

# Press release: Cycling boss swaps office for saddle in 300-mile challenge

Phil Tyrrell's day job at Highways England involves delivering new cycle routes to make it easier for cyclists to cross motorway junctions and use major A roads.

Now he is putting his knowledge to the test by taking part in the four-day London to Paris bike ride on his 50-year-old Claude Butler Classique, complete with its original Brooks leather saddle.

Phil, from Standish near Wigan, is raising money for the Wigan and Leigh Hospice after his wife had to face cancer twice herself. He said:

I remember saving up for the bike when I was 14 or 15, using my pay from a paper round, Saturday jobs at Woolworths and the Golden Egg restaurant in Chester, and pocket money.

I was made up when I could finally afford to buy my Claude Butler, and remember using it as much as I could to and from school and also at weekends. I could never bring myself to get rid of it so it's moved house with us over the years, but had been left unused for years.

Earlier this year, I was persuaded to do the London to Paris bike ride and raise money for the Wigan and Leigh Hospice. My wife's had to recover from cancer twice so I wanted to give something back to the hospice. Realising I needed a road bike, I decided to dig Claude out from the back of the shed and get it renovated.

The bike's only got five gears but it does what I need it to and we always get to where we're going in the end. I got a local repair shop to renovate it but I asked them to keep all the scratches as that's its history – and mine.

I'm feeling a bit tense about the challenge as it's a long way, but I've been out on quite a few practice rides over the past few months and the old leather saddle is surprisingly comfortable. Hopefully I'll feel the same when I reach Paris!

Phil has been training for the challenge using some of the cycle routes he's been involved with planning as Highways England's head of cycling in the North West. The organisation has been given a special £100 million fund by the government to invest in 200 cycling schemes across England by 2021.

Recently completed projects in the region include new cycle paths through the

busy Two Mills junction near Ellesmere Port, along the A585 near Fleetwood, and near junction 21 of the M60 alongside the A663 in Oldham. Improvements have also been made to footbridges, signs and road markings across the North West.

Phil added:

We're committed to significantly improving safety across our road network for everyone, and want to provide cycling facilities that give people a genuine choice about whether to travel in their car or to get on a bike instead.

Admittedly not everyone is going to want to use their bike for a 300-mile trip to Paris, but if we can encourage more people to use their bikes for local journeys then this should also improve the flow of traffic for drivers travelling longer distances.

Phil's cycling challenge between London and Paris takes place between Wednesday 19 and Saturday 22 September. More details are available at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/PhilipTyrrell>.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.