gleeds

Media Release

We sat down with Gleeds director, Simon Morris, and CITB head of external affairs, John Dickinson-Lilley, to discuss how they got involved, how training is going, and what it's like to ride at 55mph on a tandem bicycle.

Could you tell us a bit about the challenge and what it entails?

John Dickinson-Lilley: We will be doing 100 miles a day, travelling from Lincoln to Paris via Rotterdam, going through the UK, Netherlands, Belgium and France.

It's a particularly interesting challenge for me - I'll be on the back of a tandem as I am registered as blind. My background is alpine sprint skiing so normally I'm on the go for one to two minutes – this time I'm going for 100 miles a day!

What inspired you to take part?

Simon Morris: For me it started as a conversation with Mark Noonan from CITB, who I have known for a number of years. We were on an award judging panel together and he mentioned that he wanted to organise a 'big ride' for charity with a group from the construction industry.

Things went quiet for a few months and I thought I'd gotten away with not having to take part… until he emailed me with a detailed plan of action.

What really interested me were the two charities that he suggested we fundraise for. The first was The Anthony Nolan Trust, who I knew through being already on their donor register because of a recruitment drive they'd conducted on a site I was working on a few years ago.

The second is Disability Snowsport UK. Mark explained how John had had to give up his dream of winning gold at this year's Winter Olympics because he couldn't find a new guider who was fast enough for him after his previous one had retired.

John: Like Simon I got tricked into taking part – Mark said I've got this idea and I said "yeah yeah, sure I'll take part", assuming that it wouldn't be followed up. Rest assured I've learnt my lesson!

Could you tell us a bit more about how you've been preparing?

John: To prepare for the ride I've spent a lot of time in the gym doing weights and on the spin bikes, whilst over the last couple of weeks we've been doing a lot of preparation. Incrementally we've increased our distances, and last week we did 102 miles in the Lincoln Grand Prix Sportive event.

The big thing that I've learnt about riding a tandem is that like skiing, communication is critical, due to the varying nature of the terrain you cover. We can get up to speeds of 55mph on the bike, making communication the lynchpin of everything that we do

Finally – will you be doing the same again next year?

Simon: Don't be daft!

John: We'll see what happens next year – we may have already bored our current sources of fundraising to death!

You can follow Simon and John on their journey by following them on Twitter at @4C_4D and donate by visiting their Virgin Money Giving page.

Notes for editors