



Clockwise from top left: On the way to Capel Curig. Nant Ffrancon valley. The finish at Conwy Castle. Hillside above Llanfairfechan

road on the route. For now, we've had to leave out this short section and use the coastal cycle path instead.

ACCESS CONUNDRUM NEAR CONWY

The Roman road turned into a beautiful descent down the hillside, straight towards the sea. We felt triumphant as we approached the coastline and the finish. Our excitement was premature. The route swung right as we turned inland once again. Conwy Mountain stood between us and the end. One last big climb then... It was breathtaking in all senses of the word. We made our way through a landscape woven with legends, full of stone circles and burial mounds.

The trail we were following also had a somewhat mythical character to it, becoming fainter until we could no longer see where it went. Ride leader Polly checked the map, frowning in confusion. "This must be the way," she said. "It shows the byway going straight ahead, and that track to the right is the footpath."

A conundrum: a hike-a-bike section following an invisible path through boggy heather, or a rideable, well-surfaced path where we would have much less impact on the ground, but which didn't technically have access for cycling?

We opted to stick with the non-existent byway, hoping that it would choose to emerge at some point. It didn't – we just got wet feet. Information about who owned this land proved equally elusive, so we haven't been able to ask permission to use the footpath for Traws Eryri and for now have to direct cyclists along the soggy byway.

Tricky bit negotiated, this time it really was the final stretch, swooping past the dramatic Sychnant Pass and down into Conwy. A curve around the estuary cycle path, and suddenly the majestic sight of Conwy Castle came into view to mark the end of our journey. It had been a spectacular few days of journeying through epic mountain landscapes. With several thousand metres of climbing in the legs, we were ready for a rest, if reluctant to leave it all behind.

It's not the end of the story, however. Traws Eryri is a beautiful route, but a few small changes could make it even more memorable. Cycling UK will continue working to improve it – in the short term, by hopefully agreeing those elusive permissive sections, and in the long term, by campaigning for access reform to be implemented. I'm excited to see it develop. ●

Trails for Wales

In the last issue of Cycle, we mentioned that we were reinvigorating our Trails for Wales campaign to increase access to the countryside. Since then, we've published a report outlining the benefits that increased off-road access for cycling would bring for health and wellbeing and for the rural economy. We've delivered it to Members of the Senedd to remind them why being able to access the outdoors is so important.

During Bike Week, we were outside the Senedd with an enormous map of Wales to launch the report, and to talk to MSs about rights of way in their constituency and how access could be improved. There were some good conversations with supportive politicians, which stands us in good stead to continue building the political will to make some progress on widening access to the countryside.

cyclinguk.org/press-release/finish-job-access-reform-welsh-government-told