

# Sponsored paddle - Devizes to Honey Street.

## Southampton Special Olympic paddlers



**What were the main objectives of the project?** To raise funds to support Southampton Athlete, Neil Harley to participate in the Summer World Special Olympics, Athens in 2011. To widen the paddling experience of learning-disabled athletes who are currently training with Southampton Canoe Club, having mainly paddled on local water and over short sprint distances. The paddle was 8 miles in total, which was a considerable distance to cover, compared to experience so far.



**What we did:** Four athletes with learning Disabilities supported by two coaches and 1 volunteer set out from Devizes, Wiltshire on the K&A Canal on 23<sup>rd</sup> July paddling in 2 K2s and 3 K1s with the aim of reaching Honey Street, 8 miles in total as a sponsored paddle. All paddlers completed the course in 3-4 hours.



### Barriers and how they were overcome:

A minibus following the paddlers along the course to provide support. This meant that we had ground support we could contact if need be and transport available at the finish.

We thought that one paddler would struggle to complete the whole 8-mile solo so he paddled in a K2 with one of the coaches; this was the first time that he had paddled in a K2 before.

**Results and the future:** Brilliant confidence boost for all the paddlers who thoroughly enjoyed the paddle who immediately wanted to consider another challenge (paddle to the IOW was mentioned). A real sense of achievement felt by all. It gave people a chance to put all the skills required in paddling together over a longer period, particularly steering round obstacles, avoiding on coming barges and keeping a straight line in the canal. Also much needed funding raised for Neil's opportunity to paddle for his Country next year in Athens.



### Participants.

Athletes: Neil Harley, Wayne Taylor, Richard Manning, Phillip Howard.

Coaches: Leon Nicholson, Teri Hardcastle, Volunteer John Minibus driver/volunteer.