

World Parkinson's Day – raising awareness is key

Today buildings all over Scotland will light up to signify that it is World Parkinson's Day.



But although we all know the name, it seems that few of us have a real understanding of the condition.

More than half of those with Parkinson's have avoided social situations because of poor public understanding.

The condition affects 12,400 people in Scotland ranking it second only behind Alzheimers as a neuroprogressive condition.

A new survey released today shows that low levels of public understanding lead to difficulties for those who live with it.

83% said they had been laughed at or been accused of being drunk

58% said they had cancelled social situations to avoid embarrassment

33% said that their less expressive facial expressions had been interpreted as unfriendly whereas it is an effect of

Parkinson's

20% said their imbalance had been misinterpreted as drunkenness.

Parkinson's UK Scotland is using today to launch a campaign showing the reality of life with Parkinson's.



David Wilson

David Wilson from Glasgow has been living with Parkinson's for six years. David says: "Most people are understanding and supportive when my symptoms become obvious.

"Unfortunately, there are some people who react negatively and this can be annoying as well as making things more difficult for me. I use a stick, not just to help me balance, but as a signal to others that I have a disability. It can be difficult and frustrating when people expect me to give way on stairs and escalators when I need to be able to use the handrail.

"My symptoms mean that my movements can be involuntary and

unco-ordinated and it can be embarrassing when people stop and stare. Recently a passing cyclist shouted at me and accused me of having had too much to drink.

“I travel a lot by bus and life is much easier when the driver is disability aware and considerate. Sadly, that’s not always the case. You can get thrown around when the bus moves off before you’ve had the chance to sit down. The same is true when trying to get off. One driver recently would not stop when I remained seated but ringing the bell taking me three stops past my destination.

“I know that these issues really put some people off going out and about. But I refuse to give in to the challenge of other people’s inconsiderate behaviour. I think that these negative responses reflect a lack of understanding about Parkinson’s which is why these information and awareness initiatives are so important. Thankfully most folks are considerate.”



Annie Macleod

Annie Macleod, Director of Parkinson’s UK Scotland, says: “The perception that Parkinson’s is an inevitable part of growing old and is just a bit of shakiness couldn’t be wider of the

mark. Parkinson's can be brutal and has more than 40 recognised symptoms. It affects people of all ages, and typically has a massive impact on every aspect of someone's life.

“To help shift this perception we are launching our biggest ever awareness campaign to highlight just how serious the condition is. We're delighted that so many places will be showing their support for the Parkinson's community by lighting in blue for World Parkinson's Day. Whether a national landmark or local church – we thank them all for their support. People with Parkinson's and their families often feel isolated, so it means a lot to the community to know that people care and are aware of the condition.”

To see which venues are lighting up see the interactive map at www.parkinsons.org.uk/scotland



Maclellan Castle Kircudbright will feature art by Sir Billy Connolly who has Parkinson's

Annie continued: "We need everyone to recognise Parkinson's as the serious health condition it is, and the major impact it has on everyday life so that people with Parkinson's do not continue to experience such appalling misunderstanding of their symptoms. Everyone in Scotland has a role to play in developing understanding and positive public attitudes towards people affected by Parkinson's and I urge everyone to visit our website to engage with our campaign Parkinson's Is."

Parkinson's UK has today launched its Parkinson's Is campaign, which highlights how the condition is far more than just a tremor, and the often-brutal reality of living with it. Find out more at: www.parkinsons.org.uk/parkinsons-is

Other venues include: Balmoral Hotel, Edinburgh; Beacon Arts Centre, Greenock; BT Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh; Caird Hall, Dundee; Covesea Skerries Lighthouse, Lossiemouth; Edinburgh International Conference Centre; Falkirk Wheel; Hampden Park, Glasgow; Jenners, Edinburgh; Lews Castle, Stornoway; Mareel Arts Centre, Lerwick; McCaig's Tower, Oban; Neptune's Staircase, Fort William; Ness Bridge, Inverness; New Lanark; Princes Square, Glasgow; Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen; Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh; Scone Palace, Perth; St Andrew's House, Edinburgh; St Salvador's Chapel, St Andrews; Titan Crane, Clydebank; Victoria Quay, Edinburgh; Wallace Tower, Ayr.