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Jillian Ferrie
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Dear Jillian,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) is the affiliate body of CILIP, the leading professional body for librarians in the UK. We write in response to your current proposalsⁱ to reduce opening hours in some of your libraries.

We realise that all councils are facing extreme levels of financial challenges and fully appreciate that you need to make difficult decisions based on the funding available to CultureNL. We welcome that you are not planning to close any libraries and are pleased to see that you are consulting with the local community before making these challenging decisions. However, we are concerned at the scale of the reductions and that the consultation is unable to offer full flexibility in terms of responses to all changes. This runs the risk of the results not truly reflecting deeper community needs.

Reducing opening hours has the potential to severely damage the ability to meet community requirements and may also disadvantage older and more vulnerable people or others who need to visit libraries outside working hours. It is essential that you ensure any changes do not lead to some people being unable to access services they rely on and we urge you to ensure the equalities impact has been fully evaluated via detailed assessment and consultation as well as the data you are already using. It is also important to ensure that any decisions taken do not affect the local community's ability to access an adequate public library service as required by the Local Government Act.

Studies have shown that around a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacyⁱⁱ and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level. They tackle social isolationⁱⁱⁱ and support mental health and wellbeing^{iv} as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland^v and across the UK by providing free access for people unable to get online at home, delivering 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.

A public library service, open and available at the times people need it, makes an important contribution to reducing inequality and demonstrates the value a local authority places on its community. Libraries across Scotland are more popular than other activities such as attending premier league football and the cinema and recent research shows that libraries are well used by people of all ages^{vi} with the recent National Strategy for Public Libraries^{vii} highlighting the incredible return of investment libraries offer. Savings achieved through reducing opening hours are often short-term in comparison to the vast long-term positive impact libraries can have on communities.

I would hope that you can take the above information into consideration in addition to the feedback you receive during the public consultation and we would welcome further discussion on the matter.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Head of CILIP in Scotland

ⁱ <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/libraryopeninghours>

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

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

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

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

^{vi} https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/carnegie_uk_trust/2017/04/Scotland-Shining-a-Light-2.pdf

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