

'The toughest thing I ever did in my life'

Dr David Curtis was joined by restaurateur James O'Connor on an epic six-day challenge for Cycle Against Suicide

CILLIAN BOGGAN

One of Wexford's most popular GPs has reflected on his recent cycle across Portugal in the searing heat which raised nearly €5,000 for Cycle Against Suicide.

Dr David Curtis travelled to Portugal alongside his friend and well-known restaurateur James O'Connor as part of the charity's N2: end-to-end Portugal Challenge, alongside a team of cyclists from across the country to support the work the organisation are doing within families, schools, communities and workplaces. Dr Curtis described the trip as "the toughest" thing he has ever done.

Cycle Against Suicide is an awareness charity that makes a valuable contribution to the public education of mental health by changing the narrative surrounding suicide. When an individual is vulnerable enough to consider taking their own life, silence is read as indifference.

The charity says the cycle "underrpins targeted initiatives fo-

cused on men's mental health, where the need remains critical" and by taking part in the challenge the cyclists are helping the charity empower individuals with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to face mental health challenges.

"There were about 96 people taking part," Dr Curtis said. "We started right up in the north of Portugal on the Spanish border and cycled all the way down to Faro. We were doing roughly 130 to 140 kilometres every day over six days, with a huge amount of climbing. For the first few days I couldn't get over how hilly Portugal is. I had this idea of Portugal being somewhat flat, but it's not. There were huge climbs the whole way.

"It was the toughest thing I ever did in my life. It was surprisingly tough. To go out six days in a row and be climbing constantly was hard. Mount Leinster is about 700 metres, and on an average day we were doing 1,600 or 1,700 metres of climbing."

It wasn't only a question of



Dr David Curtis and James O'Connor.

batting the terrain, but the heat. While they were there, something of a heat wave struck. On one occasion, the temperature went up to 45 degrees.

"One day it was so hot that everybody got off their bikes and stood in the shadow of the ambulance that was following us. That's how intense it was."

The group of 96 were divided into three groups who set off at different times depending on what speed they wanted to go at. Spending so many hours out on the road, meant there was an enhanced importance attached to friendship and camaraderie.

"James is a good guy. Most evenings we would go and have supper together. It was so warm that we were getting up very early every morning and going to bed by ten o'clock at the latest. It was great having another Wexford man there and somebody to share the experience with."

"There were people from literally everywhere, from Kerry to Derry. There were retired Gardaí, paramedics, cyclists and all sorts of interesting people. You'd spend hours talking on the bike and at the end of the week you'd have formed real friendships."

Those friendships paved the way for honest conversations, and a regular reminder of why they were doing what they were doing.

"Every night there was a talk about the effects of suicide on families. One evening there was a counsellor, another evening a person who had been at risk of suicide but got help, and another evening somebody whose brother had died by suicide. The whole idea was to focus on young people, particularly young men,

and encourage them to seek help when they need it."

Men's health week is taking place from June 15 until June 21 and encourages boys and men to make small, manageable changes to improve their physical and mental health. Dr Curtis began practising medicine back in the 1980s. He says not only society's approach, but the general medical approach to the latter has changed beyond recognition.

The correlation between exercise and the positive impact it can have on one's mental health is by this point, well established. And it is something that has been of benefit to Dr Curtis, a lifelong proponent of it.

"The reason why I cycle is for mental health. It helps me deal with the stress of work and burn off all the adrenaline that builds up. There is no way I could have coped with my life without getting some exercise in, whether it was cycling or something else. I think we all need something that helps us deal with stress."

As it happens, a decade ago, Wexford was transformed into a sea of orange as thousands of cyclists swept in and out of the town as part of Cycle Against Suicide 2016. For the charity, the battle continues as Dr Curtis thanked Philip Cassidy and Mel Sutcliffe for their support of the fundraising effort.



An Roinn Aeráide,
Fuinnimh agus Comhshaoil
Department of Climate,
Energy and the Environment

PUBLIC NOTICE

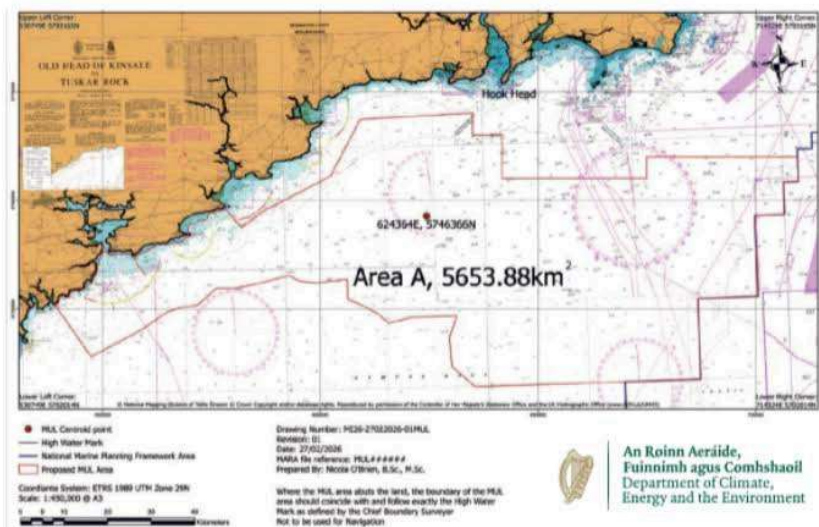
THE MARITIME AREA PLANNING ACT 2021 AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (BIRDS AND NATURAL HABITATS) REGULATIONS 2011

INVITATION FOR PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS ON AN APPLICATION FOR A MARITIME USAGE LICENCE AND AN APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Department of Climate, Energy and Environment has submitted an application to the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority ("MARA") for a maritime usage licence under Section 117 of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 to undertake geophysical, geotechnical, metocean and biological surveys in the South Coast DMAP to inform future offshore renewable energy development. The duration requested in the licence application is for a period of 5 years.

A related Natura Impact Statement has been submitted with the above licence application. The licence application and the Natura Impact Statement are available for inspection on MARA's website <https://www.maritimeregulator.ie/> application/mul260021 and at the following address by appointment - Maritime Area Regulatory Authority, 2nd Floor, Menapia House, Drinagh Business Park, Drinagh, Wexford, Y35 RF29.

Members of the public who wish to make a submission in writing to MARA on the licence application and the Natura Impact Statement may do so quoting MUL260021 by:



Email: licence@mara.gov.ie

OR

Post: Maritime Usage Licensing,
Maritime Area Regulatory Authority,
2nd Floor, Menapia House,
Drinagh Business Park, Drinagh,
Wexford, Y35 RF29.

The closing date and time for a written submission to be received by MARA is 17.30 on 23/07/2026.

MARA will then, as soon as practicable, carry out the appropriate assessment determination in accordance with Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. After the determination, MARA will either grant, part grant or refuse the licence application.

Dated this Wednesday 24 June, 2026.

Signed: Representative of Department of Climate, Energy and Environment