Robertson House, 152 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 4TB
email: admin@cilips.org.uk

Inverclyde Council
Municipal Buildings
Clyde Square
Greenock
PA15 1LY

Wednesday 28th January 2026

Dear Councillor,

At CILIPS, the professional association and leading voice for library workers of all sectors across Scotland, we welcome your commitment to open consultation with Inverclyde communities on 2026-28 tax and saving proposals. We are writing to share our expert view on the vital importance of preserving strong, supported and well-funded library services: not simply to ensure that Inverclyde Council continues to meet its statutory duty but to harness the unique benefits that libraries bring when seeking efficient and effective ways to deliver on your key priorities for residents.

We note the Council Leader's recognition that these are uniquely challenging circumstances within which to balance Inverclyde's budget, and as signatories to the Manifesto for a Wellbeing Economy, we share the Council's concern that the current fiscal system often fails to support public services to the degree that our communities need. Within this context, it is more important than ever that decision makers like yourselves have the evidence that cuts and closures to library services can only ever be a false economy. 2023 analysis proves that, for every £1 invested in libraries, Councils receive a £6.95 return in 'social value': defined as a blend of societal and environmental benefits that includes reduced social isolation, increased attainment and employment prospects, and better physical and mental wellbeing. We also know from equivalent research in England that libraries save NHS Scotland up to £3.2 million a year: again, by tackling isolation, as well as disseminating evidence-based health information in a trusted setting and making partnership working possible. When times are tough, communities need their libraries more than ever.

Given the extensive evidence base outlined above and expanded on via our website, of particular concern to us is the proposed closure of Greenock Central Library and Port Glasgow Library as budget savings suggestions. For many years, these vital libraries have been central to life in those areas, and to remove them would take the heart from their communities. As I am sure you are aware, the Council has a legal duty to secure the provision of library facilities for all persons resident in Inverclyde, and our analysis indicates that closing these branches would result in 17,700 fewer people having access to a public library within an hour's round trip on public transport. Following last year's Save Local Libraries debate in the Scottish Parliament, to which we were honoured to contribute, the Scottish Government is working at pace with key stakeholders to better define the current legal safeguards that surround public library provision, and the recent judicial review against Councillors in Dundee, sparked by aggrieved service users in response to the threatened closure of

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their local library, demonstrates the depth of feeling that communities have when it comes to fighting for their right to library access. Aside from the significant financial risk that the threat of such legal action presents, contravention of the statutory duty to support library services is sure to be economically counter-productive, with any apparent short-term savings soon costing communities and the Council in the long run. Returning to the social impact analysis cited above, evidence suggests that a branch library typically provides £1 million in value for its community every year. Not in spite but because of the difficult fiscal picture, Inverclyde cannot afford to be without its libraries.

2026 is the National Year of Reading, a UK-wide movement supported by everyone from Her Majesty The Queen to award-winning authors like Michael Morpurgo, Julia Donaldson and Richard Osman. NYR aims to reverse the steep decline seen in recent years in reading for pleasure, particularly post-pandemic and most acutely amongst families already experiencing financial hardship. For Inverclyde's children and young people, we know that reading for pleasure is four times more powerful on progress in vocabulary, mathematics, and spelling than either parental education or socioeconomic status, and DWP research reveals that being read to at age five is an important protective factor against poverty in adulthood. Public libraries are the only places in Scotland staffed by trained professionals who are dedicated to inspiring this life-changing, lifelong love of reading. We therefore urge you and your fellow Councillors to recognise well-resourced library services as an essential part of Inverclyde's long-term sustainability.

Thank you very much again for the openness of your consultation, and for your attention to our expert evidence. To discuss any aspect of this letter further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Kirsten MacQuarrie

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Sector Development Manager, CILIP Scotland