

Councillors Jenny Laing and Douglas Lumsden
Aberdeen City Council
Town House
Broad Street
Aberdeen AB10 1FY

4 March 2019

Dear Councillor Leaders,

Please Protect Aberdeen's 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 and dismay about the budget-saving proposals that will decimate your public library service and have a devastating cultural, social and educational impact on Aberdeen's communities for generations to come.

How can shutting all 16 of your public libraries except the central facility in the city centre possibly square with your statutory requirement to provide an adequate and comprehensive library service to **all** the residents of Aberdeen?

While we do understand the financial challenges and difficult decisions you face in meeting budget savings, 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 economic, social, educational and cultural picture because Scotland's public libraries provide an outstanding return on investment.

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.

In the words of writer Isaac Asimov, "a library isn't just a library. It is a space ship that will take you to the farthest reaches of the Universe, a time machine that will take you to the far past and the far future, a teacher that knows more than any human being, a friend that will amuse you and console you -- and most of all, a gateway, to a better and happier and more useful life."

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

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: 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: they are a 'must-have' service. That's why closing them or making the one that remains open more difficult for Aberdonians to get to will have a hugely detrimental impact that will cost the communities of Aberdeen much more dearly in the long-term.

We call on you to urgently reconsider these proposals and to instead protect your network of libraries, now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,



Peggy Hughes
Chair

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