

THE KEPPLEWRAY AND BETHESDA PROJECTS VISION AND CHALLENGE IN PARTNERSHIP

Ever been inspired by a vision? Ever thought of climbing a tree in a wheelchair? If not then a visit to The Keppleway Project at Broughton-in-Furness, Cumbria, in the diocese of Carlisle, might enlarge your thinking.

Situated not far from Coniston Water The Keppleway Project provides a centre where disabled and non-disabled people are fully included in a whole range of activities that offer adventure, challenge, learning and relaxation in an atmosphere of acceptance, understanding, and mutual respect.

Keppleway arose from a group of people who, from their experience of running Christian holiday camps for young people, were concerned to develop activities that would not exclude anyone.

Motivated by Christ's teaching about the acceptance of all people, The Keppleway Trust was formed in 1992 and a property purchased in 1993. Doors opened to the first guests in 1998. The centre has modern, fully accessible accommodation and facilities for up to 45 people.

“The heartbeat of Keppleway is the belief that God's love extends to all, in equal measure, regardless of ability. It's a special place where the inherent value of each person can be discovered and nurtured”

Keppleway is a place where people are encouraged to achieve many things they would never have thought they could attempt. To that end activities include rock climbing, abseiling, archery, and canoeing. With specially adapted equipment and trained instructors the possibilities for fun and adventure are endless!



Photo: The Keppleway project

There are also training programmes in disability legislation, equality awareness and access auditing.

The Keppleway Project is in the process of enlarging its vision and looking to establish a similar project in the Province of the Anglican Church of Burundi. Known as the Bethesda Project, it will be set up in the diocese of Musinga in northern Burundi.

It is proposed that the two projects will have the same ethos, be able to share experiences, have a cyclical exchange of staff and help each other to understand what it means to be inclusive.

The vision is tremendous. To set up an inclusive outdoor activity and training centre will be a completely new initiative for Burundi. Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world and resources and facilities for the disabled barely exist.

Society's view of disability often leaves people marginalised and excluded. Challenging outdoor activities and awareness training for disabled and able-bodied people have the potential to develop social integration, break down prejudice and misunderstanding, and act as a catalyst for tackling social exclusion. It is hoped that it will also contribute to the process of healing a nation ravaged by war and division.

The Keppleway and Bethesda Projects show that, inspired by a vision, challenges of all kinds can be overcome especially when people work together.



**“Who amongst us can say they are perfect and have no disabilities? Keppleway is about people and their intrinsic value and worth whatever their abilities or background.”
Stephen Hawking CBE, Patron of Keppleway**