

## Comment &amp; interviews

# CYCLE SHORTS

**THIS MONTH** NED BOULTING'S BROMPTON, ROAD TRAFFIC OFFENCES REVIEW, CYCLISTS' & EQUESTRIANS' 'BE NICE, SAY HI' CAMPAIGN, SNAPSHOTS OF SUMMER, AND MORE



John taking a break at The Dinorben Arms

Photo: Roy Spilsbury

## Local Heroes

# JOHN MATHER

Cycling UK member **John Mather** helped stop a traffic-free cycle trail being steamrollered by a bypass. **Dan Joyce** interviewed him

**A**T CYCLING UK'S Big Bike Celebration in Birmingham last autumn, John Mather and his colleagues in the Caernarfon Bypass Campaign Group were awarded the Moss Medallion as winners of 2017's Best Campaign. It was recognition for their success in limiting the impact of a forthcoming 60mph trunk road on the North Wales cycle network it will intersect. While cycle campaigning is often associated with transport cycling in urban areas, this was about protecting leisure cycling.

'I'm a leisure cyclist myself,' said John, a 74-year-old retired civil engineer. 'I live in Colwyn Bay, near to National Cycle Route 5, which offers miles of traffic-free cycling along the sea defence works, access tracks, and promenades between Colwyn Bay and Talacre

at the Point of Ayr. We have off-road coastal trails to the west between Conwy and Llanfairfechan. And in Gwynedd we have several countryside trails – Lôn Ogwen, Lôn Menai and Lôn Eifion. These trails are a valuable asset, providing miles of traffic-free, safe cycling, particularly for the young, the old, and for those with disabilities.'

John's journey from Cycling UK member to Cycling UK campaigner happened almost by accident. 'I joined the A487 Caernarfon Bypass Campaign Group as a result of a chance meeting with Roy Spilsbury,' said John. 'I met him whilst loading my bike at the car park on NCR5 at Conwy Morfa. Roy, now in his eighties, is a sociable soul and knows more about cycling, its people, and its places than anyone else I have met in the many years I

have lived here on the North Wales coast.'

The new bypass is designed to take traffic away from Caernarfon and Bontnewydd, but will put it in the path of cyclists on the traffic-free trail of Lôn Eifion. 'It will connect into the road system at the Goat roundabout south of Llanwnda,' said John. 'But Lôn Eifion, a long-distance trail popular with walkers and cyclists, also passes through this roundabout. Trail users already have to cross one major road at this location. When the bypass is complete, they will have to cross two roads, one of which carries 60mph trunk road traffic!'

The campaign group called for an underpass or bridge for Lôn Eifion to be added to the bypass plans. 'Along with others, I objected to the draft Highways Act orders for the bypass, was cross-examined, and gave evidence at the local Public Inquiry which was held in Caernarfon,' said John. 'We were unable to persuade the inspector to recommend the provision of a bridge or subway. But we did obtain useful concessions from the project team, in the form of two new controlled crossings: a Toucan crossing for the A487 (South) and a raised zebra crossing for the A487 (North), which will be "detrunked". Both crossings are to be supported by local speed limits.'

As a former civil engineer, employed by central government working on major trunk road improvement schemes, John was able to offer 'technical advice on design standards, the public inquiry process, and on the role of the minister, the inspector, the designer, the professional witnesses and legal counsel.' It was, however, a team effort.

'The campaign group, representing walkers, cyclists and equestrians, came together shortly before the draft Highways Act Orders were published in 2016,' John said. 'We met on site and at a local café to discuss and agree our options and tactics. Then we formed an email group to share information and ideas. We recognised from the beginning that we would be stronger as a united group of objectors than we would apart.'

## Stay in touch

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