

You know when someone rings you up, you're a bit distracted so you find yourself saying yes to something before you've perhaps considered all the pros and cons of what it is they are asking you to do...well read on!

It was Monday morning. I had just arrived in Parliament after a pretty awful weekend when a Labour MP rang the office and said he needed a Tory to join him and a Liberal on a cross-party challenge. Not an unusual request as there is actually more consensual working than is often thought. It was then that I was asked to join 6 injured soldiers on an expedition to climb the third highest active volcano in the world as part of the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes Battle Back scheme.

Battle Back is an adaptive sport and adventurous training programme for wounded, injured and sick personnel from across the Armed Forces, including mobilised reservists. It is MOD-led but delivered, funded and organised in partnership with Help for Heroes, The Royal British Legion and other service charities.

During Whitson the first expedition will be launched from The Royal British Legions Battle Back Centre at Lilleshall to the summit of Cotopaxi, an active volcano 5897m above sea level in Ecuador. The main aim of the expedition will be to give a group of serving and new veteran soldiers, who have recently passed through the Centre, the opportunity to take part in an expedition to enhance their recovery and future development and highlight and support Battle Back, in particular the need for more awareness and support for those injured in conflict.

I said yes straight away. I may have said a few other words later on when it actually hit me what I have signed up to do. However, whatever the challenge of getting fit and putting on some weight for me will be, it is nothing compared to the physical and mental health challenges these guys have gone through. I am deeply honoured to have been asked...although I wish I hadn't googled what happens if you fall into a volcano.