

Robertson House  
152 Bath Street,  
Glasgow G2 2TB  
T: 0141 566 5636  
email: [admin@cilips.org.uk](mailto:admin@cilips.org.uk)  
website: [www.cilips.org.uk](http://www.cilips.org.uk)

**Councillor Vaughan Moody and Councillor Andrew Polson**

**East Dunbartonshire Council**

**12 Strathkelvin Place**

**Kirkintilloch**

**G66 1TJ**

Dear Council Leaders,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) is the affiliate body of CILIP, the leading professional body for librarians and information workers in the UK. We write following the recent report in the Kirkintilloch Herald stating East Dunbartonshire Leisure and Culture Trust has recommended the closure of 3 of the libraries in the local authority (approximately 40%).

We understand that this is only a recommendation at this stage, but I would like to raise our concerns and urge you not to take this option forward. We believe this may affect the local community's ability to access an adequate public library service as required by the Local Government Act.

Libraries are visited by more people than attend the cinema and professional football matches and offer an incredible return on investment as highlighted by the National Strategy for Public Libraries, Ambition and Opportunity<sup>i</sup>. A public library service makes an important contribution to national outcomes such as reducing inequality and improving literacy as well as providing a positive experience for local people and demonstrating the value a local authority places on its community.

Libraries tackle social isolation<sup>ii</sup> and support mental health and wellbeing<sup>iii</sup> as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland<sup>iv</sup> and across the UK by providing free access for people unable to get online at home.

Evidence from Carnegie UK<sup>v</sup> 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. Libraries are also vital to improving literacy in Scotland. Studies have shown that around a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacy<sup>vi</sup> and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level.

We believe these closures would severely damage the ability to meet community needs and this may also disadvantage vulnerable groups. We would strongly suggest that an equalities impact assessment should be carried out if has not been already.

We would ask that you provide an answer the following questions:

1. What financial justification is there for closing 40% of the libraries when this is a vastly disproportionate cut in comparison to other services?
2. How do the usage figures compare in the libraries listed for closure to the other libraries in the area?
3. Is there a public consultation planned?
4. What equalities impact assessments have been carried out?

I would hope that you can take the above information into consideration when making your final decision and would be more than happy to discuss the matter further at a time of your convenience.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Acting Director

CILIP in Scotland

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<sup>i</sup> <https://scottishlibraries.org/media/1133/ambition-opportunity-scotlands-national-public-library-strategy.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-communities/>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/making-easier-health-literacy-action-plan-scotland-2017-2025/pages/6/>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/realising-scotlands-full-potential-digital-world-digital-strategy-scotland/>

<sup>v</sup> [https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie\\_uk\\_trust/2016/02/pub1455011469.pdf](https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2016/02/pub1455011469.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/339854/0112382.pdf>