



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



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www.wheelrights.org.uk

New routes sprouting up all over Swansea!

On the front page of the last issue we showed a picture of the start of work at the east end of a new cycle path in the Trallwyn area. This is now complete and the photo shows its formal opening on 11 April by Lee Waters (holding the scissors). He is now Deputy Transport minister as well as AM for Llanelli. Unfortunately, within days of the opening, vandals had attempted to block the path and removed a carved owl from alongside it.



In addition to the upgrading of the foreshore path between Blackpill and Sketty (Reported in the last issue.) paths in Singleton Park have been upgraded for cycle use. Also a new link between Llansamlet Railway Station and NCR 43 through Swansea Vale, and a path on the west side of the Tawe from Ynystawe Bridge (N. of the M4) to Clydach should be complete by the time you read this.

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Copy deadline

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

This issue

Following some local news our chairman updates us on what our council has and is achieving.

Then a review of John Parkin's new book which has important things to say about cycle infrastructure.

Two cycle tours are described on pages 5 and 7 respectively. The first may either put you off or inspire you to cycle in the Hebrides. The second will surely tempt you to cross the sea to Ireland.

How to make Active Travel happen was the theme of the meeting described on p.6. We shall hear more about what the Welsh Gov. are doing about it when Lee Waters, AM, talks to us on 13 June.

David Naylor

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Local News

New Bike Hire Hub in Mumbles

The promised hub for the Santander hire bikes in Mumbles was opened on 9 May. It is located midway between Verdi's and Oystermouth Square. (Pictured.)

The day before this picture was taken there were only four bikes by the stands, two of which were in the process of being hired. Clearly they are meeting a demand.

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20's Plenty for Wales?

On 7 May First Minister, Mark Drakeford, replying to a question from Conservative AM David Melding who had asked what were the Welsh Governments views on 20mph zones, said that "The Welsh Government believe that 20mph should be the default speed limit for residential areas." He went on to note that LA's would have the discretion to retain 30mph zones on key arterial routes, but that he wanted to see 20mph as the default for residential areas across Wales.

Labour AM John Griffiths added that this had cross-party support. He also said: "It will enable active travel - walking and cycling - to a greater extent, so it has very, very many benefits, and I'm pleased that they're now strongly recognised by Welsh Government."

We must wait and see if and when this is enacted in Swansea.

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The GAP progresses

At a meeting on 16 May with Bishopston councillor Lyndon Jones and council officers, we were updated on plans for the Gower Access Path which will link Bishopston with Mayals. It will run alongside and south of the busy road across Clyne Common, thereby providing a traffic free alternative for cyclists and walkers between the top of Fairwood Road and Bishopston Comprehensive School.

Plans for the path have now been prepared and a timeline proposed for the necessary preliminaries to construction, which, all being well, will happen in 2020. Before then locals in Bishopston and the Commoners (Most of the path goes across Common Land.) will need to be consulted, and then it has to be approved by the Welsh Government. Funding for this preliminary work has been found, but more will be needed to actually construct the path. The path has strong local support and it is expected that it will also be supported by the WG as it is exactly what they are trying to achieve with their Active Travel Act.

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Chairman's letter

It seems light years away that the Labour Party in Swansea promised to connect 10 wards with safe cycle routes to the city centre by 2022 when the next council elections take place. In fact, it was just two years ago and I for one thought it was way too optimistic given their previous record.

But lo and behold, the Welsh Government's dragon seems to have come to their rescue to slay all those doubting Thomas's and George's! Swansea scooped first prize in the Government's bidding process last August. £2M was sent down the M4 and now contractors all over Swansea are beavering away to complete this work. The new paths in Llansamlet, the cross valley link and the Tircanol route to Morriston Hospital means that both those northern wards will be connected to NCR 43 by August. With other works through Ynystawe Park and on the busy Cwm Level Road still to be finished, it all looks promising for the Eastside.

But what about other areas of Swansea, you cry! Well, the lottery wheels in Cardiff Bay have just finished rolling and Swansea got about twice as much as it should have, by population size. So next year nearly £3M pounds is to be spent. The main beneficiaries are to be Townhill and Gorseinon. Finally, after 30 years of delays and procrastination, the one mile link between Gowerton and Gorseinon will take shape – fingers crossed. So that's another four wards that gain a safe route to the City centre!

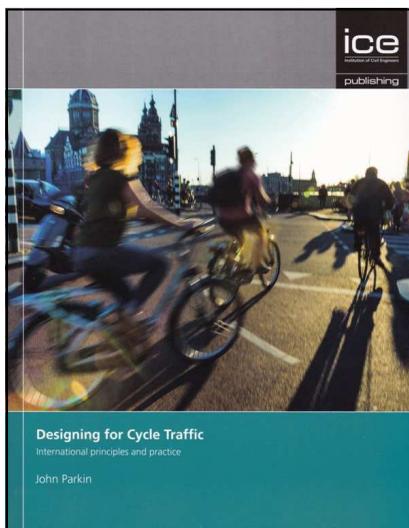
Now we need your help in shaping Swansea' bid for the final year (2020/21) of the Government's funding. Do let us know what your priorities are as we shape *Wheelright's* submission to the Council in the next few months.

John Sayce



The foreshore path upgrade from Blackpill to Sketty Lane – paid for from this year's WG grant – is (as can be seen), well used.

Book review: **Designing for Cycle Travel** by John Parkin



This book draws on cycling infrastructure design practice across the world with particular emphasis on northern Europe. It therefore complements the Welsh Active Travel Act Design Guidance. It brings together the various codes, leaving it to the relevant authorities to specify which should be adopted. For the most part these regulations complement rather than contradict each other.

There are 15 chapters and 3 appendices, totalling 228 A4 pages. This compares with the 418 pages of the ATA Design Guidance. The scope is comprehensive; in addition to the technical detail of cycle routes it includes planning and legal matters. The text is terse but clear, in the style of a technical paper. It is illustrated with greyscale photos. Terms are explained at the start and there is a comprehensive index. There are a number of equations, most of which are in the appendices.

The first chapter covers the history of cycling, followed in Chapter 2 by planning and legal issues. Then much of the nitty-gritty is contained in Chapters 3 to 11 with, for example, lane widths in Chapters 3 & 5, junctions in 8 and roundabouts in 10. Chapter 9 provides detailed information about the control of traffic lights. The final four chapters cover cycle parking, modelling and auditing, provision in developing nations and innovation.

To pick out a couple of details of particular local relevance: with hardly any exceptions the minimum width of cycle lanes is 2m. (In Table 3.7 only Transport for London out of three authorities allow 1.5m for a single lane with low traffic flows; the others require 2m or more.) The other detail is the recommendation in Chapter 8 that a cycle lane which crosses junctions should be coloured red. (There is considerable potential for this locally!)

Those looking for support for paths shared with pedestrians will be disappointed. The emphasis is on separate provision for pedestrians and cyclists for the convenience and safety of both. Cyclists should be able to cycle at their 'design speed'. Only for low traffic flows, ie mainly in rural areas, are shared-use paths considered acceptable.

While its hefty £65 price tag may put this book out of reach for the casual reader it is a must for cycle infrastructure designers. (Available from www.icebookshop.com.)

David Naylor

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Wild Camping – Bring it on

Well, maybe a cold windy April is not the best time to tick a cycling/camping trip in the Hebrides off the bucket list, but – hey – we did it! Fortunately we were cycling north for the first four of the eight days and literally blown up the 60km of Uist by a force 7 southerly.

Our route started at Castlebay on Barra – we were very lucky to have got there from Oban as there were no mainland ferries after ours for 48 hours (high winds) – and we cycled happily around this beautiful island with its stunning white beaches, deserted roads and mega fish-n-chips at the unique airport on the sandy beach. (Flights again cancelled.) A friendly local – they all were – directed us to the machair where we just about survived the wind behind a not very sheltered sand-dune! Breakfast in bed and a cuppa (I highly recommend 'jet boil') gave us sufficient energy to tackle the winds of S. Uist, Benbecula (another airport café) and N. Uist where we found a site in the lee of the most stunning white beach, plus a shimmering turquoise sea – breathtakingly beautiful.



The wind raged for three days. Whether ferries would sail was always a risk and we had to walk across at least two causeways as the cross winds would have blown us to the North Pole.

After North Uist and Berneray we landed in South Harris and found a beautiful place for our little tent by a tiny harbour and abandoned hotel – sheltered at last and the wind abated overnight. The ride around the west coast – the so called Golden road – defies superlatives, truly some of the most amazing coastal scenery I've ever seen: extremely lumpy and inlets of little bays, hamlets and off shore archipelago – minimal facilities – though we found an art gallery serving coffee at Geocrab.

On arrival at Tarbet on North Harris we slumped it in the Hostel there and attempted the only Corbett in the Outer Hebrides: An Gliseam. Slippery cycling shoes (meant to be hiking/biking: rubbish!) and atrocious weather means this is still on the bucket list, along with the 27 Corbetts on Moidart peninsula (which we didn't even catch a glimpse of because of driving rain and hill mist.)

We then turned south; cycling through Skye, Ardnamurchan and Mull for three days. Wild camping is acceptable in Scotland, but in Skye it seemed that all the nice potential sites were populated by highland cattle. But perseverance (and more helpful locals) rewarded us with a magical site looking over to the Cuillin, and likewise our last night on the side of Loch Sunnort was a unique experience.

All told we had a truly memorable 8 days. Although the wind and two days of heavy rain did not make cycling with our fairly heavily laden tourers that easy, the experience at being at one with nature in one of the most beautiful parts of the UK was unforgettable: seven ferries, about 500km and lots of cups of tea. Not bad for two Gower girls in their late 60's!

Alison Maddocks

Active Travel in Wales

On the wet and windy morning of 12 March Nick Guy and I caught the 9.55 to Cardiff to attend a meeting of the Cross Party Active Travel group. On the train we met up with Phil Snaith of the Carmarthenshire Cycle Campaign group. A bus took us to the Millenium Centre where we had a coffee before joining the meeting at noon in the Senedd.

There were about two dozen at the meeting, mainly cycle campaigners from across Wales, but also representatives from the Assembly and Duncan Dollimore, *Cycling UK's* campaign chief, from England.

The meeting was most ably chaired by Huw Irranca-Davies. He was joined at the front by Chris Roberts (Group secretary) and Lee Waters AM. While still AM for Llanelli Lee is now deputy Transport Minister.

The meeting kicked off with a presentation by Dafyd Trystan, chair of the Board of Governors of the recently opened Ysgol Hamadryad primary school in Cardiff. He described how they have been successful in getting the children to travel to school actively. (He didn't give figures but left the impression that most did.) Comprehensive measures were needed to achieve this: parental support, provision of bike parking, prevention of nearby parking, provision of a 'walking bus' and bike lessons. Before giving the talk he was confirmed as chair of the Cross Party group.

There followed a speech by Kirsty Williams AM, Education Minister for Wales. She assured us that the Welsh Government would support measures such as those just described but noted that her objectives were not limited to schools; the WG would contribute to costs such as bike provision and would help LAs provide safe routes. A question and answer session followed. The contributions included a Sustrans' speaker noting the need for joined up action and Phil Snaith emphasising the importance of planning. She said she was open to suggestions.

The rest of the meeting focussed on cycle training. It ended at 1.30pm. There followed an informal gathering in the same room to consider how best to promote active travel in Wales.

14 attended this extension. We were seated in a circle with the meeting being effectively chaired by Chris Roberts. It had been instigated by Duncan Dollimore to further Roger Geffen's initiatives in promoting active travel in Wales. Duncan (who was present) indicated that he would like to see an advisory group set up which would include representation outside of CUK. Chris invited us to come up with a strategy and this led to a fairly wide ranging, albeit inconclusive, discussion. Amongst other things it was suggested that there should be representation from a range of groups across Wales and that with there now being a Minister for N. Wales the north could be better represented.

This led to another meeting in Cardiff on 24 April arranged by Duncan, after which he joined *Wheelrights* Rhondda Tunnel meeting in Swansea.

After the meeting Nick, Phil and I joined others for a bite in the nearby Portugese café. (Delicious food here! It is at the south end of Bute Street.) Then, the rain having stopped, we walked to the station and caught a train back to Swansea.

David Naylor

The Waterford Greenway

A cycling holiday in Ireland is quite close to home but because it's only reached by crossing water it feels like more of an adventure. Having parked our motorised vehicles at Rosslare, nine of us were now under pedal power only, for the next three days. Our panniers loaded up, we boarded the ferry for our three hour crossing. Fortunately on a flat calm sea as storm Hannah with her 80 mph winds had only departed the day before.

Arriving at Rosslare late afternoon, our B&B for the night was close by and a wonderful Irish welcome awaited us, with afternoon tea and suggestions for our evening dining.

The next day, we headed to Waterford, a 40 mile cycle. Avoiding the main roads we took the very quiet country roads. In true Irish tradition, the drizzle had started but we were still able to admire the scenery. The state of the roads, however, was not something to be admired. Rough and full of potholes made an uncomfortable ride. A few punctures later, lunch at Wellingtonbridge, and, after a five minute ferry across the river Barrow, we finally arrived in Waterford. Our lovely hotel near the Marina had everything we needed and secure garage parking for our bikes.

The next day brought sunshine and we were looking forward to the main event, the Waterford Greenway. The Greenway is an old railway line which in its day, ran from Waterford to Dungarvan a distance of 30 miles. Built in 1878, it was in use for passengers until 1967 and finally closed in 1990. Ten years later, Waterford council had the idea to open it up as a cycling and walking trail for tourism and leisure whilst retaining the rich Irish heritage of the area. The Greenway was finally opened in March 2017.

It is now a spectacular, mostly flat smooth trail with stunning scenery en route. The first few miles run alongside the River Suir, then the Comeragh Mountains come into view before the trail continues along the copper coast to Dungarven Bay. Bike shops and cafes are dotted around, as well as many access points en route for further exploration of the area. There are also some magnificent structures along the way, 11 bridges, three viaducts and the highlight being the Ballyvoyle tunnel (Pictured). Built in 1878 and 400 metres long, it cuts its way through the hillside and emerges on the other side into a beautiful cutting where the high sided cliffs are covered in a rain forest like greenery.



Time for lunch at Dungarvan before retracing our steps back to Waterford.

What a truly magnificent trail! There is also a whisper that another Greenway is being considered for the old railway line from Rosslare to Waterford. Now that would definitely mean a return visit to this beautiful part of the world.

Dawn Aplin

Forthcoming events

See the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk for more information.

Cappuccino Rides

These gentle rides take place, usually fortnightly, throughout the summer, starting and finishing at the Environment Centre. Details on the 'Events' and 'Rides/Commutes' pages of the website.

Wheelrights Routes Group meeting/rides.

Normally on the first Saturday in the month at 10.00 am. Check 'Events' page of website for location and confirmation of dates.

U3A Rides.

10.00am starting at various locations. Normally on last Monday in month. Details on the 'Events' and 'Rides/Commutes' pages.

June

8-16 June: BIKE WEEK.

Thursday 13 June: *Wheelrights* meeting when Lee Waters, AM, will talk on "Active Travel and Climate Change". All welcome.

July

17-21 July: GOWER CYCLING FESTIVAL.

This is being organised by White Rock Events and will be different from previous Festivals. Summary information about the rides is given on the *Cycling Festival* page of *Wheelrights* website. They include a Junior Ride on 20 July and the annual Gower Bike Ride on 21st.

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Bikes on Hitachi trains.

After a year in service GWR have started to sign where the bike spaces are on the Swansea-Paddington trains; not on all the spaces mind you, but at least on some. This is a step in the right direction but the provision for cyclists is still far from satisfactory.

On a recent journey from Bristol Parkway to Swansea platform signs advised cyclists to wait in Zone 2. Sure enough this was opposite a bike space when the train pulled in, albeit unsigned. On getting in I found I could not hang my bike in the cramped two-bike space because another bike blocked access to the vacant hanger; it could not be moved because it was locked. Later another cyclist tried to add his bike.



There being a total of 8 bike spaces on this 10 car train there were most likely free bike spaces, signed or unsigned, further down the train. Problem is lack of information. GWR need to get their act together!

David Naylor