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# The Envision Cycling Challenge 2024

Thursday 26 – Sunday 29 September

# Overview

**Who:**
At Envision we empower young people from less-advantaged backgrounds, who are often underrepresented in the world of work, to develop the essential skills and confidence proven to support their education, employment and well-being.

**What:**
This is a 3-day charity bike ride through the Garden of England and South Downs National Park from **Maidstone** to **Tunbridge Wells** via the stunning Kent and Sussex coasts and countryside. It's a chance to raise money for a great cause, challenge yourself, meet new like- minded, interesting people and of course, have fun!

**When:**
Thursday 26th – Sunday 29th September 2024

**Why:**
This event is our main fundraising event of the year and will enable us to reach and empower more young people.

**How:**
To sign up, email **ella.howard@envision.org.uk** – info **here**

# What is the Envision Cycling Challenge?

2024 will be the seventh edition of this popular cycling event! This year's event will be organised by our wonderful committee: **Alan Livsey, Chris Stephenson, Clive Meek and Natalie Baylis.**

The aim of the Envision Cycling Challenge is for riders to get fit, take on a personal challenge, make friends, have fun – and in the process raise money for Envision.

Last year the ride went from Swansea to Henley and you can see the highlights here.

This year we will again do a 3-day bike ride but will be tackling a new route through Kent and Sussex. We are starting on the eastern section of the North Downs, close to the Medway and will be taking in the North Kent coast, Canterbury, the Cinque Ports, Romney Marsh, Eastbourne and the South Downs. The grand finish will be in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

# Who are Envision?

We believe a young person's background mustn't determine their future. We want to create a society where young people from less-advantaged backgrounds have an equal opportunity to build the essential skills and confidence needed to succeed in later life as their more privileged peers.

We partner each team of young people, led by an Envision Programme Coordinator, with a team of mentors from a local business to design and deliver a social action project that makes a positive change in their school or college community.

Working towards their project goals and key milestones, young people build the essential skills and confidence proven to support their education, employment and well-being.

Click **here** to see some of the work we do!

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# The Route

## What is the route?

On our first evening (**Thursday 26th September**) we will stay at Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel**.** We will leave bright and early on Friday morning after an early breakfast and a safety briefing.

**Day 1**

Day 1 starts out on the edge of the Kentish North Downs, we traverse the ridge and descend into Faversham**.** We then make our way along the north coast through several seaside towns including Whitstable, Margate & Broadstairs before turning inland for the first over-night stop in historic **Canterbury**

**Day 2**

Day 2 begins with us heading due south across beautiful Kentish downland to Dover. We then turn west for a coastal trip that includes Folkstone, Hythe, Rye and Hastings. The day two over-night is in **Eastbourne**, nestling below scenic Beachy Head**.**

**Day 3**

Day 3 gives us the opportunity to enjoy a little of the South Downs National Park, including Ditchling Beacon (the agreeable way!) plus Ashdown Forest and a grand finale in **Royal Tunbridge Wells**. Here we will have a big celebration with friends, family and the Envision Team!

## How long is the ride and how hilly are we talking?

The route will be about **220 miles.** As with any Envision ride there will be a few challenging hills to overcome, although rather less elevation than in previous editions of the challenge. We needed to retain a few though to make it easier to raise sponsorship!

But don't worry, you can take it at your own pace. We always have a range of abilities. You can find your people and ride with them. The average anticipated elevation for each day is around 750m.

**This is an early draft of the route map. Please note that revisions are inevitable!**

# What are the logistics?

## How will I get to Maidstone and back from Tunbridge Wells?

**To Maidstone:**

- As long as you can get your bike to Fulham on (or before) the night of **Wednesday 25th September**, we will take it to the start point by van.
- We will be travelling by train from London to Maidstone, you are of course very welcome to make your own way there if the travel arrangements do not work for you.

**Back from Tunbridge Wells:**

- You will need to make your own way back from Tunbridge Wells, however we can take any bikes and bags back to London to be collected from Fulham in the following days.

## Where will I be staying?

**Night 1** – **Maidstone** – Great Danes Hotel (Mercure Maidstone Great Danes Hotel, Kent)

**Night 2** – **Canterbury** – The Fallstaff Hotel ( (thefalstaffincanterbury.com)

**Night 3** – **Eastbourne** – The Lansdowne Hotel( (lansdowne-hotel.co.uk))

We will be doing route and hotel recces well in advance. Whilst the accommodation may not be the ultimate in luxury, it will be comfortable. The hotel in Maidstone has a pool and the hotel in Eastbourne is on the beach so feel free to bring swimming gear!

## What about food?

All meals are included in the price - dinner and breakfast will either be at the hotels or a nearby restaurant be at the hotels, and packed lunches and snacks will be provided on route.

The support van will be used to take your bags between the hotels where we are staying and to the finishing line.

We will also have support vehicles which will provide packed lunches and copious refreshment stops. We can promise you won't go hungry!

# The Fundraising

## How much do you expect me to fundraise?

This is Envision's main fundraising and promotional event of the year and so we are looking for riders who will commit not just to riding but also to raising money pro-actively from family, friends, colleagues and employers.

We are looking for riders who will commit to trying to raise a minimum of **£1,000** (on top of the registration fee which we hope riders will pay personally). On average riders in the 2 previous rides have raised between **£3,500 and £4,000**. The brilliant team at Envision will provide materials and support to help you with your fundraising.

We understand that some people who will want to ride will prefer to make a personal donation. We welcome riders on this basis, but we hope they will consider a donation of more than **£1,000** as we do not then get the benefits of increased awareness of Envision and our work. Please contact Ella Howard if you would like to ride on this basis and we will be very happy to discuss this with you.

## The impact of the ride

In each of the previous 6 years we have raised over **£100,000!** This has allowed us to give more young people the opportunity to do the potentially life-changing Envision Programme. We would love to get close to this in 2024, particularly as the need for our work is greater than ever.

# Carlito's Story

The journey began when Carlito and his 11 teammates from his year group, worked together to decide how they were going to make a positive difference in their school. After brainstorming all the social issues they were most passionate about, Carlito suggested that the team do something that brought all their ideas together. In that moment, the Student Government Panel was born, which he described as "like the student council, but incorporates student voice into it even more".

Carlito feels that whatever path he takes in the future, the essential skills he has gained will help in both his friendships and his work. Whilst his path through life is undetermined at this stage, Carlito knows that whatever he does, he wants it to be something that helps people. Reflecting on this rare opportunity to carry out a project which does just that, Carlito said that the Envision Programme was **"the first time, but hopefully not the last".**

# Signing up

## How much will it cost me to take part?

**The registration fee is:**

- **£450pp** for double or twin accommodation
- **£650pp** for single accommodation

*Plus, we are offering a 50% discount for under 30s (twin room rate only, for the first 6 under-30s to signup),.*

This fee covers all the costs of the event, meaning all sponsorship goes directly to benefit Envision's work. More specifically it includes:

- Accommodation
- All meals - breakfast, packed lunches, copious snacks and a sit-down dinner each night
- The cost of transport from London if you travel with us to Maidstone.
- The costs of the van which will pick up bikes from Fulham on Wednesday 25th September, take them to the start, and move bags between overnight stops.

**Only the following is not included:**

- Personal cycling insurance.
- Drinks over lunch and dinner.

## I'm in! How do I sign up?

Please email ella.howard@envision.org.uk to confirm your participation. Places will be filled on a first-come, first served basis on payment either of the registration fee or of a deposit of **£100**.

Final registration fee must be paid by **1st August.**

Payments should be made by bank transfer to The Cooperative Bank
Sort Code 08-92-99 / Account Name Envision / A/c No 65075999 /
Reference BIKE and your surname.

Paid rider numbers are strictly limited to 40.

Your deposit or registration fee is fully refundable in the event we are not able to proceed with the ride for any reason. However, we are not able to offer a refund on your deposit if you are no longer able to take part in the ride.

# FAQs

## Is this a big charity bike ride with lots of participants and marshals?

No – that isn't Envision's style at all. We put a lot of preparation into the ride, taking every step we can to ensure the ride is both safe and fun.

This will include a ride-through of the entire route shortly before the main ride; fully preparing electronic route maps (GPX files) which you can follow via personal Sat-Nav (strongly recommended); a Health and Safety briefing before the ride and ahead of each day and recruiting experienced riders who can help with navigation and simple mechanical issues.

As in previous years this is still deliberately a "boutique ride", with a maximum of 40 paying riders (on top of Envision staff etc.) and you will need to use your initiative: there won't be physical route signs or a group of marshals at every turn. But there's no need to worry – in previous years the peloton has naturally split into 3 or 4 smaller groups, who have worked together to follow the route and then basked in the Strava Kudos!

## Will I get a chance to see Envision's work and meet the Envision Team?

Yes absolutely. There will be lots of opportunities. Every year Envision graduates and/or employees have taken part in the ride – this typifies the commitment of our young people and the Envision team. You will be encouraged to attend some student events in the spring too, to aid your understanding of Envision and kickstart your fundraising and cycling momentum!

## I've never done anything like this before. How fit do I need to be?

One of the great things about the previous rides has been the mix of riders: young and old, male and female, experienced cyclists and relative beginners. We welcome experienced cyclists, but for many of the participants the ride was the first serious cycling endurance challenge they had done. We love converting people to cycling!

Any bike ride of 200-250 miles in 3 days requires you to be reasonably fit, but as long as you're healthy and most importantly train in advance you should be absolutely fine. One of the best ways of training, and one of the most popular and distinctive features of the ride, is the practice rides which we will organise over the spring and summer in and around London

These rides are an opportunity to get hours in the saddle, meet other people and learn more about Envision. We encourage riders to take part in at least one practice ride if possible.

## Will the ride be on busy, crowded roads?

No – the exact opposite! We stay well clear of busy roads wherever possible. Most of the route will be on minor roads and even off-road cycle paths in places. Our amazing route planner Clive Meek is an expert at finding quiet, cycle-friendly roads.

# Still unsure?

## Check out this feedback from previous riders....

The cycling is important, but we like to think this is more than just another charity bike ride!

**This event is a tremendous experience for those taking part, and not only from the satisfaction of helping the young people involved in the charity.**

**It requires commitment, belief in yourself, good humour and large doses of three of Envision's key skills: communication, determination and teamwork. It's all well-worth the effort!**

Feedback from regular rider

**A great group of people both on the ride and supporting throughout, with a challenging route through lovely countryside.**

**Great sense of achievement with the fundraising and really good organisation and communication from the Envision team.**

Feedback from a new rider

**If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Ella Howard.**


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**Working in partnership with:**

Envision is a register charity number 1095328 based at
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