



Shared User Pathways (SUPs) in Swansea: Insights from a Community Dialogue

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Executive Summary

This report investigates how community members experience and navigate Shared User Pathways (SUPs) in Swansea, focusing on the Clyne Woodland and Swansea Bay Coastal routes. Using participatory ethnographic methods, stakeholder consultation, and a community dialogue workshop, the study amplifies the voices of everyday users—especially those who are often marginalised in public space planning.

Key findings reveal widespread confusion about pathway etiquette, inconsistent signage, and a lack of clear guidance. These issues contribute to tension between user groups, particularly between cyclists, walkers, and dog owners. Vulnerable users—including children, older adults, and people with disabilities—often feel unsafe or excluded, leading to reduced access and enjoyment in these public spaces.

The report highlights how pathway design (segregated vs. unsegregated) significantly affects user experience, with both formats presenting unique challenges. It also explores how community identity influences behaviour, noting that locally owned spaces foster more respectful interactions.

Recommendations include:

- Revising SUP guidance through co-productive methods that involve diverse user groups.
- Enhancing infrastructure with inclusive design audits and clearer, multilingual signage.
- Implementing behavioural nudges, speed limits, and quiet hours to improve safety.
- Promoting empathy-based education and youth engagement to foster long-term respectful use.
- Supporting community-led initiatives such as charters and ambassador programmes to build shared responsibility.

The findings support the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and align with UN Sustainable Development Goal 11, promoting healthier, more inclusive, and sustainable communities. This research contributes to a growing dialogue on equitable access to public space and offers practical insights into future policy and planning.

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1. Introduction

Background

Following the 2020 lockdown, there was a sharp rise in the number of people using outdoor spaces. Legal restrictions on indoor gatherings and health concerns led many to meet and exercise outside. Across the UK, public space usage increased significantly ([ONS, 2021](#)). In Swansea, data from the ONS showed a 96.24% rise in usage between July and August 2021 ([ONS, 2021](#)). At the same time, pet ownership surged, with the number of dog walkers reaching 12.5 million ([Statista, 2024](#)). Bicycle sales also rose by 22%, adding around 600,000 new cyclists to roads and footpaths ([Mintel, 2021](#)).

In Wales, local authorities are also required to promote walking and cycling under the [Active Travel \(Wales\) Act 2013](#). While it is positive to see more people using outdoor areas, this rapid growth raises questions about how these spaces are being shared - especially by newer and more diverse groups of users.

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 is a key part of Welsh transport strategy. Its goal is to promote walking and cycling as the main forms of everyday travel. The Welsh Government recognises that one of the biggest barriers to cycling is the perceived danger from motor vehicles ([Gov.Wales, 2021](#)). Research shows that up to 66% of cyclists feel safer using off-road cycle paths instead of roads ([Pearson et al., 2023](#)).

Under the Act, local authorities are required to produce [Active Travel Network Maps \(ATNMs\)](#). These maps identify walking and cycling routes, many of which in Swansea are designated as Shared User Paths (SUPs). These paths are used by a wide range of people, including walkers, runners, dog walkers, horse riders, wheelchair users, children, and cyclists.

Purpose

Swansea Council has published online guidance for SUP users. This project aims to find out whether people are aware of that [guidance](#) and what they think about it. It will explore people's individual experiences of using SUPs, with a focus on how sustainable travel can be more inclusive. The findings will contribute to wider discussions about active travel and help inform future policy and planning. By engaging in the community, the project identifies barriers faced by different groups and offers insights to improve accessibility and inclusion.

The project contributes to a deeper understanding of how shared public spaces are used and experienced. It builds on existing knowledge and lays the foundation for more socially cohesive communities in Wales. Active lifestyles are widely recognised to benefit both mental and physical health ([Mahindru et al., 2023](#); [Smith & Merwin, 2021](#)).

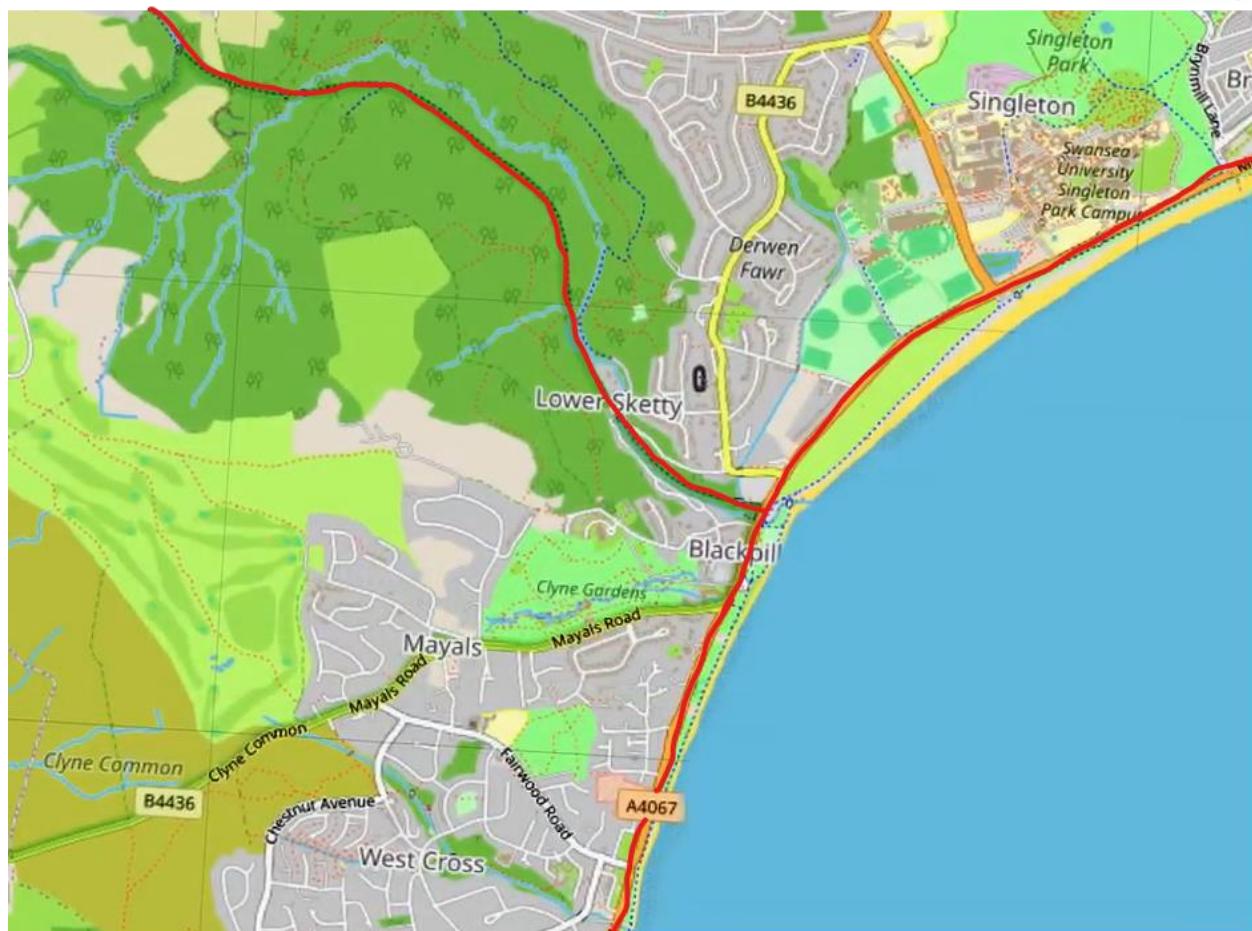
The project also supports the commitments of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). It contributes to a more prosperous, healthier, equal, and resilient Wales, with a strong focus on the economic, social, environmental, and cultural well-being of its citizens. Furthermore, it aligns with the Civic Mission of Swansea University, which seeks to engage with public, private, and voluntary sectors to enrich the local community and improve well-being.

More broadly speaking, this project aligns with the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11](#), which promotes sustainable cities and communities. It supports this goal by encouraging walking and cycling as healthier, low-carbon alternatives to driving. Reducing barriers to public space access helps ensure these areas are inclusive and welcoming to all members of the community.

Scope

This project investigates patterns of use, social dynamics, and perceptions of inclusivity on two multi-user routes in Swansea: the Clyne Woodland Path and the Coastal Path as illustrated in Figure 1, which highlights these routes in red. The research explores how growing usage of these Shared User Pathways (SUPs) affects interactions among different user groups, such as walkers, cyclists, and dog walkers. Particular attention is given to how users navigate shared space, the emergence of tensions or misunderstandings, and the extent to which people feel included or excluded in these environments.

The study focuses on understanding everyday experiences of SUP users and aims to inform more inclusive and equitable approaches to shared path design and management. While centered on two specific routes, the project's findings are intended to contribute to broader conversations around urban shared spaces and active travel infrastructure.



(Figure 1)

2. Methodology and Methods

Research Approach

This exploratory project used a qualitative, co-productive research approach, rooted in micro-ethnographic observation and active community engagement. The research unfolded in four interconnected stages: (1) initial participatory observations, (2) conversations with stakeholder organisations, engagement with the academic community, and (4) a community event. Qualitative data was analysed throughout the process, allowing emerging themes to be revisited and explored with a diverse range of path users. This inductive approach is especially effective in amplifying user voices and ensuring meaningful representation in the dialogue. Co-creative methods shaped the activities at the community event, encouraging inclusive conversations that respected and considered differing perspectives.

Initial Participatory Observations

The study began in January 2024 with eight hours of participatory observation conducted along two key routes: the Clyne Woodland Path and the Coastal Path. These micro-ethnographic observations aimed to capture real-time interactions between users and to surface tensions, misunderstandings, and usage patterns. Observed issues included the misinterpretation of bell rings, confusion around right of way, and conflicting expectations around appropriate use. Tensions were particularly notable between walkers, cyclists, and dog walkers, with many users expressing a sense of absent or unclear shared etiquette.

Emerging Themes

- **Lack of Pathway Etiquette:** Users are often unaware of informal or expected norms.
- **Limited Awareness of Official Guidance:** Few users knew about any formal rules or signage.
- **Confusion Around Usage:** Ambiguity in how the space should be used led to tension and miscommunication.

During these initial field visits, informal conversations with users further contextualised the observations. For instance, several dog walkers reported feeling unsafe or uncomfortable during busy periods and described actively avoiding the coastal route. Others noted changes in their routines to access the paths during quieter times, reflecting an emerging sense of exclusion linked to increasing pathway usage.

Based on the insights gathered during fieldwork, funding was secured through MEDr to expand the scope of the research. This enabled the organisation of a community dialogue

event designed to amplify the voices of local residents and to explore in greater depth their experiences of Shared User Pathways (SUPs), particularly with respect to inclusivity.

Stakeholder Engagement

A total of eighteen key community stakeholder organisations were approached to gather insights from the perspectives of the path users they represent. These included a diverse range of groups, such as local council representatives, charities, and the police. Between February and March 2025, I held consultative meetings with seven of these organisations:

1. **Mumbles PCSO Team – 22nd February 2025**
2. **Active Travel Team, Swansea Council – 27th February 2025**
3. **Wheel Rights – 27th February 2025**
4. **Clyne Valley Community Project – 13th March 2025**
5. **Gower National Landscapes – 13th March 2025**
6. **Councillor for Duvant – 13th March 2025**
7. **Bikeability Wales – 17th March 2025**

The conversations are built on previously collected data, allowing themes to emerge naturally and be revisited where relevant. This approach helped ensure the research remained grounded in the lived experiences of community members and aligned with the principles of co-productive methodology.

Emerging Themes:

- **Confusion:** Lack of clear signage and guidance leads to misunderstandings and tension among users.
- **Safety:** Fast cyclists, e-bikes, and inconsistent user etiquette create risks, especially for more vulnerable users.
- **Communication:** Guidance is unclear and poorly communicated, leading to confusion and inconsistent behaviour among path users.

Following these conversations an [animated infographic](#) was created to visually present emerging themes from stakeholder discussions. The purpose of the visual aid was to support an inclusive dialogue in the interactive community dialogue workshop.

Dissemination in the Academic Community

In June and July 2025, preliminary findings from the project were shared at two academic events: a national conference and a university-based colloquium¹. Both events provided opportunities to present the research aims, methods, and emerging themes to academic audiences. These cross-disciplinary events included representatives from UK universities, as well as government agencies and third sector organisations.

¹ Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD) Annual Conference, Aberystwyth University - 30th June 2025 & Learned Society of Wales Colloquium, Cardiff Metropolitan University - 3rd July 2025

3. Interactive Community Dialogue

Workshop Event

The workshop took place on Wednesday, 23rd July 2025, in a café near Swansea city center, with 22 attendees. Over two and a half hours, participants were introduced to the project and shown a five-minute [animated infographic](#) highlighting emerging themes. They were invited to reflect on what stood out, including familiar or surprising elements.

Presentations covered the participatory approach, fieldwork insights, and early challenges of Shared User Pathways (SUPs). Attendees engaged in open discussions and were invited to contribute further through follow-up conversations or by sharing relevant expertise. The animation helped bring everyone up to speed and set the stage for discussion-based activities. Two co-creative exercises - empathy mapping and a comparison chart - were used to prompt group discussion. This was followed by a wider conversation where participants identified key challenges, proposed solutions, and suggested areas for further investigation

Empathy Mapping

Empathy mapping is a co-creative method that encourages participants to view the world from another person's perspective. In this activity, attendees worked in breakout groups using a set of vignettes and an empathy map (see Appendix). Each group was given a vignette representing a different type of pathway user. They were asked to reflect on the experiences of the person described, imagining how they might feel, what they might see, hear, say, and do while using the shared pathway.

A total of ten vignettes were developed, with characters and scenarios based on real observations from participatory fieldwork and discussions with stakeholders. This approach helped participants engage with diverse perspectives and better understand the challenges faced by different users. The vignettes also illustrated the variety of people who use these spaces and the obstacles they sometimes encounter.

Comparison Charts

Attendees took part in a reflective group activity designed to explore the challenges faced by different users on two types of Shared User Pathways (SUPs): one segregated with a white line, and one unsegregated.

Drawing upon the experiences of the person discussed in the empathy map, the attendees reflected on how the needs of their path user might differ depending on the pathway design. The activity helped surface practical insights into how pathway design impacts user experience and highlighted the importance of inclusive planning and clear communication.

Following these activities, the groups reassembled as one and shared their ideas with the rest of the room. This activity helped surface nuanced views on pathway design and highlighted the importance of context, perceptions of space, user diversity, and clear communication in shaping effective shared spaces.

Challenges, Solutions, and Further Investigation

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants were invited to reflect on the challenges discussed throughout the session. Each group received a handout (see Appendix) designed to capture their insights and ideas. The handout featured a structured grid with three sections: Challenges, Solutions, and Further Research.

This activity served to consolidate the discussions and provide a clear format for recording ideas. Participants could choose to complete the handout individually or collaboratively within their groups. In the Challenges section, they identified key issues that had emerged during the workshop. The Solutions section encouraged them to propose potential responses or interventions to address these challenges. Finally, the Further Research section invited participants to suggest areas for deeper exploration, which could involve engaging with specific communities, stakeholders, or organisations.

The responses collected from this activity will inform recommendations presented later in the report, ensuring they are grounded in the perspectives and experiences shared during the workshop.

4. Findings

The following sections reflect the core issues that were raised across all of the data sources. They have been divided into thematic sub-headings that reflect the insights from field observations, stakeholder perspectives, and workshop discussions.

Inconsistent Etiquette and Lack of Guidance

A recurring theme in discussions with path users and stakeholder organisations was the lack of formal guidance on how Shared User Pathways (SUPs) should be used. A common example was uncertainty about which side to walk on when using unsegregated routes. Some participants noted that wider pathways resemble roads, leading some users to assume they should follow the Highway Code- where pedestrians walk on the right. However, SUP guidance typically encourages walking on the left, creating confusion.

Many felt that etiquette on the pathways is left to individual interpretation, which varies depending on the type of user—such as commuters, dog walkers, or runners. Participants consistently emphasised that these spaces are not roads and should not be treated as such. The use of segregated pathways also prompted discussion, with differing perceptions of behaviours like bell ringing. While some viewed it as courteous, others found it aggressive, highlighting the subjective nature of user experience.

Participants agreed that these issues could be addressed through clearer, consistent guidance, which would improve safety and accessibility - particularly for those who rely on certain levels of predictability in public spaces.

Signage was also identified as inconsistent and open to misinterpretation. For example, circular signs featuring a cyclist above a pedestrian were seen by some as implying cyclist priority. While workshop attendees acknowledged the cost of signage, others stressed that visitors and tourists depend on visual cues to navigate unfamiliar spaces, and without them, accessibility is reduced.

The current “Share with Care” guidance was widely viewed as vague and unrepresentative of user needs. Workshop participants recommended clearer signage and targeted educational campaigns to improve understanding and behaviour across all user groups.

Safety and Speed

Fast-moving cyclists and e-bikes were consistently identified as sources of anxiety and risk, particularly for older adults, children, and individuals with disabilities. While many speed-related incidents can be described as minor or low-level, they were reported as frequent occurrences across both segregated and unsegregated pathways. Observations and

participant accounts highlighted near misses involving cyclists, as well as runners passing closely by walkers, contributing to a general sense of unpredictability and discomfort.

Discussions around speed often linked back to the lack of formal guidance. Participants noted that speed is inherently subjective, with terms like “slow” and “fast” interpreted differently depending on whether the user is walking, running, or cycling. This variation in perception underscores the need for specific, measurable guidance, such as speed limits or clearer behavioural expectations, rather than relying on vague or informal indicators.

Suggestions were made to introduce speed-reduction signage in high-traffic areas along the pathways. This would offer users greater peace of mind, particularly in locations where they may wish to give children or dogs more freedom. Additionally, participants proposed the idea of designated “quiet times” to accommodate the natural fluctuations in pathway usage - recognising that certain periods, such as commuter hours, tend to be significantly busier.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Access to Shared User Pathways (SUPs) is shaped not only by physical infrastructure but also by psychological and social factors. Physical barriers - such as narrow paths, uneven surfaces, debris, and poor lighting - can significantly limit access for users with mobility aids, visual impairments, or those accompanying children. In some cases, the lack of maintenance or the presence of obstacles like overgrown vegetation or poorly placed signage further restricts movement and visibility.

Equally important are psychological barriers, including anxiety, sensory overload, and fear of unpredictable interactions with faster-moving users. These concerns were particularly evident among users with neurodiverse conditions, mental health challenges, or visual impairments. For example, some participants described avoiding the pathways during busy periods due to the stress caused by fast-moving cyclists or crowded conditions.

Specific user groups - including disabled individuals, older adults, children, and horse riders - face unique challenges. For instance, adapted bike users reported difficulties navigating narrow sections or areas with poor surface quality, while horse riders noted limited access points and a lack of space to safely share the path with other users.

Workshop participants emphasised the need for inclusive design principles that account for a wide range of physical and cognitive needs. Suggestions included:

- Wider, better-maintained paths with smoother surfaces and fewer obstructions.
- Clear, consistent signage that uses visual and tactile elements to support users with sensory impairments.

- Facilities such as changing places, toilets and rest areas to support longer or more accessible visits.
- Empathy-based education campaigns to raise awareness of invisible disabilities and promote respectful behaviour among all users.

Ultimately, improving accessibility and inclusion requires a shift from one-size-fits-all design to a more user-centered approach, where the needs of the most vulnerable are considered from the outset.

Pathway Design and Segregation

The design of Shared User Pathways (SUPs) plays a critical role in shaping user experience, behaviour, and perceptions of safety. Segregated pathways, typically marked with a white line dividing pedestrian and cycling zones, offer clarity and structure. For some users, this separation reduces uncertainty and encourages more predictable movement. However, it can also unintentionally promote high-speed cycling, particularly among commuters and recreational riders, increasing risk for more vulnerable users such as children and older adults.

In contrast, unsegregated pathways promote flexibility and shared use, encouraging mutual awareness among users. Yet, this openness can lead to confusion and conflict, especially when individuals are unsure where to position themselves or how to interact with others. The absence of clear boundaries often results in inconsistent behaviour, misunderstandings, and heightened anxiety. Particularly for those with sensory impairments or mobility challenges. In some cases, this has led to users avoiding the pathways altogether.

Workshop participants reflected on how different users experience each design differently. For example, visually impaired individuals may feel safer on segregated paths due to clearer spatial cues, while others find the rigid division restrictive or intimidating. The presence or absence of segregation also influences perceptions of entitlement and priority, with some interpreting the markings as a hierarchy of access.

There was also discussion around the suitability of segregated pathways for children. Participants noted that child cyclists are at risk in fast-moving cycle lanes but may also be unwelcome on the pedestrian side, leaving them without a safe or appropriate space.

Overall, the findings suggest that pathway design must strike a balance between clarity and inclusivity, ensuring that all users—regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel—can navigate the space safely and confidently. This may involve rethinking how segregation is implemented, improving signage, and promoting shared etiquette across all pathway types.

Community Identity and Use

The way Shared User Pathways (SUPs) are experienced is deeply influenced by their connection to local identity and the sense of collective ownership. The Clyne pathway is widely regarded as a community space, where regular users - many of whom are local residents with intergenerational social ties - have developed a strong sense of informal etiquette. This shared understanding fosters more respectful interactions and a greater sense of responsibility among users. People tend to look out for one another, and there is a visible culture of consideration that reflects the pathway's role as a locally valued asset.

In contrast, the Blackpill pathway is busier and more impersonal, often used by visitors, commuters, and people from outside the immediate area. A lack of shared norms can lead to conflicting opinions about how the space should be used. Without a strong sense of community ownership, users may feel less accountable for their behaviour, and less inclined to respect the needs of others.

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of local ownership and cohesion in promoting positive behaviour and reducing tensions. When pathways are seen as collectively owned public spaces, there is a greater expectation that users will act with respect and empathy toward others. This includes recognising the diversity of users—such as children, older adults, and those with disabilities—and adjusting behaviour accordingly.

Promoting a sense of shared responsibility can be achieved through community-led initiatives, such as co-produced charters, local ambassadors (e.g., PCSOs), and educational campaigns that emphasize mutual respect. These efforts help reinforce the idea that SUPs are not just transit routes, but shared environments where everyone has a right to feel safe, welcome, and respected.

Diverse User Perspectives

Empathy mapping conducted during the community workshop revealed the wide range of experiences among users of Shared User Pathways (SUPs). Participants represented various user groups, including visually impaired individuals, commuters, children, older adults, runners, dog walkers, and cyclists. Each group brought unique insights into how pathway design, behaviour, and environmental factors affect their ability to use the space safely and comfortably.

For example, visually impaired users described challenges navigating pathways without tactile or audible cues and expressed anxiety about silent cyclists passing too closely. Commuter cyclists, on the other hand, highlighted the pressure to maintain speed during peak hours, often leading to tension with slower-moving users. It was recognized that

children might feel confused and intimidated by conflicting signals about where they were allowed to cycle, particularly on segregated paths where they may feel out of place on both sides of the path.

These varied experiences underscore the need for tailored solutions that go beyond generic design standards. Inclusive design must consider:

- Sensory accessibility, such as tactile paving, audible signals, and visual contrast.
- Behavioural guidance, including clearer signage and educational etiquette campaigns.
- Flexible infrastructure, that accommodates different speeds, abilities, and modes of travel.
- Empathy-based education, to foster mutual understanding and respect among users.

By centering the voices of diverse users - especially those who are often marginalised or excluded - pathway planning can move toward a more equitable and user-informed approach, ensuring that public spaces are truly shared and accessible to all.

5. Outcomes and Recommendations

After the Challenges and Solutions discussion in the workshop, the participants identified the following as the main challenges for SUP users along with proposed solutions.

Challenges Identified

- **Lack of Awareness:** Confusion around SUP terminology, rules, and signage.
- **Speed and Safety:** Concerns about fast-moving cyclists, e-bikes, and unpredictable user behavior.
- **Infrastructure Issues:** Narrow paths, unclear markings, and insufficient separation between user types.
- **User Diversity:** SUPs are used by a wide range of people—walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, people with disabilities, etc.
- **Cultural Attitudes:** A sense of entitlement and conflicting interpretations of SUP etiquette.
- **Space Constraints:** Limited room for Shared User Pathway (SUP) infrastructure, especially in urban areas.

Recommendations for Improving Shared User Pathways (SUPs)

1. Infrastructure Improvements

To better accommodate the diverse range of users on Shared User Pathways (SUPs), infrastructure improvements are essential. This includes widening existing paths or reallocating road space to reduce congestion and conflict. Enhancing signage to reflect diversity, clarity, and accessibility—such as tactile surfaces, visual contrast, and multilingual formats—can significantly improve user navigation and safety. Additionally, a thorough review of current SUP guidance is recommended to ensure it aligns with the needs of all users and reflects best practices in inclusive design.

2. Education and Awareness

Strengthening education and awareness is vital to improving user behaviour and safety on Shared User Pathways (SUPs). Targeted campaigns—such as “Keep Left”—can help establish consistent usage norms across diverse user groups. Integrating SUP etiquette into school and club-based education will ensure that respectful and informed pathway use is encouraged from an early age.

3. Policy and Regulation

Strengthening policy and regulation is essential to improving safety and inclusivity on Shared User Pathways (SUPs). Introducing speed limits for bikes and exploring designated quiet hours can help protect users who feel vulnerable around fast-moving cyclists. Enforcing e-bike regulations - particularly regarding power and speed - will also reduce risk and promote responsible use. To ensure these measures are effective and widely supported, it is important to engage councils and political stakeholders in the development of inclusive, user-informed policies.

4. Community Engagement

Strengthening community engagement is key to fostering a sense of shared responsibility and respectful behaviour on Shared User Pathways (SUPs). Involving local authorities, universities, and user groups in co-design and decision-making ensures that diverse perspectives are reflected in pathway planning. Promoting inclusive media and signage that represent the full range of users helps reinforce the idea that these spaces belong to everyone. Facilitating dialogue between different user types can build mutual respect and understanding, while the presence of PCSOs and volunteers during busy seasons, can model safe behaviour and provide informal education to pathway users.

5. Behavioural Insights and Nudging

Applying behavioural insights and nudging techniques can help guide user behaviour on Shared User Pathways (SUPs) in subtle yet effective ways. Visual cues such as arrows or footprints might reduce confusion and encourage consistent movement patterns. Color-coded zones may help users intuitively understand speed expectations or priority areas, improving safety and flow. Additionally, positive reinforcement signage—such as messages thanking users for courteous behaviour—can foster a more respectful and cooperative atmosphere on shared paths.

6. Youth and School Engagement

Engaging young people through education is a vital step toward fostering long-term respectful behaviour on Shared User Pathways (SUPs). Working with children and young people to develop interactive workshops and youth ambassador programmes could help to empower children and young people. Enabling them to take ownership of shared spaces and directly participate in the communities that they live in. This co-produced SUP etiquette could be used in local school curricula to increase awareness and understanding of shared space principles. These efforts align with the ethos of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which has been adopted in Wales, by promoting children's rights to participate in decisions that affect them and to access safe, inclusive public environments.

7. Visitor and Tourist Orientation

Improving orientation for visitors and tourists is essential to ensuring that Shared User Pathways (SUPs) are accessible and welcoming to all. Providing multilingual signage and QR codes that link to clear etiquette guides can help non-local users navigate these spaces confidently and respectfully. Collaborating with tourism boards to include SUP guidance in visitor materials—such as maps, brochures, and digital platforms—will further support inclusive use and reduce misunderstandings among international and first-time users.

8. Inclusive Design Audits

To ensure Shared User Pathways (SUPs) are truly accessible to all, regular inclusive design audits should be conducted with disabled users, neurodiverse individuals, children and older adults. These audits can help identify physical and sensory barriers that may not be visible to the general public. Addressing sensory accessibility through features such as tactile paving, audible signals, and strong visual contrast will support users with a range of needs and promote safer, more inclusive environments for everyone.

9. Dynamic Pathway Management

Dynamic pathway management strategies can help adapt Shared User Pathways (SUPs) to changing patterns of use throughout the day, week, or season. Exploring time-based zoning and seasonal signage can help accommodate fluctuations in user density and reduce conflict during peak periods. Additionally, digital tools such as mobile apps and real-time density alerts can support user navigation and decision-making, helping individuals choose quieter times or routes and enhancing overall safety and accessibility.

10. Co-Produced Community Charters

Developing co-produced community charters can help establish shared values and expectations for behaviour on Shared User Pathways (SUPs). These charters, created collaboratively with local residents and user groups, foster a sense of ownership and mutual respect. Displaying them visibly along pathways and promoting them through local networks and events can reinforce positive norms and encourage users to treat these spaces as inclusive, community-led environments.

6. Areas for Further Research

Representing Unheard Voices

- Investigate the experiences of women, children and young people, tourists, and international visitors, whose perspectives were underrepresented in the current study.
- Explore how language barriers, cultural norms, and unfamiliarity with local guidance affect the use of SUPs.

Consideration of Behavioural Dynamics

- Study how different user groups interpret and respond to SUP signage and etiquette.
- Examine the psychological and social factors influencing user behaviour, such as entitlement, risk perception, and group dynamics.

Investigation into Inclusive Design and Accessibility

- Conduct accessibility audits with users who have invisible disabilities, neurodiverse conditions, or sensory impairments.
- Explore the impact of pathway design (segregated vs. unsegregated) on different user groups, especially those with mobility aids or children.

Identifying Community-Led Interventions

- Evaluate the effectiveness of community charters, local ambassadors (e.g., PCSOs), and peer-led education in promoting respectful behaviour.
- Investigate how community identity and ownership influence pathway use and etiquette.

Reviewing Policy and Governance

- Explore how local authorities and national policy frameworks can better support inclusive SUP planning.
- Study the impact of enforcement strategies (e.g., speed limits, e-bike regulations) on user behaviour and safety.

Temporal and Seasonal Use Patterns

- Investigate how time of day, season, and special events (e.g., Parkrun) affect pathway dynamics and user conflicts.
Consider time-based zoning or “quiet hours” as a potential intervention.

Grassroots Consensus and Future Consultation

- Many participants agreed that unsafe road conditions are a major reason cyclists prefer SUPs, increasing user density and conflict.
- This shared view highlights a broader issue beyond pathway etiquette, linking SUP usage to wider infrastructure challenges.
- The group's collective insight positions them as a valuable grassroots resource for future consultations on safer road planning.

9. Appendices

Event Flyer



SHARED PATHWAYS IN SWANSEA
A COMMUNITY IN DIALOGUE

WHERE:

COMMON MEEPLE 

77 St Helen's Road
Swansea
SA1 4BG

WHEN:
Wednesday 23rd July 2025
2pm- 4.30pm

WHY:
A platform for the community to enhance the safety, accessibility, and inclusivity of Swansea's shared pathways.

GET INVOLVED WITH SOMETHING- Enjoy some FREE food and drinks whilst you discuss an important topic

CONTACT:
MATTHEW.HOWELL@SWANSEA.AC.UK

TICKETS
Book tickets [ONLINE](#) or request a place via [email](#).
Places are limited

DISCUSS
Challenges faced
Improvements
Potential barriers
Meeting the needs of ALL users

HAVE A VOICE
Share your experiences and ideas
Collaborate with others
Enhance safety and encourage social cohesion



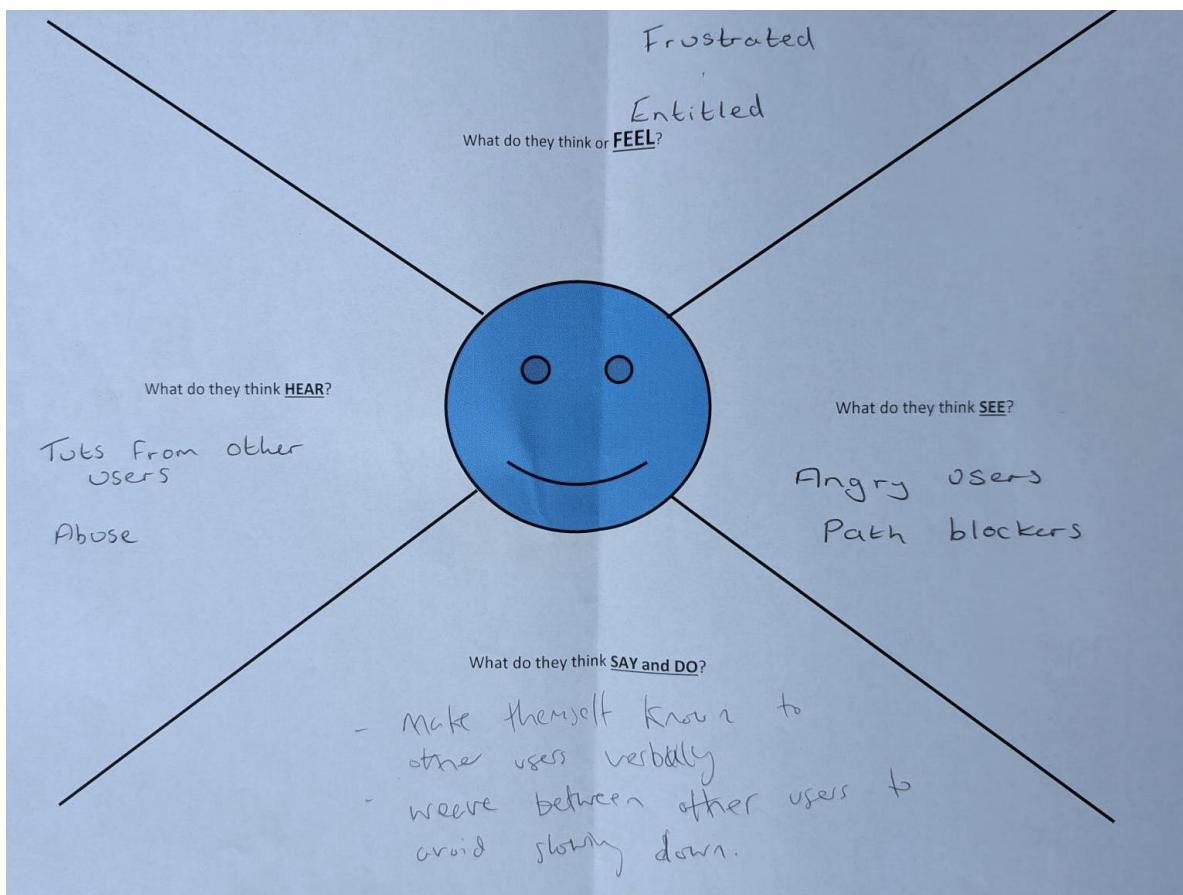

Vignettes & Empathy Maps

3. Darren Gates, 54 – Jogger & Strava Enthusiast

Travels by: Running

Darren runs regularly and uses Strava to track his fitness. He admits he pushes himself to beat personal bests. At quieter times, the SUP feels perfect. But during busy hours, walkers with dogs or people stopping for chats slow him down. He sometimes weaves between people or clears his throat to make himself known.

He doesn't see himself as rude—he just wants space to run. But he's had complaints and glares, especially from older users and parents. Darren knows the path is shared, but wonders if there should be peak time rules or "fast lanes" to avoid these constant frustrations. Darren feels like the other users simply aren't sharing the space. He gets agitated by people blocking his way and preventing him from beating his previous Strava time.

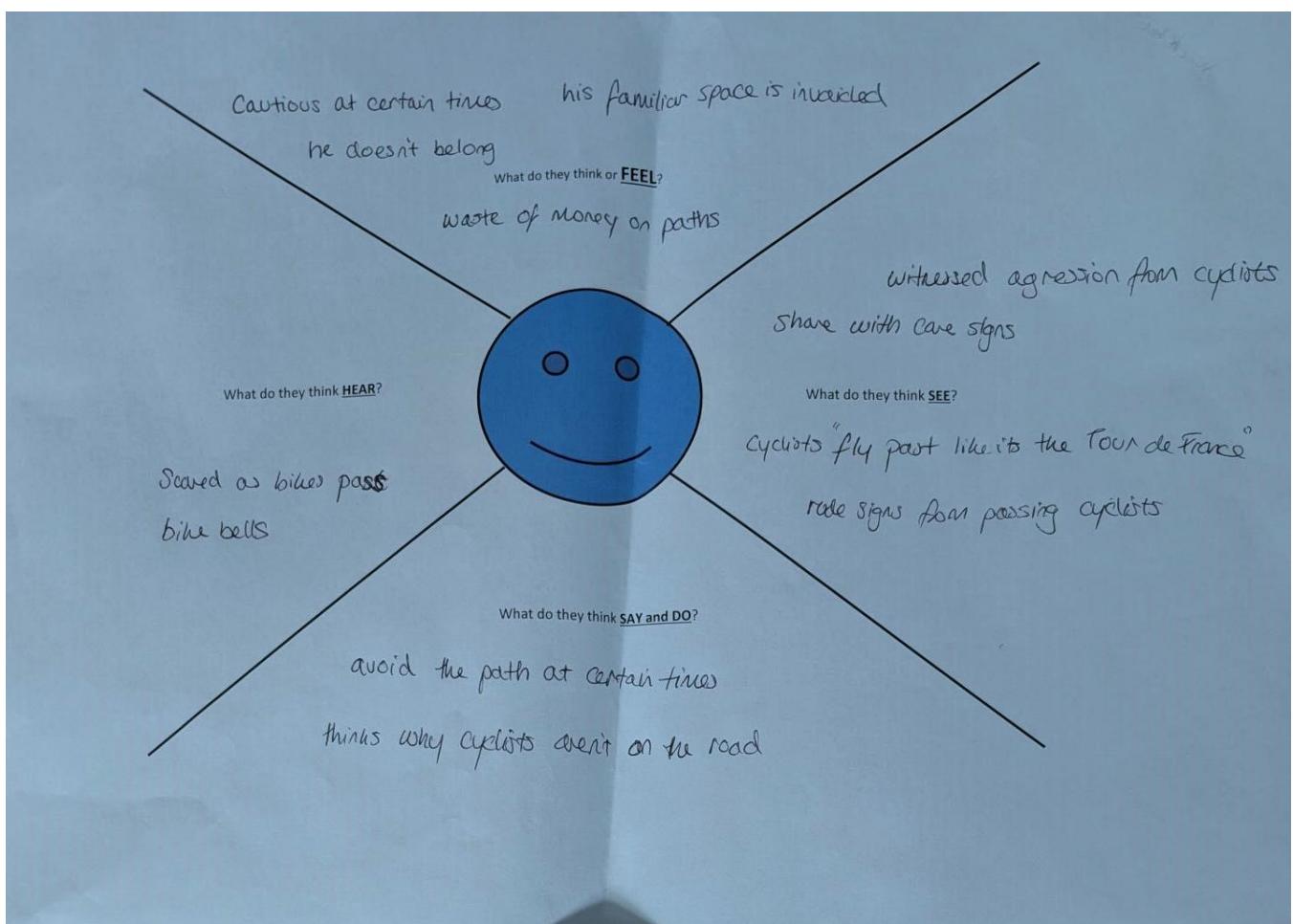


2. Colin Jones, 68 – Retired Bus Driver & Daily Walker

Travels by: Walking

Colin walks every day for light exercise and to manage his blood pressure. He enjoys stopping to talk with other older locals – as a lifelong community member, he has been friends with some of the other users for his entire life. But in the mornings, he avoids the path before 9 a.m. because “cyclists fly past like it’s the Tour de France.” He’s been brushed too close for comfort, and when he once flinched and stepped sideways, a cyclist swerved and shouted at him. Sometimes he is caught out on the weekends when the stretch of pathway by his house becomes part of a longer biking event. This has prevented him from following his usual exercise routine.

Colin doesn’t like the sound of bike bells—it makes him feel he’s being told off. He wonders: why don’t they just slow down or go around? It makes him feel like he doesn’t belong on the path anymore

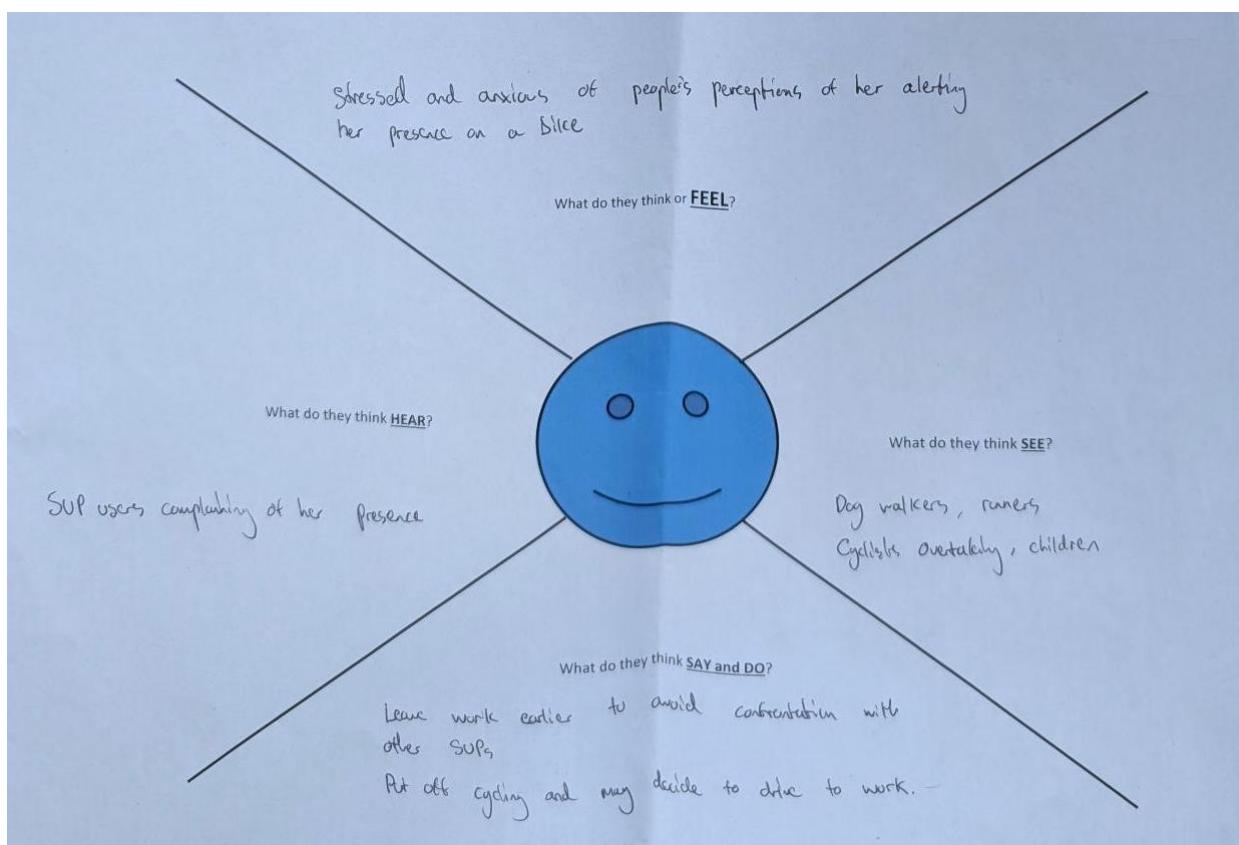


1. Rhian Brown, 32 – Specialist Nurse and Commuter Cyclist

Travels by: Bicycle

Rhian cycles to her early and late shifts at the hospital. She depends on Clyne and Bay SUP to avoid traffic and parking issues. At 7:45 a.m., she often joins a stream of fast-moving cyclists rushing to work. She uses her bell often—sometimes multiple times per ride—to alert pedestrians. But she notices some walkers look annoyed or startled, and one of the pedestrians once accused her of being “aggressive.”

Rhian is not trying to race, and she wants to get to work safely. She has had a few near misses because of dogs and dog walkers with extendable leads. She is too afraid to cycle on the road because cars come too close and some drivers are aggressive towards her. Rhian gets quite anxious that she may arrive late at work and her patients might suffer. She believes shared path users are hard to read as their behaviour on the path is often inconsistent and unpredictable.



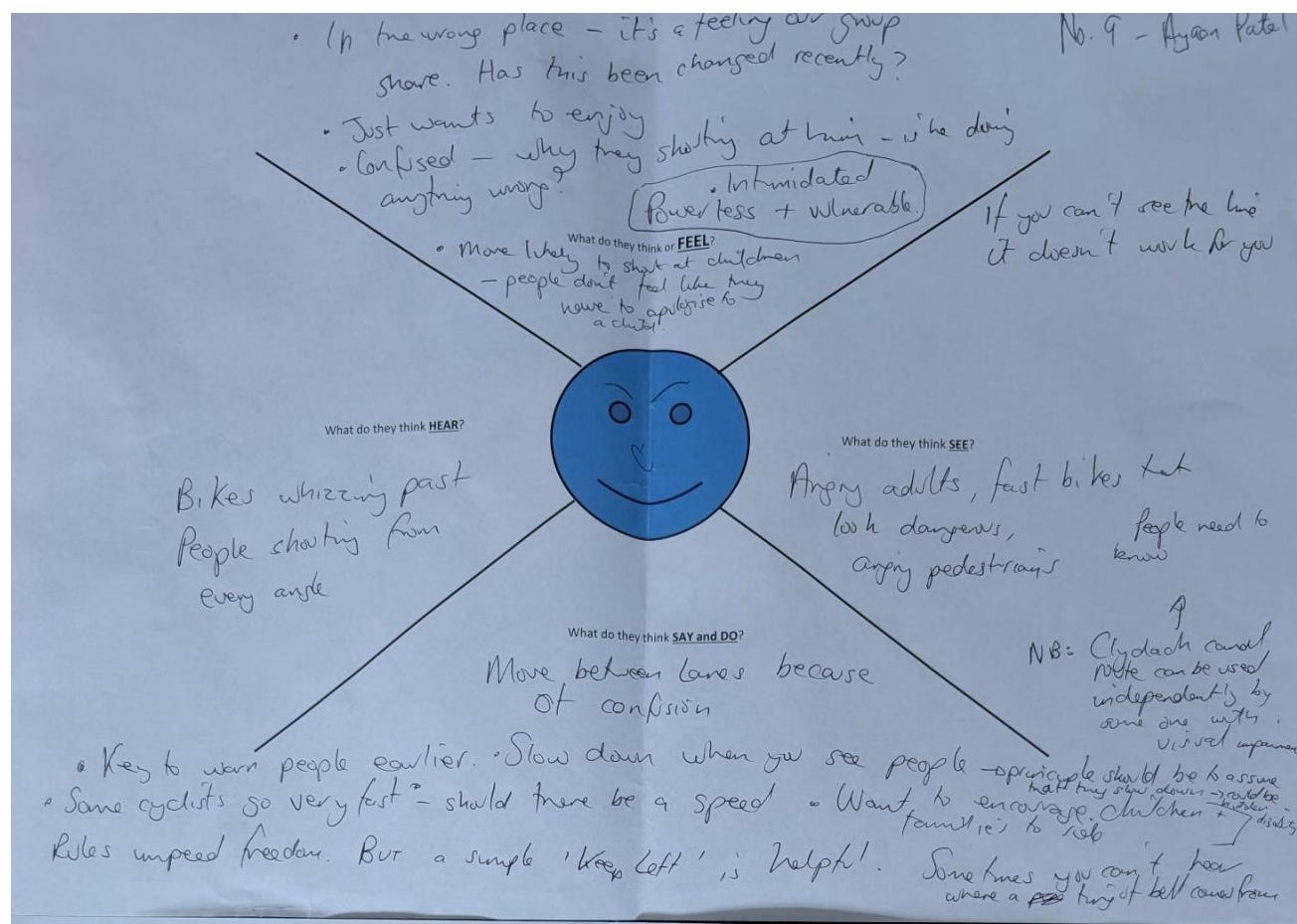
9. Ayaan Patel, 10 – Schoolchild and Holiday Cyclist

Travels by: Bicycle

Ayaan loves riding his bike during the school holidays. He uses the coastal segregated pathway along the sea front and sometimes cycles quite a distance ahead of his mum. He sticks to the cycle side, just like the signs say, but it doesn't always feel safe.

Sometimes, adult cyclists zoom past and ring their bells loudly—once, a man shouted at him to “move over”. Other times, when he tries to ride on the footpath instead, people frown or tell him off for “not being allowed there.” He doesn’t understand where he’s supposed to go.

Ayaan just wants to enjoy his bike and feel grown-up riding on his own. But the SUP feels like it’s not made for kids. “I’m trying to do the right thing,” he says, “but it feels like I’m always in someone’s way.”



Comparison Charts

Comparison Chart	
Please consider ANY tensions that might impede the needs of the person that you are considering. Use the following space to reflect upon how your allocated path user might differ on the TWO different pathways.	
Clyne Woodland Pathway	Swansea Bay Coastal Pathway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved experience because the path is now wider & don't trip on tree roots. no clear signage telling you to stay to the left 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hard to know where certain users should go e.g. children on small bikes / pram users should you stay to the left if there is a segregated line?

Comparison Chart	
Please consider ANY tensions that might impede the needs of the person that you are considering. Use the following space to reflect upon how your allocated path user might differ on the TWO different pathways.	
Clyne Woodland Pathway	Swansea Bay Coastal Pathway
<p><i>feel safer</i></p> <p>Wider sections easier to pass less cross roads. less traffic</p>	<p>feel safer. (line) more lighting run off verges</p>

Comparison Chart	
Please consider ANY tensions that might impede the needs of the person that you are considering. Use the following space to reflect upon how your allocated path user might differ on the TWO different pathways.	
Clyne Woodland Pathway	Swansea Bay Coastal Pathway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isolated path, no lighting through wooded area - less safe especially for women Lower volume of SUP users - could encourage higher cycling speeds Obstacles for cyclists caused by horse manure and tree debris - causing erratic movements by cyclists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sand is an obstacle - narrow amount of available SUP space. Bad weather encouraging cyclists to speed. Crossing points along the bay resulting in conflict zones between different movements. Children crossing at Blaenporth Lido causing hazard for cyclists. Families walking in groups taking up available space People stopping more frequently at destinations or points of interest / visitors. Segregated by white line at points causing inconsistency.

Please consider ANY tensions that might impede the needs of the person that you are considering. Use the following space to reflect upon how your allocated path user might differ on the TWO different pathways.

Clyne Woodland Pathway	Swansea Bay Coastal Pathway
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel you can step out of the way to the edge. • More considerate interactions • Less observed as quiet and enclosed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - but this seems to lead to more considerate behaviour rather than less. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More dangerous • Bigger variety of users + busier • Can't step to the edge due to sea wall • More people for work • More tourists

Challenges and Solutions

Challenges	Solutions	Further Investigation
E.g. more people use the spaces in the summer. Tourists are unfamiliar with spaces.	-Clearer signage -Educational campaigns -Digital orientation tools – apps, interactive maps, etc.	-Engage with Local and Regional Tourism teams. -Involve the university
Limited available space for e.g. building SUP infrastructure	-wider paths, but will need to compromise in other areas e.g. on-street parking, greenspace - Provide alternative routes for cyclists.	- Local Authority - Local stakeholders - politicians.
Unsure of SUP terms and guidance	- Educational campaigns e.g. Share with care	
People Pedestrians may be unaware they are using a SUP - especially on routes with lower volumes of cyclists.	- clearer signage - Educational campaigns	- Local Authority - University

Challenges	Solutions	Further Investigation
E.g. more people use the spaces in the summer. Tourists are unfamiliar with spaces.	Clearer signage -Educational campaigns -Digital orientation tools – apps, interactive maps, etc.	-Engage with Local and Regional Tourism teams. -Involve the university
Conflict for space for all users.		← involve accommodation providers. Hotels guest houses camp sites.
Cost of signage.	On going communication.	
electric vehicles too powerful.	better enforcement	

Challenges	Solutions	Further Investigation
E.g. more people use the spaces in the summer. Tourists are unfamiliar with spaces.	-Clearer signage -Educational campaigns -Digital orientation tools – apps, interactive maps, etc.	-Engage with Local and Regional Tourism teams. -Involve the university
Runners, walkers wearing head phones	- clearer signage / awareness of cyclist - promotion of safety when using head phones	
People with invisible impairments	- information campaigns about what works and clearer signs: "cyclist from behind on your right side"	- Engage with groups representing different vulnerabilities
E-bikes: crossing over into speed areas more suitable for the roads	- more cycle tracks on the roads / cycling lanes	
car drivers are unaware of laws. It feels like to be on a bike when they are overtaking	- lived experiences - the more people have experienced cycling on country roads the better they will understand vulnerability - lived experience of being a pedestrian after watching cyclists utilizing spaces	Solutions: - talks from people with experience - talks about potential consequences and dangers

Challenges	Solutions	Further Investigation
E.g. more people use the spaces in the summer. Tourists are unfamiliar with spaces.	-Clearer signage -Educational campaigns -Digital orientation tools – apps, interactive maps, etc.	-Engage with Local and Regional Tourism teams. -Involve the university
Space is not big (wide) enough for the demands placed on it	Make the space wider (see guidance) and/or build protected cycle infrastructure onto main roads	How to get funding for it
On SVs, people's behaviour (not laws) is unpredictable	Make paths wide enough to be properly segregated	How to get funding

Challenges	Solutions	Further Investigation
E.g. more people use the spaces in the summer. Tourists are unfamiliar with spaces.	-Clearer signage -Educational campaigns -Digital orientation tools - apps, interactive maps, etc.	-Engage with Local and Regional Tourism teams. -Involve the university
Walkers and runners might not be aware of the speed of the cyclists.	-Clearer signage. -Educational campaigns as people who come from different countries doesn't know the rules of walking left.	-Engage with the council Set up new laws. -Involve primary, highschools and uni; -Add speed limit function for bike factory maybe!
Cyclists like food delivery needs to deliver food speedy. It leads them hard to be careful to people that having hearing issues.	Tools tools → increase the sound of the bell. Educational campaigns so cyclists would be slow down a bit for people experience hearing impairment. -Digital tools like a <u>Senser</u>	-Invest in adding some more soundbikes. -Involve the digital team. -Invent some sensor like with light/weight etc maybe it would work
Horse riders has less space to use, as the usual space has been taken by general public. Too narrow.	-Clear signage -make the road for walkers and general public bigger, less space for driver	-go through the council -more discussion. See what other stakeholders think.
For walkers, there are so much confusion on the lines in the road.	-Clear signage, in in different roads, it should be different when the road the flat and hilly	folk

Challenges	Solutions	Further Investigation
E.g. more people use the spaces in the summer. Tourists are unfamiliar with spaces.	-Clearer signage -Educational campaigns -Digital orientation tools - apps, interactive maps, etc.	-Engage with Local and Regional Tourism teams. -Involve the university
Recognise diversity of users on SUs.	-Promote <u>ways</u> of diverse users on same space. -Signage that reflects diversity -Mediates show different users' experiences	-Challenge 'Share with Care' blandness/monotony -How to increase peoples perceptions
Get speed down	-Keep speed down signs -Engage cycling groups -Pitch attempts at topspeed at quiet times for paths.	-Engagecritically the 'competitive'side of cycling' -Ban 'racing' behaviour?
Popularize the 'keep left' implicit ruling	-Tell people (inc schools + cycling clubs) about it	-How to coordinate walking on paths + roads - focus the road is keep right.

Event Agenda

Event: Shared User Pathways in Swansea: A community in dialogue

Date: Wednesday, 23 July 2025

Time: 14:00 – 16:30 (United Kingdom Time)

Location: Common Meeple Board Game Cafe, 77 Saint Helen's Road, Swansea, SA1 4BG

Time	Session	Description
14:00 – 14:10 (10 mins)	Welcome & Introduction	Brief welcome and facilitator intro. Session aims and structure. Housekeeping and expectations.
14:10 – 14:20 (10 mins)	Background & Key Findings	Origins of the enquiry, observations and stakeholder engagement, key insights.
14:20 – 14:30 (10 mins)	Infographic Animation & Reflection	Watch the short animation. Prompt: What stood out? What surprised you?
14:30 – 15:05 (35 mins)	Activity 1: Empathy Mapping	Instructions, small group work, and mini-discussion using empathy maps.
15:05 – 15:20 (15 mins)	Refreshment Break	Light refreshments and informal networking.
15:20 – 15:45 (25 mins)	Activity 2: Reviewing Current Guidance	Review 'Share with Care' guidance. Reflect on inclusivity and accessibility. Share insights.
15:45 – 16:05 (20 mins)	Activity 3: From Insight to Action	Identify challenges, propose solutions, and suggest further research directions.
16:05 – 16:20 (15 mins)	Open Discussion	Facilitated dialogue drawing on all activities. Explore tensions and inclusive change.
16:20 – 16:30 (10 mins)	Wrap-Up & Next Steps	Recap key takeaways. Outline follow-up actions. Thank participants and close.

10. Acknowledgements

I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all the stakeholder organisations and community members who generously contributed their time, insights, and support throughout the research and the community event. Your collaboration and commitment were instrumental in shaping meaningful outcomes and fostering a shared understanding.

A special thanks goes to [MEDr](#), whose funding made it possible to produce the [animated infographic](#) and host the community event. Their support was vital in helping us communicate our findings in an engaging and accessible way.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who played a role in this initiative—your participation and enthusiasm have been central to constructing a meaningful dialogue about an important community issue.