

19 February 2018

A letter in support of the mobile library service delivered by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

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'm writing in support of the existing mobile library service and to urge Comhairle nan Eilean Siar to invest in the procurement of three new library vehicles to ensure the continuity of this vital service to the communities of the Western Isles.

While I do of course fully appreciate that the Comhairle is under financial pressure, the argument for long-term investment in public libraries – both static and mobile – is strong.

The mobile library provides access to library and information services, including literature, culture and knowledge to all those who live too far away from a static library. With only four static libraries in the Outer Hebrides, the mobile vehicles cover huge areas and are vital in providing an adequate library service for all residents, as per the requirements of the Local Government Act.

The service supports reading for pleasure and their stock is vital in supporting literacies. 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.

They also facilitate better quality of life through greater access to services, reducing service inequalities between towns and rural communities, and lower social isolation in all demographic groups, including vulnerable adults and the elderly.

Libraries provide equal opportunities for everyone, therefore renewing the current vehicles, which are no longer fit for purpose, is crucial to ensuring the Comhairle's continued contribution to national outcomes such as reducing inequality and improving literacy, life chances and health.

Importantly, the mobile library service demonstrates the value the Comhairle places on its communities. And, despite the current state of the vehicles, local residents clearly value the service delivered with a consistent growth in membership nearly doubling in the past four years. Such impressive statistics speak volumes and would be the envy of other Councils across Scotland in putting forward a strong case for continued library investment.

Scotland has long been known for its strong support for public libraries, and for the excellent network of libraries that has already been created.

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

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

Literature Alliance Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Registration Number: SC046387

On behalf of our members, we call on the Comhairle to acknowledge the outstanding service already being delivered by your mobile library service staff.

We would urge you to protect it for the long-term by investing in new up-to-date vehicles to make sure that the people living in the Western Isles can continue to have regular access to a library service and the myriad benefits they offer both now and in the future.

Yours faithfully,



Peggy Hughes, Chair

Literature Alliance Scotland Membership at February 2018

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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