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Council Leader Graham Leadbitter
Moray Council
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Dear Councillor Leadbitter,

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 libraries, reduce opening hours and cut resource budgets.

We realise you are facing unprecedented levels of budgetary challenges. However, we 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.

The 2017/18 CIPFA statistics show that Moray Libraries had 532,650 visitors, this far higher than the combined visitors to Community Centres and Leisure Centres. 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.

I understand the cuts being proposed would make a saving in the region of £200k. The recent National Strategy for Public Librariesⁱ highlighted the incredible return of investment libraries offer and we believe the savings these changes would achieve are short-term ones in comparison to the detrimental long-term impact it would have on communities. Only a few years ago an Equality Impact Assessment highlighted the way similar closures would disadvantage communities in the area and we are deeply concerned these would have a comparable impact.

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 isolationⁱⁱ and support mental health and wellbeingⁱⁱⁱ as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland^{iv} and across the UK by providing free access for people unable to get online at home.

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

We believe that if these proposals were taken it would severely damage the ability to meet community needs and may also disadvantage vulnerable groups.

I would hope that you can take the above information into consideration when making your budget decisions and we would welcome further discussion on the matter.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Head of CILIP in Scotland

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

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

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

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

^v https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2016/02/pub1455011469.pdf

^{vi} <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/339854/0112382.pdf>