

Our business was harassed by Christian fundamentalists – now it's the best known in Lewis

Posted: Wed, 22nd Nov 2017 by [Martin Flett](#)

The National Secular Society recently [reported](#) the case of Leona Rawlinson, the owner of TweedTastic in Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis. Leona was being harassed by sabbatarians over her decision to open her shop on Sundays. The story was picked up by several national media outlets, including the [BBC](#). Now Martin Flett, Leona's partner, says the business has since been flooded with support.

This post was first [written](#) on the Western Isles Secular Society Facebook page, and is reproduced here with the author's kind permission.

It's exactly two weeks today since 'The Tweedtastic Bible' was delivered to the shop. And what a two weeks! Little did we imagine the media storm that was about to engulf us.

In all innocence, we posted about the 'gift' on our own [Facebook pages](#), and on the Western Isles Secular Society page, with no thought that it would go any further. But go further it did.

The story got picked up by the National Secular Society, who ran a story on its website and sent a press release out. The next thing we knew, Leona was being contacted by the Press & Journal, and then [The Times](#). No sooner than that happened than a friend shared a post on Facebook. It was in [The Telegraph](#)! And *The Mail*, and *The Metro*, and *The West Highland Free Press*.

Then we were interviewed for *STV News*, and the day after that I was interviewed live on BBC Radio Scotland. That was lively. A Free Church Continuing minister phoned in to the programme and we had a live on air head to head. I think I held my own. During the course of the interview, it came out that ministers were advocating (instructing?) a boycott of the shop from the pulpit.

Leona was totally stressed out by this stage. But then the support started coming in.

And she now has the best known little shop on the island. You just couldn't buy that level of brand awareness.

Lots of lovely people have called into the shop to offer support, people of faith and no faith alike. The resounding message, over and over again, has been that this is not about religion, it is about controlling behaviour. By a tiny sanctimonious minority that professes to speak for the island but in reality only speaks for its narrow fundamentalist interpretation of Christianity.

Then the cards started arriving. Messages of support from as far away as Leeds. And on Facebook, the messages of support come from all over the UK, Europe, South Africa and Canada.

Neither of us can walk along the street or round the supermarket without being stopped and offered support and encouragement. My ten minute trip to Tesco today took me nearly an hour. But I wouldn't have it any other way. So many people saying: "About time..."

We never set out to be figureheads to challenge the traditional Lewis Sunday. But it looks like that's what's happening. When Leona opened the package containing the bible two weeks ago, she also opened a great big can of worms. But for the Lord's Day Observance Society, that can of worms might have remained closed.

But they had to try and exercise control over people of a different persuasion who were doing absolutely nothing to disturb the traditional Stornoway Sunday. Control for the sake of control. Exercising power for the sake of exercising power. Power and control that may now be on the wane.

Leona Rawlinson is pictured in the image above, along with the Bible and letter she was sent by sabbatarians from the Day One/Lord's Day Observance Society.

Martin Flett

Martin Flett works at TweedTastic in Stornoway with the proprietor, Leona Rawlinson. He has also worked as a sports commentator and for a local housing association. The views expressed in our blogs are those of the author and may not represent the views of the NSS.

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