



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 59 Spring 2022

www.wheelrights.org.uk

The May elections

On 5 May we go to the polls to elect a new bevy of politicians. So for reasons ranging from health, through easing congestion to mitigating Climate Change, Active Travel needs to be high on their agenda. Wales is fortunate in having Julie James (Daughter of late *Wheelrights* member Derek James.) as Environment Minister with Lee Waters as her deputy. Both are taking action in support of Active Travel.

I couldn't resist including this picture of a smiling John Sayce, taken at the launch of Sustrans e-bike scheme in Townhill in January. You can read all about in Emily Sinclair's article on p. 2.



In the context of Active Travel, recently our Chair, in collaboration with Dennis Dwyer, responded to an invitation from the Welsh All Party Group to comment on the Welsh Active Travel Act. You can read their response on the Campaigns page of our website.

This issue

We start with Emily's account of the e-bike launch. Then Barry Norris draws attention to the issue of parking on cycle paths. His daughter faces this problem cycling her child to school in Sketty. Nick Guy follows this with some suggestions which should make things easier for commutes like this.

On p.5 Bill Gannon tells us about a hazard which you probably don't know about. I follow this with highlights from the new Highway Code.

And then a Swiss Valley path anecdote from our President which again I expect is new to you.

Finally I recount how Shoreham Council's closure of a cycle lane was successfully challenged.

David Naylor

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Copy deadline

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

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E-move – Sustrans Electric-bike scheme.

Sustrans Cymru received funding in March 2021 for a two year pilot project to explore the pros and cons of e-bikes. The following five sites in Wales were chosen: Aberystwyth, Rhyl, Newtown, Swansea and Barry. We are lending bikes to people for free for 30 days and cover any maintenance costs. We are prioritising people in lower income areas, and people who don't regularly use a cycle or have poor access to public transport. We are able to lend bikes to individuals and also via various charities. We are collecting travel data and conducting interviews to gain valuable research for the project. This data will be fed back to the Welsh government and hopefully used to create new initiatives to reduce the barriers for people wishing to travel more sustainably.

In Swansea we have been asked to give priority to residents in the Townhill area, so I have been working with the Phoenix Centre. We successfully ran a taster session at the Centre in January, which received support from *Wheelrights*. The bikes were well received and have led to a lot of interest with people borrowing the bikes.

As well as loaning out to individuals we're also looking to work with various charities in Swansea to provide bikes for their service users. So far this has included a partnership with the Centre for African Entrepreneurship, which has helped us offer bikes to asylum seekers and refugees. The bikes have made a big difference to their work/life balance. A daily commute by bus to college or work was taking two hours. The use of an e-bike has cut the journey down to just 30 minutes. As the project develops we're looking to offer more support for people who are not confident on the road by having volunteers go on a ride with them in their local area.

We also have electric cargo bikes available in Swansea for local businesses and charities. We have provided cargo bikes to local food producers and will soon be rolling out a bike for delivering shopping in the Mumbles area. E-cargo bikes can be loaned out for one to three months.

We have a variety of bikes available, which allows people to do more than they expected. This includes a Tern GSD, which is capable of carrying two children on the back (Pictured). Often people feel the need to use their car more when transporting two children, so this is a great alternative. It is hoped that this scheme will show people the many possibilities with an e-bike and how it can benefit themselves and the environment.



If you would be interested in borrowing a bike, volunteering or know of an organisation that may benefit from the project, please get in touch. My email is Emily.sinclair@sustrans.org.uk.

Emily Sinclair

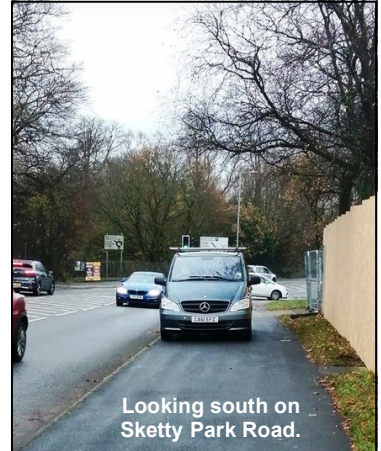
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Parking on shared-use paths

Pavement parking is a curse for many pedestrians. It can often force them dangerously into the road, perhaps a mother with young children or a disabled person in a wheelchair. That is bad enough, but now some car drivers are also parking on shared-use paths thereby obstructing not only pedestrians but cyclists as well.

A case in point is the shared-use path by the side of Sketty Park Road, close to Bishop Gore School. The council has widened and improved the pavement and put in dropped kerbs to allow cyclists to ride safely and effectively on the shared-use path.

However, for some drivers, especially those dropping children off for Bishop Gore School in the morning or waiting to pick them up after school, the wide pavement and the dropped kerbs are just too tempting. They drive up onto them and then completely or partially block the shared-use path making it difficult or impossible for cyclists to go past. The photograph shows you the kind of problem that occurs on a regular basis along the shared-use path on Sketty Park Drive and Sketty Park Road.



When challenged, the drivers usually just avoid eye contact or shout abuse. When the council has been notified, they have occasionally tasked PCSOs to patrol the area for a while, but then they stop and the problem starts all over again. There is an offence of “unnecessary obstruction”, but the police rarely enforce it.

So what can be done?

Well, in Scotland, the government has decided to ban pavement parking completely in a phased way over the next five years.

The Welsh Government has taken a different, more flexible approach. There will be no blanket ban. Instead, local authorities will receive more statutory powers to tackle pavement parking in identified “hot spots”. The aim is to implement the new arrangements from July 2022. (You can find the report of the Welsh Pavement Parking Taskforce and a statement from Lee Waters, the Deputy Transport Minister, here: <https://gov.wales/welsh-government-give-councils-powers-crack-down-pavement-parking>).

So what can *Wheelrights* members do? We would like you to let us know of any “hot spots” where parked cars are obstructing shared-use paths, as is happening along Sketty Park Road. We can then pass on our list of “hot spots” to the council and nudge them to start using their new powers in these identified areas from July 2022.

Please email the details of your shared-use pavement parking “hot spots” to *Wheelrights*: wheelrights32@gmail.com.

Barry Norris

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Bike routes on quiet streets

Wheelrights has recently welcomed Swansea Council's move away from Shared Use Paths to creating more bike routes on roads. On busy roads this logically leads to separate cycle tracks (as are being considered for Walter Road).

However these cycle tracks are expensive, so would take a long time to roll out in Swansea.

A cheaper and more cost effective option would be the creation of quiet or cycle streets on a greater number of residential streets. [Ed: See the article on p.6 of the last issue for the definitions of quiet and cycle streets, and cycle lanes, etc.]



These would only require white bike symbols painted on the road surface for the former or white lines to delineate cycle lanes for the latter, plus some destination signs (especially at each end). One example is the bike route along Williams Street (pictured). This route is greatly enhanced by the barrier half way, which stops cars using the road as a through route.

Quiet residential streets would be drastically improved for families, walkers, cyclists and people with disabilities if the Welsh Gov. proceeds with plans to introduce 20mph speed limits on minor roads in 2023.

I suggest criteria for signed bike routes on quiet roads, could be where they link with existing bike routes, and pass schools (eg Jersey Road in Winch Wen).

A pilot scheme could be trialled in the Sandfields, Brynmill, Uplands areas which already have some 20mph zones, and several primary schools; these have good access to the existing bike network (eg the Foreshore Path, and through Singleton Park to the University and hospital etc).

Sandfields also has several road barriers stopping their use as rat runs. One bike route in need of exploration is from Guildhall via Fleet Street, Vincent Street, Richardson St, Madoc St to the existing William Street route into the city centre?

Other cities like Cardiff, London etc already have many such routes and *Wheelrights* could learn from them.

So if you know of any quiet residential streets in your area, which could be a possibility for the above treatment, please let myself (or one of our Officers know)? Something for a future Routes Group to discuss.

Nick Guy

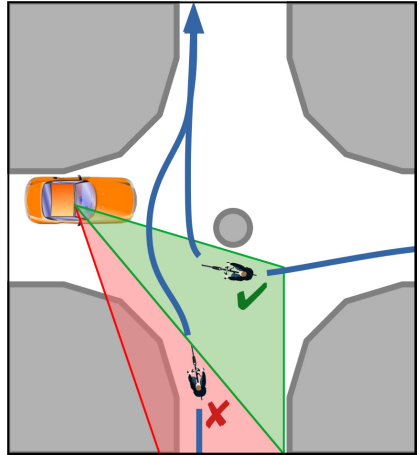
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The A-pillar blind spot

Question: Which is the most perilous manoeuvre for a cyclist to perform at a roundabout? Is it turning left, turning right, or going straight ahead?

Answer: In my personal experience the answer is going straight ahead, as evidenced by my having near misses on at least four occasions. I have had two misses at the same roundabout this year. It turns out there's a potential explanation for this, which is the blind spot created by the 'A-pillars'. This rather perfunctory name is that given by the emergency services to the door pillars each side of a car windscreen, with the B and C pillars further back. Presumably this saves time when they are busy chopping through them.

In recent years cars have ballooned in size. In fact, analysis by Direct Line insurance found that the average width of the top 20 best-selling cars in the UK expanded from 1.65m to 1.95m, and that's just since 1998. A-pillars have also ballooned in size, mostly because of safety standards, but also because they now contain an airbag. All of this creates a bigger blind spot, which can hide a cyclist in broad daylight. The situation is explained by the diagram. The cyclist from the right is turning right, and completely within the visible sector. By contrast, the cyclist approaching from the bottom is going straight ahead, and completely within the car's blind spot. In addition, if there is coincident deceleration, a cyclist can remain in that blind spot throughout the driver's approach to the roundabout.



The police are aware of this issue, and are raising awareness using the courses they give to (speeding) drivers. The advice is to employ 'active scanning' i.e. lateral and front/back movements of the head. This is not just to see round the A-pillar, but to create parallax whereby nearer vehicles stand out (see <https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/760/200216.pdf>). This is also a technique employed by fighter pilots.

But what advice can cyclists take from this? During my near misses, I only had two choices: I could either stop, or I could turn left, and I have done them both. Stopping on a roundabout is dangerous, but then so too is suddenly changing direction. Chris Walsh has the following advice:

John Franklin in his book *Cyclecraft* makes two key points about roundabouts:

1. *Cyclists should ride in the primary position to maximise their visibility*
2. *Look at vehicles entering the roundabout and decide if the driver has seen you. If not be prepared to take avoiding action ie slowing down or briefly stopping.*

Roundabouts can be challenging but the crucial message is to see, be seen, and be prepared to change velocity if needed.

**Bill Gannon and
Chris Walsh**

Robbie Burns sums it up:

*O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursel's as ithers see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion.*

The New Highway Code.

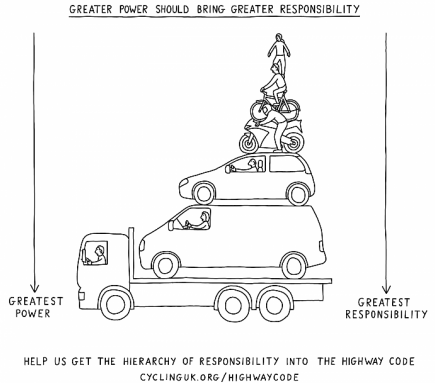
A new Highway Code came into effect on 29 January and *Cycling UK* are quite upbeat about it as most of their recommendations have been taken on board. This note is a summary of Duncan Dollimore's article in the 3 Dec. 2021 *Cycleclips*.

There are ten key rule changes of which four stand out as of particular relevance to cyclists and walkers. These 'big four' are: (New rule number in [].)

- A *Hierarchy of Road Users*. [1]
- Simplification of the rules for non-signalised junctions. [76]
- New rule to tackle dangerous overtaking. [163]
- Inclusion of the *Dutch Reach* to help prevent 'car-dooring'. [239]

The Hierarchy, depicted in the picture, simply recognises that road users who pose the greater risk have a higher level of responsibility. CUK refer to it as the 'Hierarchy of Responsibility'.

Thus large vehicles need to give way to smaller and cyclists to walkers.



Simplification of the rules at non-signalised junctions means that those going straight on have priority. Thus a cyclist crossing a side turning would have priority over a vehicle entering or leaving it. Similarly a pedestrian would have priority over a cyclist. This change replaces 14 rules.

The rules to tackle dangerous overtaking require vehicles to give 1.5m clearance to cyclists when passing at speeds up to 30 mph and more at higher speeds. CUK, while welcoming this, had argued for 2m at speeds above 30 mph and 2m at all speeds for large vehicles.

The Dutch Reach involves a vehicle occupant using the hand furthest from the door when opening it so that they can better see if a cyclist is approaching. This means that in the UK a driver should use their left hand to open the door.

The remaining six rules cover: group riding [66]; road positioning [67, 72, 213]; cyclists not having to use cycle tracks [140]; pedestrians and cyclists crossing in front of slow moving traffic [151]; Advanced Stop Lines [178]; and priority to cyclists at roundabouts [168].

This is what CUK had asked for except that they were disappointed with rule 66 on group riding. The concern was that the old rule that cyclists should "never ride more than two abreast, and ride in single file on narrow or busy roads and when riding round bends" has been replaced by "ride in single file when drivers wish to overtake and it is safe to let them do so". The concern was that this could be misinterpreted to suggest that cyclists should always move into single file when a driver wants to or thinks it safe to overtake. They would have preferred wording that notes that it is often safer for cyclists in larger groups to ride two abreast particularly when with children or inexperienced riders.

David Naylor

A very Welsh Tale

NCN 47 The Swiss Valley Llanelli to Cross Hands.

The Swiss Valley route has a section near Cross Hands at Garreg Holtt on a track from the rugby ground to the main road. There was a large obstruction on one side which needed clearing. A JCB was sent down to dig it out. A local resident said rather pointedly, you cannot dig that out it's how the village got its name... Garreg Holtt (Split Rock...) struck by Owain Glyndwr with his sword in a fit of rage...so we left it intact and crept away!

In 2003 as well as local councillors and residents we had a large contingent from Sustrans at the opening of the route at Tumble. Nearby we had erected a cast iron milepost, one of four designs given for the National Network by the Royal Bank of Scotland. I chose this one (Pictured with the children.) as it was a simple cross over the main road and I really loved the poem cast in it called Tracks, by artist David Dudgeon.



A local councillor leaned across to me and said in my ear: “you know we speak Welsh here!” I subsequently had a very blunt letter from a local retired teacher putting it even more strongly ... What could I do? It was a casting; so I sought a translation, by a poetic source via Sustrans staff at Cardiff, and my son (with his funeral business connection) had it cut in Welsh slate. We then had another ceremony where local schoolchildren sang some songs on St David's Day. 2004, and Jac Davies of the famous duo Jac a Wil (who lived locally) performed. It was magical and loads of praise followed and I was relieved – a wrong had been righted – a good result.

So next time you ride this amazing scenic route, stop at Tumble, read the poem and reflect on its profound meaning – and remember this tale.

David Judd

Teithiais ar y llwybr troellog
A'r machlud haul yn melynu'r tir,
Roedd y ddaear yn galed,
yn llyfn gan draul yr elfennau,
a dilynodd fy meddwl
feddyliau'r rhai a aeth o'm blaen,
gan sathru'r pridd dan eu traed
Yn llwybr i mi ei ddilyn,
gan adael olion i eraill
yn arwyddion iddyn nhw ar eu taith.

DOWN A WANDERING PATH
I HAVE TRAVELLED,
WHERE THE SETTING SUN
LIES UPON THE GROUND,
THE TRACKS ARE HARD AND DRY
SMOOTHENED WITH
THE WEATHER'S WEAR,
MY MIND DID MOVE
WITH THEM THAT HAD
BEFORE ME BEEN,
TRODDING DOWN THE GROUND
A TRACK FOR ME TO FOLLOW,
LEAVING MARKS FOR OTHERS
A SIGN FOR THEM TO FOLLOW.
DAVID DUDGEON 1999

The Shoreham saga

You may have read about the temporary cycle lane in Shoreham set up in September 2020 during lockdown when funding was made available to provide lanes such as this. The lane served five schools and was widely used. In November of that year West Sussex County Council removed the lane. There was an outcry and the Council was taken to court by *Cycling UK*. The case was funded by their Cyclists Defence Fund.



The case was heard in the High Court on 25 January and the Council was found to have acted illegally. They admitted to this and were instructed to contribute £25k towards *Cycling UK's* legal fees.

Since then *Active Travel England* has been formed. The role of this funding and inspectorate body is to raise the standard of cycling and walking infrastructure, manage the active travel budget and award funding for projects which improve health and air quality. It should mean that such legal challenges will no longer be necessary.

Forthcoming events

(This information and more is provided on the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.)

Wheelrights Easter Bunny Hop ride.

Sunday, 10 April (Palm Sunday) leaving Blackpill at 10.30, destination Coed Gwilym Park in Clydach. Details on the Events page. Note that David Judd has asked intending participants to contact him by the end of March.

Gower Routes Workshop.

Saturday, 12 March, at 10.00am in the Environment Centre. This is a follow up to the 1 May, 2018 Rural Routes Workshop. Numbers may be limited so if you wish to attend please let me know.

Wheelrights Routes Group meeting/rides.

These are usually at 10.00am on the second Saturday of each month and usually alternate between the Environment Centre and Ripples Café. The next is scheduled for 10 April.

Cappuccino Rides.

Allyson expects to revive these when it's warmer. Keep an eye on the Events page.

Other

Bike week is from 6 to 12 June.

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David Naylor