



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 54 Winter 2020/21

www.wheelrights.org.uk

What a year!



This time a year ago we had no idea of what was to come. Of course everyone has been affected by Covid-19, and this has included *Wheelrights*. Meetings have had to be cancelled or held virtually, as was our AGM on 9 November. Routes Group managed a few meetings between the two lockdowns but they also reverted to Zoom for their latest one.

But not all is gloom. There was that window in the first lockdown when there were so many less cars and cycling was like it used to be a long time ago. I and many others have cycled for exercise. The picture was taken on a Gower ride. There was a magnificent rainbow, albeit not well portrayed in the photo.

The Council's plan to reconfigure Mayals Road has dominated the agenda during the latter part of the year. We are working with local residents to try and get it changed to something satisfactory, which as it stands it is not. At the time of writing we have not got very far. A positive outcome, however, is that Mayals resident, Dareyoush, is now our new Secretary. Having recently retired and being a cyclist he is just the person to fill the gap left by Nick who has decided to stand down. See the profile of him on p. 3.

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Copy deadline

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

Our Chairman kicks off with some potentially good news. Next we welcome our new Secretary and pay tribute to our retiring one.

On p. 4 we learn about what it's like to be on the receiving end at BikeAbility.

Then a couple of articles, courtesy of our President: first on how Lee Waters' plans to get Wales active travelling, and then one on David's work camp this summer.

Something a bit different on the last page.

Finally, please note the appeal on p.6. It's the time of year for giving!

David Naylor

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A new Transport Strategy.

The Welsh Government has just launched a draft strategy, "*Llwybr Newydd – New Path*" which will shape Wales' transport system over the next two decades. It sets out a range of new ambitions to reshape transport in Wales, including a new sustainable transport hierarchy that will help shape investment towards greener transport options. At the top of this hierarchy is walking and cycling and at the bottom is ... private car use. Good news! And as the minister Ken Skates said: "a once in a generation moment to put public transport at the heart of Wales future".

The reason for this shift in thinking? Unlike every other sector in Wales, transport's contribution to carbon emissions has not changed since 1990; so every year it becomes harder to meet Wales' decarbonisation targets. But what is actually being proposed?

Llwybr Newydd sets out four long-term ambitions for the transport system in Wales, to be delivered over the next five years.

Firstly, the Government want to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by planning for physical and digital connectivity, so that fewer people need to use their cars on a daily basis.

Secondly, it aims for a public transport service that everyone can use, wants to use and does use.

Thirdly, to provide a safe, accessible and well maintained transport infrastructure that supports sustainable transport choices.

Fourthly, to make sustainable transport options more attractive to people and businesses.

Lastly, to support innovations that help people and businesses to adopt more sustainable transport choices.

Ambitions are great, but how is the Government going to deliver on this?

Let's turn to their 'mini-plan' for active travel which encompasses both walking and cycling. It's ambitions are full of warm cuddly phrases such as "grow active travel", "support better active travel", "create safer, better cycle paths and more space for cycling and walking", "develop workplace travel plans". But how they plan to meet these ambitions is left up in the air with little or no indication of investment plans, targets, measuring or monitoring. The one solid commitment is to reduce the default speed limit in built-up areas to 20 mph – a change agreed by the Senedd earlier this year!

The last word should go to the Integrated Sustainability Assessment that the Government Commissioned and published alongside the Welsh Transport Strategy (WTS). It appears unlikely that the measures in the WTS would reduce Greenhouse gas emissions at the rate required for the transport sector to comply with Wales' carbon budgets and the climate emergency.

If you want to have your say on this consultation go to

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2020-11/consultation-document-llwybr-newydd.pdf>

John Sayce.

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Our new Secretary



Dr Dareyoush Rassi is a physicist, recently retired from Swansea University. He moved to Swansea in 1985 and one of his first acquisitions was a bicycle. With his wife, Pat, he used it to explore the Celtic Trail and other cycle routes in South Wales.

Following his retirement they spent a year travelling, returning to Swansea in March of this year just before lockdown. They live on Mayals Road, and, sharing our concerns about its reconfiguration, he got to learn about *Wheelrights*. He didn't hesitate when we invited him to join, but did when we suggested he take over from Nick Guy as Secretary. However, with some gentle arm-twisting he agreed and was duly elected at our AGM.

With his different background and having the time and energy of one freshly retired, this bodes well for the group. We wish him all the best.

Our previous Secretary

I was going to title this "our *old* Secretary" but realised he wasn't old. I then thought of "our *past* Secretary" but that would imply that he is past it, which he isn't! So, let me use this space to write a few words in appreciation of what Nick Guy has done for the group.

As many of you know *Wheelrights* was founded in 1995 by our President, David Judd and others. By 2005 they had got so frustrated by lack of progress with the Council that they decided to throw in the towel. Nobody took up the offer to take it over.

Nick and I then met up (I think he may remember the circumstances better than I can.) and we decided between us to revive it. We agreed that he should be Chair and I Secretary. So, in 2007 after two years in Limbo, *Wheelrights*, like the Phoenix, 'rose from the ashes'.

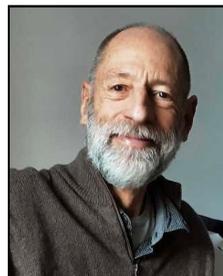
This lasted until 2016 when at our AGM in November, John Sayce was elected Chair. I stood down as Secretary and Nick replaced me. During the preceding nine years Nick and I had worked closely together, and I can say, unhesitatingly, that without Nick's energy and initiative we would not have achieved a fraction of what we did.

He always had lots of ideas, perhaps his best one being the Gower Cycling Festival. It was his idea to do a cycling equivalent of the Gower Walking Festival. There were nine GCFs, the first in 2010 and the last in 2018. Judging by the feedback we have had I think it is fair to say that they were a success. There was a sort of take over, but it didn't work.

Paradoxically I think our strength was that we were for ever disagreeing, and still are. The great thing was that Nick never got upset when I disagreed with him. (Or if he did he concealed it!) Between us we scrapped the bad ideas and retained the good ones. We 'stood on each others shoulders'.

Perhaps our main achievement was to establish a good relationship with the Council. We cultivated the art of appearing naïve, without actually being so. This opened doors.

He remains active in *Wheelrights* and I look forward to continue working with him.



David Naylor

BikeAbility experienced.

Like many people, during the nationwide lockdown last spring, my wife and I rediscovered the joy of cycling. The significant reduction in traffic during lockdown emboldened us to venture onto the roads, something we had not felt confident to do previously. Now we were able to explore a much larger area, including the Gower, during our daily exercise allowance. When lockdown ended we continued to enjoy our new-found freedom by making almost all our daily chores such as shopping and socialising on bicycle.

However, as traffic increased with the easing of restrictions, our unpreparedness to use the road in a safe manner became apparent. Neither of us had had any form of cycle training and we did not even know that such training was available. It was by a fortunate coincidence that I heard about BikeAbility training courses being offered at the Duntun site and I immediately signed us up.

The course began with some general instructions on essential safety checks and other basic points. This was followed by group exercises involving simple manoeuvres in a traffic-free area. The two instructors then led the group to a nearby residential area with flat roads and light traffic. Here we were told about 'primary' and 'secondary' positions, also about signalling and turning. Each trainee repeatedly practised adopting these positions and made both left and right turns under supervision until the instructors were satisfied.

The final part of the course involved negotiating a complex road arrangement, involving two roundabouts on a fairly steep incline, in heavy traffic. We first observed the two instructors demonstrate how this should be done and then each trainee completed the same route a number of times.

Since completing the course, my wife and I have been much more relaxed about cycling on busy roads. Previously, my main anxiety about cycling on the road had been fear of impeding or annoying drivers and a major benefit of the course for me was that by adopting the correct position as a cyclist I actually help drivers understand my intention and thereby safeguard my, and their, safety.



Dareyoush Pat

I highly recommend this training course for any and everyone. The ability to go wherever you want on a bicycle is truly emancipating (not to mention exhilarating, health-promoting and economical.) By the way the latter also applies to the BikeAbility training course: it is free of charge!

The pic. shows graduates proudly showing off their certificates after completing the course.

Dareyoush Rassi

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Active Travel

Lee Waters Aug. 2020 Blog

It's not good at my age to get excited I am told, but I am really excited to read Lee's blog on www.cyclinguk.org that promises to get a grip on Active Travel provision in Wales. It covers all the manifold issues that have prevented progress so far. It is so inspiring that I think to report on it would lose some of its impact, so I have simply reduced it to give the gist and urge you to read and take note of the whole contents and remind the council and others of its requirements. Here it is:

My lessons in campaigning:

- complaining works, to a point.
- legislation works, to a point.
- money makes a difference, to a point.

It is as much about attitudes and values as it is about engineering.

We have developed a transport system that is centered on making it easy to drive a car, and places barriers to travelling actively.

We need to ensure that walking and cycling are the most convenient transport options for shorter journeys for as many people as possible.

Little thought is given to how someone less confident on a bike may be encouraged to juggle multiple priorities and several routes to get about. This is a system design failure that we must address.

Active Travel is primarily a health agenda but it is dependent on transport professionals to deliver it, yet from a transport perspective walking and cycling are fringe issues.

So the challenge is, how do we get active travel to be taken seriously as a mainstream transport project as part of a programme of modal shift?

Protest, legislation, and funding all play their part. The Welsh approach has been to take a strategic approach to infrastructure planning.

Instead of disconnected routes opportunistically dependent on short-term funding opportunities, the Active Travel Act requires councils to set out a long view of their ambitions over 15 years underpinned by rolling three-year plans.

Councils were reluctant to identify possible future routes for fear of raising local expectations which funding would prevent them from delivering.

The Welsh Government has responded by radically increasing the funding available for active travel infrastructure.

I want to support councils who listen to people who aren't currently making local journeys by walking or cycling to help them understand what infrastructure is needed to get them to try it.

And make sure we're spending money in the right places, on the right type of infrastructure that will encourage people to walk and cycle more.

It's no good spending more money on schemes if the end products are poorly executed; that's not going to encourage anyone to leave their car at home.

Our next focus is on up-skilling the professionals and putting the target end users at the heart of the approach.

Next year councils will have to publish updated plans for their local network of routes and submit them for approval by the Welsh Government.

All future funding will be tied to the routes set out on these Integrated Network Maps.

The last time this happened genuine public engagement by local authorities was patchy: in one Council area just 13 people responded to the 'consultation'.

This time I've set aside funding to help under-resourced local authority teams to spend time with a diverse range of potential future users to ask the question: what facilities would need to be in place to encourage you to walk or cycle?

I'll expect councils to use this information to prioritise their future bids for funding.

I've also asked our arms-length delivery body, Transport for Wales, to develop a central source of expertise to help and challenge local authorities to meet the design and delivery standards that we have developed.

I want them to take a proactive role in ensuring that funding only goes to schemes that are up to scratch.

There are two remaining areas that I've not yet been able to progress: strategy and scrutiny.

Scrutiny

Getting the mechanics right is essential to effective delivery. It's essential that we produce them in dialogue with civil society, our delivery partners and those who we want to encourage to take up walking and cycling.

We have an Active Travel Board and the appointment of Active Travel Commissioners elsewhere suggests now is a good time for us to boost our scrutiny function, so I have asked Dr Dafydd Trystan Davies to take up the post of Chair of our Active Travel Board. His brief is to advise on stretching targets and to help devise a strategy and targets for Wales that consider the barriers I mentioned earlier.

He will act as an independent Advisor to the Welsh Government, sitting alongside Active Travel Commissioners in the UK, and challenging and supporting us on active travel. The challenge is now to go further and to go faster.

David Judd

A bike shelter, an e-bike and e-trike in Mountain Pleasant

Leonie Ramondt, who spoke at our agm, is asking for our support for a crowd-funding initiative to raise funds to provide these facilities. They would mainly be for older people or those with mobility issues. Visit <https://www.spacehive.com/e-bikes4mount-pleasant> to find out how. Swansea Council have already pledged £5,000. Pledges are needed by 12 December, so please act soon.

Wye Valley Cycleway

September 2020 Workcamp No 2



In last year's camp safety works were carried out. Since then our contractors have removed track from the tunnel (Pictured) and south of it.

Because of the Grant deadline the tunnel works had to be complete by the end of September, and contractors had to complete other works by the end of November. The tunnel was prepared and the blacktop laid in the week before the work camp, and very nice it looked.

There followed many months of uncertainty over Planning Permission – mostly about the bats. At the last minute it was approved and the licence obtained. The start was delayed until the Sunday, but then on a wing and a prayer we were off, albeit two days short.

The wigwam accommodation, provided by the Diving Centre, made life more civilised than camping, but we were still up by 7am in the mornings, and tucked in by 9.30pm after our evening meal and a glass or two of beer.

Chris and Clare Grimshaw again provided the camp restaurant with the usual high standard of meals including breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus coffee and cake breaks that made the work camp both memorable and enjoyable.

We had the usual backbone of some 12 experienced volunteers plus around 10 visitors each day who together did a brilliant job on the very technical assembly work required, with the general site work and clear up carried out by the machine drivers.

A major task was to manufacture and assemble the 132 light fittings and bend the Corten hoods from perforated sheet. There was one armoured cable which extended the whole length of the tunnel (1080m) and another two, each comprising four sections of 276m, to connect the lights. The eight cables were laid out along the track south of the tunnel, the lamp cables connected and the junctions filled with resin. Fortunately the weather was dry. Taking the cables into the tunnel involved 17 people carrying each length.

The mains cable to the tunnel was connected at the Diving Centre buildings half way along the track and buried alongside the path. Our electrician checked every joint that connected the lights to the main cables before resin was poured into the moulds and left to harden. It was a truly amazing production line and it worked like clockwork.

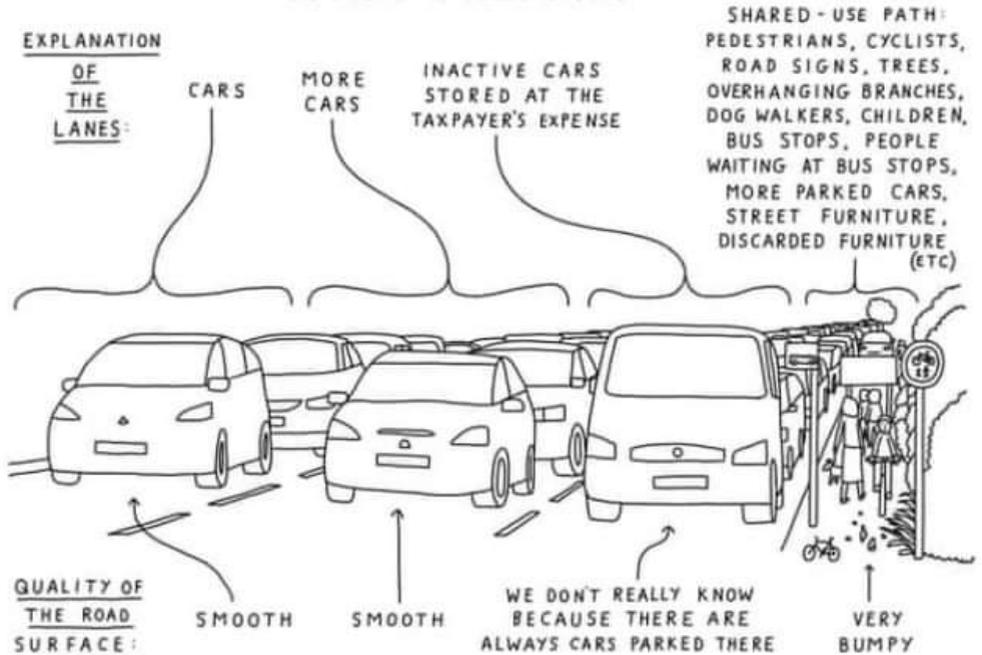
Other tunnel works included 10 alcoves to form shelters for the bats. (Pictured.)



David Judd

THE SHARED-USE PATH

AS FOUND IN MANY CITIES



Shared use path (SUP)

I was cycling on the SUP
That runs round Swansea Bay.
When all at once in front of me
Four walkers blocked my way.
I rang my bell, let out a cry,
But they would not let me by
Two were in conversation lost,
Two had something in each ear.
It seemed they would not at any cost
Let me go past, so I engaged a lower gear
And pedalled behind them at walking pace
Hoping they'd let me through with grace.

At last they did and on rode I
Beside the sparkling sea,
When a dog ran out as I passed by
And broke my reverie.
He barked and barked until at last
His owner came and held him fast.
So what's the message of this tale?
To share the path you must go slow,
Have patience and make avail
Of bell or voice to let them know
The path is shared with you as well
And they must heed your bell.

Rolyan

Merry Christmas!