

British Healthcare Trades Association, 1 Webbs Court, Buckhurst Avenue
Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1LZ Telephone: 01732 458868
Facsimile: 01732 459225 E-mail: bhta@bhta.com Web: <http://www.bhta.com>

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GET WHEELCHAIR WISE

Safety advice for wheelchair users travelling by public transport is now available, thanks to a joint new initiative being launched by the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) today (Wednesday January 24) and the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions (DETR).

Welcomed by Transport Minister Keith Hill at a reception at the House of Commons, the 'Get Wheelchair Wise' campaign aims to raise awareness of safety issues through the distribution of posters and a leaflet, 'Get Wheelchair Wise: A Guide to Using Public Transport.'

Offering practical advice, the guide will help to ensure that wheelchair users have the confidence to use public transport.

Said Transport Minister Keith Hill: "I am very pleased to welcome the publication of 'Get Wheelchair Wise', which I believe is an important initiative which will be enormously helpful to wheelchair users and to the transport industry. Without information and guidance many wheelchair users, who have never before had the opportunity to travel on public transport, may be apprehensive about what to expect and reluctant to take chances.

"The Government is wholly committed to delivering comprehensive civil rights to disabled people and accessible public transport is fundamentally important to delivering that commitment."

More follows...

The campaign is being launched as the number of wheelchair users travelling on public transport steadily increases. This trend is set to continue as new regulations mean that in the future, buses, trains, taxis and trams, will all have to be wheelchair friendly.

Accompanying the launch is the publication of a 'Highway Code' for electric scooter and wheelchair users. The guide is a result of a user's experiences, both good and bad, over the last 18 years.

The booklet offers essential advice to help users maintain their mobility and independence. Author Margaret Godfree – herself a scooter user – will be attending the launch.

Commenting on the initiative, BHTA Director, Ray Hodgkinson, said: "I hope this campaign will give wheelchair users added confidence when using public transport. It is important they are aware of the safety issues involved, not only for themselves but others too. The 'Get Wheelchair Wise' campaign provides simple, practical advice for safe travel."

The posters and literature are available from:

BHTA at 1 Webbs Court, Buckhurst Avenue, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1LZ. Telephone 01732 458868.

DETR: Mobility and Inclusion Unit, 1/18 Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR

Note to Editors: If you would like a picture of Margaret Godfree at the House of Commons launch, please call Simon Leonard on 01756 795374. We can send a print or a j-peg file as soon as the picture is available.

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Prepared on behalf of the BHTA by Alexander King Associates. For further information, call: 01756 795374 and ask for Jan Turner or Simon Leonard. Or email: jan@alexanderking.co.uk The British Healthcare Trades Association is based at 1 Webbs Court, Buckhurst Avenue, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1LZ. Tel: 01732 458868. Website: www.bhta.com