



# Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 65 Autumn 2023

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

## The link is still missing.

This picture says it all. It is looking west along the North Gower Road (B4295), along the 'missing link'. How are these two expected to pass?

Wheelrights are pulling out all the stops to get a 3m wide shared use path constructed along this 1.1 km stretch. If you have not yet signed the change.org petition (the link is on [www.wheelrights.org.uk/campaigns/](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk/campaigns/)) please do so.



The 20 mph default law (to be introduced on 17 September) is controversial: some think it ill advised while others that it is a good idea. I have a couple of thoughts on the matter and would be interested to know to what extent they are shared:

- It should allow safe cycling on these streets *without the need for cycle lanes or SUPs*, thereby promoting the message that roads are not just for cars.
- 20 mph speed limits should be enforced not by speed humps but by cameras. A sign would show green, amber and red for speeds less than 20; 20-25; and above 25 mph respectively. Red would result in a fine. Similarly for other speed limits.

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### Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to David by mid November. (Email: [david@davidjnaylor.plus.com](mailto:david@davidjnaylor.plus.com)).

### This issue

We start with a letters page: feedback which it would be good to have more of in future issues.

On p.3: a round up of current work; then two articles by John Britton. In the first he explains why 20 mph is needed and in the second we learn that the benefits of cycling extend beyond the physical.

On p.6 I summarise where we are with the Welsh Gov.'s plan to open footpaths to cyclists. And then, on p.7, David Judd tell us about a prestigious award for a new Greenway in the Wye Valley.

**David Naylor**

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## Letters to Editor

### The Missing link

Further to Mark's excellent article about the new North Gower Access Path, (*The Missing Link*: Spring Newsletter, p.3.) I would like to add more information. In 2009 I took the baton from Mr David Judd, and campaigned with Swansea Council for completion of this missing section of the North Gower Cycle Route, a 16 mile bike route which the Council was then publicising. Council Highways officer, Ben George, ran with this, with positive results. He negotiated with the then three main landowners along the route, and gained their agreement to his detailed design plans. The problem then was a lack of money to pay for the route construction, as this was well before the Active Travel Act.

Then in about 2012 Swansea Council commissioned a study of "Sustainable Transport in Gower" to which myself, David Naylor and Hamish Osborn contributed. This report identified Gowerton as a key transport hub for the Gower, and highlighted the need for more cycle paths on Gower.

Fast forward to 2023 we are now seeing new direct train services from Gowerton to London, plus the completion of the Gowerton to Pontarddulais bike path.

So I hope this ground work will help the new campaign move things forward at last. Ben's designs and the Sustainable Transport report should be available in the Council archives.

Your NGAP has all my best wishes, and I look forward to joining you at the opening ceremony, when it's built!

**Nick Guy**

### Bikes on Trains

I recently travelled by train with my bike from Didcot to Swansea via Swindon, having secured cycle reservations in advance. At Didcot there were at least four other cyclists, all without reservations. Thankfully, a railway official gave me priority, but I do not know what happened to the others. At Swindon there was no one and I could not get my bike to hang from the hook. Later I discovered that someone had wedged a 3rd bike in there as well, which impedes the trolley, and would make it very difficult to get my bike out. In addition, there were other cyclists, forced to stand with their bikes by the doors. In short, there is certainly more demand than provision; the compartments are inconvenient, and I was lucky that (as happened to DN) the bikes spaces were not already filled with luggage. Thankfully, at the moment few rules are being applied.



*[Ed. Yes, on returning from my Continental tour (reported in the last issue) I had to move four large suitcases to get my bike in. The photo on the left taken on another Hitachi train illustrates the problem. Here they managed to suspend their bikes, no doubt with difficulty. The photo on the right, taken on a German IC train, shows what is needed.]*



**Bill Gannon**

## What's new

### Gower Access Path (GAP)

Work was due to start last October, but it was not until early this year that it did. A section of new path running east from The Glebe (leading to Bishopston Comprehensive) to nearly as far as Northway Garage has been constructed. But nothing more has been done since the spring. Legal work to enable it to continue across Clyne Common is incomplete. It is expected that it will be soon so that the path can be completed by early next year.

### Gorseinon Road

Work on the new SUP between Gorseinon and Penllergaer, which started in January, is nearly complete. It follows the north side of the road from Gorseinon to opposite Lidl's where it crosses over to the south. It ends at the A483 (pictured) where, so far, there is no provision other than dropped kerbs. Clearly a safer way of crossing this busy junction is needed.



### Morrison area

Part of the existing SUP which runs through Tirpenry and Pentrepoeth from the footbridge across the A4067 (which links to NCR 43) in the south to Cwm Arian in the north has been upgraded. It has also been extended north to Llanllienwen Road. The picture below is looking across Llanllienwen Road close to where the path ends. The M4 is in the background. There is space under it to allow a continuation of the path to Clydach. Safe



crossings of the slip roads would be required but it would avoid the footbridge which is not suitable for cyclists. In addition to this, to complete a link from Tirpenry to Clydach, the SUP needs to be taken under the A48 (Clase Road) using the existing underpass.

### Ynysallen Road

The SUP on the south side of the road, between it and the motorway is complete. It connects NCR 43 in the west to Herbert Thomas Way, the turn-off to a housing estate.

### Mumbles

Work is in progress on upgrading the foreshore path.

**David Naylor**

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## Twenty's plenty!

Wales is joining the many countries where 20 mph or 30 km/h limits are becoming the norm for urban and village streets. But unlike the street by street approach of the rest of the UK, it is taking a smarter route by setting 20 mph as the national urban/village default with exceptions decided by local authorities. It has all the benefits of a national and consistent standard combined with local flexibility. The new limit becomes effective on 17<sup>th</sup> September this year.

Implementing 20 mph speed limits on urban and village roads in the UK provides numerous benefits for road safety, the environment, health, and communities. By reducing the speed limit, the number and severity of accidents decreases significantly. At 20 mph, a pedestrian hit by a vehicle has around a 97% chance of survival, compared to under 50% at 30 mph. Slower speeds allow drivers more reaction time to brake, reducing accident frequency. Less severe crashes also reduce demands on emergency services and healthcare.

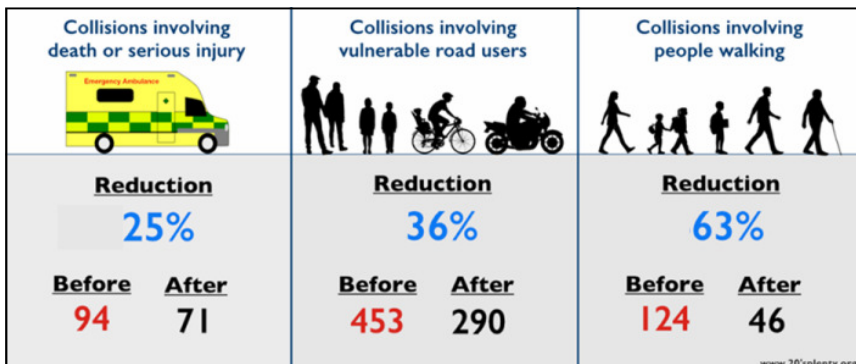
Environmentally, lower speeds reduce noise pollution and emissions. More gradual braking and acceleration creates less traffic noise than fast acceleration and braking. Emissions of pollutants like nitrogen oxides and particulate matter are reduced at 20 mph compared to 30 mph due to smoother driving. In turn, this improves local air quality and public health.

Lower speeds enable more people to comfortably walk and cycle due to increased safety. This promotes active travel, providing exercise and reducing short car trips, obesity levels, and chronic disease. It also fosters greater community cohesion and connectivity when more people use streets for active travel and socialising. Streets become more vibrant community spaces.

Reduced speeds can also increase local retail spending as more pedestrians use local shops and businesses. Drivers travelling at 20 mph also better notice local retailers and restaurants to visit.

In summary, 20 mph speed limits significantly improve road safety, the environment, public health, social connectivity, and local economic vitality. By moderating vehicle speeds, Welsh towns and villages can become more liveable places for people.

**John Britton**



Reduction in collisions in London involving vulnerable users since 20 mph limit introduced.

## Cycling keeps you Sane

A recent research study investigated the impact of commuting on workers' mental health, specifically focusing on the mode of transport, time spent commuting, and associated expenses. The study was conducted using data from the 'Commuting, Daily Habits and Urban Health Survey' in Mairena del Aljarafe near Seville, Spain, with 294 workers as the representative sample.

The findings reveal that commuting to work is a significant aspect of many people's daily lives, and that travel times have been increasing, leading to growing concerns.

The results indicate that workers who use private motor vehicles for commuting to work experience poorer mental health compared to those who use active transport or public transport. Moreover, individuals using private motor vehicles spend more time and money on their commute, contributing to increased worries about sleep loss, stress, and feelings of unhappiness or depression.

Overall, the research provides valuable insights into the impact of commuting on mental health and emphasizes the need for promoting alternative transport methods and addressing the challenges of traffic congestion. By adopting more sustainable and less stressful commuting options, individuals' mental health could be improved, leading to better overall wellbeing and productivity.

**John Britton**

*Garrido-Cumbrera, M., Braçe, O., Gálvez-Ruiz, D., López-Lara, E., & Correa-Fernández, J. (2023). Can the mode, time, and expense of commuting to work affect our mental health?. Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives, 21, 100850.*



This is William Street in Sandfields; already a 20 mph zone.  
A foretaste of the future? (See previous page.)

## Cycling on footpaths

Four years ago, before the pandemic, the Welsh Government made a commitment to increase access to the outdoors, in particular to make it legal to cycle on footpaths (with some exceptions). This initiative appears to have stalled.

In 2020 Cycling UK joined representatives of land management and other outdoor organisations to work out the details of how this access should be provided. How should it be decided whether or not a path is suitable for shared use? How can these access changes be communicated to promote responsible use?

A report setting out their conclusions was submitted to the Welsh Government at the end of 2021. Unfortunately, rather than make clear recommendations, the report just outlined the options. That's when things stalled.

Cycling UK's engagement officer, Gwenda Owen, has been busy trying to move things forward. She, working with the Cross Party Group for outdoor activity, has suggested trialling the proposed changes in a variety of locations – rural and on the edge of towns – to see how they work in practice. They have produced a report making the case for increasing access to the countryside to boost health, well being and the rural economy.

Only one fifth of the rights of way in Wales are open to cyclists and they often don't link up.

If we know of a path where cycling is not permitted but should be we are invited to send details of it including a photo and its location to [campaigns@cyclenguk.org](mailto:campaigns@cyclenguk.org). The photo below showing the footpath between Park Woods and Llethrid on the Gower Peninsula on which cycling is not permitted is a good example.



Looking south from Llethrid towards Park Woods.

This article draws on an article by Sophie Gordon in the April/May *cycle*. Thanks, Sophie.

**David Naylor**

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## Tidenham Award

Our President gives the background to the award made by the Historic Railway Society to *Greenways and Cycloroutes* and the *Friends of Wye Valley Greenway* for their work to open Tidenham Tunnel in the Wye Valley.

This 1 km tunnel, just north of Chepstow, closed for many years, had become a home for bats. Its conversion to a Greenway posed many additional environmental considerations apart from those of removing the rails, repairing the structure and path construction. As part of a combined contractor and volunteer operation to build the Greenway, the work on the tunnel was completed two years ago. It is currently open daytime, closed at night and between October and April because of the bats; but we hope that with bat monitoring these restrictions will be eased with time.



To receive this award was for me a highlight. The praise of the work we carried out to restore the tunnel was particularly pleasing, as was the recognition that the Greenway will protect the whole former route from development. Understandably railway enthusiasts generally want to put trains back, and sometimes there is a reluctance to support their conversion to Greenways, but an important consideration is the Greenway will protect the route from other development and although, unlikely in most cases, they could be reopened with a Greenway alongside, some examples already exist.

In June there was a ceremony at the tunnel to install the plaque, attended by local MP and Secretary of State for Transport Mark Harper (who unveiled it), Lee Waters (Deputy Minister for Climate Change, Welsh Government), Helene Rossiter (National Highways Head of the Heritage Railway Estate) and Andy Savage (Chair of the National Railway Heritage Awards Trustees and Director of the Railway Heritage Trust).

The huge support for this project by volunteers both in its construction and subsequent aftercare (including opening and closure of the tunnel throughout the year) was praised as an example of what can be achieved with a will. The detail of the path construction and volunteer work camps can be seen on p.7 of the Winter 2021/22 Newsletter (Issue58) and also, along with other projects, on <https://greenwaysandcycloroutes.org/>.

There are many former railways in Wales that could benefit from conversion to Greenways. Currently in rural parts of Wales they are not eligible for an Active Travel grant (which excludes tourism and recreational trip purposes), a bone of contention with me as it makes funding so much more difficult to obtain where tourism is an important part of the economy.

**David Judd**

## Forthcoming events

(This information and more is provided on the 'Events' page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk) .)

### **Wheelrights public meeting.**

7.00pm on 13 September, in the Environment Centre, Mark Youngman, *Transport for Wales* Active Travel Manager Rail, will give a talk titled "Bikes and Trains".

### **Wheelrights Routes Group meetings.**

These are usually at 10.00am monthly and take place in Ripples Café. The next is scheduled for 10 September.

### **Cappuccino Rides.**

Details on the Events page. These will continue into the autumn until we decide it's getting too wet and cold.

### **Wheelrights AGM**

Date to be decided. Check Events page.

This flying cyclist recently appeared on the roundabout in Southgate. (The house on the left is the Three Cliffs Café.)

The wheels spin and the pedals turn when the wind blows. At least they did until the chain came off, when, as in the photo, only the front wheel spins.

However, on a more recent visit, the cyclist had flown away!

