

Becton Dickinson (BD) Tackle Epic Charity Cycle

The Mizen Head to Malin Head challenge is well known among cyclists, usually taking several days to complete.

However, Peter Ferguson from BD decided to attempt to complete it in just 24 hours. Peter, who lives in Northern Ireland, has family members with Type 1 diabetes and he currently works for medical device company, Becton Dickinson (BD), where he is the diabetes care account manager for the UK and Ireland.

Currently, 97% of its insulin pens that are distributed worldwide are manufactured in Ireland. Last year was the 50th anniversary of when BD started manufacturing in Ireland, while this year is the 100-year anniversary of the discovery of insulin. Peter wanted to undertake some sort of challenge to mark these two events. He also wanted to do it for health reasons.

"This time 18 months ago, I was 17 stone. I was driving around Ireland for my job, eating the wrong things and doing no exercise and then lockdown happened. I started worrying that I would get Type 2 diabetes. I decided to use that four to five hours that I would have

been spending in a car and do a bit of exercise and within about six months, I had lost most of the weight," he explains.

Peter is an ex-professional rugby referee, so he had been fit previously. However, he had never cycled seriously before. This did not stop him from deciding to do a charity cycle for BD's nominated UK charity, which involved cycling 30 miles every day over a onemonth period. He had always wanted to do something with Diabetes Ireland so he decided to set himself a new charity challenge.

While he would have liked to cycle around Europe, this was not possible as a result of the pandemic, so he decided to do the Mizen to Malin Head cycle, but with a twist – he hoped to complete it in 24 hours. He reached out to work colleagues in Ireland to see if anyone else would like to take part and in the end, 12 cyclists decided to give it a go.

Including the support team, almost 30 people were involved. "We completely overengineered what was going to happen on the cycle and what was going to happen with the support team. We had to consider details like how long we were going to stop for, what type of clothes to bring and what we were going to eat. As long as there is food in the body, it will keep going. The problem a lot of people have is that they just don't eat enough," he notes.

However, the one thing you cannot engineer is the weather. At the last minute, due to a change in the direction of the wind, the team decided to cycle from Malin to Mizen Head instead. Peter says he didn't really struggle with the lack of sleep, but the hardest thing for him was the cold.

"It got down to one degree and I personally wasn't prepared for it. I was prepared for everything else, but that cold really saps your energy. It didn't really start to get warm for us until about 10am

the next morning as it was quite a misty and damp morning," he recalls. While the cyclists fell just outside the 24 hours altogether, when just cycling time was taken into account (excluding food stops etc), they managed complete the cycle in 21.5 hours – a huge achievement.

"In the few days after the cycle, I was living on adrenaline, but as the week wore on I became more tired, but it wasn't a physical tiredness it was an emotional tiredness. Some of the emotions that came out after the race were unbelievable. I was delighted that people were happy afterwards," he says. At the time of going to press, the cyclists had already raised over €25,000 for Diabetes Ireland.

If you would like to donate, visit: <https://www.justgiving.com/team/bddiabetesirelandcycle>

*This article first appeared in Diabetes Ireland Autumn 2021 issue.

Peter Ferguson, BD



Members of the Mizen to Malin challenge team



Diabetes Ireland CEO, Kieran O'Leary, pictured with Peter in Mizen Head



Diabetes Ireland CEO, Kieran O'Leary, pictured with Peter in Mizen Head

Peter Ferguson (left) and other members of the Mizen to Malin challenge team pictured at Malin Head celebrating their achievement

