

Jillian Ferrie  
Chief Executive  
CultureNL  
Heritage Way  
Coatbridge ML5 1QD

30 July 2019

Dear Ms Ferrie,

### **PLEASE INVEST IN THE FUTURE & PROTECT NORTH LANARKSHIRE'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 concern about the cost-cutting proposals that could affect all 19 of North Lanarkshire's public libraries with reduced opening hours, thereby limiting access for your constituents.

We do, of course, appreciate the strain of financial challenges and the difficult decisions you face in meeting them; however, these proposals seem to go directly against the satisfaction reports of the library service, which, at 80%, put them consistently above the Scotland standard.

What's more, we would question whether these proposals would still meet the requirements of the Local Government Act that you provide an adequate library service that is accessible for all residents.

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.

**Chair:** Peggy Hughes | **Co-Vice Chairs:** Dr Valentina Bold & 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

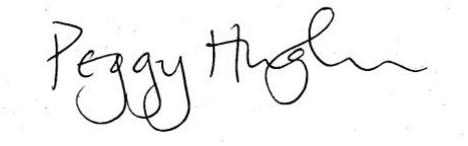
In the words of Scottish award-winning writer Theresa Breslin: *“The library was the step-up previous generations used to progress. When we have managed to do this, let us not then pull the ladder up after us.”*

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 we urge you to reconsider your proposals to reduce opening hours and to instead think of the long-term gains by protecting your network of libraries, now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,



**Peggy Hughes**  
Chair

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