



# Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 26 Winter 2013/14

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

## The new cycle/pedestrian Beaufort Bridge



This bridge was lifted into position in mid August and available for use shortly after that. It was formally opened on 15 October. The old bridge, which it replaces and which had always been a hazard for cyclists in wet weather because of its slippery surface, has been removed.

National Cycle Route 43 will cross this bridge. At the time of writing it is closed north from here for two miles to the motorway while construction of the flood mitigation works is carried out. There are two alternative diversions as explained on p. 2.

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### Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to the Secretary (address below) by mid February.

### Editorial

The Active Travel Bill is now law; and at least the spirit is being reflected in the actions of Swansea Council. These range from 20mph zones in the Sandfields (already implemented), through plans for cycle commuter networks, to supporting a new Cycle Hub described on p. 6; not to mention the NCR 43 work described here.

To give me a break David Judd has offered to be a guest editor for the Spring edition.

**David Naylor**

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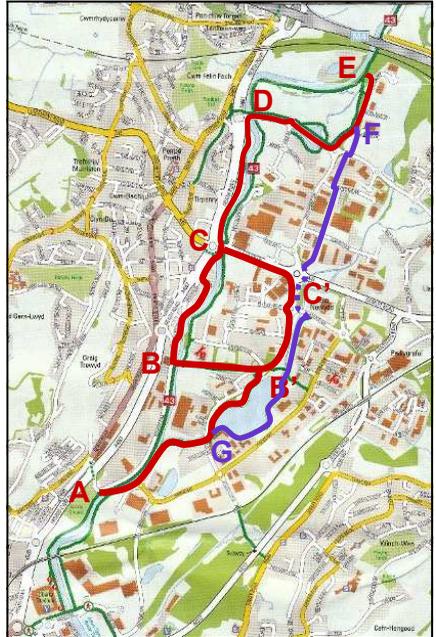
## Local News

### NCR 43 Diversions

The closure of a section of this route south of the motorway was reported in the Spring Newsletter (No. 23). The flood mitigation work is nearing completion and the cycle path should be reopened – its northerly part following a new route on top of a new bund – before too long. This note provides an update on the diversion situation.

The map is the same as that on p. 2 of Issue 23 but with a new and shorter cycle friendly diversion added as the purple line FG. This route is not signed as it is not suitable for eg tricycles and bikes with trailers (due to barriers). The red lines show the signed 'official' routes. The full purple line indicates the sections entirely separate from roads (apart from some crossings), the broken line a short section along Valley Way. I would recommend you use the footway alongside it.

To use this diversion travelling south follow the existing diversion signs from E to F where you pick up a path facing you across Mill Stream Lane. Follow this south until it ends at a big roundabout. There is a reasonably friendly crossing of the A48 here followed by a not so friendly crossing of Fendrod Way. Look to your left for the path which takes you along the east side of Fendrod Lake. At G cross Valley Way and pick up the path to the Mannesman Bridge (A).



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### City Centre

In early October the Council held 'Drop-in' sessions at a venue in High Street to which the public were invited to view and comment on plans to make the city Centre more cycle friendly. The Council have various plans which include improved links to the railway station. What was encouraging was that these plans were generally supported by the non-cycling public.

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### Mumbles Road

I represented *Wheelrights* at a recent site visit to discuss proposals for upgrading the shared use coastal path (NCR 4) and to upgrade the footway on the north side of the road to shared use. Also attending this site visit were Pablo Rees, representing local disability groups, and Andrea Gordon, Chair of Guide Dogs for the Blind, Cymru. We were in general agreement about a few changes to the Council's plans which we felt necessary. It is encouraging and important that we are all pulling in the same direction.

It is also encouraging that the Council invited all of us to this site visit whereas in days past the disabled and cycling groups were consulted separately. Furthermore that we are being consulted at an early stage before the 'concrete has set' (if I may coin a phrase).

David Naylor

## Cycle Tourism can fund Cycle Routes

The Gower Cycling Festival has been great fun, and has at last made us some money for our campaigning work. In addition over recent months we are realising some more important contributions to cycling in the area. As David Naylor highlights in his thorough Festival review (on the Cycling Festival page of our website) we succeeded in our aim of attracting a substantial proportion of cycle tourists from England and other countries. In addition, during the Festival week, we met a few long distance cyclists passing through Swansea along NCN route 4: one French couple cycling from Brittany to Ireland, and another group cycling from Ireland to Rome! There seems to be a steady trickle of these.

Sustrans estimates that cycle tourists spend an average of £30 per day in local shops, cafés, pubs and accommodation thus contributing to the local economy.



Recently a tourism company has contacted *Wheelrights* to ask for help with their report on “Sustainable Tourism in Gower” for Swansea Council. They have highlighted the need for more safe cycle routes on Gower, and for links with Swansea. The almost completed North Gower Route (the idea of our President David Judd) is an excellent example of what can be achieved, and David Naylor is currently reviving an earlier proposal (again originating from David Judd) for a route across Clyne Common to link Mumbles and West Cross with Pennard. Two of our Festival sponsors, the Heritage Centre and Three Cliffs Café, are supporting this.

I have heard that Pembrokeshire have seen this potential and are funding some new cycle routes with tourism money, so why not Swansea?

One example where tourism money could fund a new route, which would also meet the needs of commuters and utility cyclists, is the proposed Gowerton to Fforestfach cycle route.

This route would use quiet roads to link NCN 4 with the exciting Penllergaer Estate, and the Swansea Community Farm, both excellent visitor attractions. It would also link the areas of Portmead, Blaen-y-Maes with Fforestfach employment centre and Gowerton station etc.

I raised this at a meeting with cllr Sybil Crouch who was very supportive and mentioned that the Welsh Government has some tourism grants which can be applied for. These routes would help the Council meet their strategic priorities for tackling transport poverty, and their Manifesto commitment to increase the numbers of cycle routes in Swansea.

Thus our little Festival could potentially help a key aim of *Wheelrights* which is to increase the number of safe, accessible cycle routes in Swansea.

I plan to give a presentation on this topic to Swansea Councillors so if you have any further ideas on this theme, please let me know.

**Nick Guy**

## Wales: a Cycling Nation?

This, except for the “?”, was the title of a conference I attended in Cardiff on 16 September. I have added it because it would be dishonest to give Wales that accolade at the present time, but the intention of the conference was clear: Wales should become one.

It was a good conference with some inspiring presentations and a choice of workshops. More time was allocated to the workshops and for discussion than to the presentations.

There were two workshop sessions, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon; in each there was a choice of four workshops. This had the advantage that on average only a quarter of the approx. 60 delegates attended one, but the drawback that there was inevitably more than one workshop of interest in a session. There were also two roundtable discussions. The conference was ably chaired by Phillip Darnton, chair of Cycling England until it was closed down by the Coalition Government.

There were just three presentations; these were given by John Griffiths AM, Minister for Culture and Sport, Carwen Jones, First Minister, and Ruth Hussey, chief Medical Officer for Wales. They were all in the morning. The roundtable discussions, which took place in the afternoon, were led by Phillip Darnton and Simon Nurse. Other contributors – to mention just a few with whom I’m acquainted – included Jane Lorimer, the new CEO of Sustrans Cymru, Ian Richardson of CTC Cymru and Geoff Rone of the Cycling Embassy (also, like myself, a CTC Right to Ride rep.). Ben George of Swansea Council was also there.

15 Minute presentations from the two Ministers came first. Both stated their intention to get people on bikes and mentioned the benefits of cycling: health, wellbeing, their benefits for the environment and the economy. As would be expected of a Sports Minister John Griffiths highlighted Welsh successes in competitive cycling. He noted that more girls are cycling and that the NCN was valued by families. The first Minister started off by stating that he saw cycling not just as a pastime but as a means of transport. He wanted to see cycling and walking as normal activities, and a change in the attitude that roads are just for cars. He noted that cycling is valuable for communities, that more cycle friendly infrastructure is needed, as are 20mph zones. The Active Travel Bill should facilitate this. Perhaps not surprisingly, where the money is coming from was not explained.

Ruth Hussey’s presentation was on “Health and the Economy”. Predictably she highlighted the health benefits of cycling but noted that they were not just physical, they were also mental, social and emotional. She enlarged on the drivers for change: the Active Travel Bill was one of three Bills to get the currently inactive two thirds of the Welsh population more active; a cultural change involving the whole nation was needed.

I attended workshops on promoting cycle tourism and on increasing public pressure for better routes in one’s area. There was some overlap in the topics covered which were also aired in the roundtable discussions. Points made include: the need for greater awareness of the excellent cycle network in Wales, much of it flat; the need for better publicity; the need to counter the image of cyclists as “MAMIL”s (Middle Aged Men In Lycra); and to make a better business case for cycling. In the workshop on better routes attention was drawn to the poor quality of some and lack of continuity of most cycle paths. A lady who had cycled round (most of) the world emphasised that cyclists of all types needed to pull together. The need for more space for bikes on trains was also highlighted.

Phillip Darnton in his summing up noted that, because most people drive, politicians who build roads are elected. He suggested more 20mph zones as the first and most effective step. He welcomed the Ministers intention to make Wales a Cycling Nation.

**David Naylor**

## Why I ride my bike (Part 1)

Two years ago I didn't ride a bike and now I love to.

When I first started working for what was then the Environment Agency I was unfit and had clearly been eating too many pies at university (whilst taking little exercise). I was overweight and going up a flight of stairs would leave me sweaty and breathless. I started a new job where people cycled to work. I thought these people were all mad and you'd certainly never get me doing anything like that! Then add a cycle to work scheme where I could purchase a new shiny bike; well – I was on my way to becoming a cyclist and I didn't even know it.

In late summer 2009 I got my shiny new bike. It was a mountain bike. The following day I rode to Verdi's in Mumbles from Brynmill and back. Two things became apparent. Firstly I was even less fit than I had initially thought and, secondly, my bottom really hurt. After that ride I was ready to give up. Enter enthusiastic friend who wanted to ride his new bike to work and would I please ride with him. So preparing my bottom and lungs for the onslaught I set off on my first ride to work – all 7.4 miles. Turns out it was significantly harder than riding to Mumbles. This completely put me off. I tried a few more trips over the next two years but then gave up. My bike gathered dust; it got used as a clothes hanger. Not a good start.

In the mean time horrified by my weight I decided to lose a few pounds, which I did. I tried riding my bike and, yep, I was certainly better on the flat, but that hill on the way to work put me off. By this stage I had also found out that my mountain bike wasn't really appropriate. Frustrated at my progress I decided that if I were to get a new bike I could only justify this by riding it, or I'd end up with two bikes gathering dust and doing impressions of clothes horses.



Fran cycle touring

I had no kit, no padded shorts, no mud guards, no pannier rack, water proofs etc. but I really liked the idea that I could get fit cycling to work and I just love being outside. When I was cycling home and not in a rush to get to work I loved it; it made me feel great and put a big smile on my face.

Enter the Swansea Cycle Challenge 2012. It would seem I was ripe for the picking, I wanted to ride my bike but was finding all sorts of excuses not to bother including rain, cold, ice, no hair dryer in work, etc. I was only happy to cycle if it was a lovely sunny day in summer. But we don't get that many of them so I was only likely to cycle a couple of days a year.

**Fran Rolfe**

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*Ed. Fran's complete article was too long to fit in this issue, so in a subsequent one we'll continue her story: how the Swansea Cycle Challenge and her boss overcame her excuses, how she subsequently went cycle touring, and her comments on barriers to cycling.*

## A new Swansea Cycle Hub

An exciting new development for cyclists in Swansea could be on the way courtesy of a local housing association.

Coastal Housing Group, based on Swansea's High Street is proposing to provide an integrated facility for cyclists on its land at the junction of King's Lane and the Strand. The proposed facility would provide people cycling to the city centre with a secure, covered place to leave their bike while they worked or shopped. Showers would be available inside the new purpose-built building, along with provision for bike maintenance.

The idea was the brainchild of the Group's director of development, Mr Geraint Oakley. Discovering that similar schemes already operated all over the world the team were inspired to develop the project. They realised that such a thing could be done, and could be made to work anywhere. Members of the team visited Mud Dock in Bristol and Cycle Point in Leeds, where they learnt how similar models worked and what they could hope to provide in Swansea.

Coastal's scheme would take full advantage of its location on a key route of the cycle network, offering hire facilities as well as advice on the best routes to make the most of Swansea's fantastic geographical location. This will help to bring more people into the city centre using sustainable transport.

Coastal Housing has already begun talking to Swansea City Council and support from local politicians is strong. At present, the aim is to provide the facility through a partnership, so involving the local authority at an early stage was felt to be crucial. Partners already consulted include local retailers and charities as well as higher education institutions, meaning that the project is born of shared enthusiasm and ideas.



Coastal Housing Group is already firmly established as a leader in regeneration in Swansea and Neath Port Talbot counties with nearly 6,000 properties let and under construction. Currently in the city centre they are encouraging development to revive the High Street. They are also the developer behind the new scheme at the top of Wind Street, next to Swansea's mediaeval castle. That scheme will include 27 affordable flats to let, four executive apartments for sale and new restaurant space to complete the renewal of one of Swansea's most historic streets.

**Adam West**

# London Away Day

(27th September 2013)

I departed from Briton Ferry taking Claud (my favourite city bike) for an outing to London, and headed to Swansea rail station arriving 8.30 am, thinking I'd be the first one there, but, no, Rose was waiting on the bench. One by one everyone arrived by 9am, looking at Claud laden with panniers and a few thought I was going for the week. (Little did they realise they were all but empty!)

Our train pulled up and John White and Dai Harris talked to the train manager about getting our 12 bikes on. No problem, so with cycles loaded we found our seats. With the outward, the return, the cycle reservation, and the seat reservation tickets, all x12, John White must have had a rain forest with him.

We were met in Paddington by the Cardy brothers. John wearing his London map cycling top (pictured) showed us where we were heading. So all set up and ready for the off, we departed from Paddington following our leader like disciples. (It's not by chance that his initials are JC same as that Jesus Christ bloke who had his own disciples, and apostle Paul – a pattern there?).



Anyway, getting back to the ride, we entered onto the many busy roads through London, for ever stopping because of the congestion and red lights. I realised how dangerous this London cycling could be and how easily I could end up going into the back of a bus or taxi, not because of the roads but because of my attention being repeatedly diverted by the smart females on the pavements.

After weaving through the busy streets and parkways, we eventually got to the CS3 (Cycle Super Highway 3), now, only having to share our route with other cyclists, we whizzed along for a few miles, till we left the CS3 to head towards the Thames cable car. Here we stopped at the Crystal Café for liquid refreshments, before boarding the cable cars with our cycles to take us high over the Thames with views of the Thames Flood Barrier, the O2 Centre (Millenium Dome) and the Olympic stadium in the distance.

We regrouped at the other side of the Thames, from where we followed JC along the river bank stopping to take some photos of the Cutty Sark (or as I thought it was when I was a kid the Cutty *Shark*), then over London Bridge and again along the river bank to Big Ben. We fought our way through the crowds to Trafalgar square where Nelson was waiting for us, and then down the Mall towards Buckingham palace; was gonnna call in for a cuppa but Liz wouldn't answer my text (and I know she was in 'cos the flag was flying). So after a well appreciated meal in a restaurant on Warwick Avenue we returned to Paddington Station for the three hour journey home.

The weather was perfect, dry, some sunshine and warm for time of year. No punctures, no bike issues and enjoyed by all.

I would just like to say, and I think I speak for all: A very big thank you to John Cardy and everyone else for the excellent organising of yet another successful trip.

**John Ridd**

## Cycle fatalities hit the headlines

As we go to press the news is full of the recent wave of cycle fatalities – five in London in two weeks. It seems that tragedies like this are needed to get action, and there is some indication that, at least in London, an upgrading of the cycle infrastructure will result. Lets hope that this will be a spur for better provision here and that we won't have to wait for such accidents.

## Future events

### Green Fayre

This takes place in the Waterfront Museum on 23/24 November (10.0 am – 4.00 pm). *Wheelrights* are sharing a stall with the CTC and Sustrans.

### *Wheelrights* Christmas Dinner

This is planned for Thursday, 12 December. Time and place to be decided. If you plan to attend contact Claudine Conway on 07918 140124, email: [claud@volcanotheatre.co.uk](mailto:claud@volcanotheatre.co.uk).

### Dylan Thomas Centenary

A ride from Laugharne to Swansea is planned. The date has not yet been fixed but it will probably be in June during Bike Week.

### Gower Cycling Festival

This will be from 9-16 August. Note that unlike this year it will, as in the earlier Festivals, end on the Saturday.

*Merry Christmas readers!*



A CTC 'ride' in December 2010.