

Network Rail colleague takes on Wales' highest road pass by bike to raise money for Children in Need

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The Wales and Western project manager has climbed some of the highest peaks in the world, and will next face the famous 'Gospel Pass' ascent for charity, on Friday 18 November.

58-year-old Mark Dix is swapping rails for trails to tackle a 50-mile-cycle in the Brecon Beacons for Children in Need.

The circular route will take him from Crickhowell to Ross-on-Wye, via the challenging Gospel Pass, and with a return trip through Talgarth and Talybont-on-Usk in Wales.

The famous pass sits at the head of the Vale of Ewyas, in the beautiful Black Mountains, and reaches 549 metres (1,801 ft) at its highest point.

This isn't the first time fitness fanatic Mark has taken on a physically gruelling fundraiser for Children in Need. In 2021, he raised more than £1,500 cycling a similar (but less challenging) route in the Brecon

Beacons. The year before, Mark cycled 120 miles from Twickenham to Bath in a single day, raising £1,000.

A former Commissioned Officer in the British Army, Mark has never shied away from physical challenges and is an enthusiastic mountaineer having taken on some of the highest peaks across the world – including Aconcagua, in the Andes, Argentina. In preparation for his next fundraiser, Mark has been conditioning himself in his garage, on his fixed-state-turbo-trainer, recently completing a virtual double ascent of the Alpe d'Huez – an iconic cycling venue in the French Alps, used in the Tour de France cycle race.

The father-of-two, from the Forest of Dean, has chosen to raise money for Children in Need as he believes that all children deserve the best start in life, to give them the best possible future.

Taking on a physical fundraiser also underscores Mark's belief in how physical challenges can help improve mental health.

Mark said: 'I'm doing what I love with a fundraising twist, for BBC Children in Need.

"Every child deserves a safe, happy and secure childhood, regardless of where their story begins. I believe that children are the future of our society, and we should all do as much as we can to invest in them."

Mark's four-hour-cycle, on Friday 18 November, will begin at 09:30am. He plans to keep his supporters and followers updated on his journey by posting videos at key sections on the route. Mark will also be assisted by a team on the ground, so that the full cycle is captured and to ensure Mark's safety.

When asked about what challenges he can expect to face on the day, Mark added: "I'm hoping the weather will be on my side. Once you complete the ascent to the highest point on the Gospel Pass, you can face extreme winds that can be tough to overcome, but it's a challenge I'm prepared for.

"I'm really looking forward to completing this one and I encourage anyone who wants to join me on the day to do so, or please donate, if you can."

Nick Millington, interim route director at Network Rail Wales and Borders said: "All of us at Network Rail are so proud of Mark for his fundraising efforts, over the years, and we would like to wish him the very best of luck for his charity cycle on Friday 18 November.

"Mark is a fantastic colleague who, next year, will be celebrating his tenth year as part of our railway family, so I would also like to congratulate him on his upcoming big work milestone."