

Mike Crockart MP dons blindfold to back Guide Dogs campaign



Edinburgh's Liberal Democrat MP, Mike Crockart, today (29/11/2013) experienced the challenges facing blind and partially sighted people on Edinburgh Streets.

Mike donned a blindfold to walk with trainee guide dog Bracken from Guide Dogs' Corstorphine base to his constituency office on St John's Road. During the walk, Mike faced the problems regularly presented to people who are blind or partially sighted – including A-boards, street clutter, and cars parked on pavements.

Commenting on the walk Mike said: "We walked along a very demanding road and guide dog Bracken did fantastically well, but the blindfold walk brought home the difficulties presented by A-boards and street clutter. We walked along some narrow roads and enclosed, busy spaces, and the blindfold walk also brought home how brilliantly the dogs work and how much a guide dog owner has to put their complete faith in them."

The walk was part of a move to back Guide Dogs Streets Ahead campaign which highlights some of key obstacles that people have to overcome every day. The obstacles present a particular problem for people who are blind and partially sighted.

Guide dogs are trained to avoid obstacles and take the most direct route when assisting their owners. Unfortunately this can result in an owner being led into a road to avoid such clutter, potentially putting both them and their dog into the path of oncoming traffic.

Equally, long cane users find the slalom created by randomly placed obstacles – such as shop advertising boards – disorientating and anecdotes of injuries sustained from collisions with such items are unfortunately all too frequent.

The blindfold walk also highlighted the importance of Guide Dogs Safe and Sound campaign urging mandatory audio on electric vehicles.

Electric, Hybrid and quiet combustion engine cars are making today's vehicles quieter, posing a serious risk to blind and partially sighted pedestrians.

Mike said: "Judging when it was safe to cross the road was very difficult because of so much noise around. But I would be far more worried if there was a vehicle coming towards me at speed that didn't make any noise at all."

Learn about Guide Dogs campaigns by visiting www.guidedogsscotland.org.uk