

# Wheelrights Meeting

## Notes of meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023

In the Environment Centre, Pier Street, Swansea SA1 1RY (and on Zoom).

Present: Approx. 25 attended in the room and several on Zoom.

Ian Walker, professor of Environmental Psychology at Swansea University gave a talk entitled

### **Challenging our car addiction**

The meeting was chaired by John Sayce who, having welcomed all, introduced the speaker.

#### **The Presentation:**

Ian spoke about the double standards relating to car use. The term *Motonormativity* is used to describe this. The essence of it is that behaviour which would be unacceptable or even illegal in other walks of life is accepted when it comes to driving.

He noted that cars were dangerous machines. Risks associated with driving are accepted whereas they would not be elsewhere. He gave pollution as an example: smoking is not tolerated in populated places whereas the toxic fumes from cars are. Studies showed that a significantly larger proportion of people accepted risk relating to driving than, eg, in a working environment. Another example is that people would accept a location for a new hospital at the edge of a town which required driving to get to it rather than in a more central location.

He also noted that the language used in the media, particularly when reporting accidents, portray cyclists in a negative way. Furthermore that current urban road design encourages the use of cars for short journeys and discourages walking and cycling.

#### **Additional Information**

In <https://thearoncars.org/2023/01/31/car-brain-with-dr-ian-walker/> Ian Walker discusses the same themes.

<https://www.swansea.ac.uk/press-office/news-events/news/2023/01/the-blind-spot-that-stops-us-seeing-the-dangers-of-motoring.php> is the Swansea University press release which summarises the study underpinning this work.

And <https://psyarxiv.com/egnmj> is a copy of the research paper.

#### **Q and A.**

A wide ranging discussion followed the talk. This centred on the problems caused by cars in Swansea: the congestion they cause; and the difficulty of getting people on bikes.

There followed informal discussion over tea and coffee.

Notes prepared by  
David Naylor