



Stock is variable at bike recycling centres but never expensive



For around £100, this roadster ticks all the 'transport bike' boxes

Cycling instead of driving or using public transport can take some of the heat out of the cost of living crisis. Pedalling costs pennies per mile, as cycle commuters have long known. Now that it costs £100 to fill up an average family car with petrol, others are waking up to the savings that cycling offers. Cycling levels in England rose by 47% on weekdays for the five months to July (see cyclinguk.org/cycle-surge-england).

'On your bike' is only an option, however, if you have one in roadworthy condition. For bike owners whose machine just needs some TLC, the Big Bike Revival and the Scotland Cycle Repair Scheme can help; we'll come back to these later. As for those who don't own a bike: how much might they be able or willing to spend to get one, given the inflationary pressures in every other part of life right now? How about £100, the price of that tank of petrol?

A bike at that price has to be secondhand. You can't even buy a bicycle-shaped object from a catalogue shop for £100 these days. The least expensive 'proper' new city bike is, in my opinion, either Decathlon's City Bike Elops 100 (£199.99, decathlon.co.uk) or its 20-inch Folding Bike B'Twin 100 (also £199.99). I reviewed the folder last year when it was called the B'Twin

Oxylane 100 (cyclinguk.org/cycle-magazine/bike-test-less-famous-folding-bicycles).

A cheap secondhand bike isn't only for someone who absolutely can't spend more. Most of us are feeling the pinch and there's value in having a cheap 'hack' bike that costs next to nothing to maintain and that you can leave locked up in town without worrying much about theft or damage. If you have a son or daughter heading off to college, a cheap runaround is ideal because bike theft levels are high around universities. Or maybe you have a friend who needs a bike? Who better to help them start riding on a tiny budget than you, the local cycling expert?

SECONDHAND SOURCES

Finding a good quality secondhand bike requires a degree of luck. Even if you know what you want there's no guarantee it'll be available for a price, and in a place, that suits you.

Secondhand shops. You might find a bike at a charity shop or generic secondhand shop that isn't a derelict 'full suspension' 'mountain bike' or a child's bike, and that doesn't need money and time throwing at it to fix it up. I didn't. I did once find a rideable Raleigh Record for £11 that I converted to singlespeed. Not this time.

Facebook Marketplace. A friend of mine bought a virtually unused 'mountain bike' this way for his university-bound daughter. It cost £40. The main advantage of Facebook is that you can narrow down the search to your own town so you can go and inspect the bike before purchase. You must have a Facebook account, of course. I don't (and don't want one) so I didn't pursue this.

Cycling websites. Cycling websites that list for bikes for sale – such as the Cycling UK Forum (forum.cyclinguk.org), Singletrack (singletrackworld.com), and PinkBike (pinkbike.com) – are good sources for higher-quality secondhand bikes and parts. You seldom find sub-£100 bikes on such websites because keen cyclists tend to buy decent bikes and look after them.

eBay. There are loads of bikes on online selling sites such as eBay (ebay.co.uk) and Gumtree (gumtree.com), and it's easy to filter your searches by price and keyword so you're not trawling through endless unsuitable options. You can also narrow the search to your local(ish) area, which is crucial when you have only £100 to spend. It costs £34 to send a boxed bicycle across the country with Paisley Freight (paisleyfreight.com). That's a third of your budget! Sellers of sub-£100 bikes very rarely off this facility in any case; it will be pickup only, so the bike needs to be nearby. The second problem ▶