

Wheelrights Meeting

Notes of meeting on 12th October 2022

In the Environment Centre, Pier Street, Swansea SA1 1RY (and on Zoom).

Present: 19 attended in the room and several more via Zoom.

John Grimshaw CBE, Founder of Sustrans and *Wheelrights* patron gave a talk entitled
Building Routes for People.

He was Chief Engineer of Sustrans which he founded in 1977. After more than 30 years he stepped down and now continues his work with the charity *Greenways and Cyclerooutes* which he set up in 2016. Its website is: <https://greenwaysandcyclerooutes.org/>.

The meeting was chaired by JS who, having welcomed all, introduced the speaker.

The Presentation:

John first gave us some background. Preliminary work on the Bristol-Bath cycle route started in the early 1970s. Now it is one of the most used routes in the UK. This led to his founding of Sustrans and the concept of the National Cycle Network (NCN). In 1995 they received £42.5m Lottery funding which was used for the first 2,500 miles of the NCN. There followed a number of promotional cycle rides. Of these a key one was in 1996 from Belfast to Lands End. (The writer was a participant. On a typical day the peloton would consist of over 100 cyclists. There were refuelling stops hosted by LAs at which John would encourage them to provide cycle routes in their area.) By June 2000 the NCN had reached 5,000 miles, and now it is more than twice this.

He then went on to comment on the role of cycling to meet our zero emissions targets and how the cost to the NHS was dramatically less for those who are active compared with the sedentary.

He explained how he got things done: that it was important to get local support for schemes from volunteers and local contractors; that in addition, by means of annual workcamps and the help of Local Authorities, he manages to get schemes approved and built in record time.

Finally he described his work as chief engineer of *Greenways and Cyclerooutes*. These included the Brean Down Way in Weston super Mare in 2017; the Waddesdon Greenway from Waddesdon Manor to Aylesbury from 2018 to 2021; the Wye Valley Greenway from 2019 to 2021; and, most recently, this summer's work camp near Shepton Mallet, work on which will continue next year.

Q and A.

Following the presentation JS thanked John and invited questions and comments. He also invited those present to identify up to two routes they would prioritise by sticking labels on a map. Five were identified.

Replying to a question about what distinction, if any, should be made between leisure and active travel John said that he would make no distinction. Commenting on the issue of how to get things done he noted the importance of developing good relations with planners.

There followed informal discussion over tea and coffee.

Notes prepared by
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