



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 2 Autumn 2007

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Don't forget Connect2!

Connect 2 is Sustrans' project competing with three other projects for a single £50 million grant from the Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks - The People's Millions competition to be televised in December. Connect 2 has 79 constituent schemes in the UK overall, 9 of which are in Wales.



The two main schemes in the Swansea area are:

- Clydach (providing a new alignment of National Cycle Route 43). The Clydach scheme involves replacing the pipe bridge to bring NCN 43 into Clydach by the Mons bridge, a short distance to the east (shown in photo).
- Afan Valley and Port Talbot (linking Afan Forest Park to Aberafan seafront).

A short film about each project will be shown on ITV during the week of 3rd to 6th December, with the winner decided by a phone-in between 26th Nov. and 9th Dec.. The result will be announced in a further programme on 10th December.

If Connect2 wins, millions of us will be able to travel in a healthy and environmentally-friendly way to the shops, school, work, and the park or to see family and friends. There are a variety of ways to get involved in supporting the project and

find out more about your local schemes. Log on to www.sustransconnect2.org.uk or call 0845 058 1373 for details. Encourage friends, colleagues and organisations to support the project and help Sustrans win the vote. Members of a family can vote separately with up to five calls per family. If you can help or require more information contact Helen Davies, Sustrans new manager for SW Wales, at the Swansea office on 01792 454492. And, of course, don't forget to vote!

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Infrastructure — the latest

Work has started on a 1km new route for NCN4 (a bypass to Culfor Road) immediately E of Loughor Bridge.

Further west most of NCN4 between the Bynea Bridge and the Penclacwydd bird sanctuary has now been asphalted.

The pedestrian crossing of the Mumbles Road at the Sketty Lane junction has been upgraded to a cycle crossing.

Congratulations to our Secretary!

Wheelrights secretary, David Naylor, was presented with a Sustrans award at Oxford recently. See Page 6 for details and a photo.

Wheelrights campaigns for improved facilities for cyclists in the Swansea Bay area. We help get people on bikes by, e.g. providing beginners' classes; we also provide information about rides and other matters of interest to cyclists and their supporters. We are an umbrella organisation, separate from the CTC and Sustrans and other cycling groups, but whose activities we seek to both support and complement. See our website for details of events, meetings, activities, contacts, etc.

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Swansea Metro Phase 2

Having been given assurances that we would be consulted about provision for cyclists before the start of the Phase 2 construction *Wheelrights* learnt in August that work was in progress – we had not been consulted. This would not have mattered had proper provision for cyclists been made but on seeing the plans we found that it had not. So on 5 September we wrote to the Council asking that six proposals to rectify this be given *urgent* consideration. There being no response we had the opportunity (on 17 September) to raise this with Cllr John Hague, Cabinet Member for Environment, and he arranged a meeting between himself, two senior Council staff and three from *Wheelrights* to discuss the issues. This meeting took place on 4 October.

Two of the issues are considered here of which the first is the most important.

This was a request that the 400m (¼ mile) of footpath along the south side of Oystermouth Road from the Y junction west of County Hall to the pedestrian crossing to the east (by Bathurst Street) be upgraded to shared-use as it is a clear desire line. The routing of the Metro along the minor road between it and County Hall strengthens the case. The footpath would require widening and a cycle/pedestrian crossing would be needed at the road junction halfway along it. The Council's response was that there was no funding for the work and that their consultants advised against shared-use paths. Cllr Hague asked for a cost estimate thereby keeping the options open.

The second was to request cycle access from the foreshore path to the café currently being constructed on the south side of County Hall and to ask that proposed cycle stands be sited where they could be seen by cyclists using the café. This was also rebuffed by the Council on the basis that their consultants advise against shared-use (which would apply to the short access path). One was left with the impression that cyclists would not be welcome at this café! Cllr Hague again kept this option open.

Most of the other points got the same treatment.

We would be glad of advice on how to respond to this apparent lack of preparedness to cater for cyclists in new developments. Last year, when the Metro Phase 1 was constructed, we were encouraged by the Council's acceptance of our recommendations by providing a counter-flow cycle path along the south side of Mansel Street. Has there been a change of heart? The Council will surely deny this, but a key problem appears to be their readiness to accept the advice of consultants who appear to be prejudiced against cyclists.

It took a month for the Council to reply to our letter of 5 September. So much for our use of the word "urgent". Cllr Hague has indicated that he will call another meeting. We keep our fingers crossed.

European Mobility Week

This European-wide initiative ran from 16th - 22nd September. The idea was to promote transport alternatives to the car. To qualify for the initiative the City Council closed Wind Street on Friday 21st and a range of events was provided there and in Castle Square on that day.

On Saturday 15th September a "peloton" of cyclists rode from Blackpill to the City centre to advertise the week. Each rider carried a yellow A4 poster on their back advertising European Mobility Week. The ride was led by Rob Wachowski, the City Cycling Officer, and thanks to his contacts the traffic lights on the roads changed to green as the peloton approached. First stop was Castle Square, then down Wind Street and across to the Sail Bridge, finishing at a café in the SA1 development. At around 15 the numbers were down on previous years (due to inadequate publicity) but we felt that it achieved its purpose.

See the *Wheelrights* website for a picture of the group before departure from Blackpill.

Regional Transportation Plan

A recent *Cycle Forum* (on 17 October) was different from usual in that it took the form of a workshop in which ideas for the RTP were solicited. A draft should be completed next spring with the plan being finalised in late 2008. Having been informed that proposals for specific schemes would be appropriate we put forward schemes such as the Clydach Connect2 project (see front page) and the N. Gower cycle route. After the meeting we realised that this was not perhaps appropriate as the RTP will apply to the years 2009 – 2014 by which time these schemes should at least be under construction. Fortunately it was suggested that post-meeting proposals would be welcome. Accordingly *Wheelrights* plan to put together a submission. This is likely to include such important matters as maintenance and signing. We should be able to tell you about this in the next issue.

Cycle Training

We held the third class of 2007 for adult beginners on Sat. 22 Sept., the last day of European Mobility Week, in the County Hall car park. The weather was good and nearly all the participants were cycling by the end of the two hour session.

The next beginners class is scheduled for Spring 2008. Contact Veronica Wood (01792-206617) for details.

Letters

In *View from the saddle* (Newsletter no. 1) David Judd touches on a tricky issue: how to minimise the (perceived and actual) problems of shared use paths. As CTC local *Right to Ride* representative I have access to their e-mail forum. This issue has been tossed back and forth recently. The suggestions which follow are my own, but I have been influenced by informed comment from the CTC forum.

Cyclists and pedestrians mix happily on the Continent and there is recent evidence that they can do so here. Cyclists were banned from part of the city centre in Cambridge for 13 years up to 2005. Then for an 18 month trial period cycling was allowed. There being no increase in recorded incidents involving cyclists the ban has now been permanently lifted.

But should separate lanes be provided for cyclists? The Swansea Bay path is a case in point.

A distinction needs to be made between *linear routes*, ie sections of path which people use to get from A to B and *recreational zones* which are destinations in themselves. The section between Blackpill and County Hall lies in the former category whereas the Blackpill Lido area, and probably much of the path between there and Verdi's, the latter. To divide or not to divide – that is the question!

It seems to me that in recreational zones the path should not be divided. The evidence is that cyclists and pedestrians (and wheelchair users) can happily coexist but education of both and perhaps some policing is needed. On linear routes maybe; but only if the path is at least 3m wide and if usage is heavy. The obvious advantage of a divided path is that cyclists have a clear run and pedestrians are not threatened by cyclists. The less obvious disadvantages are the aggression engendered in a cyclist (and I speak for myself!) when a pedestrian strays on to his or her 'territory' and an increased chance of incidents at junctions or at locations such as the Cenotaph.

So maybe we should ask the Council to remove that rumble strip from the Blackpill Lido area and the other 'non-linear' sections of the foreshore path, and also figure out ways of improving the behaviour of the minority who cause the problems David identifies in his article.

David Naylor

A Cycling Education Facility (by John Roach)

Whilst visiting Sydney recently I was taken to Sydney Park, a large recreational area of 109 acres in the inner-city area. The park comprises large open recreation spaces with distinctive hills that provide 360 degree views over Sydney, wetlands, a sports oval, sculptures, a heritage area featuring the remains of a brickworks and a children's bicycle training area.

This area is part of the Sydney Community Road Education Scheme (CARES) and is primarily a cycling education facility for children to prepare them for road safety and cycling on roads. It covers an area of approx. one half of a football pitch and is a reduced size version of a network of different road arrangements e.g. a roundabout, 'T' junctions, pedestrian crossings, traffic lights, road signs, etc.



The facility is a permanent feature of the park and education programs are given by ex-Police Officers to school and college groups during the school day. The facility is then open to all outside of school hours. It has a covered area with a community room and is a base



for both young and adult learners. When I visited on a Sunday morning it was busy with children safely practising their cycling skills around the road 'network' with parents nearby.

A facility like this would be very useful in Swansea. It would certainly raise the profile of cycling education in this area but the site would need to be appropriate. To avoid unwelcome use after dark its location would need to be similar to Sydney, ie next to a busy road, surrounded by a substantial safety rail and is overlooked by several residential blocks.

The 2007 Paris – Brest Audax

This 1200 km ride was attempted this year by five cyclists from the Swansea Bay area. To fulfil the requirements of this most challenging of cycling events the participants have to complete it in 90 hours. This means 200 miles every 24 hours or an average speed of 8.3 mph, including stops! It is therefore a matter of cycling day and night with only short stops for a bite of food and an hour or two of sleep at the control points.

There was unusually heavy rain and winds this year which led to a high dropout of at least . 30% (Normally it is 7 or 8%). It is to the credit of the five that only one failed to complete it within the 90 hours. How they kept awake and avoided falling off their bikes is a question only they can answer. Apparently many riders experienced hallucinations, and the one who didn't make it thought a bus was coming to pick him up; but there was no bus.

As we go to press we do not have all their names, but we do know that Anne Learmonth, the only lady in the group, completed the ride within 84 hours. Furthermore she had just got married to fellow participant David and we understand that this was their honeymoon!!!

The 2007 version of the Highway Code (Part 1)

Those of you who are CTC members will probably be aware of CTC effort made to get cyclists' interests included in the 2007 version of Highway Code. The CTC claim that over 40 rules have been changed to the benefit of cyclists.

The changes that have been made to the Highway Code vary from the mundane to the fundamental. There are many new rules for cyclists on the use of crossings and for taking care around tramways. Others offer advice on whether cyclists should use cycle facilities.

For the sake of road safety, we should always look to update our understanding of the Highway Code and review the current wording of the Highway Code that affects cyclists. So let's start with rules 59 -63. noting the use of 'should' and 'must'. Please note the new wording that makes it clear beyond all doubt that:

- flashing lights on cycles are legal when used alone (rule 60)
- cyclists are not obliged to use cycle facilities where it would be unsafe to do so. (rule 61)

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Clothing. You should wear

- a cycle helmet which conforms to current regulations, is the correct size and securely fastened
- appropriate clothes for cycling. Avoid clothes which may get tangled in the chain, or in a wheel or may obscure your lights
- light-coloured or fluorescent clothing which helps other road users to see you in daylight and poor light
- reflective clothing and/or accessories (belt, arm or ankle bands) in the dark

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At night your cycle **MUST** have white front and red rear lights lit. It **MUST** also be fitted with a red rear reflector (and amber pedal reflectors, if manufactured after 1/10/85). White front reflectors and spoke reflectors will also help you to be seen. Flashing lights are permitted but it is recommended that cyclists who are riding in areas without street lighting use a steady front lamp.

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Cycle Routes and Other Facilities. Use cycle routes, advanced stop lines, cycle boxes and toucan crossings unless at the time it is unsafe to do so. Use of these facilities is not compulsory and will depend on your experience and skills, but they can make your journey safer.

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Cycle Tracks. These are normally located away from the road, but may occasionally be found alongside footpaths or pavements. Cyclists and pedestrians may be segregated or they may share the same space (unsegregated). When using segregated tracks you **MUST** keep to the side intended for cyclists as the pedestrian side remains a pavement or footpath. Take care when passing pedestrians, especially children, older or disabled people, and allow them plenty of room. Always be prepared to slow down and stop if necessary. Take care near road junctions as you may have difficulty seeing other road users, who might not notice you.

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Cycle Lanes. These are marked by a white line (which may be broken) along the carriage-way. When using a cycle lane, keep within the lane when practicable. When leaving a cycle lane check before pulling out that it is safe to do so and signal your intention clearly to other road users. Use of these facilities is not compulsory and will depend on your experience and skills, but they can make your journey safer.

The current Highway Code is online at <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/TravelAndTransport/Highwaycode/index.htm>.

Sustrans award for *Wheelrights* secretary, David Naylor

Sustrans' main flagship project is the National Cycle Network which is now around 12,000 miles in total length. Helping to look after this network is a team of 2,400 volunteer Rangers who litter pick, check signs, cut back overgrown vegetation and clean graffiti. About two-thirds of the Rangers work in 190 groups, each co-ordinated by a volunteer Liaison Ranger.

This year at their annual conference for Liaison Rangers Sustrans presented awards to these volunteers to recognise their achievements. The conference was held in Oxford on 6 October with around 80 Sustrans Liaison Rangers attending.

Our hard-working *Wheelrights* secretary, David Naylor was nominated by Swansea City Council and received a Sustrans "Liaison Ranger of the Year Award". The citation gives the reason for the award as:

- Produces a regular newsletter that lets everyone know what's coming up and reports on events that have happened.
- Has also been instrumental in reviving a local cycling group and building an excellent web site that reports on the work being carried out by the local enthusiastic Rangers.
- Arranges meetings with the Rangers and Council Cycling Officer to discuss any concerns about the cycle network.

The photo shows Sustrans Chief Executive, John Grimshaw, presenting David with the award.



Copy deadline

Copy for the Spring 2008 issue of the *Wheelrights* newsletter should be e-mailed to John Roach (j.a.roach@btinternet.com) by Feb 29th. 2008.

Future Events

Monday November 26th Working Group meeting in the Yacht Club, E. Burrows Rd., Marina at 7.30pm.

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