



# Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



**Newsletter No. 74 Winter 2025/26**

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



## A welcome link

On 24 September Swansea Council formally opened the link from the shared use path from Pontarddulais to the north platform of Gowerton Station. To continue south, instead of diverting through Gowerton, the railway can now be crossed by the footbridge and then NCR 4 joined by the Commercial Inn. This provides an off-road route from Pontarddulais to the coast except for a short bit of road between the station and NCR 4.

While this is fine for those who want to catch a train or who have arrived on one it is not convenient for 'through' travellers, ie those who simply want to cross the railway. Clearly a station bypass crossing the railway on a new pedestrian bridge using the abutments of the old railway bridge is needed. This would be shorter, avoid Station Road, the down and up to the station and, importantly, the tortuous footbridge crossing of the railway. A note about how this bypass can be achieved can be found on our website: follow the "Gowerton Station Bypass" links. The engineering should be straightforward and disruption to rail traffic minimal. (A pre-fabricated bridge would be lifted into position.) There are however major legal and bureaucratic challenges. Given the will these can be overcome.

## This issue

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A poem.

### Copy deadline

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

Our Chair kicks off with a summary of the Council's infrastructure plans, gleaned from an Active Travel Stakeholders meeting.

Next, Joe Muldoon makes the case for the North Gower Missing Link, as in his recent appeal update.

Then a summary of PEDW's report on the Gower Access Path.

This is followed by a description of our recent pioneering Kidical Mass ride.

Finally our President writes about this year's Shepton Mallet work camp.

**David Naylor**

**Chairman:** John Sayce

**Secretary:** Dareyoush Rassi

**Treasurer:** Chris Walsh

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For their contact details visit:

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

# Active Travel Stakeholders meeting

on 3 September 2025

This summary is based on notes I took at the meeting.

Pontarddulais. A route through Coedbach Park is now finished. Further connections are being considered.

White Rock bridge - Work has been completed under the bridge but is not yet open.

Three Crosses to Dunvant. Difficult because of common land and SSSI issues. A possible route is being developed.

Gowerton Station. The completed path was opened on 24 September. Lighting and CCTV, which is subject to agreement with Network rail, is awaited.

Sandfields. Options to improve permeability around Argyle Street are being looked at: possibly a contra flow for cyclists?

Penclawdd to Gowerton. Discussions with landlords have started and design options, especially around halfway house, shared with them. Lighting the path is being considered.

Loughor to Gowerton. Phase 1 from Ffordd Beck to Island House is being discussed. Phase 2: Island House to Loughor appears to be on hold.

Clyne Common (GAP). This still requires S38 consent. Consultation has now closed and the conclusion is awaited. The Council's Legal section have yet to buy the Common land.

Clyne valley Refurbishment of the section between the Railway Inn and Dunvant Car Park will commence in November subject to an agreement with a contractor. The existing rough path between Derwen Fawr and Clyne Valley Road will be tarmaced. However its western end does not link to NCR4 and we want to get this changed.

Penllergaer Woods. Negotiations continue with the Penllergaer Woods trust but should be completed shortly. The council have the money to complete this work.

Tawe Valley.— The path on the western side of the river is to be built without Active Travel funding. It is a difficult, costly and complex project, to be constructed when money is available.

Carmarthen Road. A concept is being developed and is likely to go out to consultation before Christmas.

Barrier Removal. There is little to report. Council don't appear to have a list of sites but welcome *Wheelrights* input. It was pointed out that they were put in to stop anti-social behaviour and that they had consulted with local councillors. Priority is for Active Travel funded routes.

Cycle hire. An e-bike dockless scheme, as in Bristol, is being looked at. It would be for the whole of Swansea, except that it would not reach certain areas.

**John Sayce**

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## The Missing Link

The current footway (pictured) heading west from Gowerton along the south side of the B4295 to Penclawdd is not a fit and proper path for shared use. It is 1.1km long and is the missing link in the SUP between the two villages.



Previous proposals to remedy this footway failed to reach a successful solution. This missing link acts as a barrier to its use for Active Travel which the Welsh Government support. This, combined with the rise in the popularity of walking and cycling, underlines the need for a solution.

The slim width of the path, combined with overgrown hedges and the close proximity of the carriageway, which increases the sense of speed and volume of traffic, adds to an unpleasant experience. The narrow footway is not conducive for people with disabilities or who ride mobility scooters, or families with buggies or prams, especially when they meet oncoming cyclists.

Gowerton has high traffic volumes which, especially at school commute times, underlines the fact that the missing link discourages more sustainable transport modes.

Where the shared use path from Gowerton currently ends cyclists are faced with the challenge of joining the carriageway and then contend with a rough pot-holed road surface. This discourages many cyclists who reasonably decide it's safer to continue along the footway, thereby compounding the risks to pedestrians and other path users.

We believe that addressing this problem will benefit communities from both villages, improve road safety, reduce barriers to active travel, encourage a healthier life style for all ages and abilities and enable them to enjoy the fantastic views along the Loughor estuary.

If you have not already signed the Missing Links petition you'll find it on <https://www.wheelrights.org.uk/campaigns.htm>.

**Joe Muldoon**

## **GAP: the Official Report.**

In August the report of PEDW (Planning and Environment Decisions, Wales) on the Gower Access Path (Case reference: *CAS-04405-W7F8N3 - Section 38 Common Land Application for works on Clyne Common.*) was published. This is a summary of it (rephrased to fit the space available).

### Ecology/Biodiversity

To ensure that the impact on the ecology of the Common is minimised an ecologist will be employed .

Swansea Council have worked closely with interested parties including Ward members, local interest groups, Commoners, various officers, the British Horse Society and ecology consultants.

The route will be aligned behind tree outcrops, thereby reducing the vegetation clearance required and minimising the impact on the biodiversity and ecology of the Common.

### Surfacing

The shared Use Path (SUP) will be surfaced with a material which includes rubber from recycled vehicle tyres (illustrated). This is suitable for horse riders.

### Route Alignment

To address Commoners' concerns the SUP will be set back from (south of) the existing stock proof fence. Cycle grids and by-pass gates will be installed at either end. Tree outcrops between the path and the road are proposed to screen it from the highway.



### Cycle Grids

These are designed to keep sheep and cattle off the SUP but allow the passage of cycles. The by-pass gates, which should be self-closing, are for pedestrians.

### Designated Use

As the route is dissected by bridleways equestrians will be permitted to use it.

### Interaction with Livestock

As there is the potential for livestock to venture onto the path it is envisaged that, as on roads, path users will give consideration to these animals, eg by reducing speed.

### Impact on Grazing

As the SUP will only occupy 0.2% of the Common area the impact on grazing is minimal.

### Order of Limitations

This comprises an explanation as to why horse riders will have "legal authority" to ride.

### Status

Legal complications due to not all the path being owned by the Council are explained. The essence is that it will remain a permissive route and that the Council will maintain it.

**David Naylor**

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## Kidical Mass Ride

Two years ago Patrick Tribe & I were invited to help with the first Swansea Kidical Mass ride organised by a great bunch of parents. Having been impressed with the delight on children's faces and positive feedback received, we were inspired to organise another ride this time as a *Wheelrights*' ride.

Kidical Mass rides are a chance for kids to take their bikes out on real roads and cycle paths enjoying the magical power of *safety in numbers*. Imagine a family-friendly peloton with purpose! These rides shine a spotlight on children's right to move safely, and spread the radical notion that kids should be able to bike to school and other places without it feeling like an extreme sport. And yes, they're also a gentle protest for better, safer cycling infrastructure.

When I think back to my childhood and how enabling the bike was, not just a right of passage but the freedom obtained by the ability to travel pretty much anywhere you like with your friends, igniting many adventures. I believe that getting children enthused to ride regularly will inevitably generate more adult cyclists.

A surprising amount of work goes into preparing these rides. One of the key tasks is designing a route not too short, not too long, not too easy and not too difficult. In addition both the Council and Police need to be informed of our intentions, risk assessments have to be completed and insurance sorted, etc. Fortunately, we had a number of willing and able *Wheelrights* volunteers to help with this and, on the day, organisational and marshalling duties.

Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November, the day of the ride quickly arrived. The iconic 'Vetch' field was a great starting location with plenty of space to get organised. A reception gazebo (borrowed from the Environment Centre) also provided a little shelter from a rain shower. There was a palpable buzz in the air, and the ride began promptly at 11am. There were all sorts of bikes including a tandem and a few cargo bikes, and loads of kids. The ride made its way towards the YMCA, Walters Rd, Magistrates Court and then after just under two miles returned to the Vetch via Sandfields, passing St Helen's Primary School.

Relieved that we had no incidents with only many positive experiences to take away. And finally two quotes from young adults: from Adda "I really enjoyed it because it was fun and I was cycling with my friends" and from Miri "It was a good thing because I got to ride with some of my friends and I didn't have to ride next to Mummy".



All in all a very successful event and hopefully seeds have been sown for the next generation of cyclists.

**Chris Walsh**

# Shepton Mallet work camp

6 to 13 September 2025

The annual Greenways and Cycleroutes work camp was again at Shepton Mallet; it extended the previous section of the Somerset Circle at Hamwood Viaduct for a mile to where it links with Thrupe Lane, a quiet road heading towards Radstock and Bath. Again we had the wonderful campsite (pictured) at Rock Farm (thanks to Gavin Mayall) and were again fed by Chris and Claire Grimshaw with their camper van.



The railway was required by the owner for access and so land alongside it was obtained for the route. So I had to rethink my previous strategy which was, where possible, to use disused railway routes because they were already engineered with excavation, drainage and ballast. We therefore had the extra work to excavate to formation, build the path base with stone and drainage, but we were able to connect to the former railway drains and use existing culverts. The resulting path, out of the railway cutting, gives fantastic views of the countryside, even Glastonbury Tor on a clear day.



Our superb local contractor Mark Golding had done a lot of the formation preparation, including cross drains and the construction of a "sleeper Bridge", comprising a metal frame and old concrete sleepers (pictured.) for the farm access. We connected cross drains, and at two railway culverts we built retaining structures to allow a platform to be cut into the steep railway embankment slope below the railway but above the culverts.

Gabions (One is pictured.) were used to build up the retaining wall. They provide a brilliant method where there is a strong volunteer labour force. On the upper side concrete sleepers laced with steel rope support the bank. At one culvert entrance we built a small dam which created a pond to enhance the environment.



Gated crossings for farm animals were constructed in concrete at four locations (to prevent damage to the path) and considerable clearance and fence building was carried out in the wooded section. The stone in a railway masonry retaining wall alongside the path was spalling and in need of pointing (illustrated); this provided a feature for users to enjoy.

The extensive drainage work needed headwalls to prevent soil entering the pipes. This involved our tried and tested method of filling sandbags with a lean mix, placing them to form the wall and then letting them go off to create a permanent structure, albeit mostly out of sight. I with my helpers, a Tesco trolley and a couple of cut off traffic cones filled hundreds with the mix (1 to 10 cement to sand).



As always innovative benches were constructed (this time using recycled Ekki hardwood from harbour piles in Holland) that were difficult to cut and drill but will last forever. These comprise four simple benches mounted on stone blocks and three so called simplicity benches (pictured) that provide different height seats with table tops. These were a nightmare to cut to the correct dimensions.

A shelter with seats, a very rare feature despite our climate (not one on five miles of Swansea foreshore despite millions spent at Mumbles) was built mostly out of pallets donated by a volunteer, and steps were built down to a seat to give a fine view of Hamwood Viaduct.



Meanwhile bridge shutters and steel reinforcement were being assembled in the yard ready for a bridge to be constructed in October at Cheddar

All in all a very productive week despite some inclement weather; some 88 volunteers worked 362 person-days, many who helped on previous work camps. A fantastic effort that gives us all great pride in our various contributions. It was officially opened on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

To complete the connection with Shepton Mallett there remains landowner agreements to enable us use the magnificent Bath Road Viaduct and Showering's Charlton Viaduct (famous for its Babycham).

In a rare moment of leisure we walked the route from Hamwood Viaduct through Windsor Hill Tunnel and over these latter two viaducts to enjoy a courtesy tea at the fantastic Kilver Court Gardens below Charlton Viaduct (pictured).



**David Judd**

## Forthcoming events

(Details on the Events page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk).)

Monday, 24 November: **Wheelrights AGM** in the Environment Centre. Other events will as usual be listed on the Events page. These include the Routes Group meetings, normally early in each month.

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The following is a sequel to the poem in last Winter's Newsletter.

### Gower Access Path (continued)

A year has passed and we have yet to see  
A path across Clyne Common  
From Mayals Road to Bishopston  
That's safe to use and traffic free.  
How much longer must we wait  
For that path to be built?

The Commoners are satisfied, the path is redesigned;  
There was funding for it, but is this now denied?  
If so then other funds can surely be acquired;  
The cost is low in traffic terms so should not be hard to find.  
The planners now give it support.\*  
When will the path get built?

When done it's not just adults who will choose  
To walk or wheel across the Common.  
School children then can also use  
Their bike, or hike to school in Bishopston;  
Healthier and more fun than car or bus,  
When eventually that path gets built.

Rolyan

\* See article on p.4

## Merry Christmas!