

Robertson House
152 Bath Street,
Glasgow G2 2TB
T: 0141 353 5637
email: admin@cilips.org.uk
website: www.cilips.org.uk

Council Leader Derek Milligan
Midlothian Council, Midlothian House
Buccleuch Street
DALKEITH
Midlothian
EH22 1DN

Dear Councillor Milligan,

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 in response to your proposals to close a number of libraries and believe the proposals, if taken, may affect the local community's ability to access an adequate public library service as required by the Local Government Act.

As you know, much of Midlothian is rural, suffering from high levels of social exclusion and underachievement in schools and rising deprivation. There is a large young and retired segment, with children and young people aged 21 and under accounting for a high percentage of the population, a higher than average number of lone parent households and below average education attainment levels.

Libraries offer the capacity to contribute to many policy and social goals. 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 isolationⁱ and support mental health and wellbeingⁱⁱ as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotlandⁱⁱⁱ and across the UK by providing free access for people unable to get online at home.

Further evidence^{iv} 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^v and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level.

Libraries across Scotland are more popular than other activities such as football and the cinema and have a huge impact on the communities they serve. The recent National Strategy for Public Libraries^{vi} highlighted the incredible return of investment libraries offer. We realise you are facing severe financial challenges and have to make difficult decisions yet we believe the saving these changes would make is a short-term one in comparison to the long-term impact it would have on communities and may disadvantage vulnerable groups.

Also, the additional costs for mobile library provision would mean that the overall savings may well be minimal yet have a high impact on communities.

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

Head of CILIP in Scotland

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

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

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

^{iv} https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2016/02/pub1455011469.pdf

^v <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/339854/0112382.pdf>

^{vi} <https://scottishlibraries.org/media/1133/ambition-opportunity-scotlands-national-public-library-strategy.pdf>