

31<sup>st</sup> January



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email: [admin@cilips.org.uk](mailto:admin@cilips.org.uk)

Clackmannanshire Council

Kilncraigs, Greenside St, Alloa

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Dear Councillor

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland ([CILIPS](http://cilips.org.uk)) is the leading professional body for librarians nationally. Many of our members work in services including those in your public libraries.

I am writing to raise concerns over your proposal that would see 3 out of your 5 libraries close. We are pleased to note that you are holding a consultation on any cuts and we realise the local authority funding model means difficult decisions must be made. However, we urge you not to take these proposals any further.

We believe that closing these libraries would be deeply damaging to the local communities who rely on them. This would leave some areas without an accessible and adequate branch, and this could be a breach of your requirements based on both the Local Government Act and Equalities Law. To close 60% of your libraries in one go would be a severe and unprecedented reduction in Scotland.

Public libraries are essential to 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 to search and apply for jobs and welfare.

You suggest that these decisions are based on declining use, but we understand this apparent usage fall has coincided with major reductions in staffing and opening hours, both of which will have inevitably affected the ability of communities to make full use of their libraries. We believe it would be deeply unfair on them to justify closures on this basis, especially when [the evidence of recent research](#) reaffirms the vital importance of library spaces to the public (a majority of whom stated that there can be 'no substitute' for them).

Libraries have never been needed more as we emerge from the pandemic and usage all over the country is rising significantly. Libraries pre-pandemic were visited more than Scottish football and the cinema combined and we expect this to be the situation again, provided that libraries remain open and staffed with skilled professionals.

How much value a local authority attaches to its public and school libraries can often be a good indication of how much it values its people. We ask that you take these savings proposals no further and we would be happy to discuss this matter in greater detail should you wish.

Yours Sincerely

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

Sean McNamara, Head of CILIP Scotland