

Personal statement from Ken Hames

Thank you for signing up to the Ben Nevis Challenge which I promise will be one of the most memorable experiences of your life!

Many of you will be familiar with the Beyond Boundaries television series where I led groups of disabled people on expeditions across the globe, trekking through some of the world's toughest terrain.

I wanted to show that adventure is for everyone and that disabled people should be given the same opportunities to fulfil challenging personal goals.

I witnessed on the expeditions how disability was no bar to achievement.

In the end it was always personal qualities such as emotional intelligence, the right motivation and sheer grit and determination that enabled people to achieve their goal. The participants demonstrated their ability time and time again to form a high performance team quickly and effectively.

The success of Beyond Boundaries 3 inspired both Philip Rodney - Chair of Scottish law firm Burness (which is kindly sponsoring the Ken Nevis challenge) – and I to create a new event.

I wanted to take the Beyond Boundaries theme a step further by creating the ultimate challenge where disabled and non-disabled people work together to achieve a shared goal.

We teamed up with two of the UK's leading disability charities - Scope and Capability Scotland – for the Ben Nevis challenge which will be the first event to scale Ben Nevis led by disabled people using wheelchairs.

I have witnessed the social isolation often experienced by disabled people. Many face substantial barriers such as inaccessible public transport or inadequate social care, which prevent them from even leaving their home never mind climbing a mountain.

However, there is a deep lack of public awareness about these barriers. Disabled people are often invisible in our society – whether in people's everyday lives or in the media. Indeed there are many non-disabled people who do not even know someone who is disabled.

I believe passionately that disabled people must have the same opportunities as everyone else in all areas of their lives if they are to achieve equality. Taking part in a challenge of this kind is just one of those opportunities. It also presents a very real way for non-disabled people to actively engage in the struggle for disabled people's equality.

Everyone – disabled or non-disabled - has strengths and weaknesses which can sometimes prevent them reaching their full potential. But I have seen how these can be overcome through good team work – where the qualities of a group of individuals who are gifted in very different ways are combined and people work together to overcome obstacles and achieve a shared goal.

This inclusivity lies at the heart of the Ben Nevis Challenge. It will be a 'partnership of abilities' as teams compete to reach the summit in the fastest time.

It will be tough, exhilarating and will present a tremendous opportunity for personal growth as everyone works together to achieve this amazing collective goal.

To all of you who take part in this event I can promise that the increased motivation and confidence following your achievement of it will last long after the event itself, and indeed will impact on many other areas of your lives.

As well as challenging you physically, I would like this event to challenge your expectations about what you can achieve.

Finally, I hope that it will encourage you to support the work of Scope and Capability Scotland and champion the rights of disabled people in the future.

Remember 'ability, not disability'.

Ken Hames