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## JOHN AIMS TO JOIN SOUTH POLE ELITE

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11:00 - 22 August 2006

A westcountry man is aiming to become one of just eight people to reach the South Pole alone and unsupported. John Wilton-Davies, pictured, has already invested £70,000 on training and equipment for the expedition, which is due to start in November. The self-employed business consultant, who lives with his wife and two children in Clyst Honiton, Devon, will carry 140kg of supplies behind him on a sledge during the expedition, which is expected to take up to three months.

Mr Wilton-Davies said: "I'm 44, married, with two young children. I guess it is mid-life crisis time. I have been a fairly fit guy most of my life and I got to the point where I thought if I don't do something like this now, things will start wearing out."

Fewer than 200 people have reached the South Pole - and most have travelled in teams or relied on dogs, kites or powered vehicles to get there. Solo adventurers are few and far between - and even fewer make it all the way.

Mr Wilton-Davies has been training in Spitsbergen and Greenland, both in the Arctic Circle, to prepare himself for the conditions. Temperatures have dropped to minus one degree Celsius, but it is nothing compared to the extreme cold he will be up against in the Antarctic, where temperatures are an average -25C and at times can plunge as low as -40C.

Mr Wilton-Davies hopes to cover the 700 miles at up to 15 miles a day by walking 12 hours at a time. He will pull his sledge behind him with his equipment on board, including food, shelter, state-of-the-art satellite communication equipment and enough fuel to spend four or five hours a day thawing ice and snow to make water.

Meanwhile, his 34-year-old wife, Michele,

who works for Christows Stockbrokers in Dix's Field, Exeter, will look after the couple's children, Zak, three, and Sam, one.

She said: "I realised he would be away for two or three months, but hadn't really taken into account the amount of training. There are stages where I am very supportive and times when I'm a bit fed up with the whole thing.

"I think he'll cope with it physically, but the biggest problem will be the mental difficulties of being on his own for that amount of time."

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