

Moray Council Office  
High Street  
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Dear Councillor,

On behalf of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS), the professional body for library workers, I am writing to express our grave concern regarding recent proposals to close seven of your eleven library branches, including two that serve as joint public-school libraries. If imposed, these closures would leave Moray as the only local authority in Scotland with fewer than one library branch per 20,000 people: the poorest public library provision anywhere in the country when calculated by population.

As has already been demonstrated this week by the extent of public protest and press outcry, Moray residents are acutely aware of their legal and moral right to adequate public library access, and CILIPS therefore urge you to consider alternative solutions to the challenging budget conditions currently facing the local authority. Independent research shows that **every £1 invested in libraries generates a £6 return in social capital**, so there can be no more cost-effective measure than safeguarding the future of much-loved local library services that provide equitable access to books, IT and resources, and are essential to literacy and attainment, physical and mental wellbeing, tackling misinformation and social isolation, and more.

We are deeply sympathetic to the difficult financial landscape within which the Council is forced to operate, having campaigned for a nationwide move to [a genuine wellbeing economy](#) that works for people and planet. Nevertheless, even if implemented in their entirety, these short-term saving proposals would represent just 2% of the £12.7 million that the Council is seeking for the next two years, and they would cost far more over the long term as library closures invariably prove to be a false economy. Our [extensive evidence bank](#) reveals that libraries in Scotland are more popular than the cinema and football combined, having seen both **usage and demand increase in the past decade** for what is often the only remaining non-clinical, non-commercial space left where a community can come together to learn new skills and access vital support. Research confirms that **the public sees digital services as no substitute for physical library spaces**, and the library staff who run them are consistently ranked as **one of the UK's most trusted professions**: empowering patrons to enhance their literacy, alleviate loneliness and ultimately **saving NHS Scotland £3.2m per year** through health and wellbeing provision. These cherished community spaces also serve on **the frontline of the cost of living crisis**, providing what renowned Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis describes in our Warm Spaces guidelines as 'crucial extra help to get a decent number of vulnerable people through the winter'.

The transformative impact of public and school library access is particularly pronounced for children and young people. We know that **being read to at age 5 is an important protective factor against poverty at age 30**, and being supported to engage in two or three additional reading activities **increases pupil exam scores by an average of one extra A grade pass**. It has been scientifically



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proven that **reading for just six minutes a day boosts mental health by 68%**, with non-readers 28% more likely to report feelings of depression. The fact that **nearly 1 in 10 Scottish children do not have a book of their own at home** makes their access to professionally staffed public and school libraries even more crucial. Research indicates that children who are able to use a school library have higher attainment and confidence, effects particularly pronounced for youngsters receiving free school meals. With over 25% of adults in Scotland facing challenges related to reading, writing and numbers, reducing their earning potential by approximately 7.1% compared with having a basic level of literacy, the support of school and public librarians is vital to developing Moray's young workforce and meeting your Council-wide vision for young people to grow up 'safe, well-educated and reach their full potential'.

The evidence above helps to explain why libraries in Scotland are protected by several key pieces of legislation. As I am sure you know, Moray Council has a **statutory duty to secure the provision of adequate public library facilities for all persons resident in your area**, in a way that is also compliant with the **Equality Act**, upholding social justice for those with protected characteristics and reducing the inequalities of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage. If Burghead, Cullen, Dufftown, Fochabers, Keith, Lossiemouth and Tomintoul Libraries are closed, it risks **over 17,700 residents** being left lacking a library branch within a one-hour round trip via public transport. Your own service redesign research shows that 86% of Moray citizens are understandably not willing to travel for longer than 20-30 minutes to exercise their right to adequate public library access.

As you may be aware, the threatened closure of Kirkton Community Centre and Library in Dundee earlier this year provoked [a judicial review against the Council](#) after Govan Law Centre accepted instruction from aggrieved service users. Whilst as a professional body we are encouraged to see citizens aware of and willing to fight for their legal right to libraries - in itself, demonstrating a form of democratic literacy that strong, supported library services are essential to nurturing - we would far rather avoid the need for such action in the future, instead seeing the investment of time and money involved channelled directly into libraries themselves.

CILIPS are here to help and eager to support your efforts to secure the future of Moray's vital and valued libraries, so please do not hesitate to get in touch to discuss any of the above evidence in greater detail. Thank you very much for your attention, I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

*Kirsten MacQuarrie*

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CILIPS Sector Development Manager