



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 75 Spring 2026

www.wheelrights.org.uk

About Cycle Funding



Leisure cycling in Germany

In this column a year ago I suggested that we need to cater for leisure cyclists (pictured) as well as active travellers. I then used the case of the lack of a N-S link through Llethrid Cwm to illustrate this. I make no apology for raising this issue again as I think it important.

We have on occasion criticised the Council for spending Active Travel money on routes which are not just for active travel. But, of the four UK Nations, only Wales excludes leisure cycling from AT funding; so should we not therefore welcome all cycle provision (which meets the guidelines) and encourage the Council to include routes also used for leisure? This does not mean that we should not support

active travel – of course we should. Our main *raison d'être* is to encourage people to cycle as a mode of transport – to get to work, to school, to shop, etc.. But should we not also support other bike users – tourists and those who cycle for leisure or fitness, such as illustrated in the photo – and be happy for them to use facilities provided primarily for active travellers?

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Copy deadline

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

First, Nick describes a welcome development in Sandfields. This is followed by a letter; then an update on the path across Clyne Common.

On p.4 Brenda invites us to take action about the lack of provision for cyclists on the new one way streets in Sketty.

Then John Britton tells us about his recent cycle tour in Portugal.

Finally our President records a Greenways Awards ceremony in Bilbao where John Grimshaw's Charity received an award.

David Naylor

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For their contact details visit:

www.wheelrights.org.uk/aboutus

New Rain Gardens in Sandfields

This is an exciting development to make cycling easier in Swansea.

Several roads in Sandfields are not through routes to cars; I think to stop residential roads being used as rat runs.

Further good news is that three of these have been transformed into rain gardens, which also provide level access for bikes, pushchairs and wheelchairs without them being blocked by parked cars.

The best one, at the east end of Vincent Street (pictured), also has chairs and trees to make it a pleasant community area. This rain garden is particularly important as it enables children and families to ride to the Vincent Street school, and to the park and playground on the Vetch field.

The lovely design was created by Kate (at Urban Foundry – a Swansea urban design firm, where also our member Gordon Gibson works).

Wheelrights has asked Swansea Council to sign a bike route from the west (Guildhall) end of Fleet Street, via Bond and Vincent Streets and the Vetch field to William Street and the city centre; all quiet residential roads.

However, the Council's response has been mixed: they are talking about making the whole of Sandfields "permeable for cyclists" rather than specific signed routes.

One of the Council's Highways officers highlighted that these rain gardens had been funded by three different organizations which had three different aims: environmental and flood defence as well as Active Travel. This officer suggested that future bike routes should be considered where they have several benefits.

Please visit these rain gardens, and let us know if they can be replicated on other roads.

Nick Guy

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Correspondence

Joe Muldoon in "The Missing Link" (Newsletter, issue 74, p.3) makes a strong case for the upgrading of the missing part of the North Gower path. I wonder if the approach used in Sandfields (my article above) might help this campaign? This stretch of bike path would provide safer routes to the two Comprehensive schools in Gowerton, enable tourist and leisure riders/walkers to access Gower, as well as being an active travel route linking communities with Gowerton train station.

Nick Guy



Mind the GAP

On January 12th this year we were informed that the Welsh Government Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW) had allowed the Council's application for their amended scheme to provide a SUP for walkers, cyclists and equestrians alongside the B4436 across Clyne Common.

This decision is a crucial step in what we we hope will be the provisional of this vital piece of AT infrastructure linking the communities of Mayals and Bishopston and beyond into Swansea and parts of South Gower.

The next step is the funding required to build the path, by the time of publication we expect the bid to secure this funding from Welsh Government will have been submitted by Swansea City Council.

Once the funding is allocated work should be able to commence early in the next financial year, most likely at the Bishopston end of the link extending from the short length of SUP from the Glebe, along Northway and into Murton, alongside the Community Centre building on Murton Green.

Work on the bulk of the path, inside the fenced off part of the Common, should commence as soon as possible after the nesting season, effectively September, leading to what we anticipate will be an opening of the path in its entirety before the end of 2026.

It's taken a long time and a lot of effort from many to get here and we are optimistic that the remaining obstacles will be overcome without too much further delay and we will arrive at situation where at long last people will be able to cross and enjoy the Common without recourse to the use of a motorised vehicle.



Patrick Tribe

Looking west along the B4436 from near the top of Mayals. The path will be to the left of the road.

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Object now to Experimental One-ways.

Where? In Sketty, the western section of Eversley Road is now one-way (east) from Gower Road to Frogmore Avenue, and Frogmore Avenue is one-way (north) from Eversley Road to Cae Saeson Crescent. The sign pictured is *not* in Sketty! It is elsewhere.

Why? The Sketty ward councillors asked for this. Reasons given include 'concerns' about traffic volumes, about vehicles passing each other in streets narrowed by parking, and about damage to residents' parked vehicles (a door mirror, reportedly). Residents have been informed that if this arrangement is 'successful' there could be 'further changes' (implying more one-way streets).



'Experimental'? Permanent layout changes were proposed (new kerbs, angled parking outside the Eversley Road car park) but a 'reversible' experimental arrangement starting on 17 Nov. 2025, with a six-month window in which objections could be made was favoured.

What's the legal basis? The Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/ycfy2hy>. An ETRO can be seen as an extended live consultation. The ETRO runs for 18 months but objections can be made only until 16 May 2026. Then the authority may make the arrangements permanent after considering any objections.

What's this got to do with cycling?

When deciding on which route to cycle we all make accommodations with traffic, gradients, turns and other factors. One-way streets reduce our choices, often forcing us onto busier roads, steeper hills and longer routes with riskier turns – and they tempt some into pavement cycling. See box for the official view. Neither this 'temporary experimental' set-up nor the planned permanent arrangement provides for contraflow cycling.

Welsh Active Travel Act Guidance 11.21.2

Permeability for cyclists can be greatly enhanced by exempting them from one-way restrictions; [this] encourages active travel with connections unavailable to motorised traffic. Retaining two-way cycling should be considered if it is proposed to introduce one-way working for general traffic.

What can we do? Respond during the six-month consultation period, ie *by 16 May 2026*. Do you have to change your route? Do the higher driving speeds encouraged by one-way working worry you? Are you intimidated by drivers trying to overtake you as they know nothing is coming the other way up the Frogmore Avenue hill? Are you worried by the priority given to motor traffic in these back streets? Or by the failure to follow the guidance? Do you question how the 'success' of the experimental arrangement will be measured?

Send your objection before 16 May 2026 quoting reference DVT/284691/AR to Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Business Intelligence, Civic Centre, Oystermouth, Road, Swansea, SA1 3SN or via email to Legal.TrafficNotices@swansea.gov.uk

Brenda Lillicrap

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Winter Sun on Two Wheels in the Algarve

In December 2025 my partner and I escaped the short days and drizzle at home and spent a week in the eastern Algarve, based in Tavira. We hired bikes and over the course of the week rode most of the stretch between Faro and the Spanish border. It turned out to be one of the most peaceful and restorative cycling breaks we've had.

The riding along this section of southern Portugal is almost entirely flat. For mile after mile you're pedalling just behind long sweeps of white sandy beach, separated from the Atlantic by dunes, lagoons and the shifting channels of the Ria Formosa. In places the route hugs quiet lanes; elsewhere it follows sandy tracks and sections of the Ecovia do Litoral, Portugal's long-distance coastal cycle route.

What struck us most was the light and the space. The temperature hovered in the mid-teens, the sun shone most days, and there were hardly any people about. In summer this coastline is busy, but in December we often had entire stretches to ourselves. The only sounds were the wind in the grasses and the rhythmic hum of tyres on compacted sand. It felt wonderfully calm.

The birdlife was superb. The lagoons and saltmarshes are rich feeding grounds, and we regularly saw flamingoes, avocets, herons and flocks of waders lifting in unison as we approached. Storks were a particular highlight, many already nesting on chimneys and telegraph poles. Seeing these huge birds calmly rearranging twigs against a bright blue sky was a reminder that winter in southern Europe has a very different character from ours.

We reached the border town of Vila Real de Santo Antonio. It was here that we stumbled across one of the most extraordinary Christmas displays either of us has seen. In the town hall stood a vast nativity scene – easily 50 feet long and 20 feet deep – complete with hillsides, villages and painstakingly detailed figures. Suspended above the scene were model vultures circling on fine wires, adding drama to an already impressive tableau. Throughout the week we saw smaller presépios (nativity scenes) in churches and public buildings, all beautifully done. There's something very embracing about Christmas in Portugal.

A practical note for anyone tempted to take a bike. You can carry bicycles on the regional trains that run along the Algarve line between Faro and Vila Real de Santo António (with connections towards Spain), but the rolling stock is distinctly old fashioned. The trains have high steps (illustrated; the photo is from an internet article by João Marinho) and lifting a loaded touring bike up into the carriage requires a fair bit of strength – and sometimes a helpful fellow passenger. Platforms are generally low, so there's no level boarding.



But change is on the horizon. The Algarve line is being electrified, with overhead wires already in place along much of the route. The expectation is that electric trains will replace the ageing diesel units, bringing improved accessibility and, one hopes, easier bike access with lower floors and more generous multi-purpose spaces. If that materialises, it will make combining rail and cycling along this coast even more attractive.

Although our week was calm and sunlit, it was sobering to read that in January of this year severe storms swept across parts of Portugal, Spain and France. Torrential rain and high winds caused significant damage along the Algarve coast. A friend with a house in Sagres told me that several beach bars were simply destroyed by the ferocity of the seas. It was a stark reminder of how precarious our climate has become, and how exposed these beautiful coastal environments are.

That contrast – between the serene, almost empty beaches we enjoyed in December and the destructive storms only weeks later – has stayed with me. Cycling at a gentle pace along those fragile dunes and lagoons, you become very aware of how finely balanced these landscapes are.

All in all, we would thoroughly recommend the eastern Algarve for an off-season cycling trip. Flat, scenic, rich in wildlife and culture, and blessed (at least when we were there) with gentle winter sun. It's a part of Europe that rewards unhurried exploration – and one that reminds us why protecting both climate and coastline matters so much.

If you're looking for a December ride with light, space and birdsong, Tavira and the road to the Spanish border might just be the place.

John Britton



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European Greenways Awards 2025

This group of some 13 member countries (who are developing Greenways) join up to share experience of their development. Every two years they have an awards competition for best practice and this year *Greenways and Cycleroutes* submitted a bid. (They chose the *Exemplary* category to publicise their methodology and gave details of the schemes they had built.) They are a Bristol based charity led by John Grimshaw (founder and Chief Engineer of Sustrans for 30 years) and with whom I have volunteered at workshops over its ten year life developing routes. I have reported back on most of these in our newsletters.

Details of the competition are on <https://www.aevv-egwa.org/> and of the group on their website: greenwaysandcycleroutes.org.

The schemes they develop are mostly small difficult projects that have languished for years and need the experience and dedication their team of volunteers possess to raise local support and drive them forward. In October they held their AGM near Bilbao; we had an indication we were in line for a prize (one of the 9 awarded), so John Grimshaw (Chief Engineer), Caroline Levett (Company Secretary) and I (a mere mortal) went over to receive it and spend a few days enjoying that fantastic area. The judges agreed unanimously to give us first prize.



We stayed the first night in Bilbao and enjoyed the fantastic waterside environment and sculptures and then moved for the AGM to a hotel in Portugalete, downstream alongside their famous transporter bridge (Pictured; there are only a few left – one in Newport). This one, I have to say, was in a more attractive location, and provided vital connection between the old and new town.

Historically this was a major iron ore mining area, exporting ore for smelting. The numerous railways used to transport ore to where there was coal to smelt it have been converted into Greenways. In addition historical information has been retained in a museum and conference centre at Albanto-Zierbena in the Basque Country where we met for the award ceremony, overlooking a spectacular iron ore opencast site.

Details of the awards are on the website, suffice to say we won the first class in our category and John, Caroline and I, pictured with the award and beret, which was subsequently donated to and treasured by me. The next day we had a few trips on some of the nearby Greenways, both walking and on electric bikes, followed by a grand dinner in the evening to celebrate the event.

On the Saturday we had a chance to go by train to Balmaseda, the centre of the resistance in the civil war, to explore the upper Basque region. A beautiful small town with a museum showing history and customs of the area well worth the visit. We returned by bus to our hotel near the airport ready for our morning flight back to Bristol.



David Caroline John



It was indeed a memorable trip in the company of John, Caroline and the 100 or so delegates, seeing first hand what routes the local area was providing and learning about the developments of other member states.

My overriding memory was the visit to an 18th Century iron foundry, seeing the craftsmen in their traditional gear working iron in a charcoal furnace with its bellows and hammer run off a waterwheel.

David Judd

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Forthcoming events

(This information and more is provided on the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk .)

Wheelrights Routes Group meetings.

These are held monthly at 10.00am on a Saturday normally in Ripples Café, West Cross. Check the Events page for the next one.

Wheelrights public meeting.

23 March: 7.00pm in the Volcano Theatre (High Street, Swansea). Details to come.

U3A and Cappuccino Rides.

The U3A rides take place monthly. The Cappuccino rides will restart in March/April when it's warmer, but only if there is enough support. There were only one or two regulars last year. If you know of any new people who may be interested, please ask them to contact Allyson. See the Events page for both and the Rides page for Allyson's contact details.

Other

9 to 15 June: Bike week.

27 to 31 May: Swansea and Gower Cycling Festival.

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