

# West Lothian entrepreneur prepares for Kilimanjaro climb by walking Pentlands

A West Lothian entrepreneur has been getting ready to scale the world's highest free-standing mountain – by walking the Pentland Hills.

Broxburn businessman John Keogh, who has provided more than 300 all-weather coats free of charge to rough sleepers across the country, is planning to climb Mount Kilimanjaro.

Mr Keogh, who is in his mid-Sixties, has five months to get fit enough to tackle a trek that will take him 19,000 ft up the dormant volcano in Tanzania.

And tackling one of the highest peaks in Africa will be a test of resilience not only for him but for the changing robe coat which can convert into a sleeping bag.

“If the coat can work on the extremes of Kilimanjaro, it can work anywhere,” he said this week.

John has been fund raising for The Outsider since he started the Community Interest Company two years ago.

The changing robe coats are hand-made in Scotland and sold to outdoor enthusiasts, while all net-profits from the sale go into the manufacture of the sleeping-coats to be distributed free of charge to those who live on the streets of towns and cities around the country.

Having raised money through previous sleep out events however, he is now stepping up his efforts, with Kilimanjaro, on the northern border of Tanzania.

After a day training in the Pentlands, he told the Local Democracy Reporting Service. "It's a massive challenge for me but it's not as big a challenge as rough sleepers face every day of their lives.

"My climb is a choice, their's isn't. I'm up in the Pentlands, and I'll come down from the hills to safety and warmth. Rough sleepers don't.

"The sleeping coat is not a solution, but it is a way to survive another night. Rough sleepers climb a mountain every day. let's wrap them in warmth and humanity, not judgement."

As well as fund-raising, John is undertaking the grueling climb to raise awareness of the issue of rough sleeping, which he believes is a forgotten blight on society.

John has already spoken about the Outsider coat at local schools and at cultural, business and environmental events.

The success of the coats has prompted John to look at the potential to develop other types of low-cost clothing which is of practical use to outdoor enthusiasts but also of potentially lifesaving benefit to those who live on the streets.

The Kilimanjaro climb is not technically as challenging as the Himalayas or Andes, but the high elevation, low temperature and winds can make the peak a difficult trek even for seasoned climbers.

The Outsider has supplied coats to the City of Edinburgh council and works with charities around the country distributing the sleeping bag coats.

You can find out more about the work of the The Outsider

at [www.theoutsider.co.uk](http://www.theoutsider.co.uk)

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter