

# Help stop sabbatarians spoiling Sunday swimming

Posted: Fri, 2nd Dec 2016

The National Secular Society is appealing to the Great British public to help a fundraising effort to open a swimming pool on the Isle of Lewis on Sundays, which councillors are currently refusing to open on the Sabbath.

Local campaigners have started a fundraising drive to open the Ionad Spòrs Leòdhaisa Sports Centre, and are halfway to reaching their target of £11,400 – needed to fund a 12 month trial for Sunday opening.

The local council is refusing to open the pool on Sundays, citing cost reasons, but they have rejected cost-saving suggestions like closing the pool during the week in little used hours to allow it to be open for three or four hours on a Sunday. The Council has faced numerous accusations of using the cost argument as a cover for religious objections to the pool opening on the Sabbath.

Families into Sports for Health (FiSH) said their survey showed 71% of the sports centre's users were "supportive" of the proposal to open for some hours on Sundays.

In September Elma Macleod of FiSH [said](#), "Overwhelming evidence from the users of ISL now shows a strong demand for seven day opening amongst the users of the facility."

Campaigners argue that religious considerations on the Council are overriding the wishes of local people and in October Councillor Neil Beaton [urged](#) his colleagues to distance themselves from a "stifling sanctimonious Sabbatarian shroud".

Councillor Beaton wrote that "It was apparent from the e-mails and letters I received that preserving the Sabbath was the main objection" to Sunday opening, not the financial objections that were made.

"Sadly there is a sanctimonious Sabbatarian shroud stifling parts of the Western Isles. This Council has to distance itself from these baleful influences and focus its attention on the wellbeing of its constituents."

The National Secular Society has urged its supports to [make a donation](#) to ensure families on Lewis and Harris can go swimming on Sundays.

NSS spokesperson for Scotland, Alistair McBay, said:

"If some fundamentalist Christians wish to observe the Sabbath then of course they can do so according to their custom and ritual, but to force everyone else who does not share their beliefs to observe it too is not acceptable. The financial constraints advanced by the local council are simply a smokescreen for religious fundamentalism at work. The community on Lewis is not one homogenous group where everyone wants the same thing and lives by the same code, yet the Calvinist element on Lewis is determined to impose its unique brand of Christianity on everyone else and declare a part of the United Kingdom its own to govern according to its beliefs. We appeal

to the council and fair-minded Brits of every hue to support these parents in their bid to pursue a healthy lifestyle for their families."

There are less than two weeks left before the appeal expires, and FiSH need to raise £5,695. [Click here to donate to the fundraising effort](#)

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