

There are around 20 million bikes in Britain, but only six million of them are used regularly. That's 14 million reasons to run a Doctor Bike clinic. Many bikes aren't used regularly because they're at the back of the shed with something broken. It only needs a small fault, and the bike's in the lumber room.

A Doctor Bike can help change all that. Doctor Bike is a stall in a busy public place where mechanically-minded members of your group give bikes a free MOT, point out what's wrong for referral to a bike shop, and maybe give a quick squirt of oil to help a rusty chain turn.

It's an exciting event with plenty of bikes and people milling around, and a great chance to have members of your group giving out leaflets and posters, encouraging people to join and giving people the pro-bike propaganda on why the bike is likely to be best for them.

WHERE?

Somewhere public and busy, where people will linger and where you won't get in the way. A town square, shopping centre or precinct. The council usually owns these places, so be sure to apply to them early for permission to do Dr. Bike.

WHEN?

A Saturday 9.30 am - 3.30 pm is the best time.

PUBLICITY

Dr. Bike is a stunt to grab public attention. The media love it as well, so be sure to let them know where, when, and that it's a good photo-opportunity and try to get advance publicity. Spice it up with one of your "Doctors" in a white coat with a stethoscope! Have a leaflet raid, notify local schools and try to interest the media in advance of your Dr. Bike so that it gets plenty of advance publicity, and a good number of patients.

THE SITE

Use your common sense to pick the right spot, where you'll be prominent but not in the way. Mark off the "clinic" so that you have an area to check the bikes in, a table to put posters, flyers and leaflets on, and a secure place to keep the tools away from light-fingered people.

THE DOCTORS

Remember, this is a public relations exercise. Be friendly and helpful, and as well as your bike checkers, have people to talk to members of the public, answer questions, hand out lists of rides, meetings and HNBW '94 events. Try to have four to six present, and have drinks and butties on hand to keep the team from wilting under the rush of rattly bikes.

DOCTOR BIKE'S OPERATING KIT

Grease, oil, cloths, pumps with a variety of adaptors and basic tools to start with. These will help sort the basic problems out.

BIG JOBS

Be sensible. Doctor bike is a public relations exercise and to sort out minor glitches. You can oil rusty chains, straighten crooked saddles, pump up soft tyres, straighten a rubbing wheel, but don't get into extensive repair work or try to resurrect the dead!

Once you've finished, DO NOT tell them that the bike is in perfect working order, and make it clear that any major repairs should be done by a bike shop - your job is to spot and list these faults.

SUPPORT

The local police may be happy to run a stall alongside, postcoding bikes and giving information on theft prevention. Ask them now! Why not ask the local Health Promotion Unit to have a "Doctor Human" stall next door, doing health checks for the public. And use this opportunity to get the cycling and health message across AGAIN - five miles a day keeps the doctor away.

