

Dear Sir/Madam,

Proposal to close public libraries

CILIP in Scotland (CILIPS) is the Scottish arm of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. CILIP is the leading professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers. Many of our members work within local authorities. We are deeply concerned by the proposal by West Dunbartonshire Council to close 5 libraries with the removal of over 15fte posts.

We note the proposal suggests that 3 main hub libraries could maintain a high level of service due to the geographical layout of the authority. However, we believe that removing libraries from some communities will have a negative impact on the lives of many people who need them most.

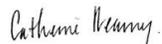
We hold that a good public library service is essential to the well being of communities, providing a positive experience for local people and demonstrating the value a local authority places on its community. Our views are supported by evidence based research carried out by the Scottish Government which concluded that participation in culture is significantly linked to good health and life satisfaction. For example, those who visited a library were almost 20% more likely to report good health than those who had not visited a library in the previous 12 months (i).

Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland (ii) and across the UK (iii) by providing free access for people unable to get online at home. This is particularly important in Scotland where broadband take up is still lower than the UK as a whole (iv). Evidence from Carnegie UK shows that online access delivers substantial social and economic benefits to citizens and communities including improved educational attainment; better job prospects; better access to public services; cheaper goods and products; access to advice, information and knowledge, improved communication with family and friends; and enhanced democratic and civic participation (v).

In addition, it is CILIPS's view that libraries are vital to improving literacy in Scotland. Over a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacy (vi) and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level.

In conclusion, CILIPS believes these proposed closures will diminish the service and impacting on the ability of to continue delivering innovative partnership work to attain key policy goals such as employability, digital participation, lifelong learning and health promotion.

Yours sincerely,



Catherine Kearney
Director

- i. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2013/08/9956>
- ii. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Economy/digital>
- iii. <http://www.publications.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital/strategy/>
- iv. <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/communications-market-reports/cmr14/>
- v. <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=7324c775-a74a-47d6-b9ad-4a4c173087a3>.
- vi. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Life-Long-Learning/17551>