

Wheelrights Meeting

Notes of meeting on 13th September 2023

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

Present: Dawn Aplin (DA), John Cardy (JC), James Dewar (JD), Jeff Green (JG)*, Nick Guy (NG), Tim Lewis (TL), Joe Muldoon (JM)*, David Naylor (DN)*, Dareyoush Rassi (DR), Pat Rassi (PR), Leonie Ramondt (LR), John Sayce (JS), Chris Walsh (CWa), Chris Wood (CWo).

* Attended by Zoom.

Apologies: John Britton (JB), Caroline Carter (CCa), Chris Connick CCo), Allyson Evans (AE), Gordon Gibson (GG), David Judd (DJ).

Mark Youngman, Transport for Wales Train Manager, gave a talk entitled

Bikes and Trains

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

1. The Presentation:

Mark in summarising his background noted that he had worked with LAs. He then gave a slide presentation the essence of which is as follows:

- The rail services covered by TfW. These range from the Valley lines, the rest of Wales and NE into England to Shrewsbury, Chester, Birmingham and Manchester. They do not cover the inter-city services run by GWR nor (in the future) by Grand Union Trains (GUT).
- A new interactive website for rail travellers. This provides live information about train locations. There is also provision for on-line booking, including bikes.
- Their work on Active Travel. This covers provision at stations: bike parking, signing, etc.
- Examples of cycle parking at stations and plans for better provision. Mark noted that vandalism was a problem, eg at Llansamlet. He asked for ideas.
- New trains with improved bike storage, Specifically: Classes 197, 231, 391 and Voyager. The 197 has 2 or 3 carriages with space for respectively 4-6 or 8-12 bikes. It is intended for use across Wales. The 231 and 398 have 3 or 4 carriages with space for 6-9 bikes. They are intended for the Valley lines. The Voyager, currently in use by Scotrail, is to be used on The Heart of Wales line. It comprises two carriages with generous space for 10 bikes in one of them. Mark showed us the proposed layout of bike spaces.
- Engagement. TfW plan to engage with Councils and user groups incl. Wheelrights.

A Q and A session followed after which Mark said that he was keen to receive ideas and questions from members. We can email him: Mark.Youngman952@tfwrail.wales.

After a tea/coffee break DR, NG and DN gave short presentations: DR on feedback he has received from a members survey (about proposed new name and website); NG with an update on the new website; and DN summarised his defence of our name and website.

2. Feedback from survey.

DR had received 33 replies from our 86 members. 20 were in favour of a new website, 6 were against and 8 did not state a preference. Regarding a new name, 9 favoured "Swansea Cycle City", 7 "Swansea Cycling" and 6 "Swansea Bay Cycle Campaign Group" (4 of whom suggested dropping "Group".) He himself is maintaining a neutral stance.

3. New website.

NG thanked members for their feedback on the mock up of the new website, on which work is in progress. See the Appendix for NG's written views.

4. Defence of name and website.

DN had prepared a detailed defence of the name "Wheelrights" and the website. This, with the other written responses, is in the Appendix. At the meeting he noted his conclusion: namely that both should be retained and that a new website would not serve a useful purpose.

Notes prepared by
Nick Guy and David Naylor

APPENDIX

Written responses to the suggestions for a new name and website.

David Naylor (Paper titled “Defence of the name *Wheelrights* and the *Website*”)

The Name

There needs to be a good reason to change it.

The name **CTC** lasted for over a century before it was changed to **Cycling UK** and that was for the good reason that it was no longer just about cycle touring but had a much wider remit.

Wheelrights (founded in 1995) is only 28 years old and its *raison-d’etre* has not changed. It has been around long enough for some key people to recognise it but not long enough for others who should. This is the first of two good reasons why the name needs to be retained.

The second is that **Wheelrights**, subtitle **Swansea Bay cycle campaign group** encapsulates what we do: we campaign for the **rights** of those on **wheels** (bikes, trikes, etc.)

Were there a reason to change it, to me **Swansea Cycle City** seems singularly unsuitable. It implies that our campaigning is limited to the City, whereas it extends across the County and, in NPT, from the Bay Campus to the Neath estuary.

The Website

The perceived problems with the website are that it is not readily recognised by search engines, so that people are not finding us, and that it is not “modern”.

Aware of the first I have for some time sought advice on how to help search engines find it, and have tweaked the code accordingly. But this has not stopped searches coming up with a **Wheelwrights** site or one of the various **Wheelwrights Arms** across the UK. Following up a suggestion from Chris Carter I have included **Wheelwrights** as a key word in the meta section of the Home page plus a note saying that we are not them. This seems to be bearing fruit.

I am not sure what being modern entails but judging by the ‘Mock up’ and some other sites I have visited it seems to involve filling the Home page with a photo so that useful things like a menu are not up front. In the case of the Mock up you even have to scroll to see all of the photo!

I have designed our site to be easy to navigate and the feedback I am getting is that it is. There are pictures on the Home page but they do not dominate. It is not intended to be a marketing tool, nor should it be; social media is for that, and I am glad that you recognise this.

I have indicated my support for a new website but only if it is a very short (single screen) ‘gateway’ to the main site. John Britton came up with a Dutch example; liking this I came up with <https://www.wheelrights.org.uk/WRgate.htm>, but with suggestion that the photo be replaced by a video as in the Dutch example. The Mock up competes with the existing site and does not in my opinion serve as a gateway. A view expressed by members who know about websites is that a second one would confuse both search engines and potential visitors. This together with my position strongly suggests that you stick with what we have.

The problem of course is that the website is wholly dependant on me. A transition to a new webmaster/mistress is needed. This person needs to have an IT background, with some knowledge of the codes used in the source: HTML, CSS and to a small extent PHP and JavaScript. With a knowledge of these codes the site can probably be more easily maintained by direct use of an editor such as Notepad++ rather than by means of a package.

A suggestion for giving our website (and us in general) a new look is to replace the logo. This should be the result of a competition, as was the present one back in 2007. (But mine was the only entry!) I have already seen a suggested logo which to me would be acceptable.

Conclusions

The name **Wheelrights** should be retained for two reasons: it has not been around long enough to be well known and it, together with the subtitle, encapsulates what we do.

The website is an easy to navigate source and archive of information. It should therefore be retained, but arrangements made for somebody to take over from me as webmaster. Social media should be used for marketing. A second website is unlikely to serve a useful purpose.

David Naylor, September 2023

Caroline Carter. (by email to DR on 11 September. Noting that she will miss the meeting [visiting the USA] expressed her thoughts on the new website and associated issues as follows.)

I fully endorse David's points, specifically:

- 1. Name Change:** I don't see the need to change the name away from "Wheelrights, Swansea Bay Cycle Campaign Group". I agree with David's point that "Swansea Cycle City" doesn't cover the 'County' elements of Swansea, nor does it reflect the fact that some campaigning work has been undertaken in Neath in the past. A name change necessitates jettisoning the profile the organisation previously enjoyed and entails a certain amount of admin to amend and alert everyone, including partners and stakeholders of the new name.
- 2. Rationale for a New Website:** I am not convinced of the need for a new website at this moment in time. Increased use of Wheelright's Facebook Page would better facilitate marketing, publicity and signposting.
- 3. New Website Combined With Retention of the Current Website:** I understand that the intention is to retain the current website and to have limited content on the new website. This approach would, I think, create unnecessary duplication and confusion. Indeed I don't know of any other organisation which has two different websites. The logical conclusion of creating a new website is that the current website would not feature any new content and the current content would be archived. Is this the Committee's intention?
- 4. New Logo:** As David stated, the time has probably come for a new more modern logo to replace the current one. Obviously the same branding is needed across all platforms. Is it the intention to have the current logo on the new website?
- 5. Improvements to the Current Website:**..As David stated, search engines struggled previously to find Swansea Wheelrights, but my husband, Chris, made some suggestions to David and this has now improved the site's 'searchability'. A few other tweaks were suggested: e.g. being able to access the most recent newsletter directly from the Home Page. A new logo would make the current website look more 'modern'. Further changes to the current website could probably be made, and my husband was prepared to work with David on this. However this work has understandably ground to a halt, as the future of the current website is now in doubt.

I'm confident that we can move forward with the rationalisation and improved online presence of the organisation and I look forward to playing my part in this.

Regards
Caroline.

Allyson Evans (by email on 12 September to interested parties. Noting that she will miss the meeting writes as follows.)

I have just read Caroline's email (following on from David's) and agree with the most part.

When a new website was discussed initially a few years ago I assumed it would take over from our current one. I can't see two website's working together; it would be very confusing for everyone including us!

There is so much info on our current one, but I feel when prospective new members in particular find it, and click on there, they are not drawn in, because of it's older look.

I wondered if maybe some photo's could be put on the top, and/or under the Wheelrights name at the top and the links? Just to make it a bit more attractive and with a bit of colour?!

Just a thought I have no idea if anything like that can be done.

I also agree with Wheelrights staying in the name. Again I feel if we change it completely without Wheelrights, people who know Wheelrights, will think it's something quite separate.

I have no thoughts either way on the logo.

Al

Nick Guy (by email on 12 September to interested parties.)

I'll try to answer the concerns raised:

1. Glad there is a consensus around need for new logo, and increase our Facebook/ social media presence, and support for these.
2. Several organisations have two (or more) websites eg Swansea Council has cycleswanseabay (tube map) which also covers NPT. These websites succeed in offering different services etc. Thus we could maintain current website as info/archive, (and great to modernise it), while new one's main aim is to promote our work and reach out to a wider, younger more diverse audience, and draw them in.
4. Agree with concerns about updating both websites, and can report that I've recruited two younger members (IT and web savvy) to update new website.
5. Fundamentally, role of new website is a social marketing tool. I've spoken to a council marketing/recruitment chap who tells me that both social media and a modern website (along with meetings, podcasts, events etc.) all complement each other with effective campaigns.

I wish Caroline a good trip to USA and share her opinion that we can all work through these issues and continue to enhance the excellent profile and credibility Wheelrights has built up'

Nick

Phil Brophy (by email on 13 September to DN.)

I am a big fan of the name Wheelrights! The website is good. It could be a bit livelier but unless there is a volunteer to set up and run a new one then stick with the one we have. It has the right info and is easy to navigate.

Phil