

**PRESS RELEASE**

**NOVEMBER 2009**



equality • choice • control

## **LOCAL CAMPAIGNER'S CRUSADE GOES FROM PINT TO PARLIAMENT SIZE**

A local disabled campaigner lobbying to improve the accessibility of Edinburgh's pubs will see his facebook campaign have a national impact when it is debated in Parliament tomorrow afternoon.

Mark Cooper was inspired to launch his 'Barred!' campaign in February after visiting a pub in Edinburgh with disabled access, but no disabled toilet – meaning he was forced to leave in the middle of his drink to go 200 yards up the road to another pub just to use the toilet.

Initially aiming to seek a local resolution, Mark launched a facebook site in order to present a petition to Edinburgh City Council asking them to access audit pubs and clubs around the city and to tell the public which premises were 'actually' wheelchair accessible. The site attracted over 700 members in its first week.

Mark said: "Facebook connected me to a world where a full and varied social life is taken for granted, but my Barred! group attracted disabled and non-disabled people from all over the world.

"I was inspired by the amount of people who joined to share their own personal experiences of access problems, and it soon became clear that this issue was not just about my personal quest for a pint!"

Following this overwhelming support, Mark approached Capability Scotland to further his campaign and raise it to the national political agenda to improve disabled access throughout Scotland. As a result, Mark is now working as Capability's Parliamentary and Policy Officer and has been gaining cross party and pan-disability support for his cause.

Tomorrow, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Barred! campaign will be recognised by a motion in Parliament by Lothian's MSP George Foulkes.

George said: "No one should be Barred! from accessing a pub or club or receive a poorer standard of service because of a disability.

"I am looking forward to the Barred! campaign's development and future successes, disabled people still face access barriers doing everyday things, despite a lot of good work already in this area. Whilst not all pubs and clubs can be made fully accessible national action is required to tackle the information gap about access so that disabled know where to go out to.'

Bill Kidd, MSP and member of the equal opportunities committee said "It's refreshing to see direct action on this issue by those personally affected, I am keen to see Barred! improve licensing law and re-enforce the Disability Discrimination Act by getting pub and club owners to consider the needs of disabled people'

**ENDS**

**For more information please contact:**

**Michaela Crosthwaite – [michaela.crosthwaite@capability-scotland.org.uk](mailto:michaela.crosthwaite@capability-scotland.org.uk)**

**T: 0131 347 1055 M: 07760 991 604**

**Sarah Allen – [sarah.allen@capability-scotland.org.uk](mailto:sarah.allen@capability-scotland.org.uk)**

**T: 0131 347 1015 M: 07984 073 008**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

Capability Scotland campaigns with, and provides services to, disabled children and adults across Scotland, supporting them to achieve equality and have choice and control in their lives.