Disabled Adventurer becomes first to ascend Yr Wyddfa in power mobility chair unaided for Disability Pride Month

Thursday 18 July, 2024

As part of Disability Pride Month, mental health campaigner and disabled adventurer Nick Wilson has reached the highest point accessible on Yr Wyddfa (Mount Snowdon) ‘unaided’ using a first-of-its-kind engineered all-terrain mobility chair, RockClimber™. Following a first attempt in June, Nick took to the Llanberis route once more to reach the Bwlch Glas, a staggering 1000m up, without any physical support.

Nick’s climb aims to raise greater awareness and action towards current accessibility and independence challenges faced by wheelchair users every day, importantly showing how inclusive design and engineering can help to make the world more accessible for everyone, everywhere and positively impact lives.

RockClimber™ is based off extensive motorsport design experience to create a new chair concept. It includes 4x electric motors enabling 15Hp of power; bonded aluminium construction for maximum strength and minimum weight (210kg); 4-wheel drive with variable wheelbase to help with climbing and a range of 50 miles on flat terrain. After the steering failure during the previous attempt, the team reviewed the collected data and agreed a series of enhancements that would ensure RockClimber wouldn't be the point of failure again – this included new steering, brakes, wheels and tyres.

The project, championed by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), demonstrates how inclusive design and engineering can be used to improve accessibility in urban and rural environments, enabling people reliant on wheelchairs to have greater independence and freedom without the risk of falling or getting stuck. With more than 650,000 registered wheelchair users in the UK (NHS National Wheelchair Data Collection), there are still barriers in everyday life where wheelchairs are not equipped to tackle different environments, even on the high street.

Nick said: "While many people in the disability community won't want or feel the need to go up a mountain, they can feel like they're trying to do just that on a daily basis, with so many accessibility obstacles. By achieving this, we've demonstrated how inclusive design and having the right equipment can help to make the world more accessible, whilst showing what’s possible when you keep fighting and never give up, however dark things may seem. Inclusive design and engineering can create more capable and suitable equipment, to make the world more accessible for everyone, everywhere."

Rock Engineering Director and IET member, Elliot Dason-Barber, added: "We are all incredibly proud of what we have achieved with RockClimber. Our goal was always to design, and manufacture, a power-chair that would give Nick the capability to scale Snowdon truly unaided, and I think we've shown we've done that.

“It has been a real privilege to help Nick achieve his goal, but Rock Engineering has also had the opportunity to develop its own experience in inclusive engineering and demonstrate its capabilities in vehicle design. This project has given us a real opportunity for accelerated learning, and several attempts on Mount Snowdon have meant that RockClimber is now a very mature, and well understood design. It also means the team have lots of ideas for how to make things even better.”

The IET’s Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr Laura Norton, said: “The IET’s Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr Laura Norton, added: “This is a fantastic achievement for Nick and the Rock Engineering team – as well as for inclusive design, which is so important today. Accessibility needs to be prioritised, and engineering and technology play a pivotal part in enabling this. We hope in the future that a single chair solution will be available to many more wheelchair users, breaking down barriers and allowing for greater freedom and independence.”

The climb’s success is dedicated to the loving memory of Nick's Dad, who suddenly and unexpectedly passed away during their initial attempt in June, something which Nick didn't find out about until afterwards.

Nick said: "My Dad knew the importance of what we were doing, how much it meant to me and really believed in the RockClimber project. As such, his dying wish was for me to not be informed until after the attempt, sacrificing the opportunity to see me one last time and say his goodbyes. His legacy and memory, couldn't be one connected to a failed attempt, therefore our success is dedicated to him."

Media:









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