

Wheelrights

Notes of Meeting on 13th June 2019 in the Environment Centre, SA1 1RY

Present (members): John Sayce (JS), Nick Guy (NG), David Naylor (DN), David Judd (DJ), Mike Lewis (ML), Allyson Evans (AE), Don Ashman (DA), Mike Cherry (MC), Hamish Osborn (HO), Fran Rolfe (FR), Phil Brophy (PB), Gordon Gibson (GG),

Present (non members): Jeff Green (Swansea Council), Laura Pack (NPT Council), Councillors Nick Davies & Mary Sherwood, Phil McDonald (Swansea Environment Forum), John Childs (FoE), Andrew Davies (ABMU), Jane Tonks (Uplands Vision), Dennis Dwyer (Ripples café), John Davies (and wife, Bay Transport), and others.

Apologies: Ian Davidson, Pat Hansard, Chris Walsh, Dawn Aplin, Simon Bailey, Richie Saunders

The meeting had 37 attendees, and was chaired by John.

1. Speaker: Lee Walters – Deputy Minister of Transport, Welsh Govt.

Lee Waters gave an entertaining and informative presentation about his current thinking around the Active Travel Act (ATA):

Main aim is to encourage a lot more people to make everyday journeys by bike.

The challenges are:

- Poor implementation – Plans to review the Guidance of ATA
- Design issues – Plan to revise the Design Guidance
- Increased funding – Lee increasing this to £20m (for all Wales) -- some top sliced for training of Council staff, and better public Consultation.

His aims for future are:

- To create well designed routes, designed by trained Council staff.
- A “pipeline” approach – step change,
- The new TfW to take on Active Travel (as well as buses & trains)

Lee’s vision is for a generational culture change – he believed we have made a good start, but lots to do: need well designed, continuous networks of bike routes, which link up, and are where people want them. Its vital to get the details right, and to get communities involved so they are asking for new routes.

Lee then took questions from the floor (Q) and gave his answers (A):

DJ asked about:

- (Q) The role of Planners – (A) Lee agreed, and got Planning Guidance strengthened.
- Leisure/Tourism cycling – (A) Lee got the regeneration argument, BUT is pushing Active Travel esp. to tackle air quality/health/environment issues. He decided to prioritise urban cycling, and will hopefully return to leisure cycling in future.
- (Q) New road design has to consider cycling – (A) Lee agreed and tackling culture of road designers by training, and reviewing guidance on road design.

Jeff Green owned up to being a highway engineer:

- (Q) How about express bike routes eg between Swansea and Llanelli? – (A) Lee was concerned about constraints due to engineers risk averse attitude to road safety. He praised Mark Drayford’s recent introduction of 20mph default speed limits in urban areas; need for training of engineers.

Councillor Nick Davies asked about culture change:

- (Q) How do councils build cheap, accessible, safe routes? – (A) Lee completely agreed, need to be ambitious!

Gordon Gibson said:

- A previous Highways Director talked of doubling cycling figures (but from a low base); need to be ambitious, and learn from other countries, eg New York. – (A) Lee agreed and said Behaviour Change is vital. He wanted more spending on buses.

A woman in audience:

- (Q) What about walking, and the problem of cars parked on pavements? – (A) Lee agreed

and stressed culture change, small steps, consultation.

Andrew Davies said:

- Swansea has lowest proportion using public transport? – (A) Lee stressed transport poverty and the high cost of car ownership.

Jane Tonks:

- (Q) Does the ATA help bus transport? – (A) Lee described problems of bus deregulation which both UK and Welsh Gov. are now reviewing, and TfW has a role.

Dennis Dwyer:

- (Q) What about improving bike provision on trains? – (A) Lee said he is torn on trains. In future he hoped for bike rental schemes at Welsh train stations. But Cllr Mary Sherwood said she needs the reliability of taking own bike on trains.

In conclusion Lee praised the role of cycle campaign groups, like Wheelrights, in pressing for improvements and closely monitoring Council plans esp. new developments. He stressed the need for Behaviour change, and looked forward to working with us.

Following a tea break/networking we broke into 3 small groups to discuss:

1. Park and Cycle scheme

Aim to encourage commuters to travel by bike for the final mile of their journey. Proposed a pilot scheme in Swansea Vale where drivers could have free parking if they used bikes for final mile. Advantages are the extensive network of cycle paths in this area.

2. E- Bike rental scheme

Proposal to provide e-bikes at a suitable location, eg on Townhill to enable cycling in a hilly area of transport poverty. Cllr Mary Sherwood reported back that this would need costing and full consultation. Agreed that e-bikes will be a significant contribution to encouraging more people to cycle in future. In Holland e-bikes are now out-selling conventional bikes.

3. Workplace Parking Levy.

This could be a part of behaviour change combining sticks with carrots (eg showers, bike parking, training). Nick Guy reported back that Scottish Gov. and Nottingham council are currently consulting on schemes from which Wales could learn. Proposed that WG consult on WPL scheme for large employers. Swansea is in good position with large public sector employers. Also a creditation scheme eg Swansea University has “gold standard”.

Bike Week Events:

- 15th June: June Family Fun day at Bikeability 11am – 2.30pm.
- 16th: 43-2-C ride from Clydach to Swansea Marina 11am start.
- 17th June: Launch of new digital marketing scheme of Sustainable Transport 6pm at Gower Heritage Centre.

Also:

- Gower Cycling Festival planned for 18th-21st July – org by White Rock events.

Nick Guy (*Wheelrights* secretary)