



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 58 Winter 2021/22

www.wheelrights.org.uk

What's an active travel route?



Wheelrights members, particularly those in the Routes Group, spent a lot of time this year trying to identify active travel routes. There was the Commonplace exercise in the spring when we were asked to place pins on a map and comment on what AT provision we would like to see there, and then in the summer there was the ATNM (Active Travel Network Map) exercise which taxed us further as we were invited to select routes from a hard-to-read map which showed 158 of them. There was a huge response to the first, little of which helped us actually choose routes. The ATNM exercise at least had the merit that it confirmed routes we had already selected and prompted us to add to our list.

But we lacked guidance on the criteria for what constitutes an active travel route. OK, it's a route which makes it easier and safer to use a bike or walk rather than drive for commuting or shopping purposes but how does one actually choose one? We need to debate this and this Newsletter would be a good place for your views. I've set the ball rolling on p.6.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to me, David Naylor, by mid February.
(Email: david@davidjnaylor.plus.com)

This issue

Our Chairman kicks off with a piece about e-cars which I hope will not put you off e-bikes; about which there is some cheer on p.4.

Elsewhere there's advice on fault reporting, an upbeat article on Cappuccino rides and a reminder about next year's sub.

This year Penyrheol Primary won *Sustrans Big Pedal Challenge* so the article from their Year 6 pupils is particularly welcome.

Finally, after my bit on utility cycling, our President updates us on work on the Wye Valley Greenway.

David Naylor

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E-cars to the rescue?

The papers recently have been full of articles about the need to change our diesel or petrol cars. Then there is the government subsidies for buying e-cars which is strongly supported by a huge advertising effort by the car producers, portraying themselves as saviours of the planet!

Let's take a moment to separate the facts from the fiction.

E-Cars are emission and pollution free? Well sadly not, as the mining of raw materials to make their batteries and generating the electricity they run on produces emissions. Whilst there is nothing coming out of a tail pipe, every time the e-car brakes it emits very small particulates that are bad for the lungs to say nothing of the tyre wear escaping into the atmosphere.

Cycling can't really make a big dent in carbon emissions, can it? It has been calculated that if just one in five urban residents switched from the car to cycling one day a week, it would cut emissions from all car travel in Europe by about 8%.

The pandemic and lock downs forced people to rethink how they work, remotely at home and outside the 9 - 5 working day. But this change is slipping as anyone who has travelled in the rush hour in Swansea can tell you.

So how has the local authority responded to the climate emergency? Their carbon zero policy for 2030 doesn't take into account the services they buy in from other suppliers like the school bus companies. Glasgow has a fleet of e-buses, but Swansea doesn't seem to even have a plan to purchase any in the future! Meanwhile diesel buses continue to pollute the lungs of our youngest citizens in schools. In fact Swansea doesn't have a sustainable transport body, so it's not surprising that there are no plans for pop-up cycle lanes, extra bus lanes or cycle priority routes.

Yes, Swansea seems to think that establishing more e-car charging points is the way forward, so that the city retains its position as the 2nd or 3rd most car dependent city in the whole of the UK!

John Sayce

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Problems on bike routes

Wheelrights officers have been discussing these problems with Highways officers and councillors and have come up with the following advice on how to report them.

They can be reported on <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/highwayproblems> or by phoning 01792 843330. Other ways of reporting problems are given on the 'Various' page on *Wheelrights* website. Then, depending on which method you use, consider the following:

Provide a detailed location and, if possible, a photograph of the problem and location. The Council accept location details via the App *What3words* (It finds locations to 3m squares!)

Another issue is that the response may be limited to an acknowledgement, although they do say that they will respond more fully if asked. Maybe we should test this out?

Nick Guy

Cappuccino rides: a success story in 2021

This was the year of the re-launch of these rides after a blankety-blank 2020.

I wrote about our first re-launch ride in May in the Summer issue, and we were able to continue right through the summer, with rides every two weeks or so. They almost all turned out to be between 25 and 28 miles, no matter in which direction we pedalled off!

This type of ride is quite popular, as there's a lack of rides of this length in this area, with most being much longer and/or at a faster pace.



We always have a coffee, or should I say Cappuccino, stop which helps tired legs recover for that final push home.

We venture from Swansea, exploring all routes north, south, east and west. This year these included Aberavon (twice), Neath canal to Aberdulais (Pictured), up Clyne to the café at Penclacwydd, over to Grovesend and Loughor on the new path from Gowerton, and all kinds of deviations on the route between here and Pontardawe.

Our last ride in October was a lovely ride to Mumbles where we enjoyed a coffee at Southend Gardens sheltered from the sea wind.

Unlike previous years I did not have to cancel any at the last minute because of bad weather, which was great. All the rides went ahead as planned. On one or two, when I was away, my "deputies", Reena and Yvonne, stood in and did a fantastic job.

On the occasions that David Naylor joined us, I could concentrate on leading from the front, as I knew his back marker skills: hoovering up at the back, keeping everyone in line. On one occasion though, he took his role to the infinite degree: disappearing off the back to look for someone who he thought had fallen by the wayside, only to discover she was still in the pack. He then had to double back and pedal fast to catch us up.

We had more people join us for the first time this year, mainly by word of mouth. The recommendation that we are doing a good job and that all are most welcome on these rides is always a nice way to get new recruits.

We also now have a professional photographer as one of our members, Louise, who takes some fantastic action shots, usually without anyone knowing she's taking them, see the thumbnails on www.wheelrights.org.uk which on clicking expand into collages of our rides.

We continued until early October when the colder, wetter weather set in. We will restart in March/April next year as soon as spring has sprung.

If you are reading this article and these rides appeal to you, please get in touch via the Rides page on *Wheelrights* website so I can add you to my contact list for rides in 2022.

Let's hope the winter sails through quickly; very soon the brighter, longer days will call us out once again.

Allyson Evans

Mount Pleasant e-bikes (The promotional offer continues.)

Clive Saddington (Pictured) has recently recovered from a hip replacement and is exploring his options for getting cycling again. He is the most recent person to test-ride one of our e-bikes. He said "what a wonderful enterprise; what a marvellous job you're all doing. I had a thoroughly wonderful afternoon in the sunshine testing out this new e-bike. Thank you very much!"



It shouldn't be a surprise that the e-bikes are most popular with people over 50 who have previously cycled but are having problems with their knees, backs or hips. The ability to adjust the power assistance means that it becomes easy to get and keep fit again while cycling along our beautiful autumnal cycle paths between Swansea, Mumbles, Neath, Aberavon, Clydach, Llansamlet, Llanelli and beyond.

As the days shorten there are still plenty when the weather is great for cycling. And as a suitable advance booking software solution has still to be found, Swansea residents are benefiting from the continuation of our free promotional offer. You can still explore Swansea by e-bike for up to six hours for free and help us promote e-bike use! So create yourself an account and book a bike via [https:// mountpleasantcommunityebikes.lend-engine.com/](https://mountpleasantcommunityebikes.lend-engine.com/). Please give us at least three days notice so we can ensure someone is available to show you how the bikes work.

As it turns out, this issue of finding a suitable booking system is shared with numbers of other e-bike schemes in Wales. So the bike share groups that are sprouting after lockdown are working together to find a solution. Hopefully, it will be all be sorted by next spring and then it should be easy for members of the system, to seamlessly book and borrow the bikes and plug them in to charge on return.

Leonie Ramondt

Sub.s for 2022 now due. (Same price as last year: £5.00.)

If you have recently paid many thanks for your continued support.

If you do not intend rejoining, many thanks for your support and please confirm by email so you can be removed from future mailings.

Instructions for joining or renewing can be found on our website using this link <https://www.wheelrights.org.uk/joinus.htm>

Those not paying by Standing Order will be reminded by email in early January. More than half our members have now set up a SO and we are encouraging the remainder to do the same as it simplifies the process and saves us sending you 'nag-mails'.

We confirm receipt of all payments.

Chris Walsh
Treasurer/Membership Secretary

Penyrheol Active Travel

Hello everyone. We are pupils in Year 6 and we go to Penyrheol Primary School. One of the things we love about school is our cycling sessions. A few years ago our head teacher, who is called Mrs Williams, thought it would be a good idea to start up a lunch time cycle club because a lot of the children were bored on the yard. You could earn a place in the bike club by being really good in class or completing some excellent work. Everyday all our teachers would choose three children who could go to the cycle club.



Now Mrs Williams has bought lots more new bikes for our school. In KS2 we have about 20 bikes and Foundation Phase have balance bikes to help them learn to ride. We now have bike sessions as part of our outdoor learning. Every day one class has a bike day where groups of children can have a lesson and challenges to complete. As well as this we are allowed to cycle at playtimes and lunchtime using the school bikes or we can bring our own bikes. It is so much fun and playtimes are now much better as we have lots to do and are keeping fit and healthy at the same time.

Because we can use our bikes at playtimes in a safe and fun way lots of children cycle to school. We have special weeks when we can bring our bikes and win prizes. Roger [Dutton] from Sustrans also comes to our school and holds sessions to fix up our bikes and check that they are safe for us. Roger also does fun bike sessions for all our classes where we learn to control our bike by riding through cones. When we are in Year 6 we learn to cycle on the road around our school too.

Last year we were all really proud because we won the *Big Pedal Challenge* in Wales. Everyone made a really big effort to cycle or scooter, even some of the teachers cycled to school, and every playtime we were out on our bikes cycling around the yard.

In Gorseinon we have a really great pump track and a cycle path that goes all the way from Grovesend to Gowerton. Mrs Williams has said that this year we may be able to cycle all the way along the cycle path and have a picnic as part of outdoor learning. We are all really looking forward to this.



Year 6 Pen-y-Rheol Primary pupils

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Utility cycling

In this article I set the scene, pose and suggest some answers to the question: What constitutes an *Active Travel* route?

Cyclists range from mud-spattered mountain bikers to lycra-clad roadies with somewhere in between, the utility cyclist. They are very much in a minority – at least in this country – and it is to increase their number that the government is throwing money at active travel routes. So let's first take a look at the types of route the Welsh *Active Travel Guidance* (Revised in 2020.) and other codes prescribe for cyclists.

These divide into road routes which either use roads just as they are or make them safer for cyclists by the addition of surface marking and/or signs, and off-road routes which segregate cyclists from cars and may or may not segregate them from pedestrians. This is what the codes have to say about these two categories.

Road routes.

The simplest measure is to identify them as either *Quiet Streets* or *Cycle Streets*. These are applicable to quiet back streets where traffic volumes and speeds are low. The former would be identified by cycle markings on the road surface, the latter by cycle lanes. The distinction between them is that cycle streets are through cycle routes whereas quiet streets are not. Both are intended to make the street safe for inexperienced cyclists.

Then there are cycle lanes. They are delineated by 150mm wide white lines, continuous if the lane is mandatory, broken if advisory. Only emergency vehicles can use mandatory lanes; advisory lanes can be driven (but not parked!) on when not occupied by cyclists.

Off-road routes.

These divide into Shared Use Paths (SUPs), shared by cyclists and pedestrians, and cycle tracks either lightly or completely segregated from both motor vehicles and pedestrians. The lightly segregated are called 'hybrid' or 'stepped' cycle tracks.

SUPs may be divided into cycle and pedestrian lanes separated by a white line. Whether or not they are divided depends on the usage. Generally they should only be divided if usage is heavy (as, eg, on the Swansea foreshore). AT Guidance requires a minimum width of 3.0m on primary cycle routes, 2.5m on secondary, and recommends 4.0m on busy routes. (I would add: should be 4.0m when cyclists and pedestrians are separated.)

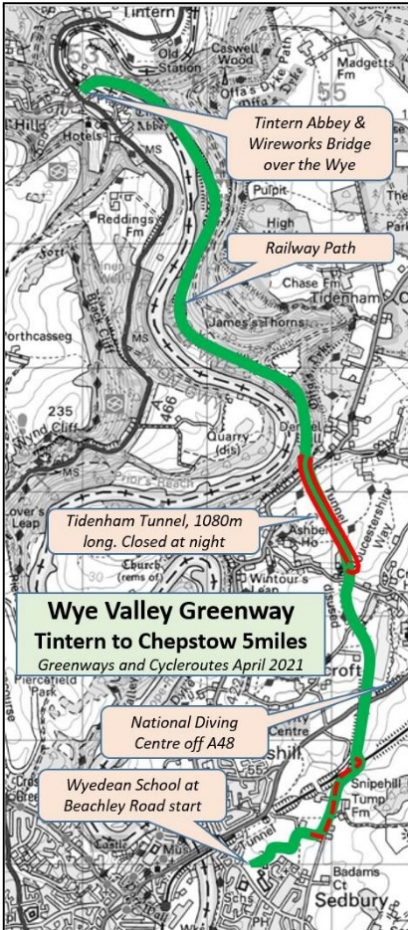
Stepped cycle tracks are separated from motor traffic and pedestrians normally by kerbs, but it could be a verge. The AT Guidance requires a minimum width of 2.0m but allows 1.5m to get past constrictions. A buffer of at least 0.5m is required on the road side.

So what constitutes an *Active Travel* route? Clearly it is a route which follows desire lines and connects places between which people are encouraged to cycle. They would typically be between one and five miles in length. My own view is that these are sufficient criteria and that short routes within suburban areas, where most of the streets are in 20 mph zones or are candidates to be quiet or cycle streets, do not need to be identified as AT routes. That is except for longer routes which pass through such areas. But what are your views? Space can surely be found in these columns to express them.

David Naylor

Wye Valley Greenway: Sedbury to Tintern

The September 2021 Volunteer Work Camp.



The report last year showed progress after two years (See Newsletters 50 & 54) and this year the scheme has been largely completed with this September's work camp. It comprises a length of around 9 km from Sedbury (just east of Chepstow) to Tintern. A section just north of Sedbury of around 1 km is to be part of a future housing development, so a 500 m length runs along Sedbury Lane to provide a temporary link (dotted red line on plan) by a ramp to connect with the track at Snipehill Bridge.

At the Sedbury end Wydean School provided a width along their sports ground which is amazing and of great benefit to the route (and the school).

The middle section is on the former Monmouth railway track and runs on an embankment, goes over the A 48, through a rock cutting under Bishton Lane Bridge, through the 1080 m Tidenham Tunnel, across a 10 year old landslip (that blocked the route) and runs high above the river with sections on retaining walls and connects with the forestry length at Black Morgan's Wood.

The northern section continues to Tintern using the 3km Forestry Commission path along the former railway, crossing the river at Wireworks Bridge just north of Tintern.

The major works comprised the removal of railway track, the repair, tarmac surfacing and lighting work in the tunnel, dust path construction, access provision and fencing. The works contractor was *Ecovigour*, and *Pembrey Plant* lifted and disposed of the track and assisted with other plant operations.

Volunteers included an extremely talented local group and our regular followers who came from all over the country. They did a formidable amount of the work to a very high standard including stone retaining structures, a timber bridge over the A 48, tunnel lighting fabrication and installation, fencing, seats and artwork. A major operation was to realign



the supports to Bishton Lane Bridge (Pictured.) including foundations for the props to allow the path to pass under it..



... has proved extremely popular

The final work included construction of artwork at access points using sleepers and rocks that abound on site to make pylons (Lower picture), a ziggurat,, and a serpent!

A major constraint was and remains the bats populating the tunnel. A night time and winter closure was agreed in order to monitor their numbers, and it is hoped that with time the opening will be full time. The route was opened in April and has proved extremely popular both for local use and cyclists from further afield, particularly Bristol. It was fantastic to see families passing through the tunnel really excited by their achievement.



The construction cost was around £300k and the volunteer time around 750 days, making it remarkable value (cf most current projects by others). Grants accounted for around £220k and donations £80k.

Greenways and cycle routes under the inspiring leadership of John Grimshaw and Caroline Levett continue the work of cycle path construction in England. John was Chief Engineer with Sustrans for 30 years and continues with this charity. This achievement speaks for itself and is part of a continuing programme of schemes they are developing.

The tunnel being closed in the winter I recommend you wait until April and make a full tour of this amazing route. Parking is available at Wydean school at Sedbury, in the Diving Centre where there is cycle hire and a café (check availability) or at Chepstow and Tintern.

David Judd

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Forthcoming events

Two dominate: *Wheelrights* Christmas ride on Sunday, 12 December, to the Wetlands Centre at Penclacwydd. Details, including a poster, are on the 'Events' page of <https://www.wheelrights.org.uk>, and on 8 February a general *Wheelrights* meeting at which Teresa Ciano, CEO of GoSafe will give a talk.

Other events will as usual be listed on the Events page. (If you know of any which should be included please inform our webmaster, David Naylor.) These include the Routes Group meetings, normally on the second Saturday of each month.

Merry Christmas!