

Rosie and Ella ;

A story about the passion of climate change and the challenges of access if you have sight loss.

‘Mum!.....Muuuum!’ Ella yelled as she came barrelling through the front door at the end of the school day.

‘ Guess what?...we heard all about Kelpie Country Park today and it sounds amazing, they’ve got animals, and an orchard, and all sorts of stuff. Can we go? Pleeeeease?’

Rosie, Ellas Mum smiled..outwardly at least, hearing the excitement in her daughter’s tone of voice.

‘Yes, my lovely. We will find out if we can’ .

‘ Oh thank you !’ exclaimed Ella as she continued excitedly chattering to her Mum all about the eco friendly and sustainable projects they had there and how it affected the whole planet and how important it was, and what she wanted to do to save the planet as she grew up, and how she was going to be the next Greta Thunberg .....

Rosie had switched off.

As much as she loved Ella, and could see how important all of this was to her, age 9, Ella had reached the age where she knew what she wanted to do. She needed her mother’s support to reach her goals, but there was a difficulty.

Rosie’s sight had deteriorated since she was a child, and now registered blind, found her confidence so much less now in travelling to new situations and trying out new things.

After Ella had finished her homework, and gone to bed, Rosie pulled out her laptop to work out if she could safely take Ella where she wanted to go .

‘ Kelpie Country Park’ ; Rosie used her screen reader to look up the relevant webpage, anticipating a late night for her, trying to navigate webpages that were created with sighted users in mind.

To her shock , as well as delight, Rosie found that someone had taken the trouble to alter the webpage to make the information so much easier to find, and was just what she needed to know.

There were clear directions as to what buses stopped there, and how far a walk it was thereafter. Rough pavements were always a concern for Rosie, she’d given herself a black eye the previous year when she tripped over a tree root, so was particularly keen to avoid a repeat! The fact therefore that the Kelpie team had taken the trouble to let their webpage visitors know that the path from the bus stop was flat, safe, and wide enough for Ella to walk beside her was a big relief.

It too was great to find that a Navilens code had been used, linking to a narrated and guided video around the park . Although unable to see the video, when Rosie had used the relevant app to open the code, she was able to listen and heard all about the badger set that the path took you past on the way in, how sometimes you could hear woodpeckers, and how at certain times of the year , lots of wild garlic grew. The smell of that would be unmistakeable! There were

indeed the animals that Ella mentioned, and to Rosie's delight she found she could sign them both up for a tactile guided tour of the farm there, where they could hear all about the different animals and their habitats. Rosie had loved Clydesdale horses like they had there herself since she was little but tended not to go too near any now because they were just so big, and she wasn't keen in case she or Ella might get hurt. But...what was this? The staff team could escort her and Ella to meet the horses! How Rosie smiled at the thought of being able to stroke their silky noses and feel their hot breath on her hands ; something she hadn't thought she'd ever have the pleasure of being able to do again. She must remember to check if there were any carrots left that they could take with them. The website said that was allowed.

By now Rosie was experiencing something she hadn't felt so much in recent years. Hope. And excitement, to be able to take her daughter to someplace, and actually enjoy it herself!

Ella was growing up fast and Rosie was keen, as all parents are, to make childhood memories to look fondly back on long after Ella had grown up and made a life of her own ....obviously as the next Greta Thunberg of course!

Before shutting down her laptop for the night, Rosie's new interest in eco friendly projects was awakened. It was all a bit alien to her as climate change hadn't been a 'thing' when she was at school. Kelpie Country Park had taken the time to detail all of the ways in which their team of staff and volunteers were contributing to keeping our planet safe, and it was so helpful to find that the photographs they had used to enhance their website had been created with Alt text so Rosie could appreciate the pictures of their orchard ...so many varieties of apple! And the size of that pig!

Rosie thought about making sandwiches for their visit, but at the last minute realised that Kelpie Country Park had a café. How helpful of them to acknowledge they had their menu in big print, and online too where she could check what they had available. With Ella being a coeliac, Rosie was used to having to always make and take their own food, much to Ella's typical childhood annoyance ...' Why cant I have a pizza like everyone else?' so to be able to screen read, and pre order what Ella could safely eat was an extra bonus, and one which Rosie was grateful for.

Rosie, closing her laptop, sighed contentedly.

She was really looking forward to the trip tomorrow.

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