

Council Leader Graham Leadbitter
Moray Council
High Street
Elgin
IV30 1BX

7 February 2019

Dear Councillor Leadbitter,

Please Save Moray's Libraries for future generations

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 deep concern about the sweeping cuts proposed across Moray Library Services and the devastating cultural, social and educational impact on Moray's communities for generations to come.

How can shutting more than half the public libraries (in Burghead, Cullen, Dufftown, Fochabers, Lossiemouth and Tomintoul), reducing opening hours for the remaining five libraries (in Buckie, Forres and Keith), while also slashing budgets for book, audio visual, reference books and online resources, not to mention cutting library and learning centre staff, possibly square with your statutory requirement to provide an adequate and comprehensive library service for the residents of Moray?

Please know that we do understand the financial pressure you are under to meet budget savings. However, at this critical point in time, we wholeheartedly urge you **not** to make decisions based on short-term gains, but to focus on the bigger picture because Scotland's public libraries provide an outstanding return on investment.

Simply put, libraries offer something for everyone. They are cultural centres, social and learning hubs and economic enablers. Reading is Scotland's favourite cultural activity, which has proven health benefits, as evidenced by a Scottish Government study. Libraries are critical in providing free access to literature (including printed books, e-books, and audio books) and they are vital to improving literacy in Scotland.

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

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

Libraries improve people's chances in life: they 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; 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, and we question how you could more efficiently deliver any of these services in another setting that would possibly save you money in the long-term.

On behalf of our members, and the communities of Moray, we call on you to urgently reconsider these short-sighted proposals and to instead protect your network of libraries, especially amongst your coastal communities, so that the residents of Moray can continue to benefit from all the wonderful services that libraries offer now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Peggy Hughes
Chair

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