



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 7 Spring 2009

www.wheelrights.org.uk

A Swansea cycle map

Yes, we are to have a proper cycling map. It will be at a large enough scale (1:19,000) to show street names, and by means of colour coding will show traffic free routes and other information of interest to cyclists. This will include the identification of recommended cycling through routes. We have sought your advice on this and the feed back we have had is being incorporated in the map.

The picture shows the area the map will cover. It will be two sided with the southern half on one side and the northern on the other. There will be some overlap in the City Centre.

The map is being produced by *CycleCity Guides* and should be ready soon.

In addition to the paper map *CycleCity Guides* are carrying out a detailed survey which will in due course allow web-based cycle route planning (ie bicycle sat-nav!)

The map will be issued free since 80% of the approx £25k total cost is funded by WAG with the remainder coming from local sources.



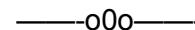
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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by end of May 2009.

David Naylor and Rob Wachowski

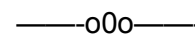


Editorial

After two wet summers this one just has to be warm and sunny! Accordingly *Wheelrights* are planning a few more *Explorer* rides than in 2008. Also we plan to alter the format of our beginners classes by dividing the class so that near beginners can be taken for short traffic-free rides. The programme is given on page 8. Note the talks by two prominent people in April and September.

Once again we have a variety of contributors to this issue, but disappointingly no letters!

David Naylor



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President's thoughts

Despite a substantial programme of road building over the last 50 years there has been very little consideration of cyclists needs in the schemes built. Routes have become busier and faster and the danger to cyclists has increased until they became unusable. It was sometimes the case, as in Swansea, that the Planning Departments took on cycling provision in their countryside work, while road building and urban development largely ignored it. Since around 1980 Campaign groups all over the country have demanded action and offered help in the planning of schemes. The London Cycle Campaign, Sustrans, CCN (the cycle campaigning network) and CTC all clamoured for action to little effect. In most of our towns it is still the case thirty years later that what provision has been made is disjointed, often with no safe through route.

It was in 1980 or thereabouts that the concern about increasing cycling accidents caused the highways and planning departments to look into what might be done and there followed a rush of Cycling Policies that promised the earth but delivered very little. That is still the case. We are grateful for the schemes that are done but they are not enough to stimulate growth in cycling..

There have been some real achievements, Sustrans National Cycle Network for a start, but that was not due to local authority initiative although it was a cooperative development. Some authorities have worked at keeping quiet routes in urban areas open and safe for cycling in their traffic regimes, but they are few. For the majority of towns cyclists have to risk life and limb sorting out their own routes by ingenious means. That is not the way to encourage cycling.

Wheelrights, just like campaign groups in other areas, has a vital role in pressing for more and better provision. It cannot be left to those in government and local authorities to do what after all they are charged to do, that is put the policies for more sustainable travel and healthy lifestyle into practice. We have to lobby (in a constructive way) for better provision in all of the various opportunities from new route development and traffic management through to training and education.

I hope you will all take on this mantle by helping Wheelrights in its efforts to improve the lot of cyclists in the Swansea Bay Area

Best wishes!

David Judd (*Wheelright's* President)

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Siding's Bridge crossing

The photo shows a bus approaching the NCN 4 crossing on the Swansea side of the bridge.

The danger to cyclists here was first reported to the Council in December 2007. Further representations led to a site visit on 24th April 2008. The situation was then assessed and it was decided that appropriate markings were needed to warn cyclists of the danger here. At the time of writing – nearly a year later – nothing has been done.

An eastbound cyclist has little warning of an approaching bus, nor does a westbound as the bus comes up from behind.

Must there be an accident before action is taken?



David Naylor

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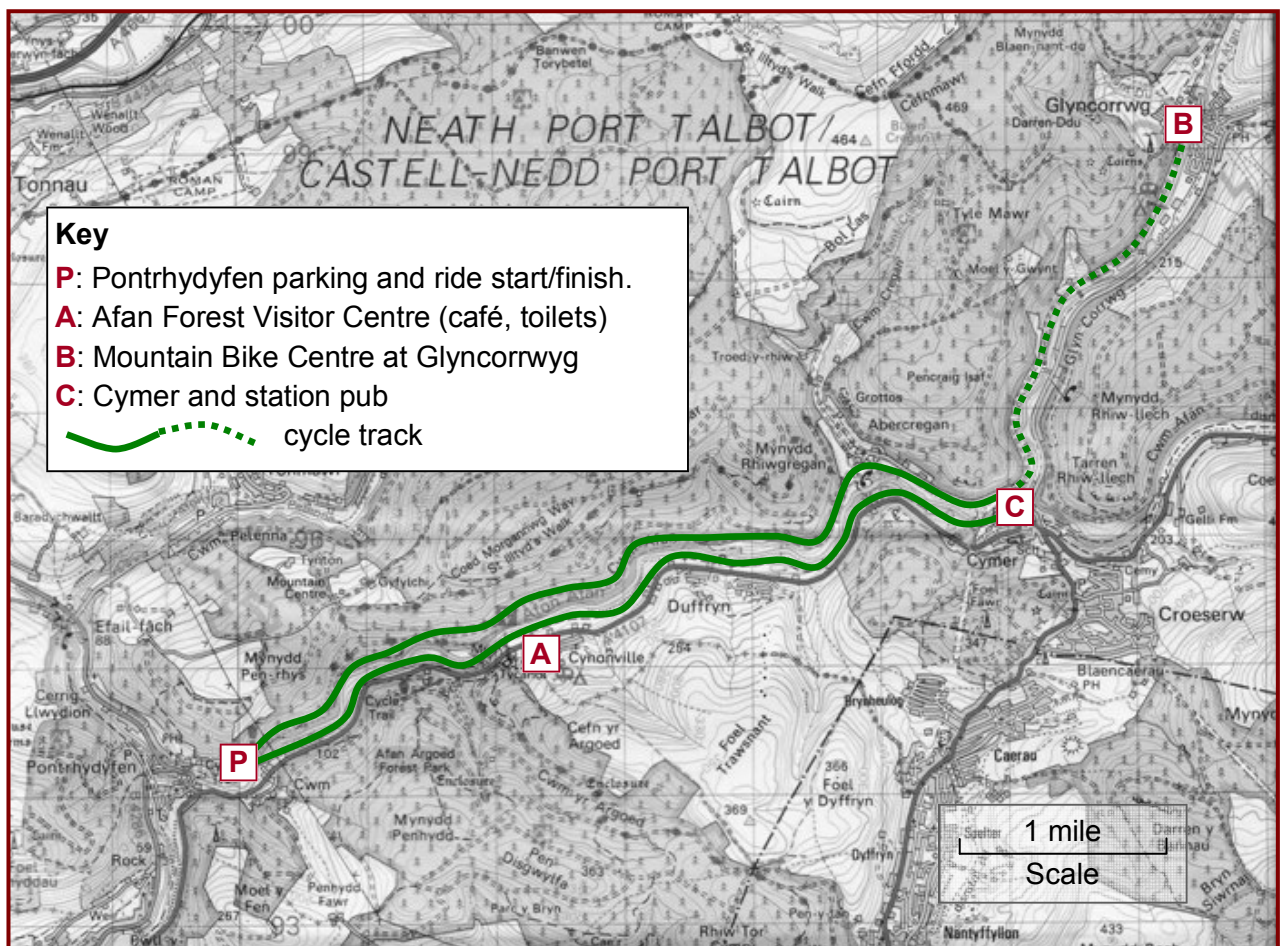
Cycling in the Afan Valley

As well as the exhilarating thrills of mountain biking the Afan Valley offers some interesting easy rides.

My personal favourite is a ten mile circular route between Pontrhydyfen and Cymer. Leaving the car at Pontrhydyfen (there is parking ¼ mile up the valley at the start of the bike trail [P]) you follow a forest track through the pine forests on the north side of the river Afan. This is a gradual up-hill ride along a former railway line – so it is not too steep. There are tantalising glimpses of the fast flowing river and you are often alone with the trees, birds and clouds above.

After five miles there's a welcome refreshment stop in the pub (once the station) in the ex-mining village of Cymer [C]. From here you can carry on north to the Mountain Bike Centre at Glyncorwgg [B] where there is a café, or you join a tarmac cycle path for a long gradual descent back down the Valley. After two miles you pass the Afan Forest visitors centre [A] where there's a café (reasonable prices), bike hire and an interesting small museum about the valley's industrial heritage. For the final two miles you can fly along to a railway viaduct which takes you back to the start.

Just before reaching the viaduct there is a small park on your right, ie between the path and the river gorge, which features fascinating Japanese wooden sculptures. This is worth a visit.



Useful information:

Skyline cycle hire (located at A): Phone: 01639 851100 or visit: www.skylinecycles.co.uk

Glyncorwgg Mountain Bike Centre: Phone : 01639 851900 or visit: www.glyncorwggponds.com

Nick Guy (Chairman)

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Local news

Foreshore path extended

The foreshore path extension east from the observatory to the river Tawe is now open. The photo is taken looking east from where NCN 4 turns inland. (The paving is not actually blue – a dusting of snow covered it when the photo was taken!)

The exit from the path at the east end is behind the tall block of flats which there faces you. There is a short stretch of unsurfaced path between this building and the Britannia Bridge. The Swansea Barrage is alongside the bridge.



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Fabian Way corridor

Workshops took place on 4 December and 26 February to consider transportation issues along this corridor. This was a WAG initiative with the workshops organised by *Arups*. They were attended by senior representatives from WAG, the two Councils and various stakeholders. 38 attended the first and around 30 the second. I attended both on behalf of *Wheelrights*.

The workshops for the most part comprised sessions in which we were divided into groups and given the task of prioritising various proposals according to a variety of criteria. This was daunting as we were provided with minimal information before the meetings and could not properly assimilate the detail in the time available to make reasoned judgements. Nonetheless there was a partial consensus and *Arups* now have lots of opinions on which to base firm proposals.

Basically the problem faced was that due to the construction of the planned 'urban village' of Coed Darcy north of Fabian Way and a new campus for Swansea University south of it there will be more traffic on this corridor. To cope with this a new Park and Ride just west of Jersey Marine is favoured. An access road running west from there to Baldwin's Bridge is to be constructed. Of the various proposals some would have buses on this road, in others there would be a dedicated bus route. A 30 mph limit on Fabian Way west of Jersey Marine was favoured, also north – south links across Fabian Way for pedestrians and cyclists.

Important for cyclists is a planned extension of the original NCN 4 route which ends about a km west of the Tower Hotel to link up with Jersey Marine and Coed Darcy, also a new cycle route entirely to the south of Fabian Way. This would run through Swansea Docks and connect with NCN 4 where it emerges from the underpass by the M4 Junction 42 slip road. It would pick up the planned University Campus.

David Naylor

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Clydach and Connect2

Last January Connect2 Technical Group invited a group of stakeholders from the community of Clydach and Glais to a presentation on the Clydach Connect2 scheme.

The invitees were then asked if they would like to be part of a Steering Group which would be responsible for ensuring that the Connect2 scheme is delivered in a way that will ensure that the cycle path is widely used and fulfils the needs of the community. The group will also steer the art programme which is a key part of Connect2 and will direct on other aspects such as signage and street furniture. The proposals were met with great enthusiasm and several site visits have now been set up to allow the steering group members to get a full understanding of the work involved.

David Naylor and Eifion Francis attended the meeting and were able to answer some of the questions raised by the attendees. Hopefully this new group will be able to help set up new links in the form of paths and also in terms of relationships between Wheelrights, Sustrans and the community in order to ensure that cycling facilities meet the standards we expect, and keeps active travel on the agenda .

The more mundane aspect of the route development such as the setting up of a Memorandum of Understanding and maintenance agreements is ongoing and less newsworthy. However, there have been some breakthroughs with this in the last few months. Sustrans have managed to build on their relationship with British Waterways who own a very important section of the Clydach Connect2 network which is funded by the Big Lottery Fund's *Living Landmarks: The People's Millions*. Sustrans' Valley Regional Park bid has also been approved by WEFO which is great news for communities throughout the South Wales Valley area. This funding will form a large chunk of the match funding for the Clydach and Cwmafan Connect2 programme.

Sustrans are continuing to work with partners at all levels and this is evident in terms of the extension to the network further up the Swansea Valley. NCN route 43 is being extended between Ystradgynlais and Coelbren. Ystradgynlais Communities First and Powys County Council have been busy working on this spectacular section with views of the Brecon Beacons National Park that will match the best of the Welsh NCN network. This link should be finished in the next few months and is a must for all cyclists and walkers in the area.



The pipe bridge at Clydach which the Connect2 route will bypass.
Note the barrier in the foreground over which a bike must be lifted.

Helen Davies

—o0o—

Reality Check

If you derived your opinions from reading papers and watching the news, rather than from your day-to-day observations of people's behaviour, you could be forgiven for thinking we'd arrived at a consensus. We should all walk and cycle more, and drive less. We vote for people who say things like this, and not for people who talk about building roads. Policy documents at every level are stuffed with this kind of thing, whole rainforests of action plans are devoted to making it happen, and politicians are falling over themselves to be filmed riding bicycles. Even car manufacturers advertise their built-in bike racks and Tesco (yes, Tesco!) exhorts people to cycle to work as its number one tip for "greener living".

So that's it sorted then. Those of us who walk and cycle regularly should be looked up to as model citizens, respected as pillars of common sense, acknowledged as trend-setters within the community, and emulated by our peers.

Hmmm. Something is not quite right here. I cycle to work every day, and walk or cycle everywhere else locally. I do my weekly shopping on foot, with a rucksack and a pair of reusable carrier bags. None of this is very much trouble for me, because I am youngish and strongish, live only five miles from work, and am lucky to have shops within a mile. Yet in the eyes of my fellow citizens, I am a freak. I sometimes put it down to clothing – after all, I do wear lycra tights, and lycra tights look a bit silly as soon as you get off the bike. But then, as cyclists go, my clothing crimes are minor – I wouldn't be caught dead in a fluorescent bib, and rarely wear a helmet. So it can't really be the clothes.

So why the gap? Is the entire nation afflicted with some sort of insincerity condition, whereby they say one thing and mean almost the exact opposite? Does the person who says "I'm thinking of getting a bike and starting to cycle to work" actually mean "you'd never get me on one of those things, you spandex-clad lunatic"?

I suspect it's something more subtle and pervasive, which is that we have all become drivers. I do not mean that literally, but that the dominance of the car culture has caused us to think like drivers, to empathise with them, and to share their world-view. People probably mean it when they say they'd *like* to walk and cycle more, but the car-centred perspective gives them both a distorted idea of how difficult it is, and a too-convenient excuse not to make the small effort that is required. If I had to lay my cards on the table, I'd say that gently persuading people to change their lifestyle is a waste of time, and that drastic restrictions on car use are our only realistic hope. In the meantime, however, I suggest that on a personal and social level we stop indulging the car-centric viewpoint, and respond to all its manifestations with the scorn or incredulity they deserve. The next time someone (who is not infirm or disabled) says "Wow – I can't believe you cycled here! You must be so fit!", respond not with the usual self-effacing "Oh, you get used to it, it's not so bad on a nice Spring day", but with "Of course I cycled here – it's only five miles. Cars are for losers." Remember – it is they, not us, whose bizarre behaviour requires explanation.

Claudine Conway

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Thanks to the Council some necessary clearing of vegetation has been carried out. This has been done at the Bishwell Road (north) end of the Clyne Valley path and also on NCN 43 just north of where it goes under the A48 (near the Morriston/Llansamlet ASDA).

It makes a pleasant change to be able to say "thank-you" to the Council (in contrast to the report on page 2). The next opportunity may be if and when they cut back the encroaching growth on Route 4 along the half mile on Fabian Way between Port Tennant and the Elba Crescent turn off. They have only been asked twice to do this!

David Naylor

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Do off road routes bring cyclists on to the road?

I posed this question in my article on p.8 of the last Newsletter and went on to suggest that they would if they were “really good”. Interested to find out if this opinion was shared I put the question on the CTC Right to Ride rep. national e-mail forum last December. (I am the local RtR rep.) The response was in essence “I doubt it” and “where’s the evidence?”

Since then I discovered that Sustrans had done traffic surveys at Blackpill which provided information about the proportion of cyclists who had exclusively used their bikes to access the path, ie had not used a car to get on to it. If this proportion was high that suggests – at least to me – that the effect of the path is to bring more cyclists on to the road. There is however the implied assumption that were it not for the path many of these people would not have cycled at all. The relevant data for traffic surveys carried out in 2004, 6 and 7 are given in the table.

Year	Did not use car	Utility path users *	Notes
2004	61%	19%	Cyclists and pedestrians
2006	86%	24%	Cyclists only
2007	88%	39%	Cyclists only

* Those neither leisure nor recreational – mostly commuters.

I posted this information on the CTC Forum in February and a handful replied.

Rod King, who was the one who asked “where’s the evidence?”, was the first. He was still unconvinced. I replied with the argument outlined above. Rod does not see off-road routes as a way forward but rather sees the need for better on-road provision for cyclists, in particular the introduction of 20 mph zones. He is behind the National 20’s *plenty* campaign and author of the booklet *Crap Cycle Lanes*.

Alasdair Massie prefaced his comments with: “.. not sure I want to dip my toes back in this piranha infected pool ...” (off-road paths and Sustrans can be a touchy issue with the CTC) and then went on to point out that there were good and bad traffic free facilities and that the good ones do indeed serve a useful purpose but the bad ones are counter-productive. He emphasized the need for a pragmatic approach: forget ideology and treat each case on its merits.

He and others referred to Danish research which shows that off-road routes do not reduce accidents. It appears that this is the result of the increased intersections generally associated with them. This however would appear not to apply to Route 4 in Swansea as there are few junctions on it. Despite this, evidence suggests that the paths do lead to an increase in cycling.

Other contributors also quoted evidence – albeit some of it anecdotal – that off-road routes result in more cyclists.

The term *off-road* then triggered another thread: on semantics. In particular the term *off-road* causes confusion because it is also used for mountain bike routes. There were various suggestions: *cycle roads*, *cycle tracks* to name two. A consensus was not reached!

A point also brought out was the value of traffic free routes as a ‘nursery’: ie somewhere where people can gain confidence before venturing on to the road.

David Naylor

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Membership renewal

A plea from the Treasurer: would those who have not yet renewed their sub.s please do so! See page 1 for his contact details.

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Wheelrights 2009 programme

Dates and details liable to change; check *Wheelrights* website: www.wheelrights.org.uk, 'Events' page for up-to-date information.

Key to RV (ie ride start point/event venue). GR = Grid Ref. on OS 1:50,000 sheets 159 or 170.

CivCe Civic Centre east car park (GR 653923) **YaC** Yacht Club, E. Burrows Rd (GR: 662927)

EnvC Environment Centre, Pier St (GR 661929) **X** See Explorer Rides programme

Date	Event	RV	Time	Description
Tue 20 th Jan	Meet'g	YaC	19.00	<i>Wheelrights meeting</i>
Mon 16 th Mar	Meet'g	YaC	19.00	<i>Wheelrights meeting</i>
Sat 25 th April	BegCl	CivCe	9.30	Adult beginner's class
Wed 29 th April	Talk	EnvC	19.00	<i>John Grimshaw: Leisure: a route back to cycling.</i>
Thu 6 th May	ExplR	X	18.30	North Gower Marsh Road
Sat 9 th May	ExplR	X	10.00	West Pier
Mon 18 th May	Meet'g	YaC	19.00	<i>Wheelrights meeting</i>
Thu 21 st May	ExplR	X	18.30	Llansamlet Lakes. (4 miles)
Sat 13 th June	BegCl	CivCe	9.30	Adult beginner's class
Mon 15 th June	Ride	X	18.30	Wheelrights N. Gower mid-summer ride *
Sat 20 th June	ExplR	X	10.00	Singleton and Brynmill Parks
Sat 27 th June	ExplR	X	10.00	Penclacwydd
Sat 11 th July	BegCl	CivCe	9.30	Adult beginner's class
Mon 20 th July	Meet'g	YaC	19.00	<i>Wheelrights meeting</i>
Thu 23 rd July	ExplR	X	18.30	Penllergaer Forest
Sat 8 th Aug	ExplR	X	10.00	Green Cwm
Thu 20 th Aug	ExplR	X	18.30	Jersey Marine
Sat 12 th Sep	ExplR	X	10.00	City Centre: visit open houses *
Thu 17 th Sep	Talk	EnvC	19.00	<i>Jane Davidson: Promotion of Cycling in Wales</i>
Sat 19 th Sep	BegCl	CivCe	9.30	Adult beginner's class
Thu 24 th Sep	ExplR	X	18.30	Clyne Valley
Sat 3 rd Oct	ExplR	X	10.00	Tircanol to Clydach
Mon 23 rd Nov	Meet'g	YaC	19.00	<i>Wheelrights meeting</i>

* Partly on trafficked roads; the other *Explorer* rides are on essentially traffic free paths.

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