

Letter from Leith Business Association to Greener Leith – with response



21.18 Update:- Response from Greener Leith now below...

Leith Business Association vice-chair, Keith Hales, has been in touch with us about some coverage of an interview with him in [The Edinburgh Evening News](#) and on [Greener Leith](#) recently. He claims he was misquoted and that in response Greener Leith have taken what was said at face value. This is his letter:-

OPEN LETTER

Dear Greener Leith

With respect to your article about Leith Walk in your latest newsletter I must state how disappointed I was that you failed to discuss with myself the content and accuracy of the recent article in the Edinburgh Evening News (EEN) where I am quoted.

Had you shown common courtesy you may have been aware of the true facts and been in a position to write a more positive article devoid of negative tone and manner.

You would have been aware that Leith Walk being one of the dirtiest streets in Edinburgh was only one of the possible reasons mentioned for the downturn in footfall along the walk. It was never “the” reason as you imply.

You would have been aware of the caveat that comparisons with other areas are difficult to draw without the figures for these areas too.

You would be aware of all the positive attributes that Leith Walk has to offer that was conveyed to the EEN.

You would also have been aware of the discussion regarding the good work that many Stakeholders are putting into Leith and Leith Walk.

You would be aware of the discussion concerning all the projects currently being undertaken by stakeholders.

You would also be aware of the LBA's offer to the CEC of a "Social Contract" between The LBA and Stakeholders in Leith with the CEC as a means of formalising all the projects that we are working on together.

You too would be aware of how positive Leith and Leith Work was portrayed, regardless of all the outstanding issues, as still being a vibrant place to live, work, visit and shop.

You seem to have taken everything as read and in isolation without first checking your information.

I have as Vice Chair of the LBA have written to the editor of the EEN asking for a meeting to discuss the unbalanced reporting of all things concerning Leith. The article concerning the fall in footfall was just one example of a biased article totally lacking in background material and real truths. A 2sec sound bite was taken out of a 40 minute discussion. This is poor, lazy journalism and unfortunately on this occasion Greener Leith was not able to raise above that level.

Keith Hales

The Reporter spoke to Keith Hales a couple of weeks ago when he explained that, in his view, it was essential that traders in the street take some of the responsibility themselves for

cleaning up and keeping clean the whole length of Leith Walk which is littered with huge bins for industrial waste. This is the kind of work which he sees the Leith Business Association fostering among the shop and business owners in a coordinated way along with help from the council. They want to enter into a social contract with the council to ensure that each party plays their part, rather than simply making demands of the council. They also plan some street art on shop shutters and on street lighting columns in an effort to dissuade graffiti. In the minutes of the LBA meeting from 6 June 2012 it was confirmed there is funding available for shutter art on seven shop front shutters on the stretch of Leith Walk from Dalmeny Street to the Foot of the Walk.

Greener Leith have now published a response to Keith Hales here which we reproduce here (with permission) for clarity:-

Editors note: Keith – apologies for not fact checking with you first about the article. I was surprised that you'd given that quote to the Evening News, and that's why I was keen to establish whether it was reasonable to brand Leith Walk as the dirtiest street in Scotland. I was as disappointed as you probably were to find out that what you were quoted as saying could in fact be true!

I'm both glad to hear that you have taken steps to challenge the negative editorial slant of the Evening News and disappointed that they chose not to report the extra, more positive information, about the neighbourhood that you gave them.

As much as anything I wrote the post to make the same point you make in your letter. That 'decent' local news journalism should be about facts – and not about a single quote taken out of context to support a fairly spurious assertion. My

intention was not to attack you personally.

The blog post was put together quickly and by me in a voluntary capacity where I am time limited – it isn't easy to fact check everything in the middle of the night and I often don't have time during the day – so I went with the written record.

I'm only too well aware of all the good work that lot's of local people are putting into improving Leith Walk – and Leith in general – and most people will also know that we do our best to focus on constructive solutions to the problems facing the neighbourhood – rather than engage in the negative stereotyping seen in other media organisations.

Indeed our website has years and years of good news stories about local people trying to take action to improve their neighbourhood.

To this end, we'll be organising a series of volunteer litter picks in the neighbourhood during the start of 2013, as well as running a social media campaign focussed on the issue to support them.

I hope this incident will not dissuade the LBA from making common cause with Greener Leith on other issues that could improve the neighbourhood in the future, and in order to redress the balance I'd be delighted to offer you, or someone else from the Leith Business Association, a chance to write about the positive work the LBA is doing to improve Leith.

Alastair Tibbitt, Volunteer, Greener Leith news.