

Midlothian Council
c/o HaveYourSay@midlothian.gov.uk

12 December 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

Shaping Our Future: A Programme for Change - Protect Midlothian Library Services

My name is Peggy Hughes and I am the Chair of Literature Alliance Scotland (LAS), which represents the principal literature and languages organisations in Scotland. I write with great concern in response to the proposed changes to Midlothian Council's library services.

The changes include the proposed closure of all eight Branch libraries and the withdrawal of the mobile library service to be replaced by a single service from Midlothian Central Library, and that non-staffed facilities and volunteer operated services are being considered. We understand this will impact 30-40 staff.

While I appreciate that Midlothian Council is under pressure to make financial savings and there are difficult decisions to be taken, the argument for investment in public libraries is strong.

Libraries are crucial in providing access to literature, assisting digital literacy, and improving people's chances in life. Reading is Scotland's favourite cultural activity, which brings with it important health benefits. In fact, a 2013 study conducted by the Scottish Government shows clear and significant links between cultural participation and improved health and wellbeing. Public libraries provide meeting places where people have access to culture, knowledge and the chance to learn. In fact, successful countries, such as the Nordic countries and The Netherlands, are actively strengthening and building upon their existing networks of public libraries. They see them as the principal way for their societies to provide local democratic access to knowledge and culture in the digital age.

Libraries provide equal opportunities for everyone, and everyone in our society has a right to choose their own path.

Scotland has long been known for its strong support for public libraries, and for the excellent network of libraries that has already been created. We would encourage you to maintain a strong viable network of libraries in your local communities, many of which are rural, so that people who live in Midlothian can have a library close at hand which is easy for them to travel to and to use.

On behalf of our members, the community and the young people in your area, we urge you to please protect Midlothian's Library Service in the forthcoming budget.

Yours sincerely



Peggy Hughes, Chair

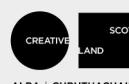
Chair: Peggy Hughes | **Vice-Chair:** Dr Donald Smith | **Treasurer:** Rosemary Ward

Communications Officer: Jenny Kumar (admin@literaturealliancescotland.co.uk / 07989 557198)

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Literature Alliance Scotland Membership at December 2017

MEMBERS

- Association for Scottish Literary Studies (ASLS)
- Association of Scottish Literary Agents (ASLA)
- Bookdonors CIC
- CILIPS (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland)
- Edinburgh International Book Festival
- Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust
- The Gaelic Books Council
- Moniack Mhor
- National Library of Scotland
- Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust
- Playwrights' Studio Scotland
- Publishing Scotland
- The Saltire Society
- Scottish Book Trust
- Scottish Language Dictionaries
- Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)
- SLAM (Scottish Literary and Arts Magazines)
- Scottish Society of Playwrights
- Scottish PEN
- Scottish Poetry Library
- Scottish Storytelling Forum
- Scottish Writers Centre
- Society of Authors in Scotland
- Universities Committee for Scottish Literature
- Wigtown Festival Company
- Writers' Guild of Great Britain (Scottish Region)

NETWORK ASSOCIATES

- Ayton Publishing
- Emergents CIC
- Florida State Universities Library
- Indie Authors World
- Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh
- Stirling Centre for International Publishing and Communication @ Stirling University
- The Poetry Association of Scotland

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