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Stephen McCabe - Council Leader
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Dear Stephen,

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 this open letter in response to your current proposalsⁱ to reduce headquarters support, opening hours and staffing in relation to your branch libraries. We fully appreciate that you need to make difficult decisions in the present financial climate. However, we are deeply concerned at the significant amount proposed and the hugely damaging impact this could have, and we are pleased to see you are consulting with the local community before making these choices.

We believe that reducing opening hours has the potential to severely damage the ability to meet local requirements and may also disadvantage older and more vulnerable people or others, such as working parents of young children, who need to visit libraries outside working hours. We urge you to ensure the equalities impact has been fully evaluated via detailed assessment and consultation and all data on usage figures is considered. It is essential that any decisions taken do not affect the local community's ability to access an adequate public library service as required by legislation.

Libraries rely on their experienced, trained and skilled staff as well as central support. The savings achieved by cutting 9 posts will be a short-term solution that will create long-term problems. To lose this much staffing from an already small team will impact hugely on the communities these library workers serve.

There is a vast evidence bankⁱⁱ that highlights the value of libraries. Studies have shown that around a quarter of Scotland's adults have issues with literacyⁱⁱⁱ and libraries tackle this by providing adult learning and promoting access to reading at a community level. They tackle social isolation^{iv} and support mental health and wellbeing^v as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries also play a key role in supporting the current digital strategies in Scotland^{vi} 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.

An appropriately staffed public library service, open and available at the times people need it 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 and half the population.^{vii} This is only possible if they remain open at times people can access them.

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.inverclyde.gov.uk/news/2019/nov/budget-consultation-begins>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cilips.org.uk/advocacy-campaigns/guide-to-lobbying/evidence/>

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

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

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

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

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