

NEWS RELEASE

Gary Barlow and original Calendar Girls lead celebrity support for leukaemia patient's epic charity cycling challenge

A man living with blood cancer is to cycle from Amsterdam to Grassington – after being inspired by the [WI Calendar Girls](#) and the Gary Barlow & Tim Firth musical about their story.

Paul Carless, 50, was diagnosed with Chronic Myeloid Leukaemia (CML) in 2014. He was soon to meet the Calendar Girls, who encouraged him to get involved with the blood cancer research charity, Bloodwise. Since diagnosis he has undertaken a series of fundraising challenges with his friend Tom Stockwell, 41,.

With the full support of Gary Barlow, Tim Firth and the original Calendar Girls, the pair will set off from Amsterdam on the 10th of July and cycle 368 miles over five days to reach the Yorkshire Dales National Park Centre in Grassington arriving at around 3pm on the 14th of July. There will be a short ceremony at the Centre, followed by tea and cake at Church House, Main Street with the Calendar Girls. All welcome!

Paul Carless said: "I was involved with the Calendar Girls West End musical selling merchandise and holding collecting buckets after the performances. One of the lyrics from the opening song of the show is about a flower truck that drove 'from Amsterdam to Yorkshire...'. That inspired this year's challenge.

"We try to raise funds for Bloodwise to support its research into finding cures for all blood cancers, to raise awareness of blood cancer and to prove that it's possible to live life as fully as possible despite having cancer. This challenge also salutes the Calendar Girls for inspiring me; and is a way of saying thanks for everything they have done for blood cancer patients like me."

Gary Barlow and Tim Firth say: "Here's a shout out to Paul for his intrepid venture, cycling from Amsterdam to Yorkshire, inspired by the opening song of our musical CALENDAR GIRLS. Let's just hope he doesn't take any inspiration from further on in the song and try to do it loaded with flowers. In fact let's hope he doesn't take any inspiration from anywhere further on in the show and try to do it naked.

All our best wishes– we hope to see him over a fundraising bucket very soon."

The finish line was suggested by the original Calendar Girl, Angela Baker; her late husband, John Baker, was a Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority officer. His death in July 1998 from blood cancer led to the famous Women's Institute calendar.

Angela says: "The Calendar Girls met Paul just after he had been diagnosed with his blood cancer. He said we had inspired him to raise much needed funds for Bloodwise.

“Paul has been very dedicated in doing just that. He is an Ambassador for Bloodwise and determined to give back to the Charity, whose research has helped him overcome his illness.

“We wish Paul and Tom well in this latest fund raising venture. We will be there to welcome their safe return when they arrive at the Yorkshire Dales National Park Office in Grassington with a cup of tea and a piece of Victoria sponge cake in true WI fashion!!”

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Chairman, Carl Lis, adds: “Angela Baker and the Calendar Girls are a fundraising phenomenon. It is amazing that twenty years after the sad death of John Baker, they are still inspiring people to raise funds to help beat blood cancer. Thank you to Paul Carless and Tom Stockwell for undertaking this challenge and for ending it so appropriately at the National Park offices where John used to work. I wish them a good and safe ride and would urge people to donate to what is a truly good cause.”

The full story of ‘Amsterdam to Yorkshire – Cycling to Beat Blood cancer’, including information on how to donate, can be found here www.amsterdamtoyorkshire.com & <https://www.justgiving.com/companyteams/amsterdamtoyorkshire>

Paul and Tom have also gained support from a host of celebrities, including Dame Julie Walters – who starred in the Calendar Girls film - and Fern Britton, who will feature in the forthcoming musical. Dame Julie Walters: *“Heard about your bike ride and sending you loads of strength and stamina vibes. Definitely with you in spirit, just haven’t got the thighs to be there in person! Good on ya!”*

Fern Britton: *“Dear Tom and Paul, Your continuing work with Bloodwise is inspiring and simply bloody good stuff! I am delighted to send you all my love and support and wish you safe travels.
All love Fern”*

Jess Phillips MP: *“Well done Paul! Its actions of people like you that mean lifesaving research and medicine can happen and that my Dad is still able to play with his grandchildren and can look forward to a long happy life.”*

Ciarán Hinds: *“Go Paul! Go Tom! On yer bikes for BLOODWISE. Such a great cause. Be strong. Crack On. Good luck! Ciarán Hinds”*

Joanna Riding: *“Dear Paul and Tom, As the song goes...“There’s no Mount Kilimanjaro you can show me that compares”....so I’m pretty sure Amsterdam to Yorkshire won’t faze you! Wishing you joy and laughter on your wonderful and remarkable adventure. May the sunshine and the wind be behind you. We are! With love, Joanna Riding”*

ENDS

Notes to Editors

For further information, please contact **Paul Carless** on **07951 479889** or paul_carless@hotmail.com

Image 1: "On the stone bridge in Linton in Craven in the Yorkshire Dales NP - Tom Stockwell, Paul Carless, Beryl Bamford, Angela Baker, Tricia Stewart, Ros Fawcett, Christine Clancy and Lynda Logan"

Image 2: "Road from Burnsall in the Yorkshire Dales National Park – Tom Stockwell and Paul Carless"

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About Bloodwise

Bloodwise is the UK's specialist blood cancer charity dedicated to improving the lives of patients. Around 39,000 people of all ages, from children to adults, are diagnosed with blood cancers and related disorders every year in the UK. It is a complex disease area made up of over 100 individual diseases, including leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma. Together, blood cancers are the fifth most common form of cancer and the third largest cause of cancer death in the UK.