

Press release

Date: September 2016

Local Edinburgh man to take part in Glasgow to Edinburgh cycle in aid of Coeliac UK

Allister McKillop, 61 years old from Edinburgh, is preparing to ride in this year's Pedal for Scotland's 'The Big Belter' cycle on Sunday 11 September.

He is taking part in this gruelling 112 mile cycling event, which starts at 6.45am at Glasgow Green and finishes at the Royal Highland Centre in Ingliston, Edinburgh, to raise funds for Coeliac UK, the national charity for people with coeliac disease.

Coeliac disease is a serious autoimmune disease caused by a reaction to gluten. When gluten (a protein found in wheat, rye and barley) is eaten, damage to the gut lining occurs. There is no cure or medication for the condition; the only treatment is a lifelong, strict gluten-free diet. If someone with coeliac disease doesn't stick to a gluten-free diet, the disease can lead to other conditions such as malnutrition, osteoporosis and small bowel cancer.

1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease but only 24% of those with the condition have been diagnosed. There are an estimated half a million people in the UK who have the condition yet don't know it, and it's something the charity is trying to tackle with their ['Is it coeliac disease?'](#) campaign.

Allister who was born in Glasgow said: "I am taking part in the 'The Big Belter' cycling event to raise awareness of coeliac disease and to raise funds for Coeliac UK. As someone who was misdiagnosed with the condition for 40 years I do not want others to suffer the way I did. It really was life changing both before and after diagnosis. I cycle fairly frequently but nowhere near as far as this! I'm doing the challenge with my son, I often get lost so hopefully he will help keep me on the right route so I don't end up in Dundee! "

"I'm hoping to raise as much as possible for Coeliac UK come the big day. I am very happy to do my bit to raise awareness of coeliac disease by taking part. If it means that just one more person thinks that it's worth getting tested as a result then that would be fantastic!" continued Allister.

To help raise awareness of coeliac disease, Coeliac UK launched an online assessment tool through its 'Is it coeliac disease?' campaign to help reach the half a million people in the UK who have coeliac disease yet don't know it. For more information please visit www.isitcoeliacdisease.org.uk.

To sponsor Allister, please visit: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/AllisterMcKillop>

-ENDS-

For further information, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

- Coeliac disease is a serious illness where the body's immune system reacts to gluten found in food, making the body attack itself.
- 1 in 100 people in the UK has coeliac disease, however only 24% of these have been diagnosed and average length of diagnosis is 13 years.
- Gluten is a protein found in wheat (including spelt), rye and barley. Some people are also sensitive to oats. Obvious sources of gluten include breads, pastas, flours, cereals, cakes and biscuits. It is often used as an ingredient in many favourite foods such as fish fingers, sausages, gravies, sauces and soy sauce.
- The symptoms of coeliac disease range from mild to severe and can vary between individuals. Not everyone with coeliac disease experiences gut related symptoms; any area of the body can be affected.
- Symptoms can include bloating, abdominal pain, nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, wind, tiredness, anaemia, headaches, mouth ulcers, repeated miscarriages, weight loss (but not in all cases), skin problems, depression, joint or bone pain and nerve problems.
- Around 12,000 newly diagnosed people are joining Coeliac UK every year. For further details on membership please call the Helpline on 0333 332 2033. Further information can be found at www.coeliac.org.uk/join
- The UK's first online assessment for coeliac disease was launched by the Charity in 2015 and can be found at www.isitcoeliacdisease.org.uk