



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 51 Spring 2020

www.wheelrights.org.uk



New routes are sprouting.

The picture shows the new route between Gowerton and Kingsbridge. It is looking south from where it connects to the existing Kingsbridge – Lliw valley path. It goes under the B4620 (shown), then across Stafford Common where it passes under the A484 to join NCR 4 via Gowerton Railway Station. Not open at the time of writing (as the signs on the gate show) it is the first stage of an off-road route to Pontarddulais.

Other new routes are cropping up as the Council struggles to spend Active Travel money by tight deadlines. The routes in North Swansea from Llansamlet to Morriston Hospital are essentially complete, a shared use path is being constructed alongside the A48 between Llangyfelach and Penllergaer and work has started on widening the path on the north side of Loughor Bridge.

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Copy deadline

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

On p. 2 our Secretary paints a picture of how Uplands could be. He follows this with a report on the recently completed signing audit carried out by *Wheelrights* members. As you can read it triggered some correspondence. (At last!) Then some good news about proposed access law changes. On p. 5 our President gives his thoughts on a proposed *Wheelrights* name change. This is followed by an analysis of last year's Questionnaire by our Treasurer. In the final article I provide a summary of a meeting held last autumn of the Welsh Gov. Cross Party Active Travel group at which the (lack of) provision for taking bikes on trains was discussed.

We end with an obituary of *Wheelrights* member and past councillor Derek James who recently passed away.

David Naylor

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Uplands: a Place for People

Many people have visited the marvellous Uplands Street market (last Saturday of each month 9am -1pm) which is organised by *Wheelrights* activist Gordon Gibson together with colleagues from Swansea's Urban Foundry. The market has set an important precedent by closing Gwydr Square to traffic once a month. There is a lovely bustling atmosphere, making it a rendezvous with music and stalls. Local traders and motorists have got used to this road closure. *Wheelrights* have had regular stalls there, giving out free Bike Maps, etc.

Now a group of like-minded Uplands residents have got together to explore the possibility of closing Gwydr Square to traffic on a permanent basis. Gordon with help from Urban Foundry has drawn up a detailed plan, and we have the support of two local Uplands councillors including the 'cycling councillor' Nick Davies. This plan includes innovative proposals for the main road.



How Gwydr Square might look.

Rhiannon Harding says that Living Streets (originally the Pedestrian Association) helps groups (led by local residents) come together around a wide range of issues, eg parents wanting safer walking routes to schools.

Living Streets Role:

- Helps local groups set-up, get constitution, etc.
- Supports development of local group 'identity'– eg logos, email addresses, etc.
- Help with setting up a twitter account, etc.
- Provides groups with national organisational backup.
- Can provide small bursaries.
- Hosts local group info page on Living Streets' national website.
- Directs media interest to highlight local developments.

If anyone wishes to get involved, or find out more, please contact me.

Nick Guy

Promoting Swansea's Cycle routes

Have you ever had the frustrating experience of going the wrong way on a long distance cycle route? One wrong sign can lead to several lost hours, tired legs and confusion.

Have you seen someone leaving High St Station by bike, looking anxiously for a bike route to Swansea University but with no bike signs to point the way?

Well, solutions should be on the way from a recent signage audit undertaken by members of *Wheelrights* Routes Group. Swansea Council gave the signage project to a Manchester based firm, *Placemarque*, who asked *Wheelrights* to provide local knowledge and expertise by auditing most of Swansea's bike routes. Five from our Routes Group completed the audit in January. They highlighted key locations needing new signs, incl. NCR 4 and 43, routes in the city centre, the Liberty Stadium and Morriston Hospital.



The audit highlighted several examples of poor signage, for example the photo shows existing signs by the Palace theatre, High St. From the signs one wouldn't know about the so-called "secret" route. This route is the most direct off road link between the train station (and Mt Pleasant) and the Liberty Stadium, NCR 43 and eventually Morriston Hospital. Hopefully the signage project will lead to this route being properly signed at last.

Sustrans (Technical Information Note 5) states that "One of the key requirements in developing safe and attractive places to cycle is comprehensive direction signing that links paths, tracks, lanes and roads together that make up the network ... Cohesive and continuous signing of a route or network gives first-time users a good impression of the area, and encourages further exploration."

Thanks are due to Mike Lewis, Gwyn and others for suggesting some new sign locations. We anticipate the new signs should appear around the end of March. [*Ed: hopefully to be reported in the next Newsletter.*] If you have ideas for where additional signs are needed, please let us know.

In addition Swansea Council has also given a "Marketing" contract to another firm, to publicise the routes and active travel in general; we are trying to make contact with this firm over next few weeks, and will keep you updated.

Nick Guy

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Correspondence

Signing Audit

The signing audit appears to be in chaos. First, Sustrans had a limited role, and we were in charge. Now it appears that we have a limited role, and Sustrans are in charge. I don't know what's been agreed with whom and I'm getting all my information second hand. There appears to be a wall of silence, as if I'm upsetting the apple cart.

The system Sustrans are working with is not well designed, with inefficient input and output. It's designed around a single spreadsheet, which is so limiting that in reality everything is being recorded in one field: the notes. The output will be hundreds of pages of mess. Are Sustrans playing politics, more keen to defend their role as auditing overlords than see improvements? And thereby preventing us from being effective partners?

Bill Gannon

Bill Gannon has expressed his frustration above. I was originally one of the signing audit volunteers but on reading the 'small print' pulled out. A decision I do not regret.

Around a decade ago, when I was Sustrans Liaison ranger for the Swansea area, I with the help of local rangers did signing audits and put up the signs, albeit mostly stick on. No app was needed (OK, smartphones were new then.) and at one time we had Routes 4 and 43 reasonably well signed.

With the perspective of age – OK, I admit I'm an old fogey! – I note how nowadays many things are more complicated than they need be. The idea that 'simpler is better' seems to have got lost. I suspect that subconsciously the designers of things and processes make them more complicated to provide employment! This signing audit is a lovely example: six people, together with a hard-to-use app are needed for a task which two could do. And they will take longer over it!

David Naylor

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Access laws to change.

Moves are afoot to change Welsh access legislation, in particular to make it easier for cyclists and horse riders to ride in places where currently they can't. This should bring Welsh legislation into line with Scotland's 2003 Land Reform Act.

The Welsh Gov. together with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have set up three expert groups to advise on the changes needed. These groups comprise members from the organisations affected which include the National Trust, farmers, ramblers and mountaineering organisations, the British Horse Society, Cycling UK and Chris Dale of Swansea's Local Access Forum (of which I am a member).

Their main brief is that the legislation should provide flexibility in the use of public paths with the criteria being their *suitability* rather than (inappropriate) historical precedent.

A fuller account can be found in the 24 January issue of Cycling UK's weekly *Cycleclips*.

David Naylor

What's in a name?

Wheelrights was our chosen name 25 years ago. We were following a trend in the UK in forming a campaign group for improved cycling safety and provision and reverse a decline in cycling over the past 40 years.



Many campaigns started before 1980 and of course the CTC has been around forever [Ed: since 1883.], but at this time political noises were being made and local authorities urged to develop cycling policies, but progress was slow in many areas including Swansea and the need for campaigns became a necessity. In 1995 I and a few other local enthusiasts (Some of whom are featured in the pic.) decided a local campaign should be started and we deliberated over the name. I cannot

remember who suggested **Wheelrights** but at the time it seemed quite appropriate, a sort of play on words, and a simple cyclist logo was added. We have since then had a regular newsletter, organised many events, lobbied the Council and for many years had almost weekly reports in the press about what was needed. Over the years this has continued and membership has held at around 70 with more supporters, but the effect of the press has diminished hugely (the membership has aged as well) so the need for more modern digital connection is clear. It has become apparent that most people locally have never heard of us and others do not get the title.

A sub-group has looked into a change in name to give us better recognition and and also to seek more ways of putting it about.

We have narrowed down the suggestions to the following:

- Cycle Swansea;
- Swansea Bay Cyclists;
- On your Bike Swansea;
- Swansea Bay Active Travel;

The chosen new name will have the sub-title: "Reimagined Wheelrights campaign group", thus keeping the link with *Wheelrights*, which will maintain the existing website with archives and infrastructure information etc. A new logo will also be looked into.

We would be glad to hear your view at a meeting to be held to make a decision on 31st March at the Environment Centre.

David Judd

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Wheelrights Questionnaire

We thought it would be a good idea to develop a questionnaire that would help engage people at the Green Fayre held last November. John Sayce our Chairman led the effort and came up with a number of questions. We duplicated the questionnaire online and publicised it via our Facebook site to get more numbers and a more representative sample. We were also keen to obtain feedback from members on what they think our key campaign activities should be.

Well, engage it certainly did as our first respondent at the stall, a very pleasant Dutch lady gave us some very forthright views on the quality of cycling infrastructure here compared to the Netherlands, some of them repeatable!

In all we had 70 respondents and I have picked some highlights below.

If you want to see the full results you will find them on the 'Various' page of *Wheelrights* website: <https://www.wheelrights.org.uk/various.htm>.

We had a 51-49 split between males and females which was really encouraging.

How often do you cycle?

(70 responses.)

And we clearly had a lot of regular cyclists looking at this graphic, 78% cycling at least weekly.

What stops You From Cycling?

Interestingly the main reason people gave was the weather (63%), probably influenced by the time of year.

Safety concerns next with 'not feeling safe' on the roads and 'no safe routes' (combined 52%). 16% of respondents thought path condition an issue. Next and equal on 14% was 'too hilly' and 'abuse from drivers/pedestrians'.

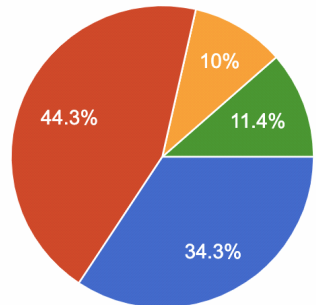
Why do you cycle?

Top three answers were: leisure at 87%, fitness at 77% and commuting at 53%. (People could tick more than one box here so don't worry about the fact these add up to more than 100%!)

Finally we asked people to rate various campaign activities which *Wheelrights* could undertake. We were reassured to learn that most people rated 'lobbying local decision makers' as the top priority.

This could become a regular questionnaire and we'd be interested in your feedback on that thought, and perhaps give us some ideas for additional questions.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely/Never



Chris Walsh

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Bikes on Trains

I attended a meeting in Cardiff last autumn of the Welsh National Assembly Cross Party Active Travel Group. On the agenda was the issue of taking bikes on trains. This was aimed in particular at Transport for Wales (TfW) who have taken over the franchise from Arriva. Following this meeting there was a nationwide email exchange between those present and others (mainly from Cycling UK) who know about trains. The group's secretary, Chris Roberts, prepared a short report on this meeting which incorporated feedback from this exchange. It is titled "Bikes on TfW Trains" and can be accessed on the 'Infrastructure' page of *Wheelrights* website. What follows summarises the key points in Chris's report.

It starts by noting that there was general agreement that there should be a minimum provision of eight bike places per train with a preference for not less than four in one location. The new Hitachi trains are unsatisfactory both because of a difficulty in finding where the bike places are and because they are hard to use.

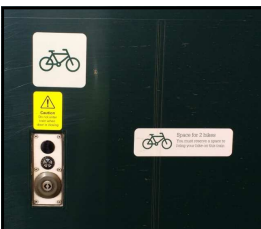
Consideration should be given to combining train travel with cycle tourism. This could be valuable to the Welsh economy. It would require ample cycle storage at least on some services. The Heart of Wales line would be one.

Bike storage spaces need to be designed to be easy to access. The often unusable bike spaces (Two hooks for vertically stored bikes in a cramped cupboard.) in the GWR Hitachi trains needs to be avoided. Bikes must have priority over luggage.

Tip-up seats are suggested, particularly in commuter trains. These provide flexibility and, if enough are provided can be used for tandems, child trailers, cargo bikes, wheelchairs, etc. as well as, of course, people. Storage with the bikes horizontal or at an angle is suitable for express trains. The photo taken on an intercity train in Germany illustrates this form of storage as well as tip-up seats.



Clear marking on the outside of coaches to show where the bikes go is needed, also information on whereabouts on the platform a bike carrying coach is expected to stop. I had the good experience recently of this information being provided at Bristol Parkway.



To the above I would add that the GWR Hitachi trains not only provide sub-standard bike storage but until recently failed to mark where they are. Now however they are starting to rectify this. I took this picture last autumn. All four bike spaces were signed! (In fairness to GWR they do at least have storage for eight bikes on their ten coach Swansea – London trains.)

David Naylor

Obituary: Derek James 1935 to 2020

Everyone I have talked to about Derek has said that he was a genuinely good man and very easy to be with as he did not have any airs and graces. I knew him as keen cyclist, a practical recycler and a storyteller.

Derek took a keen interest in Swansea's Recycle bike project. From the early days when it was on High Street he would regularly pop in to see how the project was going and as he saw positive opportunities in salvage and recycling he would provide assistance collecting bikes and parts from around the city in his trailer.

He became a personal family friend who lived close by. I would often pop in to discuss charity related issues and meet his wife Lorna at the front door and she would point to the garden and say, 'He is in the shed'. I have fond memories of finding him there, tinkering with yet another classic steel framed British bike.

Not only was he a handy mechanic, he was a natural communicator who could connect with a wide range of people. These inherent skills proved him to be a wonderful and valued trustee of *BikeAbility Wales*. He provided support to remedy numerous issues that the charity has encountered over the years. He was always available and willing to help out, enabling the charity to be the success it is today.

He would regularly come to the venue to ride on a variety of cycles with his grandson, Tom, and it was with his continued gentle guidance that Tom has become a confident independent cyclist. This personal attribute will be sorely missed.

Derek was also a keen supporter of *Wheelwrights*.



Derek with grandson Tom.

Mike Cherry

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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 usually either Environment Centre or Ripples café when route will be decided. (But check 'Events' page of website for location and possible changes.) First Saturday in month: **7 March, 4 April, 2 May, ...**

U3A Rides.

10.00am starting at various places. Last Monday in month: **30 March & 27 April**. See the 'Events' page for details and confirmation of dates.

March

Tuesday 31st: Wheelrights meeting: talk by cycling campaigner Gwenda Owen.

7.00pm in the Environment Centre Café, Pier Street, Swansea SA1 1RY. A discussion on a possible new name for *Wheelrights* will follow the talk and a tea break.

June

BIKE WEEK: 6-14 June.

Details on 'Events' page.