

Council Elections 2012 – Splashback! dives in



With just under a month to go before the local elections, Splashback!, the Edinburgh residents campaign fighting to re-open Leith Waterworld, is ratcheting up the pressure on election candidates to declare where they stand on the future of the pool.

“In the run-up to the election, we’re asking candidates in wards around Edinburgh to tell residents whether they would like to see Leith Waterworld re-open, and what they would do to help make that happen,” said campaigner Ida Maspero. “Whilst in December, all Councillors (bar the Greens) voted down a motion to save the pool, they did all two months later (bar the Tories) support a motion to allow a community bid to come forward. We’d like candidates to now tell our supporters where exactly they stand. We’re hoping for some fresh thinking, considering the massive public support our campaign has enjoyed.”

Splashback! kicked off its pre-election pressure at last Thursday’s Leith Central hustings. Maspero continued: “We asked all parties if they supported the re-opening of Leith Waterworld, and we were disappointed that only the Greens and Labour nailed their colours to the mast. Neither of the current administration parties – the SNP or the Lib Dems – could, or indeed would, say publically that they supported a community bid, which is obviously disappointing to us and our supporters”.

The city’s only true leisure pool closed its doors on 8 January after City Councillors voted against a motion to keep it open at least until the re-opening of The Royal

Commonwealth Pool, as promised. However, in early February the campaign secured a six-month hold on the planned sale of the site to allow a community-led bid to come forward. Splashback! is now investigating alternative business models for running the pool.

Meanwhile, campaign spin-off, the Homeless Itinerant Bathing Society, is making weekly Sunday visits to other pools in Edinburgh and the Lothians, the most recent being to The Royal Commonwealth Pool, newly re-opened after its £36 million refurbishment. “With the Homeless Itinerant Bathing Society, we have been hunting high and low for something that comes vaguely close to the facility we lost in terms of fun, family-friendliness and accessibility, but nothing’s compared to Waterworld,” said campaigner Simon Shields. “This includes the Commie – yes, it’s an impressive facility, but we are disappointed that the fun features proposed in various Council papers as part of the refit have just not materialised.”

To date, the only pool to come close is Dunbar. Shields continued:- “The Homeless Itinerant Bathing Society is a bit of tongue-in-cheek fun, but it has confirmed what we’ve been saying all along: Leith Waterworld is unique, and to sacrifice it, we believe, betrays a lack of vision and commitment. At best, the other Edinburgh pools offer weekly ‘family’ sessions with water toys, but these are still, in essence, exercise pools. The fun water-play features, warmer water and beached area for young and disabled swimmers are simply not there.”

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