

Try Off-road Driving with Explore 4x4

Off-road driving for visually impaired people....a whole new way to test your senses, and raise funds

Explore 4x4, an Off-road driver training company based in East Anglia, began instructing visually impaired people after being contacted by Paul Atkins, from **Support4Sight** in Saffron Walden, in early 2010.

Looking for new ways to raise money for his local society, he had hit upon off-road driving! Quite a thought for someone who couldn't drive and couldn't see!

Explore 4x4 have helped physically disabled people experience 4x4 driving but they had never considered the challenge of drivers without sight before. Impressed by Paul's courage and determination, they felt that if he was mad enough to try, then they certainly would rise to the challenge of helping him!

Visionary Views August 2010 edition carried an article about Paul's sponsored 4x4 experience. Paul said: *"The experience was fantastic for me, and Malcolm Swan the instructor was so calm and relaxed, as was Debs his business partner sitting in the passenger seat. I would certainly recommend this as a fund raising event as well as an experience to try. I raised, with Gift Aid, £2,050. A great amount in today's economic climate. I would like to work further with Malcolm on this as he has a site very close to where I live. I will be contacting him again soon"*



Driving the dream

A Norwich woman who has been blind since birth fulfilled her dream by driving an off-road 4x4 vehicle around a forest course.

Kate Petney was one of six visually impaired people who took part in a session organised by **Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind (NNAB)** at a specialist venue near Newmarket and Kate described it as



Kate fulfilling her dream

News and Information

“the thrill of a lifetime” Kate, who lives at NNAB’s sheltered support flats at Hammond Court added *“It was the first time I had ever been behind the wheel of a vehicle and it was brilliant”*

The six who took part were all driving manual vehicles and for three of them it was the first time they had ever driven while the other three used to drive before losing their sight.

Rebecca Shubrook, NNAB’s Sports Co-coordinator said: *“We are always looking for activities that will challenge blind people and allow them to enjoy the kind of things sighted people take for granted. This was the first time I had organised off-road driving and it*



NNAB 4x4 team

turned out to be far easier than I had anticipated—all down to Malcolm and Debs of Explore 4x4 who were so helpful. Everyone wants to go again so we’re definitely planning on running more sessions!

Malcolm Swan of Explore 4x4 said “The experience was and is phenomenal, both for the drivers themselves and the Explore 4x4 instructors alike. Driving manual Land Rover Discoveries without dual control, off-road and having to put your absolute trust in someone you have never met before must be daunting to say the least. It is both intense and challenging, but the courage on display by visually impaired drivers is extraordinary.

Helping visually impaired people to experience something many of us take for granted is incredibly rewarding. We are as exhilarated by the experience as they are, and we hope to continue providing this service for years to come”

For further information, please look at Explore 4x4 website www.explore-4x4.co.uk

Ed’s note:

Explore 4x4 training centres are located in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. Malcolm says they are willing to travel outside East Anglia but would need a suitable venue. If, with your local knowledge, you would like to discuss this with Malcolm Swan, please get in touch on 07766223884