

## *“If only I could pole dance”*

By Bob Bennett (Chairman CILPK)



I have recently been on holiday to London with my PA, we had plans to do quite a few things, most of which went well and in general we had a great time despite the snow, in April!

Our trip started well with the ramps waiting for us to get on and off the trains although some of them were a little steep.

We toured London on the hop on hop off bus which was great and very accessible.

The Rolling Stones Exhibition was really good and accessible. We got in for free as we had arrived late due to my wheelchair battery. They said that we could go in if we were just going around quickly but we ended up being in there for an hour and a half.

We went to see the Lion King, unfortunately the wheelchair spaces were right at the back, but the show was good and we were able to see ok.

We attended the Folk Awards in the Royal Albert Hall. The seats for this were not great and unless I leaned right forward in my wheelchair I could not see anything so that spoiled it a bit.

All of the shop assistants that we encountered were very friendly to the point we were given free teas and coffees.

The public buses were a different story.

The first problem we encountered was trying to get onto a public bus but the driver would not open the door as there were people with buggies in the spaces. My PA shouted through the door to the driver to say that we had priority, the people with prams agreed and there was a big notice to say that it was a wheelchair space and that they took priority, but the driver wouldn't move them and we weren't able to get on that bus.

We then went to the Tourist Information to ask for help, they advised that if the drivers didn't let us on the bus then we should phone the Police. We decided to give up that day and tried again the next day and had no problems whatsoever using the bus.

The next day was a different matter, we managed to get onto the bus and the driver shouted to my PA that he needed to see our Oyster card. We showed him the card and the driver said that I needed to get right into the space or he wasn't taking us. The back end of my chair wouldn't fit in due to the poles, "if only I could pole dance!"

My PA told the driver that I could move in anymore. The driver said that if we didn't get off his bus he'd call the police. We showed him an email that had the policy from London Transport company (given by the tourist information) regarding the priority for wheelchairs, once the driver read this he backed down and we managed to stay on the bus. Thankfully the police were never phoned and we got to our destination.

Overall we had a good holiday with loads of funny moments and also some rather stressful moments.