

# Cyclists top group's commuter challenge

**THE challenge was simple enough!**

Wheelrights, the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group, wanted to find out just which of a string of different travelling methods would be fastest along a route stretching between Gowerton and Castle Square in Swansea during the morning rush hour.

So nine of them gathered at 8.15am for the Commuter Challenge, a Swansea contribution to National Bike Week.

By 9am all of them were swapping stories in the square about the journeys just undertaken.

They had been on bike, of course, by car, bus, and on train. Two hardened members of Swansea Harriers had run it, while one had used a kick bike.

Different routes were used, varying in distance from about five to eight miles, so as a scientific experiment it could not be said to be 100 per cent reliable.

But it was illuminating. The cyclists, not hampered by waiting time and queues, came home first, followed by the runners.

The car, train and bus options had more to contend with in those directions, and suffered accordingly.

"It was a real success," says Wheelrights secretary David Naylor.

"Everything went according to plan.

"The self-powered people were

STUCK in a traffic jam? Or waiting for a bus that is late?

So who would win in a classic 'tortoise and hare' challenge? CHRIS PEREGRINE has been finding out.

quicker" than the powered people."

In Wimbledon fortnight, it was a case of game, set and match for their cause.

Chairman Nick Guy adds: "I recognise it's an uphill struggle to get people, including myself, to reduce our reliance on cars.

"Basically, I believe the only effective way is a stick and carrot approach, like the London congestion charge, although I personally favour road pricing which links cost to each journey.

"Wheelrights is working closely with the council to improve cycle routes in the city and we can help any commuter who wishes to have advice about possible cycle routes to work."

## WEB LINKS

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



**Claudine Conway,** marketing manager for Volcano Theatre Company.

**Cycling: 23 minutes.** "I quite enjoyed it," she says. "It was fine. Not too many hills. The traffic was not too bad.

"There was no unpleasant behaviour from motorists. I live in Newton and cycle to work in High Street. It is a round trip of ten miles, but I do about 20 sometimes. I might go via Crymlyn Bog, Kittle or Killay. I do about 150 miles a week. I go along the seafront to work.

"At the end of the day you feel very much better for it and it's nice to be in control of your travel arrangements. You haven't got to depend on other people."



**CHALLENGE SUCCESS** Campaign group Wheelrights ran a commuter challenge using car, trains, bus, bike and running.

SW/M20110622A-014\_C



**Mark Roberts,** a Swanssea University researcher.  
**Running: 31 minutes.**

"I ran on the road all the time," says the Swanssea Harrier and marathon champion.

"Cars just have to give me a way for me! I did not feel threatened. I am used to running races on the road. I enjoyed that route. I live in Killay and run to and from work every day.

"I run more than 100 miles in a week, with training and races as well."



**Chris Allton,** a physics lecturer at Swanssea University.  
**Running: 37 minutes.**

"It was great," says the Swanssea Harrier. "There was a little bit of hill early on and the second part was downhill. I enjoyed it. I run about 30 miles a week. I live in Killay and cycle back and forth to work every day, a round trip of about five miles. It is downhill going in to work, so I arrive fresh as a daisy. It is uphill back home and I have a shower after. I prefer cycling to using the car. I like the outdoors and it is a way of life."



**Alison Sandy,** an NVQ assessor.  
**Cycling: 27 minutes.**

Up to three times a week she cycles to work in Swanssea's Quay Parade from Waunarlwydd, a round trip of 11 miles. "You do get some motorists giving you a problem, people who don't give you enough room," she says. "You do have some close encounters." "But I prefer the road to paths. It is a better surface and more direct. I have been cycling for more than 30 years. I treat my bike like a vehicle."



**David Naylor,** retired civil engineer.  
**Cycling: 31 minutes.**

"I enjoyed it," says the 77-year-old. "I cycle three or four days a week and go running as well. I was a lecturer at Swanssea University from 1969 and used to cycle to work from Pennard and home again, ten miles, five days a week. I did it for various reasons. It was convenient. I got fit. I enjoyed it. It relieves stress. I would prepare some of my lectures in my head when I was cycling. I don't mind getting wet cycling. The weather is not as bad in Swanssea as people make out. I skied to work once, I think it was in 1983."



**Colin Fielder,** retired Singleton Hospital surgeon.  
**Train: 37 minutes.**

"It was great fun," he says. "I had a very relaxing journey. I cycled from home in

Dunvant to Gowerton. They only allow two bikes on a three-carriage train and I was lucky that there was room for my bike. It is best to check first. When I was working I would cycle from home in Dunvant to Singleton Hospital two or three days a week, about 30 miles in all. You see Swanssea Bay and it makes you very awake. You feel fresh and have more edge."



**Rob Wachowski,** Swanssea Council cycling organiser.  
**Kick bike: 25 minutes.**

"It was good," he adds. "The kick bike uses the muscles of a runner."

"There is no impact on the joints. I live in Upper Killay and work in Penllergaer and cycle 14 miles, five days a week. It takes me 35 minutes to get in as it is uphill and 25 to 30 minutes to get home as it is downhill.

"It is not about cycling every day, but if every commuter did it once a week there would be 20 per cent less traffic."

"There are 15 cycle counters along our routes and in the past three years there are 12 per cent more cyclists. There are around 1,400 cyclists going along the promenade on an average Sunday in the summer."



**Mike Lewis,** civil servant.  
**Bus: 40 minutes.**

"I found it quite a good ride," he says. "I like trains and buses. You can sit down and relax. I live in Morriston and now work in Llanelli. I have to drive there as it is too far to cycle. But I used to work in the centre of Swanssea and would cycle in and back, 12 miles a day, five days a week. It is far better than the car. Sometimes there are no shower facilities or places for the bike. That can be an issue in the workplace. I felt a lot better when I was cycling to work. It was a bit of a buzz. You are geared up for the day. In the car you can be stressed out before you start."



**Nick Guy,** social worker.  
**Car: 34 minutes.**

"It was 5.7 miles and the average speed was 15mph," he says. "I live in Uplands and work in Cockett. I generally drive to work as I need the car for work."

"I do feel twinges of guilt as I'm aware I am contributing to climate change and damaging our precious environment. But I would rather cycle."

"I try to cycle in twice a month. I am aware that approximately 40 per cent of car journeys are under two miles, which can easily be walked or cycled."

"You have got your own space in the car, but half the time I was stuck in a traffic jam. It is quite stressful."