

IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS AMONG FOREST MANAGERS OF ACCESSIBILITY TO SCOTTISH FORESTS BY DISABLED PEOPLE

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Abstract

Under the requirements of the UK Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005 (the DDA) service providers must provide equal opportunities for disabled people to use goods, facilities and services. In Scotland, this includes land owners who provide recreation goods, facilities and services (both for free and paid for), including access to publicly owned forest and privately-owned forest which must be accessible to the public under the terms of the Scottish Land Reform Act 2003 (where it is reasonable to provide access in terms of demand and cost of provision). With this in mind, research was conducted in Scotland to explore the current state of awareness, knowledge and skills of foresters, forest managers and forest access and recreation specialists in disabled access provision. A scoping meeting with key informants from forestry and land management organisations was followed by a series of regional forums, or focus groups. These were attended by those from the public, private and NGO forest sectors and from the findings an on-line questionnaire was developed and administered to an invited population representing managers in the forestry sector in Scotland. The results of the regional forums and questionnaire survey showed low levels of awareness of DDA legislation, understanding of disability and practical actions foresters and managers can make to make woodlands equally accessible for disabled people. The information gained was used to formulate a training programme for the forestry sector. As part of this, key messages, good practice examples, tools and other resources were assembled so as to give managers confidence and information to assist them in making forests reasonably accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities.

Key Words

Disability Discrimination Act, accessibility, disabled people