



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 53 Autumn 2020

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Covid-19 gets more on bikes.



Many of us relished the emptiness of main roads during the first few weeks of lockdown, and it certainly brought out more bikes. Unfortunately it didn't last long and now the traffic is heavier than ever.

But it has – at least we hope it has – caused a lasting increase in cycling. Due to so many people now working from home, more will be cycling for exercise or leisure rather than to work. We can only hope that this increase will be reflected in more active travel cycling when things return to normal.

The Santander hire bike scheme was closed down, but opened again in the summer. The picture, taken at the end of July, shows a group of three using them on Swansea's foreshore.

This issue

Our Chairman kicks off with proposals which should have you reaching for your pen (aka mouse). A Kingsway update follows, and on p. 4 our Secretary also invites a response.

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Copy deadline

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

Patricia's story on p. 5 of how important a bike has been to her is an inspiration to us all.

Then an article about the government's plans for e-scooter legislation. If these go ahead we may well face problems here as, apparently, they are having in Paris.

On p.7 Adrian describes three rides planned by the *Lighthouse Theatre* which will recreate some of Swansea's history. Shades of the Gower Cycling Festival?

Finally, news about the first cycle shop on the Gower Peninsula.

David Naylor

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All change or no change?

Next May, Welsh politicians will be out in force looking for your vote in the Senedd elections. So what should *Wheelrights* be asking them to include in their manifesto? Here is a sample of our demands.

1. Active Travel (AT) to have a three year plan and funding with an independent body/ person (e.g. Cycling Tsar like Chris Boardman in Manchester) to hold the WG and LAs responsible for delivery. This body is to also produce an annual report for the Senedd's Cross Party group on AT.
2. Mandate all employers and colleges with over a certain number of employees and students, to report annually and to publish figures and targets. The increase in education performance and waste disposal figures over the last 20 years are testament to this approach to behaviour change.
3. All schools' air quality to be monitored and reported on twice a year and the figures published and issued in school prospectuses.
4. Permit the non-working, ie unemployed, self-employed, unpaid carers, students, retirees, etc. to get the Cycle to Work subsidy.
5. Scrap the subsidy for e-cars and direct it towards e-bike purchases.
6. Legislate to make an all-electric taxi and bus fleet by 2026/27
7. Allow buses to carry bikes on a bike carrier at the front of the buses.
8. Legislate to make secure bike parking mandatory for public areas: e.g shopping centres, surgeries, Council offices.
9. Change the default position for all footpaths over 3m wide to become shared use paths, unless otherwise stated.
10. A percentage (5%?) of all car parking fees collected by councils and private operators to be spent on AT measures.
11. New penalties to be introduced for drivers who park on pavements and shared use paths.

Would these measures make a difference or do you have other proposals that would make it easier for all of us to cycle?

John Sayce

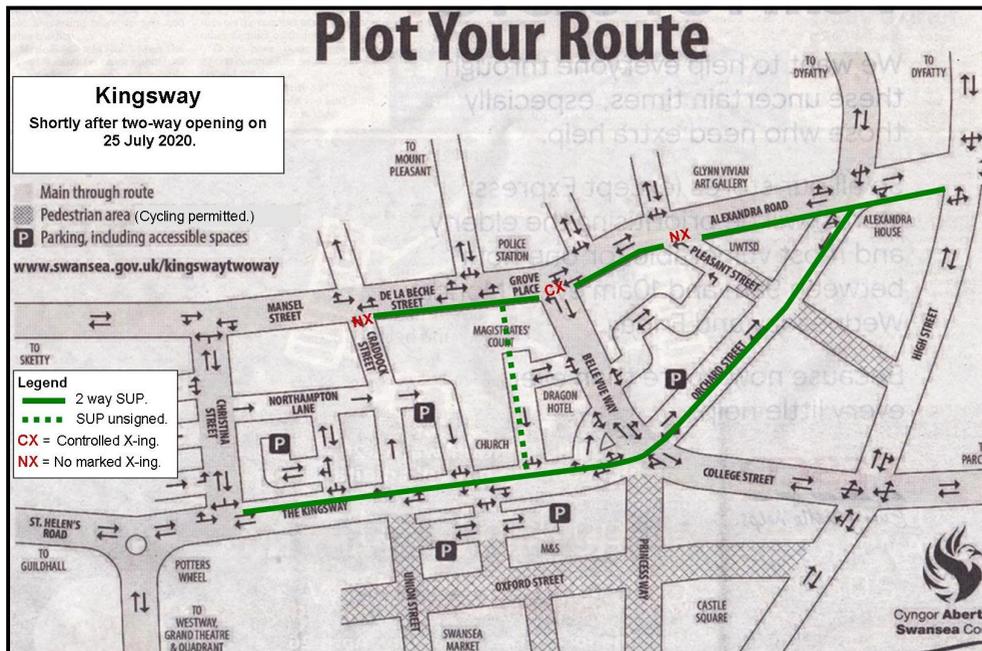
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20 mph: the default speed limit

It was announced in July that Senedd has voted (45 votes for, 6 against) in favour of a plan to make 20mph the default limit for residential streets in Wales by 2023.

The two-way Kingsway

Plot Your Route



The Kingsway is now two-way. How does this affect cyclists?



What is good about it is that it is no longer a major artery, it is almost a boulevard! With the carriageway reduced to two traffic lanes, one each way, and the 20 mph limit retained, it is suitable for experienced cyclists. Overtaking can take place only when there is no on-coming traffic. A generous 5m wide shared use path has been provided on the adjacent 'linear park'. The picture on the left is looking east and shows the parallel crossing before the left turn on to Christina Street. The 5m shared path starts beyond this junction.

The plan shows the traffic directions and the cycle routes. Another good feature is a controlled crossing of the north end of Bellevue Way.

Not so good is the lack of a right-of-way where the cycle path crosses the NW end of Pleasant Street, now one-way from Orchard Street. Furthermore, with Northampton Lane now one-way east, the E-W cycle lane on it has gone. A cyclist heading west must join the traffic on Mansel Street. The previous Dynevor Place counter-flow cycle lane has also disappeared. With the flow reversed a counter-flow cycle lane is needed as shown by the green dotted line. A lane is physically there but it is unsigned.

David Naylor

Ideas needed for cycle routes

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a huge increase in numbers of people walking and cycling.

This comes at a time when Swansea Council is about to meet its (*Wheelrights* inspired) Manifesto commitment to create new bike routes in 10 wards.

This is great news. However we have recently become concerned about the poor quality of a couple of these routes. For example the Shared Use Path (SUP) on Gors Ave. is in places very narrow, particularly where it passes close to parked cars. This opens up the danger of "dooring". Likewise the proposed "hybrid" cycle lanes on Mayals Rd also pose a danger to cyclists.

The Integrated Network Map is now up for review and this gives us the excellent opportunity to put forward new routes for the Council's next three year plan. We would like to hear from you of any new routes you wish us to propose.

I believe that a new *Wheelrights* campaign around "Safe Cycling" is needed, and maybe something to discuss at our next face-to-face meeting, which we hope to arrange whenever it's safe to do so. Other issues are consultation and community engagement. We are trying these issues out with the Council currently regarding their Mayals Road plans. [*Ed: more about this in next issue.*]

Nick Guy

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Active Travel funding

Swansea did well in the first two years of Active Travel funding, obtaining a larger share of the Welsh budget in relation to its population than other counties. It has done even better in this, the final year, with £6.6m awarded for 2020/21. This is broken down as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>£1000</u>
City Centre Links	2.467
Sketty & Mayals Network Links	1.877
Core Allocation	0.773
Safe Routes in Communities	
Gorseinon and Penyrheol	0.508
Road Safety Capital	
B4489, High Street/Castle Street	0.258
A4240, Gorseinon Area B4290,	0.470
St Helen's Road	0.151
Road Safety	<u>0.066</u>
Total:	6.570

From the above it would appear that there is significant funding for the Mayals Road cycle infrastructure project – currently of considerable interest – although the breakdown of the £1.877k between Sketty and Mayals is not stated.

This funding does not however include the Gower Access Path (which will run west from Mayals Road across Clyne Common). It is understood that this will be funded separately.

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My Bike – a Love Affair

A bicycle has a very special meaning to me. I received it as a Christmas present from an older sibling following the unexpected death of my father when I was eight years old. A bright shiny new green Raleigh bicycle brought much comfort to my heart. Between my six brothers and I, the bike was soon battered and bruised. Although I begrudgingly shared it with my eight brothers and sisters, it was mine. Cycling on the streets of Barataria (a little suburb of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad), I felt safe. Cars were seen mainly in the city at the time. The only other cyclists were the fish mongers selling their catch of the day, and the ice-cream vendors with their array of tantalising lollies and icicles. Just the job on those hot and sunny tropical days in the Caribbean.

Years later in the UK, I was to have a rude awakening! Riding a bike in sleet, snow, and *cold* rain was a different kettle of fish altogether. As an impoverished medical student in Southampton (a car being way beyond my means), a bike once more saved the day. I have memories of cycling effortlessly up the long steep hill that leads to the Southampton General Hospital. Thankfully it was a wide road with a low volume of traffic back in the 1980s. It was pure pleasure.



It was on a strawberry-picking bike ride at the end of the summer term of my last year at medical school that I met my husband Dareyoush, who was apparently checking out not just the strawberries! Shortly afterwards he was offered a permanent post at Swansea University and moved to Wales. My medical training took me to several locations across the UK but eventually I joined him in the 1990s and we were delighted with the amazing cycling opportunities on offer. In Southgate where we lived for eight years, we mountain biked on the cliff tops and cycled wherever we could in the beautiful Gower. This whetted our appetite for more cycling fun adventures. We explored trails and coastal cycle paths here in south Wales making full use of our mountain bikes which we had given to each other as presents one Christmas.

Our move to the Mayals towards the end of the 1990s was motivated in part by the health benefits it offered in terms of a promise of an active lifestyle. With a toddler in tow this time, he accompanied us in his bicycle seat along Swansea Bay and beyond.

Some of our holidays abroad have included cycling trips in Spain and Italy as an exhilarating addition to the sand and sea.

Patricia Purcell

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E-scooters on our paths?



E-scooters are becoming increasingly popular, particularly in Europe. In this country they are only allowed on private land, and the owner's permission is required. The question arises: should they be allowed on public footpaths and cycle ways? Roger Geffen in an article in the 24 July *Cycleclips* presents *Cycling UK's* (CUK) position. This draws on his article.

There is popular pressure to make their use legal other than on private land. An argument in favour of this is that they would get people out of their cars and reduce pollution.

CUK favour them to the extent that they could be allies. Their small wheels require a smooth surface, so this could lead to better quality cycling routes. On the other hand they could endanger pedestrians, and they would undermine the health benefits of cycling and walking.

Whether or not CUK could support their general use depends on what legislation is introduced. A key factor is their maximum speed. Too fast and they would endanger pedestrians; too slow and people wouldn't use them. Related factors are their power and weight.

CUK favour the *precautionary principle*. This means that legislation should at first be relatively tight so that if it is found to be too restrictive it can subsequently be relaxed, rather than the other way round. Unfortunately it appears that the (Westminster) government are not following that principle.

Before the Coronavirus pandemic the Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, announced plans for e-scooter trials next year in parts of England. The Dept of Transport (DfT) initially took a reasonably cautious approach by proposing that only hired e-scooters with a maximum speed of 20kph (12.5mph) and power of 350W be allowed. This compares with 25kph (15.5mph) and 250W respectively for e-bikes.

However, during lockdown Shapps decided to fast-track the trials and to allow them to take place this year in any English Local Authority that wanted to host them. Only a two week consultation was to be allowed for these trials. Following this the DfT decided to raise their more cautions limits, increasing the speed limit from 20 to 25kph and the power from 350 to 500W. Furthermore the weight limit was to be increased from 35 to 50kg.

Clearly, the precautionary principle is not being followed. CUK are concerned. They are not alone as a House of Lords' committee has also voiced its concern.

We will have to wait and see what happens.

David Naylor

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See Swansea with Pedal-Gower



Our friends at Mumbles-based *Lighthouse Theatre* have been looking at new ways of entertaining locals and visitors to Swansea, Mumbles and Gower over the last few months – who hasn't?

Some years ago during the **Gower Cycling Festival** they entertained us with a new show on bicycles about the Mumbles Railway called **Life Cycle of The Bay**. Well, they have got back on their bicycles during lockdown and are looking at creating a **new series of bicycle tours** to

accompany their walking tours next summer. The idea is to raise funds for both the theatre company and BikeAbility, with whom they are working in partnership.

The rides are designed to give leisure cyclists an easy introduction to the area, with stops along the way – history, performance and comedy. Suitable for visitors and locals alike.

Who better, then, to act as 'guinea pigs' for these rides than members of *Wheelrights*? So across September on Friday, 11th and Monday, 14th we are looking to invite a limited number of people to accompany Sonia and Adrian from *Lighthouse* to test out the routes, give helpful advice and – who knows? – provide extra nuggets of information to boost their commentary.

Numbers will be strictly limited due to social distancing measures but if anyone is interested please email lighthouse theatre ltd@gmail.com for further information.

Lighthouse Theatre are working on the following three routes: Rides 1 and 2 are half day (10.00am -12.30pm) and begin/end at the Waterfront Museum Santander Bike Hub. Ride 3 is all day (10.00am-4.00pm) and starts/finishes at BikeAbility's Dunvant RFC base.

1. Swansea - The City by the Sea/Tref ar y Traeth

Spend a couple of relaxing hours touring the sights and sounds of the city by the sea, from Copperopolis to the Cenotaph. Moderate to Easy - 7kms. Mostly cycle path.

2. Swansea to Mumbles – The splendid curving shore/Bae Arbennig Abertawe.

Follow the journey of thousands before you as you cycle the old Mumbles Railway from Rutland Street to Mumbles Pier. (Participants can choose to stay in Mumbles.) Meet some of the fascinating characters who took the train and hear their stories. Moderate to Easy - 20 kms. All cycle path.

3. Gower Industrial Heritage Ride – Reid Treftadaeth Ddywidianol Gwŷr.

This is a ride with stops From Mines and Steelworks, to Cockles and Laverbread. Stops in Penclawdd and Llanrhidian, with a long climb and descent to come home.

Cycle Path and Quiet Roads. Challenging - 35 kms.

Adrian Metcalfe (Lighthouse Theatre)



A Gower cycle shop



Essential Gower Cycles, the only cycle shop on the Peninsula, opened this summer. It is located in Southgate on the sea side of Three Cliffs Café. At the moment it's in a gazebo but John (featured repairing a bike) plans to move to the house behind it.

If you just turn up he will check your bike and carry out adjustments, including a coffee, for a modest fee. For bigger jobs call him on 07984 493748

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Forthcoming events

Due to Covid-19 restrictions physical *Wheelrights* meetings open to all are on hold. An exception is the Routes Group who have restarted their meetings, normally on the first Saturday of the month. Pending the opening of other suitable venues they are being held in Ripples Café on the West Cross foreshore. Details of these and any other meetings can as usual be found on the Events page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.

However, thanks to the initiative of Adrian of the Lighthouse Theatre, the three rides, described in Adrians article on page 7, are planned for September; rides 1 and 2 on Friday, 11th, and ride 3 on Monday, 14th.

Wheelrights officers continue to work with the Council, attending meetings which are now mostly virtual. These include the quarterly CAP (Cycling Action Progress) meetings.

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