

Wheelrights Routes Group

Notes of Gower Routes Workshop on 12th March 2022

in the Environment Centre, Pier Street, Swansea SA1 1RY

Present: Phil Brophy (PB), Roy Church (RC), Bob Denley (BD), Gordon Gibson (GG), Cllr Lyndon Jones (LJ), David Naylor (DN), Hamish Osborn (HO), Pete Sheldon (PS), David Wood (DW).

Apologies: Allyson Evans (AE), Nick Guy (NG), David Judd(DJ), Jenni Nellist (JN), Dareyoush Rassi (DR), John Sayce (JS), Patrick Tribe (PT).

This workshop was a follow up to Wheelrights' 1 May 2018 Rural Routes Workshop. As with that one it considered the recommendations in Capita's report "Swansea Rural Transport Strategy", finalised in July 2018, and sought ways to implement them, in particular as it affects cycling and walking routes on the Gower Peninsula. The focus was therefore entirely on routes on the Peninsula and how they might be delivered.

DN chaired the meeting. He welcomed those present and introduced the Gower representatives from outside Wheelrights, namely Roy Church (Gower Heritage Centre), Bob Denley (Swansea Ramblers) and cllr Lyndon Jones (Bishopston Ward). Having identified the purpose of the meeting he handed over to HO who was attending, both in his personal capacity as a Wheelrights member and as Chair of the Swansea Rural Development Board (RDB).

HO first made it clear that we needed to establish the detail of what we wanted to achieve. (See 4a below.) He noted that there had been four Active Travel Workshops, but that these had not included the Peninsula. There followed an exchange of ideas ranging from the role of the routes: 'active travel or leisure?'; the balance between off-road and on-road routes; details of where they should go; to funding. These are reported under headings as follows:

1. Role of routes

Regarding the question: 'are the routes for active travel or for leisure?' we accepted that they are for both. We did not attempt to differentiate except to note that routes east from Pennard in the south and from Penclawdd in the north are active travel routes. All the routes have tourist potential so we should seek the support of Tourism.

GG noted that a key objective was to protect Gower and get the support of businesses and residents; it needs to be accessible to walkers, cyclists and horse riders. RC noted that to support businesses tourists have to be attracted and a plan was needed to achieve this.

2. Nature of routes

GG noted that roads pre-dated cars and were also for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, so we addressed the question: 'Should provision be off-road or should the roads be made safer for cyclists? It was agreed that a balance was needed: off-road provision for busy roads such as the B4436 in South Gower and B4295 in North, but with measures to reduce car use, restrict speeds and make the roads safer. DN referred to the recommendation in Capita's report that a shuttle service of small electric buses be provided.

3. Routes. (Gxx identify the routes marked on the 1 May 2018 Workshop map.)

DN had tabled the map marked up with the routes on the Peninsula which had been agreed at that Workshop. We saw no reason to change these routes and were in agreement that they should form the basis of a round-Gower cycling route. PB noted the need for an alternative to the busy A4118 west of Penmaen. This is a key link in a round-Gower cycle route. DN suggested that this could skirt the south side of the Cefn Bryn ridge on the line of existing footpaths and would add it to the map (as route G06b).

LJ noted that the legal processes for the construction of the Gower Access Path (GAP) across Clyne Common (Route 01a) were well advanced and that it had been agreed with the Commoners. His aspiration was that it be continued westward to Pennard (01b) where, between Kittle and Southgate, much of it could be on the field side of the hedge on the south side of the road. (It would pass DN's house where there is space for a path between some of the property boundaries and the road.) It could then follow Sandy Lane to Parkmill.

We agreed that priorities should be the completion of routes between Swansea and Pennard in the south and Penclawdd in the north. The 'bridging' of the half mile gap alongside the B4295 (G05) should have top priority. Also priority should be given to the Llethrid – Heritage Centre link through Green Cwm (G07a).

Regarding the surfacing of the paths BD noted the need for footpaths upgraded for use by cyclists and horse riders to have a suitable surface. We agreed that we should request this. Such a surface has been provided on the recently completed Clyne Valley path.

4. Delivery

- (a) Summary. We agreed to ask for the provision of a safe route round Gower suitable for all cyclists (not just mountain bikers), walkers and horse riders. In addition we want to see the whole of the Peninsula made safer for non-motorists. Measures to achieve this include speed restrictions, road infrastructure changes with off-road alternatives for certain busy roads, and a bus service which would provide a viable alternative to the car.
- (b) Wheelrights role. HO proposed that Wheelrights make a formal request to the Council to support our recommendations. This means adding the Gower routes to the active travel routes for which Wheelrights are already campaigning. DN would contact John Sayce and the other officers to request this.
- (c) Funding. Sources of funding for investigations, design and other pre-construction work were identified; namely £7k already ear marked; funding from the RDB (HO noted they had a budget of £90k.), from Tourism; and from the budgets of the Gower Wards. For construction the main source will need to be the Welsh Government.

Notes prepared by
David Naylor