

Bike Path Art

Spokes Competition, Summer 2010

Tucked out of the wind at Yellowcraig beach and looking out to the lighthouse on Fidra is a perfect rough stone bench snugly built into a dune among the marram grass and wild thyme. The bench was built in the memory of someone who loved the place and is a celebration of the simple pleasure of enjoying the view.

I would like to develop a culture of memorial cycle ‘whoops’ – cyclists’ equivalent to the memorial bench and a celebration of the simple pleasure of cycling. Built as part of existing cycle paths they would re-form a flat route into a simple and perfectly elegant wave form. A gentle uphill, a perfect crest and then a swoop back down, into a hollow and back up again. They would have gentle banks built up and dug out to create an elegant sculptural form similar to the Jencks landform sculptures. There would be short ones, perhaps 15m long, and others more ambitiously 100m long.

Some ‘whoops’ could be planted with beech trees so that in the early summer you would get a tunnel of startling dappled green light. Others would offer you a special view on the little summit, a glimpse of the sea or North Berwick Law. Often cycle paths are in old railway cuttings and you can’t see the broader landscape.

Each ‘whoop’ would be a short moment of pleasure to ride over, a perfect sculptural form and a memory of someone else who enjoyed the freedom and life-affirming physical exhilaration of cycling.

The first ‘whoops’ would be built in the memory of Scottish cyclists like Jocky Allen* and Jason MacIntyre**. The idea of memorial whoops would grow from there. Whoops in memory of local cyclists would reinforce over a long term the sense of local ownership of cycle paths. They would generate publicity and strengthen the importance and permanence of cycling and dedicated paths within a locality. They would also improve, enliven and enrich our cycle routes for everyone.

*Jocky Allen was elected president of the East of Scotland Cycling Association in 1986 and in 1991 was awarded its highest award for services to cycling.

**Jason MacIntyre, was a triple British & multi Scottish champion road and time trial cyclist.