

5th February 2024

Robertson House, 152 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4TB

email: admin@cilips.org.uk

Clackmannanshire Council
Kilncraigs, Greenside St, Alloa
FK10 1EB

Dear Councillor,

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland ([CILIPS](#)) 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 our concerns over your proposal to close Ben Cleuch Centre Library in Tillicoultry and Sauchie CAP in Sauchie and make reductions to opening hours at the main Speirs Centre Library Alloa.

We are pleased to note that you are holding a consultation, and we of course recognise that the local authority funding model means difficult decisions must be made. We have also written to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance to highlight our significant concerns at the funding landscape nationally.

However, we believe that the proposed changes would be deeply damaging to the local communities who rely on them. The proposed library closures and reductions will take place in SIMD 1 areas where libraries are often most needed. This would leave these areas fully or partly 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.

We urge you to look at [the evidence](#) for public libraries on our website and on the Scottish Book Trust [website](#). For example, public libraries are essential to improving literacy, tackling social isolation, and supporting mental health and wellbeing. They are also the most popular service local government provides and play a key role in digital inclusion 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.

Libraries have been vital in the cost of living crisis, as [backed](#) by Martin Lewis, and users need physical libraries that they can use and [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).

It is also clear that there is little room for library cuts in your local authority. For example:

- Clackmannanshire has 1.95 library branches per 20,000 population. The national average is 2.04 library branches per 20,000 population. If Clackmannanshire close two libraries, they would have 1.17 library branches per 20,000 population.
- At the last available count, Clackmannanshire had a book stock of 39,022 for a population of 51,500. The national average was 223,706 books. Clackmannanshire's book stock per 1,000 population was 758. The national average was 1,561 per 1,000 population.

- In 2022/23, Clackmannanshire had 3.94 staff FTE per 20,000 population. The national average was 7.06 FTE staff per 20,000 population.
- In terms of professional posts, Clackmannanshire had 0.78 FTE professional posts per 20,000 population. The national average was 0.99 FTE professional posts per 20,000 population.
- In 2022/23, the cost per library visit for Clackmannanshire was £2.61. The national average cost per library visit was £2.81.
- A clear increase in borrower numbers was seen from 2019, countering any narrative of declining usage.
- Post covid, all metrics are once again increasing.
- Any decrease in the number of items borrowed also runs counter to significant decreases in book funds (140k in 2008, £59k in 2018) and does not consider eBook usage. Also, new book stock is only 25% what it was in 2005.
- Library usage across Scotland is high with libraries more popular than cinema and attending football matches so there is no clear sign of 'declining use' where libraries are funded, staffed and available.

The service has endured a near decade of cuts from 2014-2023 and we would strongly ask you to reconsider the current proposals as the long-term damage they could result in will far outweigh the saving made in the short-term. We understand how difficult setting a balanced budget is right now but we hope you can take the above into account.

Yours Sincerely



Sean McNamara

Head of CILIP Scotland