



# Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 64 Summer 2023

[www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk)

## Why isn't active travel the norm?

I recently returned from a cycle tour on the Continent (See p. 7.) and I couldn't help noticing how using the bike for every day activities is the norm over there. Two examples illustrate this.

While cycling in Holland, both on my way out to Germany and on my way home, I encountered at least one mum with kid on the bike, probably shopping. The photo, taken on a previous ride in Holland, illustrates what is not at all unusual in that country.

Then, in Germany, I was visiting a German friend and his wife and we decided to go out for our evening meal. The restaurant was two km away, so how to get there? It was a bit far to walk, we could have taken the car but didn't want to, so we cycled. Could that have happened over here? I doubt it!



### This issue

We start with a summary of the views of Mayals' residents and *Wheelrights* about how provision for active travel in the Blackpill area could be improved.

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#### Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to David Naylor by mid August. (Email: [david@davidjnaylor.plus.com](mailto:david@davidjnaylor.plus.com))

An article by a Llanmorlais resident about the North Gower 'missing link' follows with a plea for support to get this long standing issue sorted.

This is followed by an infrastructure update.

Then the experiences of cyclists and resident of the altered Mayals Road. This and the Penclawdd article highlight the need for early consultation on active travel schemes.

Finally, a bit from me about my May tour in Holland and Germany

**David Naylor**

#### Chairman

John Sayce, 46 Lon Cadog,  
Cwmgywn, Swansea SA2 0TN.  
Phone: 01792 537226.  
Email: [john.sayce@ntlworld.com](mailto:john.sayce@ntlworld.com)

#### Secretary

Dareyoush Rassi, Ringing Stones,  
Mayals Road, Swansea SA3 5DH.  
Phone: 07974 784786.  
Email: [d.rassi@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:d.rassi@swansea.ac.uk)

#### Treasurer

Chris Walsh, 8 Emily Court,  
Swansea SA1 8RA.  
Phone: 07941 823729.  
Email: [c.walsh@ntlworld.com](mailto:c.walsh@ntlworld.com)

# Blackpill

Swansea Council are considering making Blackpill better suited to active travel and have invited comments. John Sayce has responded on behalf of *Wheelrights* (WR) and Phil Slater on behalf of Mayals residents (MR). The following is a summary of their key points.

## General.

MR, concerned about the lack of meaningful consultation on the Mayals Road and Penllergaer active travel schemes, ask that a hold be put on Blackpill until a full and proper consultation is undertaken. The lack of early consultation is also a concern of WR.

## Clyne Valley path and the three Mayals Road crossings.

MR suggest consideration be given to widening the Clyne path and moving back the barriers by the toucan crossing to ease congestion. They would also like the pedestrian time phase to be increased. They note that this controlled crossing makes access to the Derwen Fawr Road junction safer for motorists. WR are very satisfied with the toucan.

MR are concerned about the lack of space at the central refuge on all three crossings and ask that this be reviewed. WR are also concerned about the refuge at the PO - Junction Café crossing and suggest that it be replaced by a single stage crossing.

## Bridge across Mumbles Road.

WR note that a bridge here would be very costly and suggest that the money would be better spent on active travel provision elsewhere. MR think it may offer some small benefit to cyclists but none to pedestrians or the disabled. They note that its high visibility would have a significant impact on the character of the landscape.

## Bridge across Clyne River. (Pictured below.)

MR support widening of this bridge as does WR, who also suggest a separate bridge for walkers. Both would like to see a less convoluted northern approach to the bridge.

## Mayals - Mumbles Road: new link.

WR propose A new connection from Mayals Road to the Clyne Valley path through Clyne Park and Mill lane. This would allow cyclists to stay west of Mumbles Rd thereby avoiding the need to cross Mumbles Road at the bottom of Mayals Road

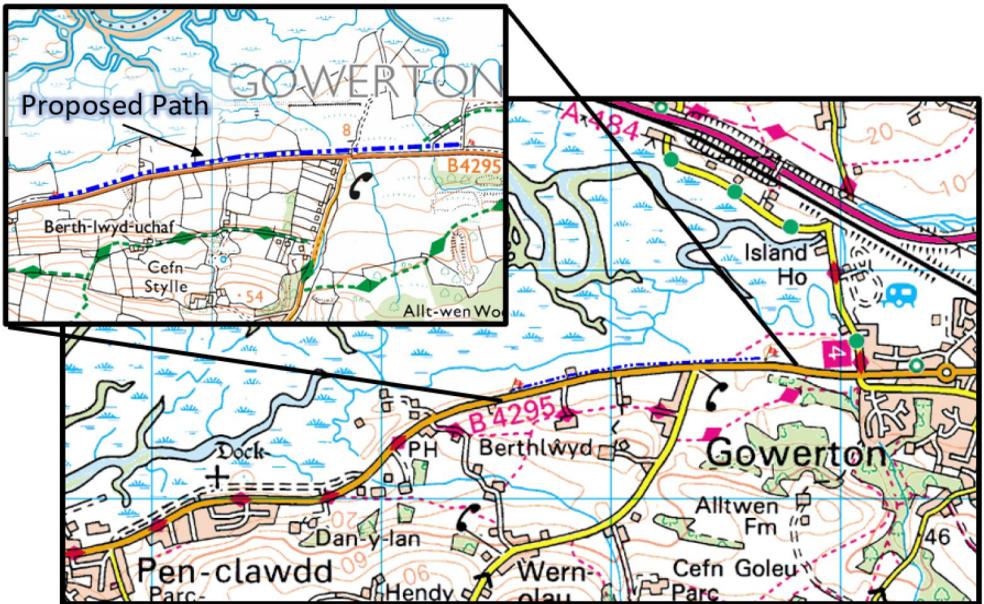
## Lighting.

WR suggest improved lighting on all shared use paths in the Blackpill area.



## The Missing Link

17 years and counting.



Cast your mind back to 2006, What were you doing then? Here are a few reminders: Nokia 1600 was the 'GoTo' mobile phone to have, you would have had to wait until June 2007 for the first iPhone from Apple. Casino Royale is first shown in UK cinemas with Daniel Craig in his debut role as 007. Facebook and Twitter social media platforms are both launched, though for Facebook you will need to have been at least 13 years of age to sign up. The BBC scrapped it's Saturday Grandstand programme. Tony Blair was PM. Rhodri Morgan is Wales' inaugural First Minister and HRH Elizabeth II opened the Senedd. The Winter Olympics were held in Turin, Italy; Swansea hosted the National Eisteddfod.

In February of that year, David Judd and his colleagues at Sustrans secured detailed planning permission from Swansea's City Council for the final section of the Penclawdd to Gowerton shared access path. The necessary funding was largely in place, but work could not begin as an agreement with all of the landowners could not be achieved.

The main problem with the section of the B4295 North Gower road, between The Rake and Riddle restaurant and the current Pont-y-Cob shared access path, is the lack of width of the pavement. It is difficult enough for two pedestrians to pass each other safely, add in a pushchair, mobility scooter, wheelchair or such like and it becomes impossible! One or other party ends up in the road – traffic permitting! Cyclists and horses must use the road and do, inevitably, frequently frustrate motorists. It's an accident waiting to happen.

Forward in time to Spring 2023 and (at the time of writing), we have been waiting, waiting, waiting and are still waiting for our council to act on this: a much needed 'safe passage' to happen along the north side of the B4295.

A small group of North Gower *Wheelrights* members, initiated by Joe Muldoon, began to ask “why”? – why was it that this path has not yet been completed? And “when”? – when will it be? Whilst we await an appropriate response, we will keep asking the City Council. Both Local Councillors, Susan Jones (Gowerton) and Andrew Williams (Penclawdd) are being very supportive and chasing for an answer for us.

Meanwhile, working on the principle of “It’s the squeaky wheel that gets the oil”, we are canvassing for support from you all. the more of you that can add your names to our Change.org petition, the better. Following the Gower Access Path (across Clyne Common between Bishopston and Mayals) model we will need at least 2000 signatures.

If you have a QR code reader app on your smart phone, please scan this code to add your name. If you prefer, use this link to Joe’s petition page : <https://www.change.org/CorrectMissingLinkBetweenGowertonaAndPenclawdd>.

If you use facebook visit: <https://www.facebook.com/northgoweraccesspath> or for more information email: [northgoweraccesspath@gmail.com](mailto:northgoweraccesspath@gmail.com)

Many thanks on behalf of NGAP in anticipation of your support,



Mark Divers

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## Infrastructure update

### Gorseinon Road

Work has started on upgrading the footway to a shared use path (SUP) between Gorseinon and Penllergaer. Sections on the north side west of Lidl’s, where a new crossing is planned, are complete, as are some on the south side. The photo is looking east from the Gorseinon end and shows the raised table at the crossing of Gwalia Terrace.

Work has not started on the crossing near Lidl’s, but the footway on the south side there has been widened, as it has been at the east end where the SUP crosses the A483. Other than dropped kerbs there is nothing, as yet, to ease the crossing of this busy road.



### Mumbles foreshore and Ynysallan Road

Work is underway at these two locations.

The foreshore path is being widened between the Oystermouth car park and Verdi’s; and, it is understood, an alternative route for more confident cyclists is planned.

A SUP on the south side of Ynysallan Road, between it and the M4 is being constructed.

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## Snapshots of Mayals Road

There follows accounts of the experiences of some who have used Mayals Road since the changes to promote active travel were completed over a year ago.

\* \* \*

After all the discussions, arguments and speculation about the 'hybrid' cycle lanes on Mayals Road, what is the verdict now that they have been in place for some time? I have been a resident of Mayals since the 1990's and I am also a regular cyclist, much more so since my retirement a few years ago. My verdict: on the whole positive.

First the pros: the cycle lanes allow the not-so-confident cyclist (like myself) to avoid cycling on the road or the pavement. This is important because it opens the possibility of cycling for many residents of Mayals and beyond who are now able to access Swansea Bay's excellent and expanding cycle route network. The narrowing of Mayals Road which was seen by some as potentially dangerous has actually helped to calm the traffic, arguably making it safer.

As for the cons, my main concern is the shared use section at the bottom of Mayals Road where the combination of the high gradient, large numbers of pedestrians and a very awkward entrance to a residential development raises the probability of accidents.

The 5 inch 'step' separating the 'hybrid' cycle tracks from the road is also a cause for concern, particularly on the downhill track. I worry that someone not familiar with the topology, particularly a child, may lose control (for example if they misjudge the slope or skid on debris, wet leaves etc.) and crash onto the carriageway.

Another predicted hazard, namely the conflict between cyclists and cars driving in and out of the many houses along Mayals Road does not appear to have been much of a problem, possibly because of the very light cycling traffic so far. Having said that, with the cycle route now under construction to extend off-road cycling all the way to Bishopston, larger numbers of cyclists are expected to travel along Mayals Road making it all the more important to find a solution for that problematic bottom section.

**Dareyoush Rassi**

\* \* \*

As a daily cycle commuter up and down Mayals road I find the new cycle path extremely useful on the uphill side. I feel immeasurably safer when travelling uphill on the path away from the traffic. I use it every working day and am very glad it is there. I regularly see other cyclists using it and expect more once the Clyne Common stretch is complete.

On the downhill commute I am going 20-25 miles an hour and think the cycle path is not safe to use at this speed with its bumps, drives, crossings and bus stops. I also feel I am not holding up so many people on the downhill stretch as I am mostly going a similar speed to the vehicle traffic. Once the path across the common is built I can see myself bringing my children into Swansea on their bikes along this path and down to the sea front cycle path. (Although they may not thank me on the way back up!)

**Phil Brophy**

\* \* \*

I use it in much the same way as Phil and for the same reasons. On 9 out of 10 occasions when travelling downhill I'll use the road; I don't fancy travelling at 30 mph plus on the path with all its hazards! On the way uphill I invariably use portions of the path. I've been known to cycle through Clyne Gardens and pop out near Westport Avenue, then cross over to join the path.

One means of improving it would be to prioritise the cyclist/pedestrian crossing at the top of Fairwood Road, both over traffic leaving Fairwood Road and turning into it off Mayals Road. The current marking and supposed raised table does not make it clear that traffic travelling straight on (ie path users) has priority. This should be improved.

I was vehemently opposed to the changes to Mayals Road and was in favour of a path along Fairwood Road. Now it's built I don't see it going away; it does serve a purpose for inexperienced cyclists and provides a link to the eventual path across Clyne Common.

**Patrick Tribe**

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As one who has been cycling up and down the Mayals Road for over fifty years I welcome the off-road cycle track on the uphill south side. It enables me to ascend the hill without holding up traffic. The blue surfacing which provides continuity across minor junctions is great, but it needs to be continued across Fairwood Road. The photo shows this crossing with a car about to turn left across the path. This reinforces the point Patrick makes about the need to make it clear that path users should have priority across this junction.

I continue to descend on the road as I perceive that to be safer than the north side hybrid track, particularly on the upper part where it crosses driveways. Here it forms a useful buffer, providing better visibility for emerging motorists – provided it is not used by cyclists! I also appreciate that the road has been narrowed from between 7 and 8m to 6m. This means that the carriageways are below the *critical width* – given in the Welsh Active Travel Guidance as 3.2-3.9m.



This encourages motorists only to overtake when nothing is coming the other way, and it means that Mayals Road now meets the criterion for being suitable for cyclists.

**David Naylor**

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## A Continental cycle tour

As I have done over many years I went cycle touring in Holland and Germany this May. While I guess one has to expect all sorts of weather in May I had not expected it to be cold and wet in Germany, where in recent years the problem was that it was too hot. This year it was cold and wet in Germany but the sun shone in the UK and Holland.

My two week holiday involved travelling to Bavaria by bike, train and ferry, joining an organised tour there, and returning home, again by bike, train and ferry.

On the way out I travelled by train to Colchester and from there cycled the 25 miles to Harwich to catch the overnight ferry to Hook of Holland. Once you have found the way out of Colchester this is a pleasant ride on NCR 51. I enjoyed a pint and a bite in the 'Ye Olde Cherry Tree' in Little Oakley, 5 miles short of the ferry. In Holland well signed cycle paths took me to Rotterdam; from there a train to Roermond, and then a 15 mile cycle ride to the Gasthaus-zur-Post in Orsbeck, just inside Germany. The next day involved a little cycling, but mostly it was trains to Landsberg in Bavaria where I met up with the tour group.

The rain started as I entered Germany and continued, albeit light with some breaks, for the week I spent there, but May 9<sup>th</sup> – my birthday! – was fine. Despite the weather we had a great trip. There were 14 in the group in addition to Andre, the leader and owner of the tour company *Mercurio*, and his helper Samuel. The other 13 were all from Yorkshire and most knew each other. We were a cohesive group and got on well together.



Our ride through Bavaria was mostly on cycle paths through woods and meadows, remote from roads. The trees were newly in leaf, a pleasing blend of light green (mainly beech), dark green conifers and white blossom. The paths were nearly all smooth pothole-free asphalt. The photo shows Andre leading us on one of them.

We also cycled alongside lakes, of which there are many in Bavaria. These included the west side of Ammersee; Kochelsee where we stayed in the village of Kochel; and Walchensee, over 200m above Kochelsee, round which we cycled.

On the day we cycled to Kochel our route crossed the Murnauer Moos, a flat marshy area. It was the wettest day and after cycling through ankle deep puddles we encountered deeper waters where a small stream had overflowed. Andre wisely decided that we had to retreat. (Do e-bikes work if their motors are submerged?) This diversion added 10 miles to the ride. Not only did we get more cycling for our money but, byway of compensation, Andre treated us to *kaffee und Kuchen* in a café we happened upon.

*Mercurio* tours are not for the head-down roadie but if you don't mind easy rides of around 30 miles a day, staying in nice hotels, enjoying tasty picnic lunches and being taken up long hills in a bus or train, then maybe they are for you. There's a link to their website on the Links page of *Wheelrights* website.

**David Naylor**

## Forthcoming events

(This information and more is provided on the 'Events' page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk).)

### **Bike Week event:**

#### **Pier Street Party.**

Various rides will converge on the Environment Centre for a party where there will be stalls and cycling/green related activities. There will be a 'Dr bike' and a chance to test ride an e-bike. Wheelrights have organised four rides which leave at the following times and places:

- 9.30am from foreshore car park, Penclawdd, SA4 3YE (GG's), or Gowerton station Park & Ride car park at 9.55, or Dunvant Rugby Ground (BikeAbility) at 10.15.
- 10.00am from The Grove, Uplands, SA2 0QR.
- 10.30am from Ripples Café on the foreshore, SA3 5TW.
- 9.30am from Murton Community Centre, SA3 3AR. (Refreshments at 9.00am.)

### **Wheelrights Routes Group meeting/rides.**

These are usually at 10.00am monthly in Ripples Café. Check the Events page.

### **Cappuccino Rides.**

These are now underway. Details on the Events page.

### **U3A Rides.**

Also underway. Details on the Events page.

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This tool station is located in Gowerton near the diagonal crossing of the Gowerton bypass, opposite the Commercial pub. (In the background.)

They are cropping up in various places. They provide a stirrup pump and tools such as allen keys.