



Swansea Active Travel Routes to be Updated

Consultation on an update to the Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) began in July. We hope that you will take part. To do so, Brenda, on p. 4, provides you with the link and offers advice on how you can contribute. The Consultation is over 12 weeks and the Council are required to submit their updated ATNM to the Welsh Government by 1 Dec.

The ATNM was last updated in 2022. The extent to which it has been implemented has been disappointing. The excellent start made by the last but one Labour administration when Julie James and Lee Waters were respectively Minister and Deputy Minister of Transport has not been followed up. Key cycling links such as the South and North Gower Access Paths, the bespoke cycle track along Walter and Sketty Roads, and a south of Fabian Way link to the Bay Campus as an alternative to NCR4 are not even it seems on the 'to do' list!



No! The happy cyclists in the photo are not cycling on a traffic free alternative to a busy road near Swansea, but far away in Germany. It was taken on one of my cycle tours.

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Copy deadline

Please send copy for the next issue to David by mid November. (Email: david@davidjnaylor.plus.com).

This issue

First, a letter responding to an article in the last issue, followed by an article on this year's SGCF, then, on p.4, Brenda offers advice on how to respond to the ATNM consultation.

On p.5 our President provides background to the ToolKit about which Laura Laker recently gave a Webinar.

Then Bill Gannon tells us about his cycle tour in Belgium, following which we learn about Jon and Brenda's experiences on their tandem

Finally, photographic evidence of a close pass.

David Naylor

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A letter to the Editor

Floating bus stops

In response to Brenda's "Safe Cycling vs 'Inclusivity'" article (Issue 76, p.7) the best argument I can think of to make in favour of floating bus-stops involves the Welsh Government's own recent commitment to "making Wales a safe place for women".

If cycle routes are to be routed away from bus-routes, then they will necessarily be consigned to back-streets and alleyways. These are precisely the places where women will be more likely to encounter unsafe places, intimidation, threats, and potentially even violence. The well-lit, overlooked bus route is the opposite on all counts.

In any case, changing the cycle route guidance will not make a single visually impaired person safer. That is because they are not endangered by 'cyclists', they are endangered by 'kids on bikes', and their behaviour will be the same regardless of what is painted on the road. Kids are irresponsible on push-bikes, then they are irresponsible on electric bikes, then motorbikes, then behind the wheel of a car, and then at some point they grow up. It has always been thus, and the more of that process that is completed on a push bike, the safer we all are. Let's all keep the risks in perspective.

Bill Gannon

—oOo—

2026 Swansea & Gower Cycling Festival

What an unforgettable five days on the road. The attendance at this late-May event was a record. It showcased the very best scenery, coastlines, and the cycling terrain South Wales has to offer. Drawing a brilliant mix of local club regulars alongside visiting cyclists from Stroud, Reading, Bristol, Cardiff, North Wales and the Midlands this annual event delivered five packed days of group riding under ideal early-summer conditions.

Operating from *BikeAbility Wales* HQ at the Dunvant Rugby Club, cyclists set out each morning on an expertly curated ride program crafted to highlight the region's most iconic visual landmarks, historic sites, and challenging topography. The rides were classified into three types:



- Scenic Leisure Loops: Families and casual cyclists cruised along the sheltered, tree-canopied Clyne Valley trail, emerging onto the Mumbles seafront with sweeping, unobstructed views across Swansea Bay out toward Mumbles Head and its historic lighthouse, before following the coastal path around to the cliffs of Southgate and Three Cliffs Bay.
- Gower Heritage Routes: Mid-distance groups wound through the quiet, rolling lanes of North Gower, taking in panoramic vistas across the Loughor Estuary, passing historic sites like Weobley Castle, and sweeping past the ancient woodland at Cwm Ivy and the expansive salt marshes of Llanrhidian.
- Tough Valley & Mountain Randonnées: Seasoned endurance riders tackled demanding 70-mile loops pushing inland, tackling steep valley ascents through Neath Port Talbot and across the Carmarthenshire border to earn breathtaking, high-altitude views reaching toward the Black Mountain and the Brecon Beacons fringe.

This selection earned glowing feedback across all ability levels, offering a thorough showcase of Gower's natural diversity alongside the rugged beauty of the surrounding valleys. A triumph for local cycling culture!

Whether regrouping atop panoramic hilltops, pausing for café stops along the coast, or gathering for post-ride refreshments back at the Dunvant clubhouse, the atmosphere throughout the five-day event reflected the very best of the Welsh cycling community. The addition of on-site camping pitches at Dunvant Rugby Club brought a lively, weekend-long festival vibe that encouraged both local riders and traveling guests from across the UK to make a full holiday of the event.

The seamless execution of such a multi-faceted event relied heavily on the dedicated ride leaders, support crews, and back markers who guided every group safely through these spectacular courses.

With record participation numbers, enthusiastic feedback from riders of all ages, and glowing praise for the route choices, the 2026 Swansea & Gower Cycling Festival built on the success of the last three years and has put Swansea firmly on the festival map.

Adele Stuart



Review of Swansea Routes

Have your say on future cycling routes in Swansea. The council is updating its Active Travel Network Map (ATNM). They say: “The update will provide an up-to-date evidence base to support future Regional Transport Fund grant funding applications.” and that “Routes not on the map cannot receive active travel funding from the Welsh Government.”

Everyone who wants cycling to be safer and more enjoyable in Swansea has the chance to contribute by taking part in the consultation. It's open now, until 19 October 2026.

To take part go to [https://datamap.gov.wales/survey/Swansea AT Survey 2/](https://datamap.gov.wales/survey/Swansea%20AT%20Survey%202/) and fill in the boxes as you feel appropriate. The map showing the proposed future routes (the ATNM) should pop up near the top of the screen. To find the SWA number of a particular route click on it and enlarge it – a lot! – and the number should appear.

If you've got five minutes: include just three routes you think should have priority in the box in Section 1(2). Wheelrights suggests asking for priority on, say, three routes that would encourage you or your family to choose cycling as an everyday way of getting about. Wheelrights' choices are Walter/Sketty Road for which designs are already drawn up, the “Missing Link” in North Gower and the Clyne Common path. The designs for the last two have been in preparation for some time.

In box 1(3) You can add your observations about your experience of using a route: is a particular bollard/chicane too tricky, is a crossing missing, is the mix of foot/cycle traffic too much...? Also add the personal information in Section 2(1-7).

Wheelrights is formulating its own response, which will be in the form of an email, it will also raise broader issues.

If you've got a bit longer: Check existing routes on the ATNM for errors and identify unnecessary proposed routes. Also please check the corresponding routes on the four Wheelrights maps. In many cases a single Wheelrights route involves more than one on the ATNM, and in a few vice versa. Both acronyms have been assigned if there is a good overlap, indicating that it is just one route.

Identify [in box 2(3)] the location of barriers to everyday cycling of which you are aware (actual barriers and metaphorical ones, e.g. poor crossing provision, hazardous side street crossings, missing dropped kerbs).

Check the proposed routes for important missing bits, also for daft/unnecessary ones.

[Ed: To see where at least some of the routes on the ATNM begin and end you might refer to the four maps on the Routes page of Wheelrights website (under “Cycle routes in Swansea”). These provide this information for existing routes, routes which Wheelrights would like to see on the ATNM and some already on it. Routes which appear on both are identified by both a Wheelrights acronym and the ATNM one, eg: the North Gower path (the ‘Missing Link’) on the NW Swansea map, shown as NG (131) in the Legend, is also ATNM Route SWA131.]

Brenda Lillicrap

Rural Path Campaign Toolkit

Many may have heard of, even read, her book *Potholes and Pavements, a bumpy ride on Britain's National Cycle Network* by journalist Laura Laker. [Ed: reviewed in the Winter 2024-25 Newsletter (Issue 70)] If you haven't read it then I suggest you do even if it leaves you a bit despondent as to how best to make real progress on route development, there are many hurdles and it's not getting easier.

As a follow up Laura decided to write about ways of improving progress on this, especially where schemes have been held up for many years, often due to land acquisition. How best to learn from past experience of successes gave her the idea of revisiting and extending the information and methods gathered from people she had met for her book. This resulted in her Rural Path Campaign Toolkit. The toolkit is divided into sections for action according to the issues and includes messages to be positive, work with local groups and local authorities, assisting their efforts whilst keeping the focus on moving forward. On 7 July she gave a Cycling England Webinar about the toolkit. Under the new heading "Rural Paths Campaigning Toolkit" on the Routes page of Wheelrights website I explain how the Webinar gave a remarkable insight into the effectiveness of local involvement and pressure and provide a link to it.

This toolkit represents a significant exposure of the many pitfalls that exist and how they may be overcome. It is based on the experience of people from all over the country, and is indeed a valuable guide on how to progress schemes. It gives an amazing insight into the ways individuals, groups and even officials have responded. It is a remarkable collection of ways and means of getting things done despite almost overwhelming opposition.



Some suggestions are pretty simple and remind me of many occasions in my own experience, such as naming the scheme to give it an identity that explains its function or locality, or apply pressure to make progress. There are examples of schemes all over the Country that have come about because of the persistence of individuals or groups .

My own experience of the methods is largely due to my connection over 30 years with John

Grimshaw (founder and Chief Engineer of Sustrans, who for the last 15 years headed up *Greenways and Cycleroutes* with Caroline Levett). Many examples of his successes and methods are detailed in the toolkit including current work on the Somerset Circle in Shepton Mallet aided by a remarkable local group on the Strawberry Line. The photos show work at Shepton Mallet: on the left drystone wall building and on the right a Gabion retaining wall.

David Judd



Flanders Tour



It was 34°C according to the forecast as we rode towards Antwerp, but the automated sign on an Apotheek we had just passed (located no doubt above concrete) was showing 39°C. Two days before, at 4am, our first ride leader (coffee expert 'B') had succumbed to a bad dose of vomiting – so bad that the tour company flew out replacement 'I', just to drive the van. Now our second ride leader (pilates expert 'R') also started feeling nauseous. Maybe it was the heat, or was it a vomiting bug? We didn't know, but the decision was taken to leave R with P&T (a GP and his wife, riding a tandem) whilst we headed on to our scheduled stop at a Flemish mini-brewery. Later, T said she didn't think she could ride the next day, and P couldn't ride the tandem on his own...



Antwerp building with many flags.

It's fair to say this cost the tour company (Pedal Nation of Sheffield) a lot more lost sleep than it cost us, and they have our sympathy. In truth, we all had our own GPX files for each day's route, a support van full of food, good bikes, and decades of cycling experience. Oh! And our own GP. As it turned out, the next day was less hot, and we all completed the day's ride to Leuven as planned. However, it was an object lesson in the effects of heat.

The other lesson we learned was about the stark contrast between cycling in Flanders and Wallonia. It's like you cross a line on the map, and suddenly you are riding amongst lorries and high-powered saloons, dodging parked cars and potholes. The Flandrians love their bikes; the Wallonians tolerate them.

In case you do not know, Flanders is the northern half of Belgium, where they speak Dutch; Wallonia is the southern half, where they speak French. You can try speaking French in Flanders if you want to, but they will reply in English.

For me the high points were Brugge and Ghent. They were eye-opening in terms of friendliness and infrastructure, and my Beeline made short work of guiding me to any random point I picked on the map. It was bliss.

Trip: Dover, Ostend, Brugge, Ghent, Antwerp, Leuven, Mons, Kortrijk, Dunkirk, Dover (8 nights). **Group size:** 6 + 2 leaders. **Cost:** £1,725 (+ £160 for Dover, optional). **Excludes:** evening meals.

Bill Gannon



Taking to a Tandem

After some quarter century of enjoying my (cheapo ex-rental) bike for everything from escaping the tedious motor congestion on shopping errands to the odd softy tour (with my partner, Jon – B&Bs, definitely not camping) I started wondering about graduating to an e-bike. However, my eyesight (already not good enough to drive) meant it was perhaps unwise to cycle. But it's such fun! I really would like to keep doing it for as long as possible. So we committed to an e-tandem (not at all cheapo...).

What's it like, taking to a tandem? We've had it for about ten months and covered about 500 miles, mostly local. Given my eyesight, I'm always the one on the back (the stoker). It's been quite an adjustment not being able to see much of the way ahead (bumps, branches, loose dogs, wandering children, hills, bends, barriers) and having no control of the steering, gears or brakes. Fortunately, the captain on the front has taken on board (ha!) the need for lots of communication and is getting quite good at it. We've pretty much mastered controlled starts and stops and have arrived at a *modus vivendi* on cadence ("I can't pedal that fast") and gear choice ("Change down dammit"). Full and frank discussions are ongoing about appropriate speed and, crucially, the amount of wobbling or lean that's OK before the stoker yelps. I'll explain. When turns, barriers or other path users mean you need to go very slowly, on a standard bike you balance the bike by making minor adjustments to the steering and shifting your weight slightly. If you're on the back of a tandem you often haven't seen what's in front and it feels very twitchy and unstable. And if the captain suddenly finds it necessary to stop and put his foot down, tilting the bike in the process, it's scary.

We will gradually get more skilled, and it's most definitely worth it for the fun of being out on a bike. But it does take a certain amount of determination (or bloody mindedness) to be using the tandem for routine daily errands that replace the car for short local journeys.

The challenges of getting around on a tandem have highlighted the shortcomings of provision for cycling in Swansea. On the most direct, least steep main roads, there are no protected cycling routes. Cycling on roads, mixing with motor traffic needs (besides nerves of steel) the ability to start off quickly with traffic or to turn right through traffic. Most of Swansea's designated routes for cycling aren't up to the standard set by the ATA Guidance (a coherent network of, direct, safe, comfortable, attractive routes) that would make them easy and inviting for trainee tandem riders – or for anyone new to or nervous about cycling. The seafront route is lovely when empty (i.e. when the weather's bad) but needs laser-like attention on what everyone else may be going to do when it's busy. The so-called routes that are no more than cycle roundels slapped onto pavements demand the ability to slow down, balance and scan quickly for turning traffic (or stop and restart) at every side turn. Many routes demand that you position the bike at crossings so that you can reach to press the button for the lights while also manoeuvring round posts, railings and people on foot. And then there are the barriers. So many barriers that don't conform to the guidance. Even the ones that may be rideable by a forewarned practised rider on a

standard bike are impossible on a tandem. Just two examples – the one between the river path and the road bridge at Sainsbury's (GR 661932) and the one at the bottom of Dunvant Road at Olchfa (GR 609932).

These are things that take some of the fun out of local tandem riding – and they're also the things, with their unnecessary stop-starting and unnerving wobbly moments, that put off people who otherwise might quite like the idea of trying out cycling as a way of being more active, using the car less and having more fun. Let's keep campaigning for improvements.

Brenda Lillicrap

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A Close Pass

The photo, a screen shot from a video taken by me on Gors Avenue, illustrates an all-too-common hazard. It is pretty clear that I was not given the 1.5m clearance required by the Highway Code. In fact I was close enough to give a friendly tap on the side of the car to make them aware of my presence.



Sadly, I, like many others, am all too familiar with the "close pass" and tend not to scream in shock or horror when they happen. Maybe we become desensitised to the experience. However, for those who are being encouraged by the Welsh Government to engage in Active Travel, a close pass could well be enough to put them off cycling on the road forever. A recent survey by a colleague in my place of work found that many staff wouldn't even contemplate cycling on the road due to their perceived fear of the risk.

Martin Thomas

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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 usually at 10.00am monthly and take place in Ripples Café. Check the Events page..