



# ROBERT LLOYD column

In YourArea.co.uk

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**QUESTION:** What is the shortest word in the English language that contains the letters: abcdef? **Answer:** Feedback.

OK, it also contains a K and a double use of E – but let's not be pedantic.

Feedback is to be valued, even savoured like a fine wine (or is that a whine?).

And, so it was that I was delighted to receive an email last weekend from Steve Colinese, a regular reader of this column from Gorseinon.

He started his email with some promise, explaining how he enjoys reading a 'first class whinge' and expressing the view that I am 'a bit of a wind-up merchant'.

Before I could even plead 'Guilty as charged', I could sense a 'But' coming my way.

For, in last week's column I managed to crank through the gears on a moan about cyclists on Llanelli's Swiss Valley cyclepath.

Issues included the speed of cyclists, how often they encroach on the two-metre bubble when passing pedestrians, the lack of good old-fashioned cycle bells and a separate moan about the way cyclists use the highways.

Steve is a member of British Cycling, the main national governing body for cycle sport in Great Britain, so obviously knows his onions (although I should add here that he's never, to my knowledge, been pictured carrying onions on his bike!).

So, when Steve places a 'But' in his feedback, it requires that I pay special attention – and, of course, give him 'almost' equal rights to express himself.

Steve's good-natured feedback included this helpful information...

*National Cycle Network*



The problem of shared use paths has been explained from a cyclist's point of view.

Picture: Alex Linch

*Route 47 (the clue is in the word 'cycle') up Swiss Valley is a shared use path.*

*It rises/falls at a rate of 100 feet per mile, so it's possible to get some decent speed up on the return from Cynheidre without much effort.*

*Unfortunately, in my experience, too many pedestrians and dog walkers on such paths want their half of the path in the middle(!).*

*Conflict inevitably ensues, particularly if dog owners have*

*their animals off the lead.*

*At a time of a pandemic, we should be doing everything possible to keep out of hospital... uncontrolled dogs do not help in that respect, as I know to my cost only too well.*

*British Cycling's design guidance specifically recommends that shared use paths are only suitable where low useage occurs.*

*I would say that's appropriate for Swiss Valley, and even for NCR Route 4 along the Lla-*

*nelli coast because of the space available, but definitely not for Swansea Bay foreshore (NCR 4) or the Clyne Valley path (NCR 4).*

*You mentioned motorists complaining about cyclists bunching.*

*The Highway Code states it's perfectly permissible to ride two abreast.*

*The people who complain about this are probably the same people who say cyclists should pay road tax – which*

*was abolished in 1937. It's been replaced by VED which is based on a vehicles emissions.*

*As I always say when challenged by angry drivers, unless I've had baked beans for my pre-ride meal I won't be emitting any pollution!*

*I completely agree with you about bells on bikes.*

*These days they are so small and unobtrusive, and I'm encouraged by the number of times people actually thank me for ringing it.*

*On the other hand, there are times when I even have to use a whistle to get people's attention, particularly those zombies with earphones who are oblivious to everyone.*

*Finally, for some context, I will be 68 next week. I do more than 5,000 miles a year on roads and to a certain extent on cyclepaths when they're quiet.*

*One of my 40-mile rides this week had an average speed of 16.8mph.*

*Like many of my fellow roadies, I have invested serious money in bikes, kit and cycling related personal protection equipment (PPE) – yet when there are collisions it's always the cyclist who comes off worst.*

*I don't jump red lights, and I give hand signals, make eye contact with drivers, smile and wave my thanks when they let me through, and I often stop in the lanes on Gower to let vehicles pass me... but often don't get any thanks.*

*So, you see, many of us take cycling seriously.*

*Apart from prostate cancer, it's helped me stay very fit, and has helped enormously in keeping up my morale during the pesky pandemic.*

*Thousands more have discovered the joy and health benefits of cycling this summer as a result of Covid-19.*

*All of the above was eloquently put by cyclist Steve and I'm grateful for the feedback. Keep it coming...*

*It was an American lawyer who once said, "Criticism, like rain, should be gentle enough to nourish a man's growth without destroying his roots."*

*Keep on buying the paper and I'll tell you more!*

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## Am I on the way out?

YOU'D be amazed at some of the stuff that lands in my email box.

Some of it interesting, some of it newsworthy, some of it rude, some of it downright bizarre.

This has been an average week. But, to give some examples, I've received messages about 'six dangerous foods', 'most goals scored by pink football boots', 'nine foods which cause a bad night's sleep', 'nine edible flowers'... and (cue drum-roll) 'why I'm about to become extinct'.

The last one grabbed my attention, if only for its use of the word 'extinct'.

The email clarified: "Despite there being more than 730,000 people with the name Robert in the UK today (and almost 40,000 across Wales) it seems the name is on its way to becoming extinct.

"Only 511 of you were born last year – the second lowest number since 1926."

The downward trend has sparked a new campaign by a bakery with a name which begins with the letter R (you guess!).

They want to celebrate more of the nation's most 'Remarkable Roberts'.

The bakery's PR guru said: "There are many famous Roberts flying the flag for their namesakes all over the world – such as British actors Carlyle, Coltrane and Pattinson and their US counterparts Redford, Downey Jnr and De Niro, and musicians Williams, Plant and Palmer."

In the 1940s, Robert was firmly within the top five boys' names in England and Wales before dropping into the top 20, where it stayed until the early '90s.

Even in 1996, there were more than 2,600 babies born with the name, but since then its popularity has dwindled – down as low as 115 in the popularity charts.

According to baby name expert SJ Strum: "The name Robert means Bright Fame, so surely that is worth saving from extinction!"

"It is making a quiet comeback online with mentions picking up on baby name forums, some even saying it has 'sex appeal'.

"And there is no doubt TikTok star Robert Georges has certainly given it plenty of teen swagger." Interesting stuff?

As a 60-something digital dinosaur, I have to ask the question: what is TikTok?



What's in a name? Clockwise from top left, Roberts Plant, Pattinson, Carlyle, DeNiro and, right, Downey Jr.

