

Monday 2nd September 2024

South Lanarkshire Council  
Almada Street, Hamilton  
ML3 0AA

Dear Councillor,

As the professional body for library staff in Scotland, and following our letters earlier in the year on [13th February](#) and [15th April](#), we wish to thank South Lanarkshire's Councillors for their ongoing efforts to mitigate the risk to public library services and opening hours that arose from the 2024 Budget. The extent of press coverage and passionate public protest against the original proposal to withdraw services from seven much-loved library branches evidenced the enduring value of library professionals and the irreplaceable services we offer communities, as well as South Lanarkshire residents' well-informed understanding of their legal right to adequate public library access. We are therefore greatly encouraged by the Council's continuing efforts to avoid the dire social, economic and legal consequences that could ensue in the event of such closures.

As I write, the nation is still reeling from the shocking arson attack on Spellow Library in Liverpool, an assault on the beating heart of a community by those who would seek to destroy the unique equality of opportunity that libraries across the country represent. The past month has, however, also demonstrated the depth of connection that exists between the public and their libraries: almost £250,000 has been donated to help rebuild, restock and reopen this vital civic resource. However inadvertent, we would hate for South Lanarkshire residents to suffer similar losses.

For example, we believe that the proposed significant reduction to opening hours for Cambuslang Library would leave a service that falls far short of community requirements for an extended period of time. [Research shows that communities require a physical service](#) and such cuts would disproportionately impact those who rely on library access during evenings and weekends: particularly school-aged children who have already seen their school library services drastically reduced in recent months and years. The link is clear between reading and [the wellbeing and mental health of young people](#), and we are deeply concerned that this change leaves schoolchildren deprived of their legal right to adequate library access.

Meanwhile, proposed Community Asset Transfers in Bothwell and Greenhills could leave up to 6,500 residents without a library service run by trained library professionals. While we are encouraged to see that communities care enough to try and save library services themselves, as the professional body for library workers we do not recognise libraries that are not run by trained and paid staff, funded by the Council or their arm's length partners.

Furthermore, we note that proposed mitigations in several South Lanarkshire locations involve self-service. Elements of this can be useful as an add-on to staffed services that are dedicated to widening access, but the proposal in isolation would lead to communities losing vital, legally enshrined access to a safe space that is adequately safeguarded by skilled professionals. Librarians are amongst [the most trusted professions](#) in the UK, making it all the more critical that we remain directly involved in service delivery for local residents.

Relatedly, while we welcome the Future Libraries Fund support for Cambuslang Library in particular, we are concerned to learn that some of this funding may be ring-fenced for the delivery of Bookbug, as we understand a founding principle of the programme is that Bookbug resources and training opportunities are funded by the Scottish Government. As [our extensive evidence base demonstrates](#), what patrons require above all else is investment in professionals: the lifeblood of the library services that your constituents clearly treasure.

We remain eager to support your mitigation discussions however we can and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

*Kirsten MacQuarrie*

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