

Council Leader Derek Milligan  
Midlothian Council  
Midlothian House  
Buccleuch Street  
Dalkeith  
Midlothian EH22 1DN

8 February 2019

Dear Councillor Milligan,

### **Please Protect Midlothian Libraries**

My name is Peggy Hughes and I am the Chair of Literature Alliance Scotland (LAS), which is Scotland's largest literary membership network, representing the principal literature and languages organisations in Scotland.

I'm writing on behalf of our membership who share my great concern about the proposed closures of libraries in Dalkeith, Gorebridge and Newtongrange as part of a measure to make savings on your forthcoming budget.

While we do appreciate the financial challenges and difficult decisions you are facing, we question how you could square the circle of more efficiently delivering any of the library services in another setting that would possibly save you money in the long-term.

In fact, this rather contradictory case on reducing costs by closing libraries is clearly highlighted in your 'Notice of Meeting and Agenda' document for the forthcoming meeting on 12 February, which sets out the additional funds required to cover redundancy payments of library staff, setting up alternative service support elsewhere, and buying a new mobile library with driver to stop at these localities to ensure you can fulfil your statutory requirement to provide an adequate and comprehensive library service for the residents of Midlothian.

As an alliance of literature organisations, we champion the benefits of literature, books and reading for pleasure. Indeed, reading is Scotland's favourite cultural activity, which has proven health benefits that are evidenced by a Scottish Government study. Libraries are absolutely critical in providing free access to literature (including printed books, e-books, and audio books) and reading for pleasure boosts young people's life chances – across all social classes - and helps to improve literacy.

But libraries offer the people who use them so much more than a cultural centre - they are social and learning hubs and economic enablers. Public libraries are the principal way for local authorities to provide local democratic access to knowledge and learning, public services, books and culture in the digital age – in a safe, warm space with qualified staff on hand to help.

**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**

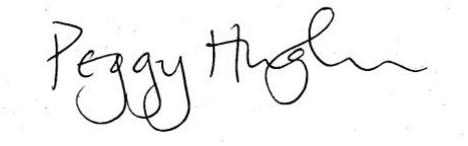
And they're popular too: Scotland's libraries welcome more visitors through their doors than the cinema and professional football matches combined.

Libraries also assist with digital literacy and offer free access to computers and wifi, which is especially important for job-seekers or those accessing Universal Credit; they help lower social isolation in all demographic groups, especially the elderly; and they provide an important space and resource for many disadvantaged people in a non-judgmental, public space, open to all.

The value of public libraries is clear: Scotland's public libraries provide an outstanding return on investment. That's why closing them or making them more difficult to get to will have a detrimental impact in the long-term.

On behalf of our members, and the communities of Midlothian, we call on you to reconsider these proposals, which are based on short-term gains, and to focus instead on the bigger economic, social, educational and cultural picture by protecting your network of libraries, now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,



**Peggy Hughes**  
Chair

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