleasant evening in Grisland. On day three we passed several Roman sites along Hadrian's Wall and the sun was still shining *en route* to Corbridge. On day four *en route* to Tynemouth we had a blend of the old and new, said goodbye to the big hills and began a subtle descent along the Tyne valley. We followed the river Tyne through Newcastle and all the way to the end where we enjoyed a lovely lunch at the Bike Hub on the banks of the Tyne in Newcastle and a traditional Fish, Chips and Mushy peas meal at Tynemouth.

At the end of the ride we were collected again by our mini bus and trailer and taken back to the Hilton in Newcastle to collect our vehicles, the hotel allowed us to use their facilities to wash and change. The sun was still shining!

Ian Davies

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Time to *Swytch* to Electric?

Like a lot of you I started cycling as a child graduating up from basic single or 3 speed hub gears to the derailleur multiple gear bikes we all [*Ed: nearly all, some of us still use hub gears!*] enjoy riding today with the extra gearing making riding hilly routes so much easier.

I had previously considered an electric bike would not be for me as it seemed a bit like cheating. If I had a problem with inclines on my rides, then lowering the gearing on my bike was all that I needed to do.

Is it now time for me to go electric? The research begins! Electric bikes come in all shapes and sizes from road, touring and MTB; they also vary considerably in price and quality. A visit to the local cycle shop was worthwhile as it gave me a clear picture of the pros and cons of electric. Battery range is a major issue as in order to keep costs down cheaper bikes have lower capacity batteries and hence a shorter range. Distances that can be covered are also dependant on how much pedal assist is given by the rider, and advertised distances are unlikely to be achievable in the real world.

I started researching the options on line. A manufactured bike with a range that meets my needs would have been fairly expensive, and there was the question of what I should do with my existing bikes.

My solution came in the form of the start-up company *Swytch*. It is based in London and specialises in producing custom made kits to convert existing bikes to either electric or electric-assist at a fraction of the cost of a new bike. Their standard kit comprises all you need to convert your existing bike. A new hub motor wheel to your chosen size is supplied, along with a hub motor, a battery with a choice of either a 25 or 50 mile range, the necessary fittings, a pedal assist sensor for the crank and handlebar mount for control unit and battery.

The link below will take you to an independent review of their product by *Cyclist*. <https://www.cyclist.co.uk/reviews/6026/swytch-e-bike-conversion-kit-review>.



My own kit has recently arrived and I am currently deciding on which of my bikes I'm going to install it. Note: the kit can be transferable should you choose to use it on another bike in the future. The lower powered 25 mile kit currently costs £400 and the higher powered £500.

I hope this article has been of help if you are thinking of going electric. There are practical ways of doing so with your existing bike without breaking the bank.

Mike Lewis

—oO—

Cycling to Gigha

There is something special about the Scottish islands. Two years ago it was Mull; this year we went to Gigha, 'we' being my wife, Isla, son Don, his wife Ruth and their 4 year old daughter Jess. Gigha is a tiny island off the west coast of the Mull of Kintyre.

How to get there? Ideally by bike, but it was not practical for all of us to cycle. Isla and I had travelled by train to Edinburgh where Don and family live. Ruth and I cycled; not all the way: we took the train to Ardrossan, a ferry to Brodick on Arran, cycled to Lochranza from where we took the ferry to Claonaig on the Mull of Kintyre and from there cycled to Tayinloan for the ferry to Gigha. Meanwhile Don drove with Isla and Jess to Tayinloan.

It was late May and recent sunny weather had come to an end. Light rain started when Ruth and I reached Arran, light by Scottish standards but enough to chill and dampen. It is 15 miles from Brodick to Lochranza and 20 from Claonaig to Tayinloan. Lovely cycling, that is if you enjoy hills. There is a 200m ascent just before Lochranza and two 130m climbs on the Mull of Kintyre. But the scenery is superb and the traffic was mainly light.

From Brodick there are eight flat miles along the east coast before the start of the 200m climb. This was a lovely stretch: rhododendrums in flower, pink granite outcrops blending with late spring flowers, and the wind was behind us. We cycled up all the hills, I, glad of fitness gained on a recent CTC tour in Ireland [See the Summer Newsletter.], and Ruth has the strength of youth, but needed to recover from recent work pressure. All went according to plan, the ferry from Lochranza providing a break from cycling and a chance to get warm after being chilled by the long freewheel down to the village.

Back on the mainland we left the big hills some seven miles short of Tayinloan. Unlike earlier, the wind was now against us, but the rain had stopped. Don, Isla and Jess were already there. He parked the car (No charge!) and we wheeled bikes plus all our stuff on to the ferry. We had enough bikes for all because Don had brought two of his plus Jess's little 'Isla' bike. Their kit included a 'follow me' attachment which allowed Jess's bike to be hitched on to the back on Don's or Ruth's when she got tired, as the photo shows.



It was just 3/4 mile on Gigha to the house we had rented for the week. The island is 7 miles from south to north and 1½ miles across. During the week we explored it on foot and by bike. The weather was mixed, but on one sunny day we picnicked on Cuddyport Beach in the SW. We brewed tea on an open fire and had the beach to ourselves.

We reversed our outward journey to return to Edinburgh. But this time it was dry and Ruth had recovered her fitness, so when she took the lead I was pushed to keep up – which is as it should be!

What is special about Gigha, like other remote parts of Scotland, is that things don't get stolen! We locked neither our bikes nor the house throughout our stay.

David Naylor

In place of the M4 Relief Road

Early this summer we learnt that Mark Drakeford had cancelled the proposed M4 Newport tunnel bypass. So how will the £1.4 billion saved be spent?

While he gave economics as the reason for the cancellation he said that he would in any case have rejected it on environmental grounds.

Cycling UK, represented by volunteer campaigner Hugh Mackay, in collaboration with the Wildlife Trusts Wales hired barristers to make the case that the proposed scheme would exacerbate climate change and cause irreparable damage to several SSSIs. The case was also made of the need to spend the money saved on Active Travel projects.

Lee Waters, ex Sustrans Cymru CEO and now Wales's Deputy Transport Minister, had lobbied for the cancellation of the project, and this no doubt influenced the decision.

Further information can be found in CUK's 7 June 2019 on-line newsletter, *Cycleclips*.

David Naylor

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Forthcoming events

Wheelrights Routes Rides (meet 10.00am. Env. C. or Ripples Café. See Events page.
Saturday, 7 September (and first Saturday in the month thereafter.)

Cappucino rides. 1.00 pm in the Coast Café, SA1 3SN. See the Rides/Commutes page.
Normally fortnightly on Tuesdays. (Check the Events page or contact Allison.)

U3A rides. 10.00 am various venues. See the Rides/Commutes page.
Mondays, 30 September and 28 October.

Relief Café Wales. 10.00-13.30. Normally on first & third Sat. in month at locations below.
Saturdays, 7 & 21 September (7th in the Phoenix Centre, Townhill; 21st in the Env. C.)

September

Saturday 14 September: Dr Bike Session.
10.30-16.30 in Ripples Café. See the Various page for details.

Tuesday 24th: Wheelrights meeting
7.00 pm in the Environment Centre. Details to come on Events page.

October

Wednesday 2nd: Cycle funding rally in Cardiff.
1.00pm outside the Senedd, preceded by a ride. See article on p.3.

Saturday 12 October: Dr Bike Session.
10.30-16.30 in Ripples Café. See the Various page for details.

Check the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk in case of changes to the above and for subsequent events.

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