



# Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



**Newsletter** No. 14 Winter 2010/11

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

## Our European(?) Boulevard

The Swansea Boulevard dominates this issue. This is because now is a critical time; some money (£17.5m according to the *Evening Post*) has become available to start work on it, but the plans for cyclists and pedestrians are yet to be finalised. As Nick Guy explains on p.3 the Council are involving us in the plans.

The photo shows most of the area affected. Oystermouth Road runs from top left to bottom right. LC2 and the Waterfront museum are centre left. The cycle route to the south of Oystermouth Road to which Nick refers will run to the left of the picture. Links to the City Centre either side of LC2 and to the junction at the bottom of Wind Street (right foreground) are proposed.

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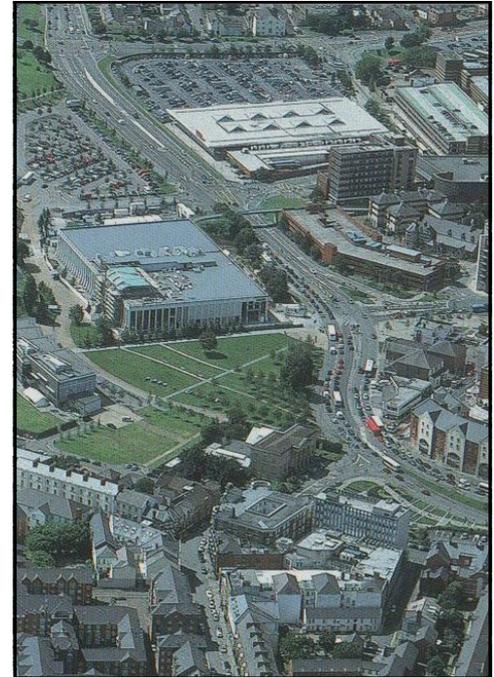
### Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by mid February

### **Wheelrights' meeting**

Our next meeting will be at 7.00pm on Monday 17 January in the Environment Centre. The Boulevard will be top of the agenda followed by our plans for 2011.

All are welcome.



## Editorial

In contrast to Nick's upbeat article on the Boulevard Gordon Gibson, on P.4, provides a damning critique of the Council's latest plans for the Tawe bridges which underlines what we are up against. This with the responses to it on the next page makes one ask: should we throw in the towel?

I think not. Despite actions contrary to the Assembly's walking and cycling policies the Council have done some things for cyclists in Swansea. Our role therefore is to work with them to try and ensure that they follow the guidelines in *Manual for Streets* (as David Judd notes on p.5).

Elsewhere in this issue there is some good news on p.2, and then on the last three pages: a description of a rather special ride, Claudine's piece with its enigmatic title which might indeed spark some correspondence, and finally a glimpse into the not too distant future.

Merry Christmas!

**David Naylor**

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## Honours for *Wheelrights'* officers

### *Wheelrights* President, David Judd, gets award



Courtesy Huw John, freelance photographer

On Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November, at the Welsh Assembly Government's *Walking and Cycling* Conference, David Judd was presented with a *Lifetime Achievement Award* by Jane Davidson, the Welsh Sustainability Minister.

We arranged for the presentation in recognition of David's enormous contribution to the development of the NCN in south west Wales and his contribution to Sustrans. Jane Davidson paid him a warm tribute and David gave a lively speech in which he gave tribute to those he's worked closest with and in particular to colleagues in Bristol for their support. Since 2007 David has been helping us as a consultant on Connect2 schemes and overseeing our relationship with Pembrokeshire Council.

As the funding for his work with Pembrokeshire has come to an end David will be finishing his work for us at the end of the year. The well used paths he's created stand testimony to his great work and significant achievement, and I'm very grateful for all he has done.

David is keen to point out he is not dead yet

**Lee Waters** (Head of Sustrans Cymru)

### *Wheelrights* Secretary, David Naylor, is honoured

David was one of three short listed for a *Sustainable Swansea Champion Award* but did not get the award. The winner (Alan Brayley, Managing Director of AB Glass) was announced at a ceremony in the Dylan Thomas Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> October. The letter inviting David to the ceremony contained the following sentence:

*They [the judges] were clearly impressed with your work with Wheelrights and [the] CTC and commented that you help to make cycling more accessible for others, leading to improvements in their health and well being and improving recreational and transport facilities for residents and visitors to Swansea.*



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## NCN signing audit

During the summer Sustrans sent out a directive to the Liaison Rangers across the UK (of whom I am one) asking for one of our local rangers to be a *Signing Champion*. We discussed this and decided that we neither wanted nor needed one; signing is after all what rangers are meant to do. Partly to get Sustrans off our backs and partly because signing was on the Council's agenda we committed ourselves to carrying out a signing audit of the NCN in the County.

This we did in October. It involved a number of rangers taking photos of existing signs and of places where signs are needed. I put it all together in the form of three reports. These are available as pdf files on the Various page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk). The reports contain recommendations. They are currently in draft form with a consultation period up to Christmas to allow amendments.

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**David Naylor**

## The Boulevard – a new cycle route

The good news for Swansea cyclists is that CCS are proposing a new cycle route linking the Civic Centre with the bottom of Wind Street. It will run either on the south side of Oystermouth Road or between it and the foreshore. Our understanding is that it will be connected to the foreshore path west of the Civic Centre along the existing footpath which will be widened and made shared use. There will also be north-south links to the City Centre either side of the Leisure Centre (LC2). A further link on the east side of the Civic Centre to the foreshore is proposed.

This route provides an inland alternative to NCN 4 which avoids the sandy section immediately west of the Civic Centre and is shorter.

*Wheelrights* have been campaigning for a cycle route in this area for most of the 15 years of its existence. What's more CCS's Transportation Department is involving us in meaningful consultations; in particular, following a meeting with their Head, Chris Vinestock, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, we are to be involved in finalising the details of this proposed route.

OK, the Swansea Boulevard won't be anything like the artist's impression which just showed pedestrians – where were the bikes and cars? The Council has been honest in dropping the "European" description. Like the "café quarter" of Wind Street there are likely to be big differences between the initial vision and the reality.

There will be conflicting demands between car users, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport with compromises needed by all parties. As ever the devil will be in the detail.

But this is a golden opportunity for *Wheelrights* to be fully involved in the planning and design.

I believe CCS are genuinely committed to providing for cyclists and a close consultation process has begun.

WE NEED YOUR VIEWS! so come to the next meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> January when we should have detailed drawings for discussion/consideration. (See box on page 1.)

## Cycling Action Plan

This arises from the report of CCS's Overview Board which recommends nine strategic proposals. In addition to these proposals *Wheelrights* are pressing for the implementation of agreed items on our wish list,

These include completing the short length of the new section of NCN 4 immediately east of the Loughor Bridge, progressing plans for the vital Gowerton – Kingsbridge missing link and completing the east end of the North Gower path to Pont-y-Cob Road. There is also the Boulevard work referred to above plus a number of items in and outside the City Centre.

The Action Plan is informed by the excellent WAG *Walking and Cycling Action Plan for Wales 2009 – 2013* which I urge you to read.

David Naylor is involved in much of the detail so if you have any suggestions or questions please contact him by email: davidjohnnaylor@tiscali.co.uk or phone: 01792 233755.

**Nick Guy** (*Wheelrights* Chair)

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We have a new Treasurer and Membership Secretary. At the agm on 25 October Geoff Wood stood down and Colin Fielder was nominated to replace him.

Colin was one of the original *Wheelrights* members. Since his retirement two years ago he is once again taking an active role and it is fitting that he has taken this over (and not just because he is now studying for a degree in maths!). Geoff will now have more time to help in other ways.

## The Tawe Bridges Extravaganza \*

It's chaos! Multiple lanes, filters, traffic lights out of sync, queues, road-rage and ....errr.... have you ever tried walking or cycling in the vicinity of the Tawe Bridges in Swansea?

Despite huge investment in new bridges, elaborate traffic management systems and upheaval of routes to St Thomas and the docks, they got it wrong, badly wrong. And those same players that got it wrong first time round have come back to tell us how it should be put right.

The problem is, they always get it wrong.

There can never be enough roads for cars. Build new roads and they soon fill up. Now this is bad enough outside of our cities on the M4 or M25 but when it comes to our city centre, we need to re-establish our priorities.

Here's just a sample of what has been done to us over the past 10 or 20 years.

As many as eight traffic lanes, wider than the original M1, drive up past the new bus station in the middle of our city; a complex gyratory road system encircles the city centre with bizarre and dangerous traffic lanes in all directions – the very antithesis of good pedestrian environments; two highways dominate our riversides without a thought to pedestrians or cyclists, let alone their role in the regeneration of the city centre. (And more roads are planned.)

There's the gorge that has ripped the heart out of Morriston; the motorway-scale Landore bridge; the disgracefully extravagant and furtive gated bus bypass round the Hafod, (three huge depersonalised road schemes that don't even have names in the popular lexicon); a new proposed 'pedestrian friendly' European Boulevard, with 'less junctions' so that traffic can flow better (for which read, 'faster'). As on the Kingsway, pedestrians will take their lives in their hands if they choose to cross at their convenience rather than at the fenced and controlled engineer-designed crossings.

And now they want more - a massive roundabout over the two Tawe Bridges. Haven't they had enough rope yet?

Not a hint of how this new road scheme will help the community of St Thomas, destined to be further tragically isolated, nor how it will support mixed use redevelopment on the approaches to the city centre, with homes shops businesses colleges and more on Parc Tawe, nor will it improve the virtually non-existent links between the Tawe Trails, SA1 and the Marina.

The land-take, often of prime space, for these blinkered schemes is vast. The resultant implosion of the social and economic vitality of our communities has been devastating as witnessed not just by St Thomas but by Hafod, Plasmarl, Morriston, Fforestfach, Cwmbwrla, Gendros, Greenhill and even our High Street.

The unrestrained dominance of motor vehicles in city development is now well past its sell-by date as new people-friendly approaches in cities all over Europe, including Britain, demonstrate. It's about time that city planning, people spaces, local commerce, homes, schools and long-term jobs came to the fore. We've had quite enough of road schemes thanks.

**Gordon Gibson**

( Blogging at [www.4cities.wordpress.com](http://www.4cities.wordpress.com) )

\* Published in the *South Wales Evening Post* on 3<sup>rd</sup> November under the title *Why keep giving cars right of way.*

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## Responses

to Gordon Gibson's article on the previous page:

\* \* \*

Couldn't agree more with the sentiments expressed by Gordon Gibson. There is only so much space for/on roads, and the more that is given to cars, the less is available to pedestrians and cyclists. "We must look after the cars, they are quicker!" WRONG: I can cycle from Mynyddbach to the Civic centre in Ten minutes "door-to-door", but by car takes at least twice as long, plus the time it takes to find a parking-space. Planners would do well to remember that you can fit at least four bikes in the space needed for one car!

**Eifion Francis**

\* \* \*

A European Boulevard – not in my lifetime. The artist's impression of a wide tree lined space for walkers and cyclists to enjoy closer links between City Centre and Marina/foreshore is a travesty of what we can expect. More space and priority for cars with no cycle provision on the corridor because of lack of width, development right up to the highway and more of a barrier than ever. In truth another West Way with multi-traffic lanes and long crossings that you can hardly see the green light to cross... not for the faint hearted. We can look forward to new footways built (such as in front of the Waterfront Museum) that two pedestrians can hardly pass with shopping. Have the City Council not heard of the guidance *Manual for Streets* 1 and 2 which gives examples of how it can be done with imagination?

And what has re-jigging the North Dock circulation got to do with improving the City to Marina connection for walking and cycling? They propose to spend millions on this work out of the Boulevard budget. And it is proposed to link the traffic signals – big deal... that has been done for the last 24 years as Councilor Hague can testify... he saw video footage of it working taken from the Post Office Tower.

We must impress on the Assembly and European Office what is going on with the money they are giving to this scheme. I am appalled that nothing has been learnt from the recent roadworks that are ruining our city centre.

**David Judd**

\* \* \*

A timely question. We need to decide whether our city is a space for people or is to be further shaped by the insatiable demands of motorised transportation. With the forthcoming construction of the European (is it still "European"?) Boulevard, we must be wary of allowing ourselves to be placated by the small concessions that will inevitably be offered to pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users in order to deflect criticism of an otherwise car-centred development. Why should the citizens of Swansea not stand at the centre of their world, instead of being sidelined by fast-moving vehicles, corralled behind barriers and marooned on traffic islands (however leafy and nicely landscaped). Politicians like to talk about "tough choices", but rarely "choose" to confront the dominance of the private car, preferring instead the not-so-tough choices between one form of traffic chaos and another, between two different comically inadequate cycle facilities, or between one model of pedestrian ghetto and another. Let's not stand for it this time round.

**Claudine Conway**



## The Fairtrade ride

This was a 500 mile ride from Aberfeldy in Scotland to Cardiff to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> Fairtrade town. (This is Bicester in Oxfordshire – not actually on the route.) Here we cover the tenth and final stage from Ammanford to Cardiff on Monday, 1<sup>st</sup> November. David led the ride from Dunvant to Cowbridge. Phil was the organiser and drove a back-up vehicle, meeting up with the riders at various places *en route*. In what follows the sections in italics are Phil's. He begins with the start at Ammanford on what turned out to be a lovely sunny day.



*We thought we had a challenge to get to the i-SMOOTH café by 8.30, but Mike Wood was up before 6am to ride the 26 miles from his home just to get to the start! Also riding were Ian Jones and Phil Snaith from Carmarthenshire Council, and Alan Cram, Fairtrade supporter and friend of Ammanford Fairtrade Town Group pioneers Annette and Dewi. Among those coming to support were MP Jonathan Edwards, AM Rhodri Glyn Thomas and Town Councillor Jane Potter.*

*After a lovely autumn ride along golden leaved lanes the first stop was the Dunvant Rugby Club. Here Bikeability, an organisation which enables people of all abilities to enjoy the pleasures of cycling on specially designed bikes were awaiting both us and their clients. Their bikes include hand cycles, recumbent trikes, quad cycles and tandems.*

*David, Colin Fielder and Rob Maiden joined up with the ride here, but first tried out the Bikeability bikes. This resulted in Rob falling off a bike before he'd even started the ride!*

Altogether a dozen riders left the Rugby Club. They followed NCN 4 to the Environment Centre where they arrived at noon.

Here six went there various ways. The remaining six were joined by Brian Croft and led by David continued on towards Cardiff. The group included Colin, Mike, John Arnold from Surrey and Toby Quantrill from Sussex. David led them on a direct cycle friendly route to a few miles short of Cowbridge where he left them to catch a train from Bridgend back to Swansea. This route was a blend of NCN 4 (most of the way to Port Talbot), the A48 (past Margam where it's not so busy) and minor roads via Ewenny. They stopped for lunch in Port Talbot. Phil writes:

*We opted for lunch at TESCO in Port Talbot; not for its culinary reputation, but so we could complain about the lack of Fairtrade drinks in the café. We filled in a customer feedback form and sent a free text to 80072: "We are part of the 500 mile Fairtrade Bike Ride. Stopped at your Port Talbot store for lunch BUT no Fairtrade drinks in café."*

They got to Cowbridge on schedule at 3.45pm and there it seems their culinary expectations were more than met, as Phil explains:

*What a glorious contrast the next stop was: The Living Café in Cowbridge. A dream of a Fairtrade café! Lots of cafés now have the basics of Fairtrade tea and coffee. But this café goes much further, with a mouth-watering selection of Fairtrade cakes and snacks.*

They arrived in Cardiff at 6.15pm in the dark having cycled 65 miles from Ammanford. They were met by local cyclists and given a great reception in Cardiff's Millenium Centre where they were welcomed by Jane Davidson, Wales's Environment Minister. For more about this final day and what preceded it visit <http://thefairtradefoundation.blogspot.com/>. On this site there are U tube interviews with John and Toby and Jane Davidson's welcome.

**David Naylor and Phil Broadhurst**

## Attack of the Space Lemons

Don't worry – I haven't branched into Sci-Fi short stories. Some of you will recall that I have been somewhat scathing in these pages about the colour pink when it comes to bicycles and cycling accessories. But in fact I don't dislike pink as such – I merely object to its arbitrary association with the feminine. There is, however, one colour that really gets my goat, and we have entered its peak season. I'm talking, of course, about hi-vis yellow. I think it's fair to say that no-one chooses hi-vis yellow clothing for aesthetic reasons. There are some good yellows about, and those with the right attitude and a suitable skin tone might be able to carry off a race-leader's jersey with aplomb, or sport a jaunty headscarf that looks like some kind of homage to Kandinsky. But no one chooses a garment thinking “this is great, but would look better if it were the shade of radioactive custard”.\*

So, given that anyone lately taking a constitutional could be forgiven for wondering why The Swans seem to be permanently at home to Norwich City, something else must be going on.

It's worth reminding ourselves for a moment that this stuff isn't compulsory. Cyclists have been persuaded, or persuaded themselves, that it's for their own good, and there are signs that the sulphurous epidemic is spreading to pedestrians. It wouldn't be stretching a point to suggest that we have already reached a situation where hi-vis is *de rigueur* for cyclists in the eyes of most drivers, all policymakers, and a substantial number of cyclists themselves, and the majority of casual observers. We've been here before, with helmets – the tyranny of common sense is upon us again.

It's at this point that we might get all misty-eyed about a time when not only did high-vis yellow not even exist in nightmares, but it seemed perfectly sensible for the CTC to campaign against cyclists being legally obliged to equip their bikes with lights. But that historical moment has passed, and we are not here to indulge in a fit of nostalgia. With the advances that have been made in LED technology, decent lights are cheap and easily obtained – bicycle light technology has not just kept up with the law, but outpaced it. Roads are shared public space, and we share a duty to each other and to ourselves to be visible when we are using them.

And there, I'm afraid, my Christmas-tree tendencies end. As well as being horrible, hi-vis yellow is unnecessary in the daylight and useless at night. I like a bit of retro-reflective trim (inconspicuous by day, effective by night), and am impressed with truly striking design such as Foska's wonderful skeleton jersey. But as an online acquaintance of mine wrote recently, “I have decided not to participate in the high-visibility arms race that will end up in peds and cyclists dressed like something out of *Close Encounters* [...] and all cars running high beam headlights during daylight hours, [and] I don't want drivers taught to expect that the other road users sharing the space will be the same colour as a space lemon.\*

There's a creeping tendency to shift the responsibility for safety onto the more vulnerable road-user – have a look at the DfT's “Lighten Up” game for children if you doubt this\*\*. This, of course, was what the CTC was really fighting all those years ago. Ask yourself why no-one demands that *cars* are painted hi-vis yellow. For me, there is too much illumination, not too little. Anyone who thinks that dazzling car headlights are for the benefit of pedestrians has not walked home along a country road at night. They are, however, yet another excuse for motorists brashly to announce their presence whilst not having to think about their speed. When everything that is deemed to be worthy of drivers' notice must be illuminated or gaudy, the rest of the world fades into the background or disappears into shadows and blind spots. Let's dim the lights and mute the colours a little, and take the trouble to look around us again.

**Claudine Conway**

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\* *The imagery indicated, as well as the quotation, is shamelessly borrowed from the cyclist known online as “Ravenbait - the cross product of Tank Girl and Ellen Ripley” [www.ravenfamily.org/sam/](http://www.ravenfamily.org/sam/)*

\*\* <http://talesoftheroad.direct.gov.uk/be-bright.php>

## Sat Nav for cyclists?

Ever wanted sat-nav for the bike, but despaired of ever finding something that won't direct you straight to the M4 for every single journey? These ridiculous in-car things are useless for any cyclist, and there's not much point waiting for Google to produce something since it certainly won't know about every shortcut near where you live.

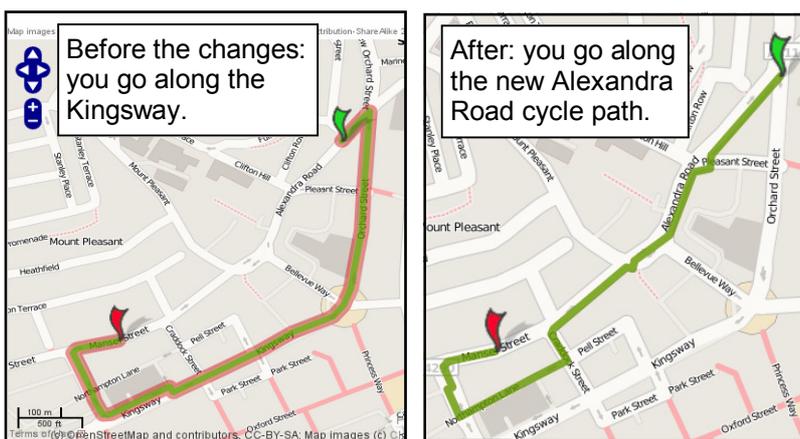
Well, despair not, in this day and age the internet exists, and committed individuals can now harness this awesome new power, and this is what they are doing. To achieve bike sat nav all I have to do is to say the magic words 'OSM', 'smartphone' and 'cyclestreets.net'. Let me explain.

**OSM:** The first ingredient, OSM, stands for Open Street Map (<http://www.openstreetmap.org/>) and is a project to create Public Domain mapping data for the whole world. An ambitious target, and one conceived after making the frightening discovery that all the mapping data on services such as Google Maps is proprietary, and cannot legally be used for anything. Already on OSM for the UK you will find a wealth of information, such as all the roads and all the NCN routes, but almost anything can be mapped and there is still a vast amount of data yet to add. They heartily encourage anyone to create an account and get mapping, so I did, and I have.

**Smartphones:** The second ingredient is the latest must-have gadget, the i-phone/Android. Although you might not own one yet, and I don't either, it is most assuredly what your phone will do in the future, and perhaps more importantly what the phones of the next generation of cyclists will do. The key to the explosion in functionality these devices provide is the App, and one of these apps will be 'Sat Nav for Bike'. Think it won't happen? Too late, it already has! One was launched for the Bike Hub cycle-hire scheme in London, and plans are in an advanced stage to launch nationwide.

This app was funded with the aid of a £5000 grant from the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund. Yes, just £5000. This contrasts with the government's £2.4m Transport Direct *find a cycle route* project which achieved something very much less useful.

**Cyclestreets:** On this site (<http://swansea.cyclestreets.net>) all the mapping data is brought together with some highly technical route planning software developed, pretty much for free, by the Cambridge Cycling Campaign. This is optimised for cyclists and actually adds 6 seconds for every metre climbed, and subtracts 1.8 seconds for every metre descended. It therefore knows to avoid hills! Another thing they are also desperate to avoid are busy roads and traffic lights. Unfortunately the planner knew nothing about our most excellent Alexandra Road contra-flow cycle path. The pictures compare journeys from near the Station to Mansel St before and after my changes.



my changes.

It took a few weeks for my new route to appear, but it has appeared and I'm rather proud of it. I neither sought nor needed anyone's permission to add this route, and it will hereafter be found by anyone using the CycleStreets website/ Smartphone app.

Perhaps one day we can look forward to seeing adults and youngsters riding along optimal

urban routes whilst being told precisely where to turn, and parents willing to let their children cycle because they know their phone will keep them off the busy roads. This is something that we control. It's ours, it belongs to us, and it's within our power to add all the routes we know about and hopefully bring Swansea just one step closer to Copenhagen.

**Bill Gannon**

[Ed: I have had independent advice that *cyclestreets* is excellent for planning rides.]