

6th September 2022



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Council Leader Euan Jardine  
Scottish Borders Council Headquarters  
Newtown St. Boswells  
Melrose  
TD6 0SA

Dear Euan,

I am writing to you from the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland ([CILIPS](https://www.cilips.org.uk)), the leading professional body for librarians in the country, and many of our members work in services including those in your local authority and associated trust Live Borders.

We completely understand that both the pandemic and years of austerity have created unprecedented challenges. However, we are deeply concerned by your library service currently having the lowest opening hours in Scotland and that many of your branches have opening hours that potentially do not meet the public need, for example a key branch such as Peebles having no evening opening. This has been further exasperated by the significant reductions in funding for your book fund and digital offer when compared to a few years ago.

This has resulted in Borders Libraries falling behind other authorities and means residents in the authority may be given a poorer quality of service than elsewhere. This could raise serious questions over whether the Council meets its statutory requirements for library provision under the Local Government Act and could also be a breach of the [Equalities Act](#) should people be disadvantaged in terms of access.

Libraries are essential in improving literacy, tackling [social isolation](#) and supporting [mental health and wellbeing](#), as evidenced by the Scottish Government. Libraries play a key role in supporting the current [digital strategies](#) in Scotland by providing free access for people unable to get online at home, delivering substantial democratic, social and economic benefits to citizens and communities as well as helping people search and apply for jobs and welfare.

Libraries rose to the challenge of lockdown, but the majority of communities want physical library services to return to what they were. This is backed up by the new National Strategy, highlighting why libraries are all about people, place and partnership.

A strong economy needs libraries. They have a key role in tackling misinformation, promoting information literacy and engaging communities with the stark reality of climate change. It is also essential that young people can access library services to support their studies and to improve attainment and it is difficult how to see this is possible with your current opening hours.

How much value a local authority attaches to its libraries can often be a good indication over how much it values its people. I ask that you urgently review the service you are offering and consider undertaking some detailed consultation so you can ensure your service is meeting the needs of the communities you serve.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sean McNamara", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP Scotland