



PETITIONS FORM

If you wish to submit a petition for consideration by Committee, please complete this template.

Please refer to the Protocol on Petitions before completing the template. If you require any further information or advice, please contact the Democratic Services Manager whose details are provided at the end of this form.

Details of Principal Petitioner

Please enter the name of person and organisation (if applicable) raising the petition. Please include a contact address to which correspondence may be sent, a contact telephone number and email address if available.

Name: Sarah Hawkins
private citizen representing Save Comrie Library and Save Our Rural Libraries

Address:

Tel. No.:

Email:

Title of Petition: Save Comrie Library from Closure!

Petition Statement – Please state (in no more than 250 words) what action the Petitioner wishes the Council to take.

We call on Culture Perth & Kinross and the Perth & Kinross Council to reverse their decision to close our Comrie Library.

Our local authorities have decided to close Comrie Library (and 6 others) in **March 2025** for economic reasons. But our library is a vital public service, integral and valuable to our community. It is a hub for social wellbeing, increasing knowledge, self-education and literacy, providing inspiration, and counteracting inequality. Closing it is a false economy.

Culture Perth & Kinross and Perth & Kinross Council did not inform the community or gather opinions before taking their decision (in December 2023). They seem to be acting contrary to their stated aims and required processes.

Action Taken (if any) to Resolve Issues of Concern before Submitting the Petition

Before a petition is submitted, petitioners are expected to have taken reasonable steps in attempting to resolve the issue.

Please enter below details of any individuals or organisations approached. Copies of correspondence, including any responses, should be appended. This information will be made available to the Committee prior to its consideration of the Petition.

Meetings:

Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK): 29 October 2024, White Church Comrie; hosted by Comrie Community Council (see poster). Save Comrie Library (SCL) and CPK each presented their view. SCL's is attached: [SaveComrieLibrary_intro2meeting_2024.10.29_forCPK.pdf](#). We have had some contact since, but no formally-documented ones.

Comrie Community Council: Agenda item on 10 October 2024, 14 November, 2024, 12 December 2024 (Cllor Stewart Donaldson present at all). Extracts from minutes collated into one file: [ComrieCommunityAndDistrictCouncil_MinutesExtracts.pdf](#).

MSP Jim Fairlie and MP Pete Wishart: 8 November 2024 met in person with 4 SCL members. They noted our concerns and were broadly supportive but emphasized that we should focus our efforts towards PKC.

MSP Mark Ruskell: 2 zoom meetings (8 November and 13 December, 2024) with SORL representatives from villages other than Comrie. Minutes prepared by Ruskell's office, attached: [MarkRuskellsOffice_Library Closures - Community Meeting Notes_2024.11.08.pdf](#), [MarkRuskellsOffice_Library Closure Campaign - Dec Meeting Minutes.pdf](#).

Letters: from September 2024 onwards, many people sent letters to councillors, CPK officers, and M(S)Ps. 14 representative ones, with responses, are included.

The first two, written by Comrie residents on behalf of both Save Comrie Library and SORL are:

* 2 December 2024: [SORL_Save Our LibrariesCampaign_rePKCreCouncilTaxRise.pdf](#), was emailed with title 'Please support the council tax rise, and include library funding in the plans'. From Sarah Hawkins on behalf of SORL, to all PKC councillors, copied to 5 CPK officials, all Perthshire South MSPs, and the MP.

* 18 December 2024: [SORL_AlastairForsyth_Perth and Kinross libraries risk to Council letter.pdf](#), was emailed with title 'Letter to all PKC Cllrs from Save Our Rural Libraries'. From Alastair Forsyth on behalf of SORL, to all PKC councillors.

The third letter, emailed 23 Oct 2024, shows SCL sought a constructive approach to saving Comrie library: [SaveComrieLibraryToMSPs_InvitationToMeeting-2024.10.23.pdf](#).

The other 11 letters are in chronological order and speak for themselves.

Questions in Holyrood: our actions have contributed to MSPs raising questions:

* Murdo Fraser to Angus Robertson: https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/general-questions-november-7-2024?clip_start=11:49:15&clip_end=11:51:22

* Liz Smith 12 December: email attached in letter section

Claire Baker 20 December and earlier: emails attached in letter section

Media: Councillors will no doubt be well aware that there has been good coverage in print media and BBC Scotland, or else will have easy access to such material now. So here is a link to just one early article, concerning only Comrie:

<https://www.pressreader.com/uk/strathearn-herald/20241107/281582361145185>

Appearance before Petitions Committee

Petitioners may have the opportunity to appear before the Committee to speak in support of their petition. Petitioners should indicate whether they wish to make a brief statement to the Committee when it is considering the petition. Note – Proceedings of meetings of the Council, Committees or Sub-Committees held in the Council Chambers, 2 High Street, Perth, and which are open to the public are broadcast live online and recorded/uploaded to the Council's YouTube page.

***I DO wish the opportunity to make a brief statement before the Committee** ☒

***I DO NOT wish to make a brief statement before the Committee** ☐

**mark box as appropriate*

Signature of Principal Petitioner

When satisfied that the petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance on Petitions, the Principal Petitioner should sign and date the form in the box below.

Any additional sheets of signatures should be appended to this form.

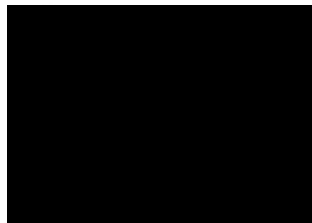
Signature: Sarah Hawkins

Date: 22 January 2024



Name in block capitals: SARAH HAWKINS

supported by Andrew Scobie,
Chair, Comrie Community Council



Comrie's petition is on paper so there are too many additional sheets to append to this form, at least with the technical skills and software I have. All our material is, however, securely bound in paper form: this form with its supporting documents listed on p2; two books of petition signatures (labelled 1 and 2); and a summary of our arguments whose first panel is entitled 'Save Our Rural Libraries "Forever"'. The corresponding electronic files are also clearly named.

*This information sheet was written
in mid-October 2024.
It was available with
the petition*

Save Comrie Library Information Sheet

Comrie Library is run by Culture Perth & Kinross (CPK), a charity under the authority of Perth & Kinross Council (PKC). It currently offers a minimal service with only 10.5 hours opening per week: Thursday 14:00-16:30 and 17:30-19:00; Friday 10:00-12:30, and Saturday 9:30-12:30. We have a dedicated librarian, a wonderful network-builder and sharer of knowledge. Comrie Library has a limited but good stock of books on a wide variety of subjects on its shelves. Books requested from the P&K central library collection are delivered weekly. Our library offers numerous regular activities (a book club, a writers' group, bookbug sessions and story-reading for festivities such as Halloween), with occasional authors' talks and arts and crafts learning sessions, as well as unique, locally relevant events like local artist Helen McCrorie's film on Comrie memories.

Timeline related to this petition and campaign

On 6th December 2023, at a meeting of PKC, a decision was made to close 7 small rural libraries (Comrie, Birnam, Alyth, Auchterarder, Pitlochry, North Inch, Coupar Angus) at the end of the current financial year in 2025. A paper was presented with reasons to make this decision but we have not had any sight of it. There was no consultation with the Comrie community prior to this decision.

On 24th August 2024, 8 months after the decision was made, some - not all - library users received a letter from CPK and a questionnaire asking their opinion on 'alternatives' to the current library service. No mention of 'closure' was made in that letter or the questionnaire. It was this questionnaire that alerted us to the situation and started the Save Comrie Library campaign.

On 10th October, at our request, the Library issue was put on the agenda of Comrie Community Council (CCC) and discussed. We requested an open public meeting for the community to voice their concerns and wishes. Cllr Donaldson was in attendance. Both a member of the CCC and of CPK board, he had failed to inform the community prior to the decision. He maintained the view that the decision must be accepted.

On 29th October 2024 there will be an open public meeting for all in the Comrie community to discuss and challenge the decision to close Comrie Library. This has been arranged by CCC. Representatives of CPK have been invited to attend.

Main points

- **A library's value cannot be assessed by how much it costs to run:** Its value cannot be based just on the number of users or the number of books borrowed, especially in a small rural library like ours. Another assessment method often used is to measure footfall. But footfall has been shown to increase when opening hours are longer, which would argue that Comrie Library's hours should be increased rather than be limited as they are at present. Myriad social values are more important than book numbers or footfall and must be taken into account, despite their being harder to quantify. Results from the Scottish Library and Information Council's 2023 Public Library Survey revealed that from over 15,000 responses from all across Scotland, over 93% agreed that using the local library improves their quality of life.
- **Vital role in the community:** Comrie Library is a thriving hub where residents gather not only to borrow books, but also to access essential information, engage in social activities, and foster community connections. Libraries like ours are proven to have significant social

benefits, including reducing isolation, providing access to lifelong learning opportunities, and supporting wellbeing. Comrie Library welcomes and caters for all in the community, from the young to the elderly, including those with special needs.

- **Children's development:** Comrie Library is a safe, supportive and inclusive learning environment where all children have equitable access to learning resources. Used by many local children, it contributes to their educational development and literacy. As well as enjoyment and stimulating ideas and imagination, reading helps to widen children's vocabulary, helps them with school work, enables them to develop their knowledge and learn new skills, and develop new hobbies. The programme *Every Child a Library Member* shows that where children use libraries and when parents read to them regularly before they attend school, they do better in all areas of study and ultimately achieve better economic benefits in their adult years. Regular and easy access to a library therefore increases opportunities to develop the skills children need to flourish later in life, thereby increasing self-confidence in the current generation and helping reduce child poverty in the next. Comrie Library is an important resource for the nearby Comrie Primary School. Easy access to a library that is nearby is important, particularly for teachers and busy parents with several children.
- **Small libraries have great social impact:** Acting as a social/wellbeing hub is very powerful when the library is small. When the space is larger and used by more people there is less social benefit. This is because people will readily talk in small uncrowded spaces but less so in larger ones, both for social psychology reasons and because in a larger library talking disturbs more people and may often be actively frowned on. Our small rural library in Comrie performs this social function much better, enabling greater social engagement, than larger, more anonymous libraries like Perth and Crieff. The library is also particularly important in rural villages like Comrie because, compared to larger urban centres, they have fewer cultural facilities like music halls, cinemas, museums and galleries.
- **Duty of care:** Closing Comrie Library would particularly harm our children and older residents, children from homes with no books, poorer people (both families and the elderly), the neurodivergent, and those with mobility issues. It would also disadvantage healthy, employed people (who pay their taxes so deserve some local amenities) and busy parents with little time to travel miles to take their children to a distant library (after school and in the dark in winter). Comrie residents who are lonely, isolated or cold rely on the library as a safe warm space for learning, reading, and connecting with others. In a time when fostering real-world connections is crucial, and when equal opportunities are badly needed, we need to protect this resource for current and future generations.
- **Culture Perth & Kinross' mission:** If they close Comrie Library, CPK and PKC are going against their stated goals. Their proclaimed mission includes fostering community connections, supporting lifelong learning, and enhancing access to literature and information. They claim a commitment to promoting literacy, learning, and community wellbeing through accessible library services. They say they want to support culture and community. Perth and Kinross Culture Strategy 2023-2028 states: "Culture is at the heart of every community in Perth and Kinross. Culture is part of the story told by every town, village and settlement..." The closure of rural libraries, including Comrie's, would expose these claims as untrue. Rather than fostering, supporting and enhancing people's cultural wellbeing, their decision would reduce it, particularly in areas that need these services the most because they lack others, such as theatres and concert venues. The closure of our library would be a significant loss to our village that appears of no consequence to CPK.

- **Lack of consultation:** The decision was made without the required consultation with the Comrie community, depriving us of the opportunity to voice our concerns and participate in shaping the future of local services. This is contrary to PKC and CPK's statutory duties as public authorities. We believe that the library's importance to the village has been underestimated, and that its closure will have a negative impact on all generations in our community.
- **Costs and purported savings for PKC's budget:** PKC and CPK have not provided us with the costs to run Comrie Library. How much would closing it save for them? We have submitted an FOI requesting this information. If PKC need to cut costs, it should not be to the detriment of smaller communities. Perhaps they have overspent their budget, much of it going on the new museum in Perth and other larger cultural institutions in bigger towns such as Pitlochry's theatre. In comparison to these institutions, our small library costs - and will only save them - a relatively tiny amount. Our library is a basic service, just like roads and water. We pay our taxes. Cutting library funding may seem like a short-term solution to budget constraints, but the long-term consequences are profound. Decision-makers must consider both the financial and social cost of not maintaining these essential services.
- **Return on investment and economic growth:** Independent research commissioned by Suffolk Libraries shows that libraries generate £41 million worth of social value, translating to at least £6 for every £1 invested, as well as saving NHS services £542,000 annually, and supporting economic growth. 87% of users also confirmed that libraries have helped them save money in difficult times. In the midst of a nationwide cost-of-living crisis, public libraries are a lifeline of community support – not just in terms of free access to information, resources and events, but for the pivotal role they play in people's wellbeing.
- **Questionable legality of closing Comrie Library:** The law safeguards adequate public library access in Scotland and seeks to protect those disproportionately impacted by inequality of opportunity. Libraries - and particularly small libraries in rural communities - play a vital role in reducing inequality. PKC, as a public library authority, is duty-bound under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to maintain a comprehensive public library service. Other key pieces of relevant legislation include: The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, The Human Rights Act 1998, and The Equality Act 2010. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service>.

For questions, further information and to get involved, please contact:
SaveComrieLibrary@gmail.com

or scan the QR code to join the mailing list



SCAN ME

Save Our Rural Libraries

“Forever”

Closing rural libraries is a false economy:

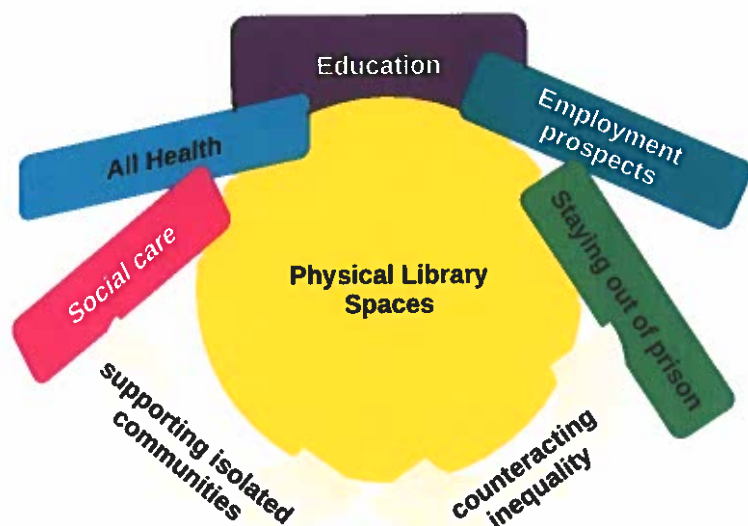
- the financial gains have been calculated using incomplete criteria
- the real costs to communities and services, now and in the future, have been ignored

Cost of running our rural libraries?

35p a month
per band D property

Calculation: extrapolated from indicative CPK cost savings and the council press release about their medium term council tax strategy. <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/24337/Proposed-Council-Tax-rises-to-protect-frontline-services> 27 Nov 2024. "At just £11.70 a month for a Band D property, we could raise over £10m to protect health and social care, support for children with additional support needs and invest in tackling poverty." We have assumed CPK needs to save £300k p.a. for libraries after the impact of NIC is included (the exact figure is unclear). If £11.70 p.m. = £10million, then £300k needs £0.35 per Band D property.

Libraries support and connect every social need



Value for money

A mobile van adds a financial benefit, but a library supports a much bigger economic benefit

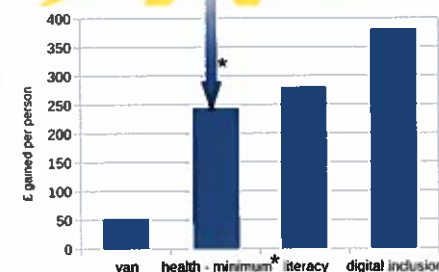
health
£244 - £60k gained per person, depending on the intervention

literacy
£279 gained per participant in any programme

digital inclusion
£379 gained per participant, assuming that participants continue to secure employment within two years of using these services.

van
£49.70 gained per participant

£6 gained for every £1 spent



*** health gain**
libraries save the NHS between £244 and £60,000 per person, depending on the intervention

Gordon, J. ed. (2023) *Libraries for living, and for living better: The value and impact of public libraries in the East of England*. ISBN 978-1-915812-21-6. p 18. Accessed 2 Dec 2024: <https://www.ueapublishingproject.com/product-page/libraries-for-living-and-for-living-better-by-john-gordon> Also as J. Gordon, A. Blackett, R. Fordham, M. Garraffa, S. Howard Wisner, E. Leist, A. Ponzo, D. Smith, A. Welsh & G. Xydopoulos, (2023) University of East Anglia CreativeUEA and Health Economics Consulting.

Your statutory duty: Adequate library provision

for all persons resident in their area*

Defined in meaningful terms:

Feasible access to a library building

assessed using multiple criteria in respect of
the specific population e.g.
its size, presence of vulnerable/disadvantaged people,
travel options, added value of convenient 'dropping in'

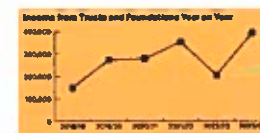
Libraries provide most value when they are **LOCAL**

The largest user group served by all 3 (PKC) ALEOs is people living within 30 minutes travel distance of ALEO venues.
PKC Transformation Review, 6 Dec 2023, section 6.2.

* Local Government Act (Scotland) 1973, Section 163

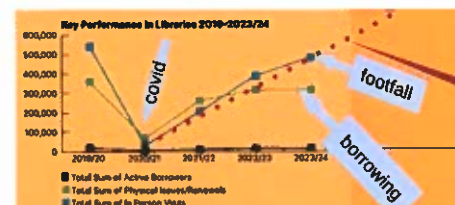
Major decisions made

- at the wrong time



a blip in income

- using footfall and borrowing:



footfall 18% less than before covid,
yet in line with national figures and
still rising

BUT: continue the **line** for
2-3 years and footfall likely
to be better than pre-covid

footfall should
soon recover as
elderly return

data from Culture Perth and Kinross Annual Report 2023-4

These simple accounting measures are inappropriate as the sole criteria

e.g.

Lynch, E. (2024) *The value and impact of Scotland's libraries*. Scottish Book Trust. Accessed 16 Dec 2024

"The benefit of libraries to our children's outcomes, and to addressing the attainment gap, are not quantifiable by simple division of "active borrowers" by costs of operation as presented by Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK)."

Letter from SORL members to all P&K Councillors, emailed 18 December 2024

Better measures include long-term benefits of social value

(very broadly defined),
like those in the University of East Anglia study
already cited (page 4 of this file)

- reducing burdens on NHS & social care
- digital inclusion
- counteracting inequality & deprivation
- helping with loneliness and homelessness (warm spaces)

Culture Perth and Kinross know this – see:

• CPK's Equality Impact Assessment, Sept 2024

• CPK's **new initiative**



“New campaign highlights cost saving benefits of library membership”

Under ‘Latest News’, undated.

Accessed 14 January 2025
<https://www.culturepk.org.uk/news/new-campaign-highlights-cost-saving-benefits-of-library-membership/>

CPK: Value for money? Could there be a better funding model?

- The Glasgow Audit* raised serious questions about the operation of Culture Perth and Kinross
- Are Councillors aware of these questions, and are they sure that best value was always obtained by CPK's structure and financial decision-making?

In case you are thinking libraries are increasingly irrelevant to modern life...

rural libraries are the heart of our communities

...precious FREE Warm Spaces where people are greeted with a smile, can access computers, do work or homework, meet others, and browse books (without necessarily borrowing) and local history.

Libraries combat social isolation



Just because you don't currently use one, doesn't mean you haven't before or won't in the future...



Librarians help you find and the books you



the reliable information you need, might like, without bias.

Libraries generate a sense of togetherness and are a refuge from polarisation that often happens online. Unlike commercial platforms and algorithms, libraries don't create unrealistic bubbles that restrict your thinking.

Books can be quoted and debated over time for their relation to truth and human experience—often within library book-groups



Perth & Kinross is a huge local authority with minimal, expensive public transport. **Closing libraries and centralising services impoverishes rural communities of their unique advantages.**

Dear Councillor

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider our arguments for the permanent retention of all our rural libraries with their existing (or even increased?) hours.

Save Our Rural Libraries

23 January 2025



THE FUTURE OF COMRIE LIBRARY PUBLIC MEETING

29

October
7pm

The White
Church

DOORS OPEN FROM 6:45PM

Evidence that Comrie Community Council supports us.



Our starting point

Comrie with CPK
29 October 2024

Why are we here?

PKC/CPK: asks what type of library we want

- assumes the current physical library will be closed and the nearest ones will be in Crieff and Perth
- We want to take a step back:
 - is it actually necessary to close the library?

Two areas of questioning

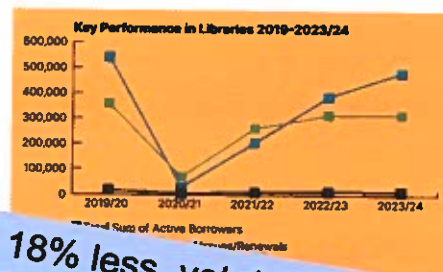
What **criteria** were used in deciding to close?

What **processes** were followed?

Criteria for making the decision

1. Financial: how much will be saved by closing
 - Comrie library (+ its shop)?
 - all P&K rural libraries?

2. Usage: footfall and borrowing



18% less, yet rising;
in line with national figures

3. Was there a cost-benefit analysis?
 - What did it include (less quantifiable benefits)?
4. What other solutions were considered?
5. Why were they rejected?

What processes were followed?

1. CPK mission & vision statements*:

- **Mission:** To develop and deliver a range of innovative and creative cultural services, public programmes and partnerships which engage a wide and diverse audience in the best of local, national, and international culture.
- **Vision:** To be at the heart of a community that connects people, ideas, knowledge, and collections.

2. Statutory obligations**:

- what consultations did PKC/CPK carry out? When?
- In what ways did consultations comply with
 - PKC/CPK's aims, vision mission?
 - statutory requirements?
- can we see the Equalities Impact Assessment?

* www.culturepk.org.uk/about/

**www.cilips.org.uk/advocacy-campaigns/legislation/

Dear Sir\ Madam,

We are children from Comrie Primary School, and we are writing to you to say that Comrie Library should not close.

First of all, as a school we use the library all of the time. In Primary 1 we got to visit the library regularly and if the library closes our buddies, as well as the future p1s, will not be able to experience the library. When you are in P1 to P3 you get book bug bags which we still remember and love them, and it would be terrible for others to miss out on this experience. It is very important for young children to visit a library to become interested and love books! If we did not have the library then lots more children would not read.

Secondly, the Comrie library is a nice, safe space for lots of people. Lots of people might not have a place that they can feel safe in at home and so can use this space to calm themselves down. Reading is a calming activity that lots of us use to help our emotions and we would not be able to do this and get so many books or games without the library. Therefore to help us stay happy and healthy Comrie Library should not close.

In addition, there are lots of families who cannot afford to buy their children books or games and so get these from the library instead. If the library closed then those families would not be able to have fun and play games because they would not have access to them. This would be so sad and make children feel unhappy and uncared for. Being able to play and relax is a child's right and we cannot take this away from them by closing the library.

In conclusion, we will be so upset and disappointed if the library closes because for some people it's their safe space as it's relaxing as well as calming with the luxurious velvet chairs. We don't want the library to close because we have lots of happy memories there and if it closes, we won't be able to make any more memories. For those who read a lot of books it's useful to have somewhere close by to get books. As well as that, the librarians are kind and nice. Please take this into consideration. Please do not close Comrie Library!

Kind regards,

Comrie Primary School

Legislation

The Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 incorporates the following existing legislation relating to public libraries -

- The Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1887
- The Public Libraries (Scotland) Act 1955
- The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

The **Local Government Act** – Section 163 states:

"A local authority shall have a duty to secure the provision of adequate library facilities for **all persons** resident in their area"

The **Equality Act 2010** says public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty. This is in addition to their duty not to discriminate against you.

The duty aims to make sure public authorities think about things like discrimination and the needs of people who are disadvantaged or suffer inequality, when they make decisions about how they provide their services and implement policies.

www.cilips.org.uk/advocacy-campaigns/legislation/

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/public-sector-equality-duty/what-s-the-public-sector-equality-duty/>

Benefits to communities, especially rural ones with few other amenities, include:

- Social contacts and networking, feelings of belonging, especially effectively achieved by small local libraries
 - Mental health (Medical Centre preparing a statement)
 - Physical health
- Education, especially counteracting social and economic inequality of opportunity: rural closures disproportionately disadvantage those in our communities who are already disadvantaged
- A safe space for neurodivergent and lonely people, including children
- local accessibility is essential for people with limited mobility and/or time
- Preserving our culture, rural and wider
- Suffolk Libraries research: libraries generate £41 million worth of *social value*, translating to at least £6 for every £1 invested, as well as saving NHS services £542,000 annually, and supporting economic growth
- The wider, less-easily quantified, benefits play a much more prominent role in rural communities than urban ones, precisely because rural areas have fewer other indoor resources freely accessible to all, and local networks can be strong

This slide was
not shown
on
but



Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Comrie Community Council, Thursday 10th October, 2024

Library Closure:

- Culture Perth and Kinross have announced that Comrie Library will close in April 2025.
- A Save Comrie Library group member read a statement. The decision to close the library was made in December 2023, but the community has only been told about it now. They seek clarification on the details from Cllr Stewart Donaldson, who is on the board of Culture PKC. Furthermore, they asked if the Community Council would set up a public meeting to discuss the library closure in more detail.
- The Community Council is happy to set up a meeting and will seek to do so.
- Stewart outlined the potential alternative service delivery models after the library's closure. He also raised the possibility of an asset transfer to the community.
- A resident expressed dissatisfaction about not being able to locate the meeting minutes where the closure was agreed upon. Stewart confirmed that the minutes are available and that the recorded meetings are on the PKC YouTube channel.
- Attendees expressed mutual unhappiness at the transparency of the decision to close the library.
- An attendee confirmed that PKC does not own the library building; the Dundas Family of Comrie House gifted it to the village.* This challenges the legitimacy of the closure.
- A representative from St. Serf's expressed concern that the library closure will adversely affect the church due to a mutual connection.

* Addendum written by Sarah Hawkins (for Save Comrie Library)

Since this meeting, we had confirmed that this minute requires amending.

The deeds show that neither PKC nor the village of Comrie own the library building. Ownership was transferred to various private individuals in a series DebbieRobertson@pkc.gov.uk of transactions, most recently in 1996.

The evidence is in an email from Debbie Robertson <>, sent on 20 November 2024 to Roddy Riddell, Geoff Fogg, Helen Smout, and Councillor Stewart Donaldson. With Debbie Robertson's permission, Roddy Riddell forwarded a copy of her email, with the deeds, to Sarah Hawkins (representing Save Comrie Library campaign), copied to Stewart Donaldson on 21 November.

These emails are not attached since several PKC officers already have them.

**Extract from Minutes of Meeting of Comrie Community Council,
Thursday 14 November, 2024**

Save Comrie Library Campaign Update:

1. Representatives from the Save Comrie Library group thanked the Community Council for hosting the meeting with Culture PKC staff on October 28th.
2. The group is producing weekly newsletters on the campaign.
3. They are confident they have a clear path to saving the library.
4. They have met with Jim Fairlie MSP, Mark Ruskell MSP, and Pete Wishart, MP. Library closures have been raised in the Scottish Parliament.
5. A formal Participation Request has been drafted and will be submitted to PKC by the Community Council.
6. The consensus is that nobody wants the library to close.
7. The group is mindful of the financial pressures which have forced this decision. Stewart provided some further information on forthcoming potential budget issues.
8. Uncertainty remains about who owns the library building. Stewart will discuss this with the Legal Services Team.

**Minutes of Meeting of Comrie Community Council, Thursday 12
December, 2024**

have not yet been approved. The library issues were discussed: updates were given, with most time devoted to a report on the informal meeting in Perth between Rob Malpas and several CPK officers.

Save Libraries Community Group Meeting

Attendees

- Sarah Hawkins – Save Comrie Library group, joined by three others.
- Sarah Handa - Chairperson at Royal School of Dunkeld parent-teacher group. Birnam Group.
- Caroline Robinson – Birnam Group, also parent from Royal School of Dunkeld.
- Kevin Gates – Scone Library Group

Discussion

- Mark provided update on response from PKC.
- **Update from Comrie** – Provided summary of meeting with CPK, noted they acknowledged they had not carried out the consultation properly. Felt they were pushing their option of closing the libraries, community group pushed back that they are seeking a multi-pronged approach and their priority is reversing the decision and to retain the library. Looking at options, for example can we look at ring-fenced funding for the libraries to fund them for the next two to three years while they look and long-term options.
- **CPK offer from meeting** - Additional mobile library stops; click and collect services; community engagement and additional reader development; outreach work inc. Bookbug and book groups; Hub library services in Aberfeldy, Crieff, Kinross, Perth and Blairgowrie (reduced hours).
- **Comrie preparing a participation request** – almost ready to submit.
- **Update from Birnam Group** – Noted the lack of consultation, feel they have told that there will be no library and they are responsible if they want to retain this service. Does not feel that they have explored all funding avenues and are not looking at it holistically. Seems to be a lack of thinking around the impact of closing rural libraries – *equality impact assessment?*
- Felt that at the meeting, CPK were presenting a case for closure rather than exploring options.
- Consensus that financial assumptions seemed flawed.
- Concerns regarding literacy levels – focused attention of being in the library and the space itself just as important as borrower numbers which CPK are placing emphasis on.
- **Mobile libraries** – Not an adequate alternative, limited time inside, only comes once a fortnight, lack of social interaction that comes with the space, limited borrowing and browsing. Cannot replace the community space.
- **Lack of equality impact assessment** – Not quantifying the impact for people with additional needs, feedback that those ASN have said they would not attend the bigger libraries and that their local libraries provide a smaller, familiar, safe space.
- **E- Books** – CPK said they would put more funding into these resources, use of which has flattened out comparably with book borrowing.
- **Comrie Meeting with Jim Fairlie and John Swinney** – Stated that whilst this decision has been made, funding may be available in the next financial year depending on the new Barnet formula. However, Mark noted once a service is gone, they're gone, and it is likely the financial pressures on local authorities will continue.
- **Lack of community engagement** – Massive failing in due process, libraries due to close in March and council are just meeting with communities now. Even if the groups were to proceed with alternative transformation plans, they would not have time to do this properly.

- **Impact Assessments** - have been completed by CPK and we have come across research demonstrating that for every £1 spent on library get £6 back - in terms of social infrastructure provided.

Actions

- Groups to work together and strategize going forward.
- Keen to look into options for ring-fenced funding to keep libraries open for the next 2- 3 years.
- Mark noted it is very difficult for the Government to ring-fence funding for council services.
- Noted the tourism levy – this could be used to fund the libraries. May be worth exploring this option with the council.
- More time for the conversation – can cuts be halted for another year to allow the community to effectively engage and explore alternatives.
- Evie to put everyone in touch with each other.
- Meeting in December before Christmas.
- Update groups with Parliamentary Forum discussion and responses to correspondence.
- Remain in touch regarding any upcoming campaign events, let us know if any action is required from our team going forward.

Library Closure Campaign Meeting

Friday 13 December 2024

Attendees

- [REDACTED] – Comrie
- [REDACTED] – Scone
- [REDACTED] – Auchterarder
- [REDACTED] – Comrie
- Sarah Hawkins – Comrie
- [REDACTED] – Birnam

Updates

- **MR** – Meeting with CPK, do not want to carry out cuts but hands are tied in terms of budget restraints. Mark made the point that any transition into community ownership has to be given sufficient time and cooperation with communities. Cuts need to be taken off the table for the discussions and decisions to be made.
- Also launched e-action on Green Party website, do not have to be member to sign.
- Continuing to look for opportunities to raise this in the chamber.
- Met with PKC a few weeks ago, discussed different options to increase available funding for libraries such as the visitor levy, council tax increases.
- **DH** – Raised online petition a few days ago which has over 400 signatures. Have been carrying out letter writing campaign, writing to authors, councillors and politicians. Joining and sharing resources online, including creating a Save Our Rural Libraries Facebook group. Held meeting 12 December 2024.
- **CR** - 1420 people who have signed the online petitions for Auchterarder (409), Scone (251) and Birnam (760), and I think Sarah Hawkins said there are 1000 signed the paper one in Comrie. Have been carrying out a media campaign across newspapers both local and national. Campaigners from the Save our Rural Library Groups have been giving interviews.
- **CR** - Have been speaking to CLIPS on what has happened and the past, for example library closures proposed in Moray and libraries closed in Fife in 2016. The community replacements to these have not been successful. PKC

have said that they will not offer anything except training. Concern in Birnam is that there has not been a willingness to reduce costs or speak with Birnam Arts about a reduction in rent. They have been challenged on this, but they have just said they need to get rid of this deficit in our budget and this is the quickest way of doing it. Mobile libraries need replacing and repairing, so not really a costly alternative.

- **CR** – Protest in Perth taking place on 11 January.
- **GA** – Likely due to repairs on mobile libraries, they will only have one if these go ahead. Evident there has been a lot of spin involved.
- **GA**- Online petition, part of Save our Rural Libraries Campaign and planning a demonstration on the 5th of February to coincide with final decision. Part of this protest meeting is to raise awareness to the wider Perthshire communities that this affects them all. Remains a lot of local support.
- **SH** – E-action has been circulated via whatsapp, Facebook groups and newsletter. They are editing a letter that AF has pulled together to all the councillors, pulls together a lot of the costs. Also includes reference to some of the questionable legal actions which have been taken. Will send the final copy to Mark and Evie. Previously had sent one to all councillors about raising the council tax which was successful. Got a good response to this.
- **SH** – Comrie community council meeting last night, library issue was brought up. Positive response, chair of the council is supportive of saving the library. Cllr. Donaldson was there and was more positive than previously about the council tax increase. However, he said that a lot of this will go to social care.
- **SH** – Asked MR if he has contacts for getting the issue in national media. How much additional council tax would be needed to keep the libraries open, Kevin Gates calculated this as being 35 pence per household, per month (Band D).
– Would it be possible to get this review and confirmed?
- **Jen** – Interview with BBC Scotland. Hosted discussion sessions in the library which looked at the real meaning of the closures, impact on the environment, impact of false economy and social impact.

- **Jen** – Artistic approaches of thinking about the library – looking to do community placard and banner making ahead of any protests and demos.
- **Jen** – Suggested open mic and demo would be great for the Jan demo, this is where you get across the genuine impact.
- **Jen** – Issue with how CPK have approached this. Lack of transparency and spin. Previously hijacked public meeting and put the focus on their alternative provision proposal. Seem to be carrying out multiple 'informal' meetings with community members which have raised concerns about transparency. Trust has broken down with community and CPK. Need to look at alternative to create positive and constructive relationship – suggests a working -group with each library represented.

Questions

Q: MR – Clear cross-campaign organising, is there an agreed timeline for action ahead of final budget decision?

A:CR - Save our Rural Libraries Campaign meeting every two weeks, have a website launching shortly, have also got other groups which handle media and community led actions/meetings. Looking to work together to rally and garner public support through demo in January prior to budget decisions. Keep sharing actions and updates with media as part of this awareness raising campaign.

Q:SH - Have a large archive in Comrie and some members have calculated how much of this false economy would be and have the data that suggests this has been in the works for a long time. Envisaged getting a portfolio together of the more important letters they've sent and the more detailed evidence they've been unable to get into a letter. They would like to present this information – Would it be possible to present this on the 11th of Jan demo? Could also send case studies or have people will give their testimonies.

Actions

- **MR** – Circulate meeting minutes.

- **Campaign Groups** – Keep MR updated with any demos and protests, will aim to attend those taking place 11 Jan and 5 Feb.
- **MR** – Set up next meeting for end of Jan, discuss any actions which need to be taken prior to the budget.
- **MR** - Continue to look for opportunities to raise the issue in the chamber and media.
- **Campaign Groups** – Circulate briefings around MSPs and cllr, continue sharing petitions, e-action, meetings and letter campaigns.
- **Campaign Groups** – Keep MR updated and let us know if we can offer any help/action anything on their behalf.

Links

- **E – Action** - <https://greens.scot/save-our-libraries>
- **Save our Rural Libraries FB Group** - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/394360330333704/>
- **Petition Birnam** - <https://www.change.org/p/save-birnam-library>
- **Petition Scone** - <https://www.change.org/p/save-scone-library-from-closure>
- **Petition Auchterarder** - https://www.change.org/p/save-auchterarder-library-from-closure?source_location=tag

2 December 2024

To all Perth and Kinross Councillors

Dear Councillors

As campaigners to keep our rural libraries open, **we ask you to fully support the proposed increase in council tax.** Further, please ensure that funding for Libraries is included in the sectors that will benefit, and ring-fenced.

You will know that CPK staff are currently having to work to provide severely reduced services, including completely closing our rural libraries.

As their Equality Impact Assessment indicates, these same people are acutely aware of the negative social and economic impact caused by poor library services, and especially by complete absence of physical libraries. Many of these impacts will cause adverse knock-on effects to precisely the same services the increased council tax is intended to benefit: education, social care, the NHS and related services, and socio-economic inequality.

That is, we welcome the increased council tax as a way of ameliorating problems of chronic underfunding caused partly by inflation and council-tax freezes in previous years. As your own notice says, the tax is "to protect health and social care, support for children with additional support needs and invest in tackling poverty."

Libraries contribute significantly to exactly these areas. Multi-disciplinary research at the University of East Anglia concludes that libraries generate *at least £6 for every £1 invested*, as well as saving (English) NHS services £542,000 annually, and supporting economic growth.

Specifically, these researchers' mathematical models showed a mobile van adds a financial benefit of £49.70 per participant per year, but a physical library supports a much bigger economic benefit: a branch library typically provides, gross before operating costs, £1m worth of value (range £600k to £1.5m), for the three domains examined: health and wellbeing, children's literacy, digital inclusion. Conservative estimates of annual added value for these themes are: health: £244 - £60k per participant depending on the intervention; literacy: £279 per participant in any programme; digital inclusion: £379 per participant, assuming that participants continue to secure employment within two years of using these services.

Source: John Gordon (ed.) "Libraries for living, and for living better: The value and impact of public libraries in the East of England." ISBN 978-1-915812-21-6. p.18. Accessed (free) 2 Dec 2024: google the ISBN number, or download from <https://www.ueapublishingproject.com/product-page/libraries-for-living-and-for-living-better-by-john-gordon>

In short, by including libraries in your new financial plans, you will be investing in both short- and long-term socio-economic benefits across the board. Those of us campaigning for libraries believe that by reducing library provision below its current level, PKC will only make false economies, undoubtedly in the long term, and almost certainly in the short term too.

We strongly urge you to at least protect the existing provision for libraries, and if possible to actively secure a better future for libraries. The case for doing so is strong and widely accepted.

Yours sincerely

Representatives of SORL (Save our Rural Libraries) members:

Sarah Hawkins, for Save Comrie Library Campaign
Caroline Wilding, for Save Birnam Library Campaign
Kevin Gates, for Save Scone Library Campaign
Angela Laurie, for Save Auchterarder Library Campaign

Sender on behalf of those above: Sarah Hawkins, [REDACTED]

The above letter was emailed to those listed below, and received responses as appended.

please support the council tax rise, and include library funding in the plans

Sarah Hawkins - [redacted]

2 December 2024 at 15:04

To: Councillor Stewart Donaldson <sdonaldson@pkc.gov.uk>, nkhogali@pkc.gov.uk, rbrock@pkc.gov.uk, ABailey@pkc.gov.uk, AForbes@pkc.gov.uk, KHarvey@pkc.gov.uk, HAnderson@pkc.gov.uk, CEStewart@pkc.gov.uk, GrantStewart@pkc.gov.uk, JWelch@pkc.gov.uk, BBrawn@pkc.gov.uk, TMcEwan@pkc.gov.uk, cshiers@pkc.gov.uk, jcduff@pkc.gov.uk, XMcDade@pkc.gov.uk, mwilliamson@pkc.gov.uk, IJames@pkc.gov.uk, glaing@pkc.gov.uk, ClaireMcLaren@pkc.gov.uk, KeithAllan@pkc.gov.uk, StevenCarr@pkc.gov.uk, AlanWatt@pkc.gov.uk, DCuthbert@pkc.gov.uk, NFreshwater@pkc.gov.uk, wbrobertson@pkc.gov.uk, RWatters@pkc.gov.uk, MFrampton@pkc.gov.uk, Dillingworth@pkc.gov.uk, franksmith@pkc.gov.uk, LBarrett@pkc.gov.uk, AChan@pkc.gov.uk, IMacPherson@pkc.gov.uk, SMcCole@pkc.gov.uk, CMair@pkc.gov.uk, IMassie@pkc.gov.uk, JRebbeck@pkc.gov.uk, CAhern@pkc.gov.uk, pabarrett@pkc.gov.uk, EDrysdale@pkc.gov.uk, aparrott@pkc.gov.uk

Bcc: [redacted]

To all PKC councillors

On behalf of campaigns across Perth and Kinross, I attach a letter asking you to support the proposed council tax rise, and at the same time to ensure that library funding is included in how the increased revenue is used.

The letter is also copied into the body of this email below in case downloading is a problem.
There is nothing else new below my signature here though.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]
Sarah Hawkins,

Responses received

Councillor Iain MacPherson <IMacPherson@pkc.gov.uk>

2 December 2024 at 15:18

To: Sarah Hawkins <[redacted]>

Dear Sarah

Thank you for your email.

I note the issues you have raised and the views that you have expressed.

Kind regards,

Iain

Councillor Iain MacPherson

Scottish National Party
Perth City South (Ward 10)
Perth & Kinross Council
[2 High Street](#)

Perth

PH1 5PH

Phone: 01738 475160

Mobile: 07468 756297

Email: IMacPherson@pkc.gov.uk

Website: www.pkc.gov.uk

=====

from: Councillor Caroline Shiers <CSHiers@pkc.gov.uk>

to: Sarah Hawkins [REDACTED]

date: 4 Dec 2024, 12:54

subject: RE: please support the council tax rise, and include library funding in the plans

Dear Ms Hawkins, thank you for your email. We are just about to start the budget review process within PKC and all these points will be considered. Your letter is helpful in representing views held by residents. Thank you again. Caroline

=====

Councillor Carol Mair <CMair@pkc.gov.uk>

Fri, 6 Dec 2024, 12:46

to me

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for including me in your emailed request. As you will know by now from the local papers, P&K Councillors did vote by a majority to support a rise in Council Tax. I was one of those who voted in favour. I appreciate how difficult times are for many people just now, and particularly with the prospect of Christmas looming on family finances, there will be many across Perth and Kinross who are very upset at the rise. However, in good conscience I could not have voted against the rise when the alternative was to make further cuts in public spending, social services etc.

I am a great reader, and very much a supporter of libraries and all the essential functions they provide to communities. I do hope it will be possible for the increased funding from Council Tax, and from Scottish Government, to provide some leeway in which our Council will be able to protect and continue funding libraries. But at the end of the day, decisions will have to be made by the officers who have to do the best they can to protect services right across our area, and to ensure the maximum security for those in our communities who are suffering most from the cost of living increases. It's an impossible task to please everyone, and for each person like you and I who value one community asset, there will be someone else demanding funding for a different one. Let's hope our council officers can find a financial balance which will provide the most benefit to the greatest number of people.

Thank you again for getting in touch with me.

Very Best Wishes for Christmas and the coming year.

Carol Mair

Councillor Carol Mair,

Ward 11 – Perth City North

P&K Older People's Champion

Working Hours: Mon to Fri 9am to 6pm – not Tuesday

Tel: 01738 475025 (answering machine attached)

Perth & Kinross Council,

2 High Street, Perth

PH1 5PH

=====

Councillor Stewart Donaldson <SDonaldson@pkc.gov.uk>

11 Dec 2024, 13:27

to me

Dear Sarah,

Thank you for your e-mail, and attached letter, of 2nd December.

As you will be aware the Medium-Term Financial Strategy was agreed by Council last week. You may find the attached documents to be of interest.

At time of writing, we have had the Scottish Budget, but it may well be until early next week before knowing the finer detail, and perhaps further out what the full implications are for people in Perth and Kinross. For instance, as regards employer's national insurance contributions, especially the impact that changes in the threshold will have on all employees, especially those on lower pay. For employers what they will have to pay is on all pay on the £4,100 from £5,000 up to £9,100. There are also very real pressures on health and social care, especially given demographics.

Yet, what did assist was the decision of full Council on 4th December (the same day as the Scottish Budget) to approve the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The new strategy allows for an indicative increase in Council Tax of 10% in 2025/2026, and 10% in 2026/2027. Then 6% would apply in 2027/2028.

These figures are not cast in tablets of stone, but for planning purposes they do clearly demonstrate the direction of travel. The objective is to sustain and maintain front line services, and to protect the capital budget.

Of course, the final decisions will be taken at the meeting of full Council on Wednesday, 26th February. That process I have to respect. At that time all the various forces within the Council will present their own submissions. My own group does form a minority administration. That said, we will aim to be collegiate, and to incorporate where possible good ideas from other groups, both within the Council, and outwith as well. Right now, I am more optimistic than a few months ago that we can make real progress. Let's see how things develop, but I very much support this new approach.

Kind Regards

Stewart.

Councillor Stewart Donaldson

Ward 6 Strathearn

01738 475018 07557 815544

+ 5 pdf attachments

=====

from Sarah Hawkins <[REDACTED]>

to: Councillor Stewart Donaldson

19 Dec 2024, 11:19

Thank you for sharing this information, Stewart.

I hope we can see some better times with the rise in council tax well used.

Sarah



To all Perth and Kinross Councillors

Dear Councillors,

As representatives of SORL (Save our Rural Libraries), we are writing to you to ask you to re-consider your current plan to close rural libraries in Perth and Kinross. Currently, five rural libraries in the county are under threat of closure, these being the libraries in Alyth, Auchterarder, Birnam, Comrie and Scone. As representatives of the library users of these communities we are calling for our libraries to remain publicly funded, and accessible to all.

There are many reasons not to close these rural libraries, advice from officers of the Council to yourselves as our elected representatives has, we believe, largely focussed on fiscal reasons for closure. Unfortunately, on occasion, you have been misinformed. For example, the advice from Head of Culture and Communities Services, Transformation Review of Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs) 6th December 2023 (Report 23/247) is based on Appendix 1, a report from Glasgow Audit which indicates that the Council owns all five of these library buildings. This is not the case. The Council owns just three of the library buildings involved.

Elected Members have not been given the full information with regard to the wider financial benefits that libraries bring to communities and therefore to the county as a whole. Research by the University of East Anglia¹ indicates for every £1 invested in library provision there is £6 of benefit. These benefits include reduction in the pressure on other council budgets, particularly in relation to the social care budget. Libraries support individual independence in the older percentiles of the population and support mentally healthy communities. They do this by giving communities a regular, predictable place that is warm, welcoming and free on the "doorstep". A place where there is a professional presence; the person in charge is not your neighbour. A place that people can have a reason to go to, ostensibly to exchange a book, but where they will have meaningful interactions with other people, the activity that provides so many mental health benefits. These are benefits that mobile libraries and Click and Collect services do not provide.

Thus, closing libraries, and particularly closing libraries in comparatively isolated rural communities, increases the financial risk to the Council. Councillors will be aware of the costs of individual care. It is highly likely that the financial outlay to provide rural libraries is an economically sensible investment involving known costs. Closure of these libraries may expose the social care budget of the Council to unpredictable and unknown pressures.

Other benefits of local and accessible libraries include education, which may also impact advantageously on other Council expenditure. For example, the benefit of libraries to our children's outcomes, and to addressing the attainment gap, are not quantifiable by simple division of "active borrowers" by costs of operation as presented by Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK)². If a library enables just one individual in a community to change their situation to become economically active, then the reduction in costs to the Council and the benefits to society at large are significant¹.

CPK have carried out an Equality Impact Assessment which indicates very clearly that the closure of rural libraries will have negative impacts on groups of residents with protected characteristics in the five communities where library cuts are proposed. Disadvantaged groups in these communities include those with disabilities and both the elderly and the young, with the accessibility of the proposed alternative library provision a key factor. The Council is exposing itself to the risk of legal action if it carries out the library closures, and as Councillors are aware, such actions may incur significant costs and embarrassing press coverage.

¹ Gordon, J. ed. (2023) *Libraries for living, and for living better: The value and impact of public libraries in the East of England*. ISBN 978-1-915812-21-6. p.18. Accessed 2 Dec 2024: <https://www.ueapublishingproject.com/product-page/libraries-for-living-and-for-living-better-by-john-gordon> Also as J. Gordon, A. Blackett, R. Fordham, M. Garraffa, S. Howard Wilsher, E. Leist, A. Ponzo, D. Smith, A. Welsh & G. Xydopoulos, (2023) *University of East Anglia CreativeUEA and Health Economics Consulting*.

² Lynch, E. (2024) *The value and impact of Scotland's libraries*. Scottish Book Trust. Accessed 16 Dec 2024: <https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/uploads/store/mediaupload/8982/file/Preliminary%20findings%20-%20Public%20librarian%20survey.pdf>

That the consultation process carried out by CPK with the affected communities in regard to the proposed library closures was widely considered to be flawed, unreasonable and unfair, poses a further risk to Perth and Kinross Council.

Councillors may have been informed that there are other models of library provision that may lead to savings and might reduce the pressure on Council budgets. CPK are keen to pursue models of community-run or hybrid community/professional library provision. Whilst there are a few success stories, anecdotal evidence in respect of these models of library provision across the UK is less than encouraging. Significant numbers of libraries which were converted to these models have struggled to survive and then have closed. The quality of provision in many of these community-run libraries is poor, with poor quality stock, a lack of consistent opening hours, and the loss of the professional librarian all being factors that have eventually led to a proportion of these libraries closing permanently. PKC have their own example of this failed experiment in Coupar Angus library, which CPK themselves say now has very few active users.³

Councillors will be aware that CPK is presently funded by the service fee paid annually to this ALEO by Perth and Kinross Council. In real terms (Bank of England calculations) the fee paid for 2024/25 financial year was worth £997,991 less than the service fee for the organisation's initial funding in 2016/17. Culture Perth and Kinross is unable to charge for most of its services, unlike the other Perth and Kinross ALEOs. Whilst CPK has mitigated its financial position by managing to raise some external funding via bids to trust funds and through generous donations, the ALEO could never be expected to fully function with this level of support from the Council. CPK now has the responsibility for the running costs of the new Perth Museum. Glasgow Audit in its report raised significant concerns about all the Perth and Kinross ALEOs but, also indicated where important savings could be made. We understand the Council is working to implement the Glasgow Audit recommendations. The Scottish Government budget settlement will shortly be in place and the Council now has the freedom to increase Council Tax. We estimate the cost of rural libraries as about 35p a month per property on Band D Council Tax⁴. Additionally, past experience demonstrates that the expected savings from the closure of Council establishments are rarely, if ever, fully realised. With financially positive changes on the horizon now is not the time to be making closure decisions which will be final and irrevocable.

Thank you for considering the information we have placed before you. My hope is that we have made a sufficiently strong case to sway your support towards retaining the five rural libraries as Perth and Kinross Council funded establishments and that you will use your influence and vote for their future retention.

Yours sincerely,

Alastair Forsyth

On behalf of representatives of SORL (Save our Rural Libraries) members:

Caroline Wilding, for Save Birnam Library Campaign
Alastair Forsyth/Sarah Hawkins, for Save Comrie Library Campaign
Kevin Gates, for Save Scone Library Campaign
Angela Laurie, for Save Auchterarder Library Campaign

³ Evidence provided by CPK at a community meeting in Scone, December 2024.

⁴ 35p is an extrapolation of the indicative CPK cost savings and the council press release about their medium term council tax strategy. <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/24337/Proposed-Council-Tax-rises-to-protect-frontline-services> 27 Nov 2024. "At just £11.70 a month for a Band D property, we could raise over £10m to protect health and social care, support for children with additional support needs and invest in tackling poverty." We have assumed CPK needs to save £300k p.a. for libraries after the impact of NIC is included (the exact figure is rather unclear). If £11.70 p.m. = £10million, then £300k needs £0.35 per Band D property. As argued above, our libraries are justifiably regarded as contributing to investment in all three areas PKC identify.

Responses Appended (all from emails, and excluding autoreplies without content):

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From: Councillor Caroline Shiers <CShiers@pkc.gov.uk>
To: "Alastair Forsyth" [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, 06 Jan 2025 11:02:47 +0000
Subject: RE: Letter to all PKC Cllrs from Save Our Rural Libraries

Dear Mr Forsyth,

I just wanted to acknowledge your email. I know our group leader, Cllr John Duff, replied on behalf of our group.
Thank you for all the information which is very helpful. Caroline

=====

From: Councillor Jack Welch <JWelch@pkc.gov.uk>
To: "Alastair Forsyth" [REDACTED]
Cc: "Kevin Gates" <K [REDACTED]>
Date: Fri, 10 Jan 2025 17:12:13 +0000
Subject: Support : Letter to all PKC Cllrs from Save Our Rural Libraries
Thank you Alastair for your email,

I am fully committed to trying to ensure local library services are retained and are developed further on a sustainable basis.

Please be reassured the current SNP led Council administration does not want to diminish the library offering.

It is my intention to attend and support the meeting on Saturday at Perth Museum and I would be happy to speak at the event if possible.

Kind regards

Jack

Councillor Jack Welch

SNP Strathmore Ward 2

Perth & Kinross Council
2 High Street
Perth
PH1 5PH
Email : JWelch@pkc.gov.uk
Phone : 07585 960540

=====

From: Councillor Grant Stewart <GrantStewart@pkc.gov.uk>
To: "Alastair Forsyth" [REDACTED]
Date: Wed, 18 Dec 2024 11:45:21 +0000
Subject: Re: Letter to all PKC Cllrs from Save Our Rural Libraries

Dear Mr Forsyth,

Thank you for the extensive email. Your thoughts and points during this PKC Budget Review period will be considered.

Yours sincerely,
Grant Stewart

Cllr Grant Stewart
Scottish National Party
Strathmore, Ward 2
Perth and Kinross Council

=====
From: Councillor John Duff <JCDuff@pkc.gov.uk>
To: "Alastair Forsyth" <[REDACTED]>
Date: Wed, 18 Dec 2024 10:45:45 +0000
Subject: RE: Letter to all PKC Cllrs from Save Our Rural Libraries

Dear Alastair

Thank you for your informative email. I personally attended the CPK meeting regarding the Comrie and Birnam Libraries as leader of the Conservative group on the Council. I wasn't able to attend the Scone, Alyth or Auchterarder meetings but other members of my group did.

We have been supportive of funding the continuation of these libraries in recent years and have placed additional funds in our budget to fund CPK keeping these going in the last two years since the closures were put forward as a savings measure by CPK.

We have commenced our budget process for the Budget meeting at the end of February and will be looking specifically at this matter as part of that process. In the New Year, we will meet with all of the ALEOs to discuss their situations.

Thank you for your work in this area. It is much appreciated.

If you wish to discuss the matter directly with me, please feel free to get in touch.

Kind Regards

John
John Duff
Councillor | Highland Ward | Perth & Kinross Council
Scottish Conservative & Unionist (Group Leader)

Tomchulan | Old Crieff Road | Aberfeldy | PH15 2DH
Mobile | 07826 908542
Office | 01738 475095
Web | www.pkc.gov.uk

=====
From: chiefexec <chiefexec@pkc.gov.uk>
To: "Alastair Forsyth" <[REDACTED]>
Cc: "Scott Walker" <SWWalker@pkc.gov.uk>
Date: Wed, 18 Dec 2024 11:38:04 +0000
Subject: RE: PKC libraries letter to all Cllrs from Save Our Rural Libraries
Sent on behalf of Thomas Glen

Dear Mr Forsyth

I write to acknowledge receipt of your email of 18 December 2024.

Sheena Galloway
PA to the Chief Executive
Perth and Kinross Council
2 High Street
PERTH
PH1 5PH

01738 475009

Please join us in a public meeting aimed at keeping Comrie Library open

From: Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>

Oct 23, 2024, 9:33 AM

to: Jim.Fairlie.msp, Claire.Baker.msp, Murdo.Fraser.msp, Roz.McCall.msp, Alex.Rowley.msp, Mark.Ruskell.msp, elizabeth.smith.msp, Alexander.Stewart.msp, pete.wishart.mp

Dear Mr Fairlie, Ms Baker, Mr Fraser, Ms McCall, Mr Rowley, Mr Ruskell, Ms Smith, Mr Stewart, Mr Wishart,

You may be aware that Perth and Kinross Council and their charitable arm, CulturePK, have decided to close seven rural libraries in the county by the end of the current financial year. I am writing to ask you to join us at a community meeting aimed at persuading them to reverse their decision:

Tuesday 29 October 2024, 7 p.m.
at the White Church, Comrie, Dunira Street, Comrie, PH6 2LJ.

We would very much value your support and advice in how to preserve what we know to be not just a little library with short opening hours, but a thriving hub, serving vital social needs and so having wide-reaching positive influences for the whole community. Our focus is on Comrie, but our main arguments apply to all rural libraries.

We are asking for the decision to be reversed for two reasons: there seem to be worrying procedural irregularities; and, while we sympathise that the reasons given for closure are economic, we believe that privileging immediate costs over other criteria will prove to be a false economy, both short-term and for future generations.

I attach two pdfs: the petition we are circulating, which summarises our main arguments; and a more detailed description of our case. In case your email server blocks attachments from unknown sources, the rest of this email summarises some of the issues specific to Comrie and other small libraries.

First, the library service seems to be acting contrary to its own stated aims and to national statutory processes. There has been no consultation. The decision was taken in December 2023. In August 2024, CulturePK sent a questionnaire to those on its email lists asking about alternative library models to the present one. It did not mention the closure decision, and many library users say they did not receive it. A few of us heard the news by chance, only very recently. It fell to us to inform the wider community—including Comrie Primary School and Comrie Community Council. We have had one meeting with Comrie Community Council, at which Strathearn Councillor Stewart Donaldson was present. This 29 October meeting we hope you can join us at is the second meeting.

Second, the reasons given for closure are economic. As far as we understand it, they are based entirely on immediate costs to the PKC library service. This is a short-sighted criterion, even in financially-stretched times. Independent research commissioned by Suffolk Libraries shows that libraries generate £41 million worth of social value, translating to at least £6 for every £1 invested, as well as saving NHS services £542,000 annually, and supporting economic growth. All libraries serve many well-attested functions that go far beyond physical access to books, including counteracting social and economic inequality. But especially because it is small and local, Comrie library is also a hub for social (and hence mental) well-being and networking. These wider, less-easily quantified, benefits play a much more prominent role in rural communities than urban ones, precisely because rural areas have fewer other indoor resources freely accessible to all.

We believe that closing small rural libraries will disproportionately disadvantage those in our community who are already less advantaged. We are told that we can use libraries in Crieff and Perth. But Perth is an hour's bus ride away (in each direction), Stagecoach recently unilaterally reduced the local number 15 bus service, and Strathearn Community Library in Crieff is a half-mile walk on a steep hill from the nearest number 15 bus stop. So neither of these replacements are affordable or practical for people with small incomes, families with numbers of children, or anyone with mobility issues. Closure seems unlikely to make enough short-term gains to justify losing the current and future social, economic, and health benefits of staying open.

We warmly invite you to join us at Comrie White Church at 7 pm on Tuesday 29 October. If you cannot join us in person (we apologise for the short notice) we would be very grateful if you could write to Perth and Kinross Council and CulturePK, asking them to work with us to find ways to keep, or even expand, the current service. Letters can be addressed to officers at CulturePK: Helen Smout (CEO), Elaine Wallace (Library Manager), Rhona Corbett (Head, Heritage and Culture), and Hailey Revill (Head, Finance and Resources), all at

Culture Perth and Kinross Ltd
AK Bell Library
2-8 York Place,
Perth PH2 8EP

Their respective emails are:
HSmout@culturepk.org.uk
ENWallace@pkc.gov.uk
RCorbett@culturepk.org.uk
HRevill@culturepk.org.uk

Finally, you may receive the same invitation from others in our group. If so, please take it as an indication of our strength of commitment. As a recently-formed group working under time pressure, we are relatively loose-knit and very much do whatever we have time for!

I thank you for your attention and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Sarah Hawkins, on behalf of the Save Comrie Library group,

2 Attachments • Scanned by Gmail
Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>

2 Attachments:
the paper petition, and the SCL Information sheet, both included as front matter with Comrie's paper signed petitions

• Scanned by Gmail
from: Smith E (Liz), MSP <Elizabeth.Smith.msp@parliament.scot>

Oct 23, 2024, 2:40 PM

to: SaveComrieLibrary@gmail.com

Dear Ms Hawkins

Thank you for contacting the Office of Liz Smith CBE MSP.

Liz is aware of the issue of library closures across the region and very much recognises the concerns you raise in your email below.

She is currently holding meetings with Perth and Kinross Council regarding this and will get back to you in due course.

Unfortunately, Liz will be unable to attend the public meeting due to another diary commitment.

Kind regards,
Gavin

from: Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>
Oct 25, 2024, 7:52 PM

to: "Smith E (Liz), MSP" <Elizabeth.Smith.msp@parliament.scot>
Dear Gavin and Liz

Thank you for your prompt response. I am delighted that Liz is aware of the issues and currently holding meetings with Perth and Kinross Council and I look forward to hearing their outcome.

Since I emailed you, two things have happened that are worth noting:

1) CulturePK have invited one (perhaps more) of our members to the 29 October meeting we invited you to. CulturePK's letter seemingly portrays the meeting as resulting from their initiative, and its purpose as discussing future library provision once the library is closed. It is our view, confirmed by the Chair of Comrie Community Council (CCC), that CCC invited CulturePK to the 29 October meeting, not the other way round. I.e. that CCC, on behalf of the Save Comrie Library campaign, are the hosts, and CulturePK are invitees. It may help your discussions with them to know that, at the least, wires seem to be crossed.

2) Jim Fairlie MSP cannot join us on 29 October but is seeking to meet with us at another time. He hopes to include Pete Wishart MP in that same meeting. In my response to him, I will take the liberty of suggesting that he includes you and your colleagues in making these arrangements.

Once again, I thank you for your support, and look forward to making progress in keeping local libraries readily accessible to all.

Best wishes

Sarah Hawkins



from: McWhinnie G (Gavin) <Gavin.McWhinnie@parliament.scot>

Nov 14, 2024, 11:43 AM

to: Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>

Just following up on our earlier response, I am writing to inform you that our colleague Murdo Fraser MSP, also on behalf of our Office, had various discussions with Perth and Kinross Council and Culture Perth and Kinross, raising the concerns of constituents at the potential closures of libraries.

He also raised this in the Scottish Parliament Chamber last week which you can watch here:
https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/general-questions-november-7-2024?clip_start=11:49:15&clip_end=11:51:22

We will continue to support the campaign to keep Perth and Kinross libraries open.

from: Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>

Nov 21, 2024, 5:14 PM

to: Gavin McWhinnie

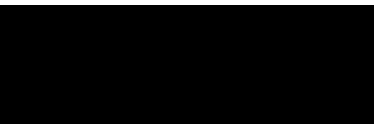
Thank you very much for this update. We greatly value your support.

We have shared your clip widely and it has been welcomed by all.

Our campaign is gathering momentum and we are hoping it will become strong and effective nationwide.

Sarah, on behalf of Save Comrie Library members.

Sarah Hawkins



Please join us in a public meeting aimed at keeping Comrie Library open (Case Ref: JF2678MI)

from: Jim Fairlie MSP <Jim.Fairlie.MSP@parliament.scot>

Oct 25, 2024, 4:22 PM

to savecomrielibrary@gmail.com, james.rae@parliament.uk

Dear Sarah,

Many thanks for your email inviting me to the public meeting on Tuesday evening. Sadly Tuesdays are not particularly fruitful for constituency events, as I have engagements in Holyrood until late on Tuesday and again early on Wednesday morning, so I am required to stay over in Edinburgh.

I would be keen to meet with representatives from the Save Comrie Library group to discuss these concerns. I do have upcoming surgeries in Crieff and St Fillans, but sadly the White Church could not accommodate my booking on this occasion, so I don't have availability at a Comrie surgery on this surgery tour.

Depending on your preference, I can either arrange to meet the group at some other appropriate venue in Comrie, or I would be happy to see you at my surgery in Crieff or St Fillans on Friday 8th November.

I have copied in James from Pete Wishart's office, as I understand Pete may be in a similar position with his responsibilities in London.

Please let Michael, my office manager know if you would like to set up a meeting. His email address is michael.ironside@parliament.scot

Kind regards,
Jim Fairlie MSP

from: Ironside M (Michael) <Michael.Ironside@parliament.scot> (Jim Fairlie MSP)
Tue, Nov 5, 2024, 11:00 AM

to savecomrielibrary@gmail.com

Good morning,

Sorry for the delay in coming back to you. I wanted to confirm that there is an appointment available to speak to Jim Fairlie regarding the situation around Comrie library on Friday at 10am in St Fillans at the Sandison hall. Can you confirm that this is suitable ? I think it is likely that Pete Wishart MP will also be there.

Kind regards,

Michael

Michael Ironside
Office Manager
The Office of Jim Fairlie MSP
63 Glasgow Road, Perth, PH2 0PE
Tel – 01738 620540

There followed a number of other emails, including with the office of Pete Wishart, SNP, MP, which culminated in a small group of people meeting with them at Fairlie's surgery in St. Fillan's, 8 November 2024.
See the Petition Form "Action taken..." box.

From: Baker C (Claire), MSP <Claire.Baker.msp@parliament.scot>
Fri, Oct 25, 2024, 10:31 AM
to savecomrielibrary@gmail.com

Dear Sarah

Thank you for contacting me about this and sharing the petition. I am away on Parliament business next week so please accept my apologies for the meeting. I am happy to raise the community's concerns with Perth and Kinross Council and share their response once I receive it.

Best wishes

Claire

Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>

Oct 25, 2024, 7:36 PM

to "Baker C (Claire), MSP" <Claire.Baker.msp@parliament.scot>
Dear Claire

Thank you very much for your willingness to pursue with Perth and Kinross Council our concerns about closing Comrie Library (and of course the other rural libraries). We very much look forward to hearing PKC's response.

Since I emailed you, two things have happened that are worth noting:

1) CulturePK have invited one (perhaps more) of our members to the 29 October meeting we invited you to. CulturePK's letter seemingly portrays the meeting as resulting from their initiative, and its purpose as discussing future library provision once the library is closed. It is our view, confirmed by the Chair of Comrie Community Council (CCC), that CCC invited CulturePK to the 29 October meeting, not the other way round. I.e. that CCC, on behalf of the Save

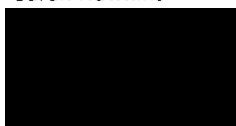
Comrie Library campaign, are the hosts, and CulturePK are invitees. It may help your discussions with them to know that, at the least, wires seem to be crossed.

2) Jim Fairlie MSP cannot join us on 29 October but is seeking to meet with us at another time. He hopes to include Pete Wishart MP in that same meeting. In my response to him, I will take the liberty of suggesting that he includes you in making these arrangements.

Once again, I thank you for your support, and look forward to making progress in keeping local libraries readily accessible to all.

Best wishes

Sarah Hawkins



From: Helen Holland <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Sunday, September 29, 2024 11:33 AM
To: Elaine Wallace - CPK <ENWallace@pkc.gov.uk>
Subject: Library closures

Dear Ms Wallace, I expect you will be receiving many letters on the subject of the proposed closure of some small local libraries. Really, Sean McNamara, in his role as director of CILIPS, has said all that needs to be said in his recent reminder to councillors of their legal duty, but I thought you should see the letter below from one of my grandsons which makes the point very eloquently. I have sent it to The Courier and hope it will be published.

I should like to add my own formal complaint at the lack of information about this possible closure. I gather a few other library users have received a survey, but no such email or letter came my way. As a regular library user and rate payer I find this not only discourteous, but also dishonest. Please could you let me have an account of what is being considered and why, as well as the names of the people responsible for such decisions.

Yours sincerely,
Helen Holland

>To Perth and Kinross Council

>Dear Sirs,

> I understand you are thinking about closing Comrie library, but there are lots of children that need to learn to read and enjoy books, and the village library is perfect for that. I used to live in Comrie and every week I went to get books, and the librarian always helped me find books I could enjoy. Now I live in France but every time I come to visit Scotland my granny in Comrie, I use the library. The library has so much choice and some children don't have any books at home, so the library is really important to everybody no matter their age; and the librarian is so kind and helpful and she doesn't deserve to lose her job. If you close the library people will be devastated and you will probably have lots of angry grannies, including mine, outside your offices protesting. Please don't close the library of Comrie or any other villages in Perthshire. Please take this letter into consideration.

> From Sebastian Garelli, [REDACTED]

> 28th September 2024

From: Elaine Wallace - CPK <ENWallace@pkc.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Library closures
Date: 1 October 2024 at 10:07:33 BST
To: Helen Holland <[REDACTED]>

Good morning,

Many thanks for your correspondence regarding Comrie Library.

I have looked at your membership and you should have received an email on approximately the 23rd of August regarding your survey. Could you please check your spam folder, as we believe some surveys have gone there. If your survey is not there, please visit Comrie Library and ask Deanna for a paper copy. If you fill this in immediately and hand it back, Deanna will send it to Perth for input. The survey closed on Wednesday 25th September, but it would be possible to add yours.

The survey was sent via email twice. Firstly, to those with current library memberships and then followed by a further email to those whose membership expired within the last 2 years or so. Those people for whom we did not an email address received a letter if they had a current non-expired membership.

The final decision to close 5 libraries was taken at a PKC meeting on 6th December 2023. The elected members

(Councillors) voted in favour by a majority to accept the paper that was presented. This meeting was filmed and available to view at the time.

Your grandson's letter is very beautiful, and as a librarian myself, I hope the Courier publish it.

Please get in touch if I can be of any further help.

Elaine Wallace
Libraries Manager
Culture Perth & Kinross

Helen Holland <[REDACTED]> 17 October 2024 at 15:40

To: Elaine Wallace - CPK <ENWallace@pkc.gov.uk>

Cc: pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk, [REDACTED] Sarah Hawkins <[REDACTED]>

Dear Ms Wallace,

Thank you for your reply. It sadly does not answer my main complaint - that a survey (whether it reached me and many others or not is irrelevant) was only offered eight months after the decision to close the libraries was taken and, indeed, treated that as a fait accompli, merely questioning thoughts about possible alternatives.

The most shocking fact was that the Heads of our Primary School had not been informed of this closure. Far from closing, the libraries should be open more often and certainly at times when children are coming out of school. Scottish education is hardly in a state where it can afford to neglect any possible chance of raising standards.

I am copying in our local MP, Pete Wishart, who has expressed distress about this action, and also two of my very concerned fellow library users who have been instrumental in arranging meetings in the village and working on a response such as Birnam's. The matter will be on the agenda at a meeting of Comrie Community Council this Thursday, 10th October - 7pm in the White Church. We would be delighted if you could attend that.

You ask what further help you can offer. It would be extremely useful to have a full explanation of exactly how PKC and culturepk between them run the libraries, who is responsible for what and who wrote the report that suggested closure. I shall look forward to receiving your answer.

Yours sincerely,
Helen Holland

Elaine Wallace - CPK <ENWallace@pkc.gov.uk> 17 October 2024 at 09:02

To: Helen Holland <[REDACTED]>

Cc: "pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk" <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>, "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>, Sarah Hawkins <[REDACTED]>

Good afternoon Ms Holland,

Thank you for your further query regarding Comrie Library.

On 29th October there is a Community Council meeting in Comrie and CPK have been invited along to this. On this evening, we will be able to explain alternative provision for Comrie and answer any queries and concerns from the public.

Best wishes,

Elaine Wallace
Libraries Manager
Culture Perth & Kinross



Sarah Hawkins <sarahhawkins.ely@gmail.com>

Fwd: letter to Amy Fenwick, Comrie Community Council

1 message

Barbara Murray <[REDACTED]>

3 October 2024 at 14:12

To: Helen Holland <[REDACTED]>

Sarah Hawkins <[REDACTED]>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Barbara Murray <[REDACTED]>

Date: Thu, 3 Oct 2024 at 15:10

Subject: Comrie Library

To: [REDACTED]

Hi Amy,

Great to have your support for saving Comrie Library!

There have been rumours in the past about it closing but it was only in August that we got some proof.

In August 2024 PKC sent a letter and a survey/questionnaire - see attached - to library users. It doesn't ask about or even mention the closure... it basically says PKC wants to set up "alternate" library services - i.e. close our library.

But very few people in Comrie actually received this letter and questionnaire. Almost no-one we've asked received it, including for example, Heather White the Headmistress of the Comrie School which uses the library. Did the Council get any communication about it? As so few people got the questionnaire the replies are null and void.

Apparently the decision to close Comrie Library was made at a PKC meeting on 6 December 2023 - without any prior consultation with library users or the community. A paper was presented at that meeting on which the decision was based but we have no idea what that paper says.

The costs to run Comrie Library are minimal. We have requested but not yet received a reply about the actual amount per annum and breakdown of cost to run it.

The amount PKC saves by closing it will be minimal. It is only open with a salaried staff member for 3 half days a week: on Thursday 2.00-4.30 and 5.30-7.00, Friday 10.00-12.30, Saturday 9.30-12.30. The building was given to the village by the Dundas family and handed to PKC to provide services around 1962 so there is no rent to pay. We think, not confirmed, that PKC cover electricity, water and heating. Culture PK provide the member of staff's salary and once a week they deliver the books that are requested online. There is also a small cost to have the computer system to run the service in Comrie and computer and a printer for public use.

Our library is important for the community. It is important for education - the school uses it as do many children, adults and the elderly for knowledge, for mental health, for social engagement, local and regional information, and for pleasure.

Suggestions to use Crieff Library mean a car or bus journey - extra expense - for people especially families and would have to be outside school hours making it difficult for parents. For the elderly or those with mobility concerns the bus stop in Crieff is a long way from the library and a long uphill and downhill walk. Suggestions to use Perth library means at least 2 hours journey by bus or car, additional expense and complicated for children, families and the elderly as well as adults in full employment.

Comrie Library is an important part of the community's historical and cultural heritage. Comrie has had a library for more than 200 years, longer than most other places in Scotland. The Comrie library building was purpose-built by the Dundas family and others, and it opened in 1901 - it is a special building and now 123 years old. See attached short history.

Other local libraries are also under threat: Birnam, Scone, Alyth, Auchterarder, Pitlochry, Coupar Angus, North Inch. Birnam had a protest a few years ago and saved their library that time. Do you or the Community Council liaise with councillors from these places and have you heard anything from them about their response/plans to

their library closing?

Birnam have an online petition. We have drafted a petition - see attached - to put online but want to work with Comrie Community Council so decided to wait till after the next Council meeting on the 10th.

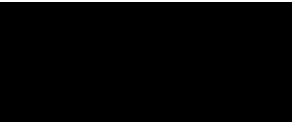
Recent articles in the Courier: <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/perth-kinross/5087052/birnam-library-protest/>

https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-courier-advertiser-perth-and-perthshire-edition/20240928/281685440257144?srltid=AfmBOophbBKhAWCKeJLx7gB_pOVDmM7fbAXg0fkblv403XcPo72ldCX





Look forward to meeting you at the Council meeting on the 10th.

All the best,
Barbara

Barbara Murray



4 attachments

-  **The survey - "future-library-models-library-members-questionnaire".pdf**
103K
-  **letter-to-library-customers-august-2024.pdf**
224K
-  **Save Comrie Library petition - draft.pages**
1045K
-  **Comrie Hits the Ton.doc**
26K

Fwd: Comrie Library

Helen Holland [REDACTED]

8 October 2024 at 11:19

To: Sarah Hawkins [REDACTED], [REDACTED]

Begin forwarded message:

From: "WISHART, Peter" <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>

Subject: RE: Comrie Library

Date: 8 October 2024 at 10:37:25 BST

To: Helen Holland [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Holland,

Thank you for getting in touch, and please accept my apologies for the delay in getting back to you.

I very much share your concerns over this matter. I am writing to let you know that I have raised this with PKC directly, and will get back to you once I have received a response.

Yours sincerely,

Pete Wishart MP

From: Helen Holland [REDACTED]

Sent: Saturday, September 28, 2024 9:57 AM

To: WISHART, Peter <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>

Subject: Comrie Library

Dear Mr Wishart,

Twice recently I have heard you speak - at the Comrie hustings and at the meeting about parking restrictions - and on both occasions was impressed by your clear commitment to our local community.

I am sure, therefore, you will have already have heard of and been concerned about the decision of PKC to close our local library (and those of several other small towns). This, at a time when schools are waking up to the pernicious effect of screens upon the minds of our children, seems an outrageous dereliction of our duty to educate the young by providing them with books, given the opportunities afforded and the skills advanced by reading. **The headmistress of our primary school had not been told of this move - she learned of it only yesterday by chance!**

There is also the serious question of the mental health of the community. Many older people use the library both for the provision of books and as a meeting place for a "wee blether". The friendly and knowledgeable librarian works hard to provide a professional and welcoming service to all comers.

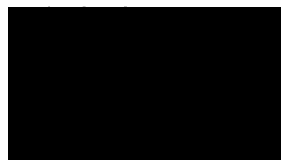
We rate payers and users of the library have received no communication about this proposal. Please could you tell me the names of the officials at PKC who are responsible for such actions. I (and others) have raised the matter with the Comrie Community Council who have promised to put the matter on the agenda for their next meeting on 10th October.

I shall look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Holland

Mrs H G Holland



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From: Richard Rutnager <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, October 21, 2024 11:22 AM
To: Smith E (Liz), MSP <Elizabeth.Smith.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Comrie Library Closure

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Ms Smith

I am writing with regard to Culture Perth & Kinross' (CPK) proposed plans to close the library in Comrie at the end of this financial year. My purpose is first to ask that you register my strong objection to this decision and second, to use every means possible at your disposal to seek a reversal of this decision through whatever paths of influence and control open to you as our elected representative to the Scottish Parliament.

I understand that CPK is constituted as a registered charity which receives the majority of its funding from Perth & Kinross Council who have the ultimate controlling interest in both the charity and its associated small trading company. As the vehicle through which the Council funds and operates its Community Public Library, Museum and Gallery services, I realise it is subject to the financial pressures felt by so many public services and that its net income position has shown a loss for the last 2 years.

Even against this backdrop, I consider the proposed closure of the Comrie library (and indeed the other 6 smaller branch libraries) is a desperately poor measure, unlikely to make a material difference to CPK's overall financial position but with hugely detrimental consequences to the communities they serve. If I may focus on Comrie in particular, as a small rural community, the library serves as a vital social, educational and cultural hub to a population that is 7 miles from the nearest significant conurbation in Crieff. Usage is a reflection of the size of the community but with its elderly population, the library is a vital source of intellectual and social stimulation to people who cannot travel and without it, would be isolated. Furthermore, the library is the only local cultural and external educational asset available to the vibrant primary school in the village.

From information obtained thus far, it would appear the annual operating cost to CPK is less than £20,000 a year, a very small amount in the context of overall budgets. A change to the operating model such as centralisation or some form of community-led structure would also be the wrong approach, distancing if not removing access to central library systems and professional expertise. Ultimately these are often just holding steps to closure and allow the Council to distance itself from ultimate accountability.

Could I urge you once again to support the reversal of this decision and influence this to happen. Closing Comrie Library is contrary to CPK's Articles of Association, to its Strategic Objectives and Outcomes and indeed to the headline figures in its most recent Annual Report which hails both an increase in usage and footfall across the library estate as well as increased library staffing levels. Whilst I understand the need for the Trustees and Executives of the organisation to seek cost savings, this decision has been taken without proper consultation and due process, no visibility as to financial rationale and at a disproportionate "cost" to community and public services.

If CPK needs to make cost savings, I believe a proper process and review would result in better decision making, achieve more sustainable cost efficiencies and do so without abandoning CPK's very purpose and

objective to manage and invest in the library estate, assets hugely valued and critically important in our communities. Thank you for your consideration of this matter and in the hope of your support.

Your sincerely

Dr Richard Rutnagur

RESPONSE

From: "McWhinnie G (Gavin)" <Gavin.McWhinnie@Parliament.scot>

Subject: RE: Comrie Library Closure

Date: 23 October 2024 at 14:42:03 BST

To: Richard Rutnagur [REDACTED]

Dear Dr Rutnagur

Thank you for contacting the Office of Liz Smith CBE MSP.

Liz is aware of the issue of library closure in Comrie and others across the region, and very much recognises the concerns you raise in your email below.

She is currently holding meetings with Perth and Kinross Council regarding this and will get back to you in due course.

Kind regards,
Gavin

[REDACTED]

To: PKC Ward 6, Strathearn Councillors CC: Jim Fairlie MSP, Liz Smith MSP, Murdo Fraser MSP, Mark Ruskell MSP, Clair Baker MSP, Alex Rowley MSP, Roz McCall MSP, Alexander Stewart MSP

02/12/2024

Dear Councillors Brock, Donaldson & Khogali,

I am writing in response to PKC's news release of 29th November announcing proposals to increase Council Tax by 10% in next year's budget to protect frontline services in Perth and Kinross, such as health and social care, support for children with additional needs, and tackling poverty.

I want to let you know that I am fully in support of the proposed increase in Council Tax and to ask you to support the relaxation of the freeze on Council Tax, which in my view is long overdue. If the increase is agreed, I would urge you to please ensure that funding for libraries is included in support of those departments and Arms Length External Organisations (ALEO) that will benefit from this additional finance to support council services to Perth and Kinross communities.

As you are aware Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK) is currently planning, as a result of council budget cuts, to close several of our rural libraries (including Comrie, in your ward), and to reduce the available service in others. Please use your votes to ensure that a fraction of the additional finance raised by council tax increase is ring fenced to prevent these cuts to an essential service. I believe that a sum as small as 35p a month added to Band D Council Tax would be sufficient to continue to finance all the rural libraries currently under threat of closure.

As the CPK Equality Impact Assessment indicates, the ALEO is acutely aware of the negative social impact of reducing library services, particularly by closing physical libraries. The closure of libraries and the reduction of library services to the community will cause adverse impacts to the other services which the increased council tax is intended to benefit ...in particular to social care and education. The loss of physical libraries in rural locations, and the reduced accessibility to the remaining libraries, will increase socio-economic inequality and hardship. For example, Comrie Library is a Perth & Kinross designated 'warm space' where vulnerable members of the community can secure comfort, refreshment and valuable social contact during times of winter need.



I welcome the increase in council tax as a way of addressing problems of chronic under-funding caused by a range of factors outwith local authority control. As your own recent news release states, the proposed increase in council tax is "to protect health and social care, support children with additional support needs and invest in tackling poverty." Properly funding a functioning library service via the ALEO will be part of the means to achieve your stated aims. Libraries contribute significantly to all these areas.

Research by economists at the University of East Anglia concludes that libraries generate at least £6 for every £1 invested. Please take a look at these robust research findings.

<https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/news/new-report-emphasises-the-huge-value-of-englands-libraryservices> (Section 6 is most relevant).

By including full library service provision in your financial plans, you will be investing in socio-economic

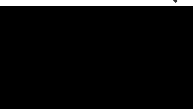
benefits for all who live in this council area. Additionally, you will be safeguarding future financial stability of the council, and supporting the social care budget in particular. Those of us campaigning for libraries strongly believe that by reducing library provision below its current level, Perth and Kinross Council will in reality fail to make ANY financial savings. Indeed, there will be a significant risk to council finances if, as is currently proposed, the Council and CPK continue with plans to close libraries and reduce library access. Just one individual person in each community affected, who consequently requires additional support due to the absence of the library will almost certainly cost the council more than the savings the council calculates it will achieve by closing the libraries.

I urge you use the opportunity presented by the proposed uplift in council tax charges to reverse the decision to close rural libraries, and to protect the existing provision for libraries across the whole of Perth & Kinross. The case for doing so is strong and widely accepted. To not follow this available course of action to avert closure will be extremely damaging to the social fabric of this part of your constituency, and will be considered by many in Comrie to be an unforgivable act of folly.

I would be pleased to receive a reply to this request setting out your responses to the points I have raised, and the specific asks made to you.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Thompson



From: Councillor Noah Khogali <NKhogali@pkc.gov.uk>

Date: 6 December 2024 at 16:09:21 GMT

To: Andrew Thompson

Subject: Threatened closure of Comrie and other rural Perthshire libraries

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for reaching out. I share your concern about the future of our rural libraries and strongly believe they must be protected.

Due to underfunding from the Scottish Government, Perth and Kinross Council has had to reduce the budget allocated to Culture Perth and Kinross, the organisation responsible for managing our library services. As a result, there is now uncertainty surrounding the future of libraries in several communities, including Comrie, Dunkeld, Alyth, Auchterarder, North Inch in Perth, Coupar Angus, and Pitlochry. Like many residents in Comrie, I am deeply concerned about the potential impact on these vital services.

This issue will remain a challenge in the coming months, but I want to reassure you that I am fully committed to standing up for our rural libraries and doing what I can to ensure their protection.

Press Release from Liz Smith CBE MSP

Inbox

Liz Smith <[REDACTED]>

Dec 12, 2024, 12:56 PM

to bcc: me

12 December 2024

For Immediate Use

At First Minister's Questions on the 12 December 2024, Liz Smith CBE MSP asked the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with local authorities regarding the reported impending closure of library facilities across Scotland.

The exchange between Liz Smith and John Swinney can be watched here:

https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/meeting-of-the-parliament-december-12-2024?clip_start=12:31:08&clip_end=12:34:41

The question follows the news of the upcoming closure of five libraries across Perth and Kinross: namely, Comrie, Auchterarder, Scone, Birnam and Alyth. The decision by Culture Perth and Kinross has sparked an outcry from residents who value the importance of these local facilities.

Commenting, Liz Smith said:

"My mailbox has been full of constituents who are very concerned about the impact of library closures. The affected communities clearly want these facilities to remain open and that is why I sought to raise this matter in Holyrood. This is particularly the case following the announcement that Perth and Kinross Council intend to hike council tax by 10%."

"We know how important libraries are, both educationally and socially. Especially in rural towns, they fulfil the role of social hubs and are critical for tackling economic and regional inequalities."

"I would like to thank the excellent work of the local campaign groups who raised the profile of this issue as even many frequent library users were unaware of the closures because a proper consultation process was not undertaken."

ENDS

--

Gavin McWhinnie

Parliamentary Assistant

Office of Liz Smith CBE MSP | Mid Scotland and Fife

For any enquiries please call 01738 553990



Sarah Hawkins <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>

Claire Baker MSP Correspondence SG Support for Libraries (Case Ref: CB4050)

4 messages

Claire Baker MSP <Claire.baker.msp@parliament.scot>
To: savecomrielibrary@gmail.com

Fri, Dec 20, 2024 at 10:04 AM

Hi,

Please find attached a response from Angus Robertson MSP/BPA, Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture after I wrote on your behalf.

I did previously write to the local authority who have said this is a decision made by financial pressures. Angus Robertson is arguing that they have more resources and they have to decide what they want to prioritise.

Since I last wrote to the Local Authority the Scottish Budget has been published and I could write to them again to find out if the budget decisions have changed since then.

I will be in touch as soon as I receive a response from them.

Kindest regards

Claire Baker MSP.

Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>
To: Claire Baker MSP <Claire.baker.msp@parliament.scot>

Fri, Dec 20, 2024 at 11:26 AM

Thank you very much for this update. The attachment is missing (easily done!). We really appreciate your continued help.

You may be interested to see the letter that we sent on 18 December to councillors and some other members of PKC.

Sarah

[Quoted text hidden]



Perth and Kinross libraries risk to Council letter 16 Dec 2024_v2.pdf
51K

Claire Baker MSP <Claire.baker.msp@parliament.scot>
To: savecomrielibrary@gmail.com

Fri, Dec 20, 2024 at 11:55 AM

Hi

Apologies, the email below was sent in error without the attachment.

That should be it attached now.

Thanks

Claire

From: Claire.baker.msp@parliament.scot

Sent: 20 December 2024 10:04

To: savecomrielibrary@gmail.com

Subject: Claire Baker MSP Correspondence SG Support for Libraries (Case Ref: CB4050)

[Quoted text hidden]



SG response support for Libraries.pdf

107K

Save Comrie Library <savecomrielibrary@gmail.com>

Fri, Dec 20, 2024 at 3:02 PM

To: Claire Baker MSP <Claire.baker.msp@parliament.scot>

Thank you. This does look more hopeful than it did. (And incidentally, thank you, too, for working with Sean McNamara. Many people were pleased to see your recent photo with him in the paper.)

A few thoughts having read Robertson's letter.

If Angus Robertson and PKC could be persuaded to break down their figures into amounts that make sense to ordinary people, it would help those who campaign for a particular sector to situate their arguments within a framework that acknowledges the needs of other sectors. It could also help people accept tax increases more happily.

Here's an example, taken from the letter I just sent you:

We estimate the cost of rural libraries as about 35p a month per property on Band D Council Tax¹.

¹ 35p is an extrapolation of the indicative CPK cost savings and the council press release about their medium term council tax strategy. <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/24337/Proposed-Council-Tax-rises-to-protect-frontline-services> 27 Nov 2024. "At just £11.70 a month for a Band D property, we could raise over £10m to protect health and social care, support for children with additional support needs and invest in tackling poverty." We have assumed CPK needs to save £300k p.a. for libraries after the impact of NIC is included (the exact figure is rather unclear). If £11.70 p.m. = £10million, then £300k needs £0.35 per Band D property. As argued above, our libraries are justifiably regarded as contributing to investment in all three areas PKC identify.

To their credit, PKC did offer the data of £11.70 for a band D property, But they don't give out information easily – so working out what benefits exactly will come from £11.70 is difficult or impossible.

Do you think that politicians and councillors could be persuaded to increase transparency in this way?

More generally, as I see it, people might well support tax increases enthusiastically if both MSPs and the Westminster government (Starmer, Reeves) were to present taxation as beneficial for communities in the long term, rather than as an immediate burden to be minimised. Part of doing that would seem to be painting a picture whereby the benefits were expressed clearly for particular sectors, with the monetary amounts explained in terms that an ordinary person can relate to e.g. the annual cost of a classroom support teacher, of keeping a particular library open for a day, or a swimming pool, 5 miles worth of potholes, a single care workers helping people in their home for a month, NHS care and waiting lists, so on. As it is, we see these unimaginably large figures, and then we're told that it translates into still under-funded public services, with not enough detail to know whether there are any other options worth discussing.

(The voluntary sector has been doing this for years: '£5 buys antibiotics to save a child's leg; £2 buys a hot meal' etc. So presumably it works quite well.)

all the very best and I hope you have a good break over the holidays.

Sarah Hawkins

[Quoted text hidden]

**Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs
and Culture**

Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson a' Bhun-reachd, Cùisean an
Taobh A-Muigh agus Cultar
Angus Robertson MSP/BPA



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T : 0300 244 4000

E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Claire Baker MSP

Claire.Fernie@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202400443032

Your Reference: Claire Baker MSP correspondence

19 December 2024

Dear Claire Baker MSP,

Thank you for your email of 28 November regarding the proposed closure of library services in Perth & Kinross.

I am aware of concerns around these proposed closures and I appreciate how difficult this is for the libraries, their staff and the communities they serve. Library services and their staff across the country have continuously adapted quickly to challenges to support their local communities. Please be assured that I understand the important role libraries play in supporting the people of Scotland. Everyone should have access to these services.

This is why the Scottish Government provides annual funding to the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), which provides leadership and advice to Scottish Ministers, local authorities, and the wider libraries sector. This funding supports the Public Library Improvement Fund and the School Library Improvement Fund that foster creative, and innovative projects throughout communities in Scotland, as well as within the school library sector.

More broadly, public libraries are devolved to local authorities, who have a statutory duty to ensure adequate provision of library services for their residents. Local authorities are accountable to the public who elect them, and have the financial freedom to operate independently, taking account of local need. Local councils are entirely separate from the Scottish Government, as long as they act lawfully, and it is up to each council how it manages its day-to-day business and decision making processes.

Nonetheless, I recognise the financial challenges that the entire public sector are facing and that local

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1



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authorities and their employees play a pivotal role in our communities.

The Scottish Government provided record block grant funding of over £14 billion to Local Authorities in 2024-25, a real terms increase of 2.5 per cent.

In 2024-25, Perth and Kinross Council will receive £342.7 million to fund local services, which equates to an extra £22 million. This is an additional 6.9 per cent compared to 2023-24 to support vital day-to-day provision.

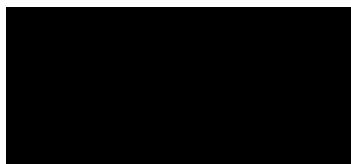
The draft Scottish Budget 2025-26 was published on 4 December 2024. It commits an additional £34 million resource funding to arts and culture in Scotland. Additionally the 2025-26 draft budget provides local government in Scotland with record funding of over £15 billion, an increase of over £1 billion or a real terms increase of 4.7% compared to 2024-25.

Any decision around public libraries and other local services must be considered extremely carefully. We strongly encourage local authorities to work in partnership with communities to explore ways of delivering services, based on need.

The Scottish Government will continue to work in partnership with Local Government to ensure that the people of Scotland continue to receive the high quality public services that they expect and deserve.

I hope you constituents find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely



ANGUS ROBERSTON

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™



Andy Hall

photographer of Scotland's landscapes and people

5 Westfield Road, Stonehaven, Kincardineshire, Scotland AB39 2EE

Tel +44(0)7866762647 email andrewalexhall@icloud.com

Dear Mr. Scobie,

I hope this finds you well.

I am a published author of 5 books in the genre of photography, three of which have been published by Birlinn and two by Luath Press. Several of these titles are held by libraries in Perth and Kinross.

My purpose for writing is to declare my concern at the proposed closure of 7 rural libraries in Perth and Kinross from April 2025, without public consultation. In acknowledging the necessity to make savings in local authority budgets, I'd like to make a special case for rural libraries being exempt from these considerations due to their importance in the wellbeing of individuals and communities often in quite isolated areas. This is particularly true for elderly and/or disabled people and children as well as the wider population of these areas.

As a teacher of 38 years experience before retirement, several of these as a head teacher of a small rural school and as depute head teacher of two larger primary schools, I was constantly aware of the importance of the local library as a source of information, technological support and as a source of reading for enjoyment, a necessary contributor to the health and wellbeing of individuals of all ages.

One of the libraries under threat is Comrie. Although I live in Stonehaven in the North East of Scotland, my older sister has lived in the village for the past thirty years. She loves reading and Comrie library is an important part of her access to reading material. She doesn't drive so having to go to Crieff library as an alternative is an unwelcome option.

As an author, I've had experience of visiting rural libraries. Based on the attendances at these, I can see how important they are to communities and the opportunities they offer for social interaction. Increasingly, as people get older, the need for ease of access increases rather than it being made more difficult for them.

In educational terms, the local library has a direct impact on children's love of reading and opportunities that will be open to them in later life which will ultimately benefit society immeasurably.

In conclusion, I'd like you to consider a plea for PKC/CulturePK to postpone the April 25th deadline to allow the opportunity for a full and comprehensive consultation with impacted communities to take place.

Many thanks for your anticipated consideration. It is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Hall

From: Amy MacDonald <[REDACTED]>
Subject: the Comrie public library
Date: 13 October 2024 at 12:57:37 BST
To: sdonaldson@pkc.gov.uk, enwallace@culturepk.org.uk

Dear Ms Wallace and Mr. Donaldson,

I would like to add my name to the list of people protesting the move to close the library in Comrie. As a children's book author, I was invited to give a presentation of my work there two years ago. It was by far the smallest Library I have ever done a presentation in, but it was packed with people young and old. I had a delightful time sharing the experience of writing books with them.

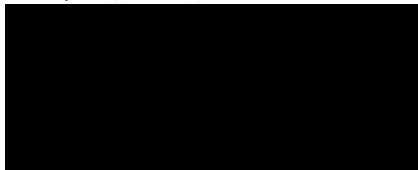
I can't emphasize enough the importance of having a local library in walking distance from every child's house. As a child I used to walk nearly a mile to my local library every Saturday and return laden down with books. I did this walk so often that I actually knew exactly how many steps there were between my house and the library. If I had had to rely on someone to drive me there, I would have read far fewer books.

I am sure the easy availability of books from a nearby library contributed to my becoming an author later in life. Think of all the young readers and potential authors like me that you are nurturing, and please reconsider the decision to close this small but important local library.

Yours,

Amy MacDonald

Amy MacDonald



PLANNED CLOSURE OF COMRIE LIBRARY

from: David Spaven [REDACTED]

Sat, Oct 12, 2024, 2:19 PM

to jim.fairlie.msp@parliament.scot, Mark.Ruskell.msp@parliament.scot,
elizabeth.smith.msp@parliament.scot, Murdo.Fraser.msp@parliament.scot,
Alex.Rowley.msp@parliament.scot, Claire.Baker.msp@parliament.scot, Roz.McCall.msp@parliament.scot,
Alexander.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot, me

Mr Fairlie

As a regular user of Comrie Library - and an author with 12 books to my name - I was dismayed to hear of PKC's plans to close the library next April.

This will be a significant blow to public services in Comrie, and comes just a few months after a marked deterioration in local bus service 15 (unilaterally imposed by Stagecoach). For folk without a car - such as myself - Strathearn Community Library would be a poor replacement, as it is a half-mile walk from the nearest bus stop served by service 15.

The PKC email on 'alternate models of library provision' sent to local library users in August made zero mention of 'closure', and as such cannot be regarded as fair and proper consultation.

Regards

David Spaven

Contact details: (removed by SHawkins for privacy)

Dear Sir\ Madam,

We are children from Comrie Primary School, and we are writing to you to say that Comrie Library should not close.

First of all, as a school we use the library all of the time. In Primary 1 we got to visit the library regularly and if the library closes our buddies, as well as the future p1s, will not be able to experience the library. When you are in P1 to P3 you get book bug bags which we still remember and love them, and it would be terrible for others to miss out on this experience. It is very important for young children to visit a library to become interested and love books! If we did not have the library then lots more children would not read.

Secondly, the Comrie library is a nice, safe space for lots of people. Lots of people might not have a place that they can feel safe in at home and so can use this space to calm themselves down. Reading is a calming activity that lots of us use to help our emotions and we would not be able to do this and get so many books or games without the library. Therefore to help us stay happy and healthy Comrie Library should not close.

In addition, there are lots of families who cannot afford to buy their children books or games and so get these from the library instead. If the library closed then those families would not be able to have fun and play games because they would not have access to them. This would be so sad and make children feel unhappy and uncared for. Being able to play and relax is a child's right and we cannot take this away from them by closing the library.

In conclusion, we will be so upset and disappointed if the library closes because for some people it's their safe space as it's relaxing as well as calming with the luxurious velvet chairs. We don't want the library to close because we have lots of happy memories there and if it closes, we won't be able to make any more memories. For those who read a lot of books it's useful to have somewhere close by to get books. As well as that, the librarians are kind and nice. Please take this into consideration. Please do not close Comrie Library!

Kind regards,

Comrie Primary School

Emailed from Comrie Primary School, 24 October 2024



10 September 2024

Dear Ms Corbett,

Proposed Closure of Alyth Library

Alyth Library has been a valuable asset to the people of the town for many, many years and yet Perth & Kinross Council are considering shutting it down.

There are few community resources that serve such a wide cross-section of the public – from ages 0 to 100+ - as does the Library. It is not just the reading public it reaches out to. Young children and even toddlers benefit from everything a library has to offer. Activities such as RhymeTime, craft sessions and the regular reading challenges not only help with social development but support active learning in all kinds of ways. This is particularly important at the present time when the educational attainment of Scottish children has fallen behind that of children in other parts of the country and while the pressures on our schools are at an all-time high.

At the other end of the age spectrum older people use the Library as part of their daily routine. It provides a service to them that is at once familiar and readily accessible. For those without easy access to books of their own or the wherewithal to obtain them - an increasing number in this time of cost of living pressures - the Library is a godsend opening up a world beyond the narrow confines of daily life. If nothing else it promotes inclusion, something which we should all value in our increasingly divided world.

And as you rightly state in your letter "libraries offer much more to community than just books". Alyth Library, for instance, has two computers, a scanner, colour printer and photo-copier, all of which provide a highly valued resource for those many people in the community who in this digital age are digitally deprived; it is rare to visit the Library to find one or more of these facilities not in use.

Nor should one discount the importance of having the services of a professional librarian on hand to ensure that we all get the most we can from what the Library has to offer. This was made particularly clear to me in the not so distant past when we faced the challenge of welcoming refugees from the war in Ukraine into our community. Our local librarian was quick to identify what was needed, to put together the resources to help them learn English and in general find their way round a strange environment. But the support she offers is not limited to new-comers to the town. I for one have reasons to be grateful for her advice and support over the years.

All the alternatives to the current library service that you outline in your letter involve a reduction in service. Those who will be most affected by this are potential future library users. As the service deteriorates so demand will inevitably fall away, and as demand declines just as inevitably will come the calls for further cut-backs, and we will find ourselves in a depressing downward spiral.

While I appreciate that the Council faces a severe financial crisis and has some difficult decisions to make, nevertheless I would urge you to think again before taking any action that will reduce the limited library service we present enjoy.

With Kind Regards

Anna May


Petition details Comments



Save Auchterarder Library from closure

Started 11 December 2024
Petition to [Perth and Kinross Council](#)



 248 people signed this week

Sign this petition

 Why this petition matters  

To Cllrs Allan, Carr and Watt,

I'm writing in connection with the consultation around future library models asking for your support with exploring solutions which result in the retention of the library in its current form.

Aside from being a source of books, an access point for digital services and a bright and busy children's library, our library has proven itself to be a valued and important community hub. A source of information, community knowledge and a space people can access freely. To lose this valuable service would be a significant backward step for Auchterarder and the surrounding towns, especially at a point where residents await services and facilities to match the 25% population growth in recent times. Our Community Action Plan consultation made clear that the community needs extra facilities and services to match the housing expansion.

While the suggested options around "click and collect" or "van libraries" offer convenience, they lack the community-building opportunities that traditional libraries provide. Without a physical presence, run reliably by staff instead of what's widely acknowledged to be an already stretched for resource, aging population of volunteers, the PK Culture of vision about being at the heart of the community, connecting people, through ideas knowledge and connections risks being lost.

Rural libraries align perfectly with the PKC goals of addressing social and economic inequalities too –The provision of computers, wifi and printing services is invaluable for those seeking employment or education opportunities, they support the reduction in digital inequality. They're one of the last place where people can go somewhere warm without it costing money and libraries in rural settings play a vital role in reducing cultural inequities.

In Auchterarder, the library has been a critical part of our Cosy Space programme, providing somewhere for, in the main, single elderly people to come and spend a few hours, out of the house and warm. Assigning a value to decreasing social isolation and providing great benefit for mental health and wellbeing is something hard to measure but increasingly understood.

In this space, people have access to the wealth of culture within the library but also signposting and access to services which, if digitally excluded, would be unknown to them:

- The Health and Social Care Advice Hub.
- Community information about what's on – How to become involved in community groups / community action plan / volunteering activities
- Dementia Support
- Consultations
- Knowledge of the Blue Door Food Bank

- Access to Fair Share and Community Garden Produce, Community Growing workshops and projects – Aligning with community food growing and sustainability aspirations
- Activity, Craft and Story Sessions from PKC Culture and partners such as Remake

The range of services have grown and will continue to grow.

The librarians support people personally by signposting them to all of this information and as well as being a source of knowledge may sometimes be the only person that an individual might speak to in a day. It is impossible to quantify fully the value of these amazing people in a space which is the heart of the community, and I ask you to see beyond what can be measured in footfall and book loans (despite both showing positive trends) and think more broadly about the impact made by the library.

I urge you to prioritise the retention of our library. It's an invaluable community asset that offers a wide range of benefits, aligning perfectly with the goals of Culture P&K and the PKC Corporate Plan. By preserving these vital spaces, our rural community will continue to thrive

Kind regards

Angela Laurie

Auchterarder and Aberuthven Community Connector
A&A Connected
Aanda.cap@gmail.com

www.aandaconnected.co.uk

----- Original message -----

From: Deborah Harley [REDACTED]

Date: 10/01/2025 14:23 (GMT+00:00)

To: steven carr@pkc.gov.uk

Subject: Fw: Auchterarder Library

Good afternoon,

I attended a meeting hosted by representatives of Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK) at Auchterarder Library on 8 January 2025 where residents learned about :

- the considerable financial shortfalls that exist in CPK's budget:**
- that CPK was initially set up in order that Perth and Kinross Council could benefit from Business Rates relief, though it was not possible to say which departmental budgets had benefitted from these savings**
- that a plan to replace the library with stops on mobile library routes and with services provided by staff from other CPK libraries has not been costed out**
- that CPK's projected budget would at best only provide for the running of one mobile library (there are currently two) for one year, with no guarantee of funding after that**
- that Community Asset Transfer was a suggested model for Auchterarder to keep its library though that would require the community to take on complete legal and financial responsibility for the library.**

As part of the Auchterarder library arm of the Save Our Rural Libraries (SORL) campaign I believe that it is imperative that the following points should be considered by council members at their meetings to discuss budgets for the coming financial year.

1. We (SORL) are aware that the First Minister has voiced his support of public libraries and has stated that he hopes that the extra public funding awarded to Perth and Kinross Council last month can be used for the preservation of our rural libraries. We would also request that at least a portion of annual Business Rates relief monies and CPK budget monies are ring-fenced for the provision of rural library services.

2. The provision of adequate public library services by local authorities is a legal responsibility. The question here is whether CPK's current proposals can be termed adequate and reasonable for rural communities. Many comments have been made by CPK about the fact that there is no legal definition of the term adequate. This is of course true, but we can argue equally that CPK cannot prove that the current library provision does not set the benchmark of what is adequate. We are therefore entitled to believe that the current level of provision is an adequate one.

CPK are proposing click and collect services and extra stops on mobile library routes plus community-led libraries. As we understand the proposals for community-led libraries CPK would only provide training to volunteers and thereafter there would be no more paid staff or funding. Click and collect and mobile library services would be limited to books and as stops on mobile library routes can be very short (some stops are only 15 minutes long, and not necessarily at times when children could access services) the services to rural populations would be vastly reduced, whilst urban communities would continue to benefit from professionally-led traditional public libraries. Therefore rural communities whilst paying the same rates of Council Tax as town-dwelling ones would receive an inferior and, we contend, an inadequate service. Rural residents of all ages would become, in effect, second class citizens.

3. Local people feel that the Council has not properly consulted with the community, nor given sufficient notice of proposed closures. Council officers have admitted that the consultation process was delayed because they were 'too busy' dealing with the opening of the new museum in Perth. Many people feel that 'value' on taxpayers' money is being received by international and out-of-county tourists to the Museum rather than residents.

4. It is worth noting that Auchterarder is a growing community. The Council has granted planning permission for hundreds of new houses here in recent years and more planning applications have already been submitted to the planning department. Yet our access to public services is diminishing -our public toilets are to be closed and now our library is under threat.

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Finally, I would like you to consider the following points:-

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b) Education has always been valued in Scotland; indeed Scotland was the first country in Europe to legislate for compulsory education, firstly in 1496 and then again in 1696. Libraries have been a part of public education for a long time and now the country who brought a period of enlightenment to the world and which trailblazed in the area of education is talking about dismantling a vital part of the educational establishment. We cannot seriously talk about levelling up society in Scotland if we take away public libraries from people.

c) Perthshire is unique in Scotland (and perhaps in the UK) as it is the place where the first free lending library available to everyone was created - the Library of Innerpefferay. We should be celebrating this historic achievement by promoting public libraries and the educational/societal improvements they bring, not closing them.

d) Public libraries are a real 'value for money' service giving back to society in all sorts of ways. They are one of the few public services that literally can be used by everyone from birth to death. Subsidising Museum cafes (which we are told is happening in Perth Museum) with public funds is not value for money and such monies would be better spent on services that actually make a difference to peoples' lives.

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We understand that the public purse is hard-pressed and that choices have to be made; but choices need to be fair, reasonable and equitable and serve the WHOLE community, not just a portion of it. Auchterarder is not asking for additional services, we just want to hold on to what we have.

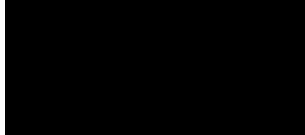
I have also attached the link to our online part of our petition (Change.org - Save Auchterarder Library) - this currently stands at just over 1200 signatures.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

With kind regards,

**Debbie Harley
Save Our Rural Libraries campaign
Auchterarder**

Address:



[Save Auchterarder Library from closure](#)



Save Auchterarder Library from closure

Can you spare a minute to help this campaign?

----- Original message -----

From: Deborah Harley [REDACTED]

Date: 10/01/2025 14:27 (GMT+00:00)

To: glaing@pkc.gov.uk

Subject: Fw: Auchterarder Library

Good afternoon,

I attended a meeting hosted by representatives of Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK) at Auchterarder Library on 8 January 2025 where residents learned about :

- the considerable financial shortfalls that exist in CPK's budget:**
- that CPK was initially set up in order that Perth and Kinross Council could benefit from Business Rates relief, though it was not possible to say which departmental budgets had benefitted from these savings**
- that a plan to replace the library with stops on mobile library routes and with services provided by staff from other CPK libraries has not been costed out**
- that CPK's projected budget would at best only provide for the running of one mobile library (there are currently two) for one year, with no guarantee of funding after that**
- that Community Asset Transfer was a suggested model for Auchterarder to keep its library though that would require the community to take on complete legal and financial responsibility for the library.**

As part of the Auchterarder library arm of the Save Our Rural Libraries (SORL) campaign I believe that it is imperative that the following points should be considered by council members at their meetings to discuss budgets for the coming financial year.

1. We (SORL) are aware that the First Minister has voiced his support of public libraries and has stated that he hopes that the extra public funding awarded to Perth and Kinross Council last month can be used for the preservation of our rural libraries. We would also request that at least a portion of annual Business Rates relief monies and CPK budget monies are ring-fenced for the provision of rural library services.

2. The provision of adequate public library services by local authorities is a legal responsibility. The question here is whether CPK's current proposals can be termed adequate and reasonable for rural communities. Many comments have been made by CPK about the fact that there is no legal definition of the term adequate. This is of course true, but we can argue equally that CPK cannot prove that the current library provision does not set the benchmark of what is adequate. We are therefore entitled to believe that the current level of provision is an adequate one.

CPK are proposing click and collect services and extra stops on mobile library routes plus community-led libraries. As we understand the proposals for community-led libraries CPK would only provide training to volunteers and thereafter there would be no more paid staff or funding. Click and collect and mobile library services would be limited to books and as stops on mobile library routes can be very short (some stops are only 15 minutes long, and not necessarily at times when children could access services) the services to rural populations would be vastly reduced, whilst urban communities would continue to benefit from professionally-led traditional public libraries. Therefore rural communities whilst paying the same rates of Council Tax as town-dwelling ones would receive an inferior and, we contend, an inadequate service. Rural residents of all ages would become, in effect, second class citizens.

3. Local people feel that the Council has not properly consulted with the community, nor given sufficient notice of proposed closures. Council officers have admitted that the consultation process was delayed because they were 'too busy' dealing with the opening of the new museum in Perth. Many people feel that 'value' on taxpayers' money is being received by international and out-of-county tourists to the Museum rather than residents.

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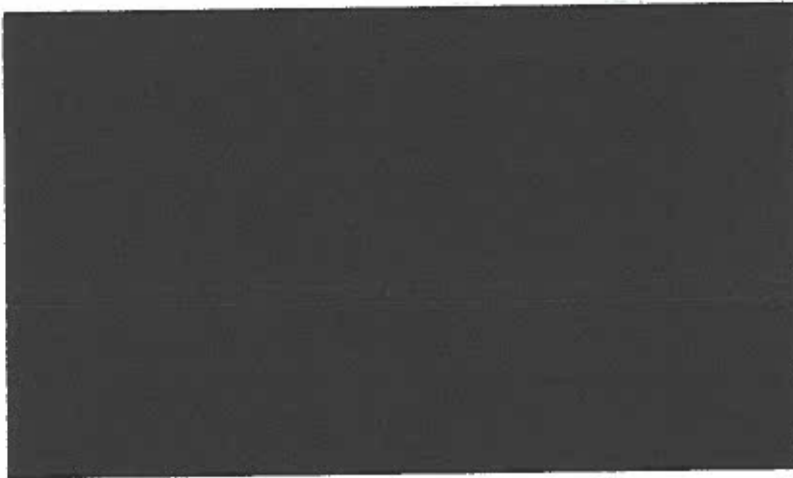
With kind regards,

**Debbie Harley
Save Our Rural Libraries campaign
Auchterarder**

Address:



[Save Auchterarder Library from closure](#)



Save Auchterarder Library from closure

Can you spare a minute to help this campaign?

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Jim Fairlie MSP <jim.fairlie.msp@parliament.scot>

To: [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday 13 January 2025 at 10:45:18 GMT

Subject: Re: Auchterarder Library (Case Ref: JF2840JR)

Dear Ms Harley,

Re: PKC library closures

Thank you for your correspondence regarding your concerns with the proposed library closures in Perth and Kinross. It goes without saying that Libraries are at the heart of Scotland's communities and they are a hugely important community and cultural resource that should be valued by all of us.

As you may be aware, library policy is devolved to local authorities and they have a statutory duty to ensure there is adequate provision of library services for their residents. The harsh reality is that PKC, along with practically every other local authority in the UK right now, is up against unimaginable financial pressures, largely due to various domestic and international factors that were outwith its control.

In the face of that challenge, the Scottish Government is giving local authorities a real-terms increase in their core revenue grant. We have increased the money that is available to local authorities as a whole by £1 billion, with PKC receiving an additional £26.5m. I hope that, out of that funding, PKC will be able to make measured decisions about the funding of public services.

PKC have yet to set out their budget for the financial year so, along side Pete Wishart MP, I will be working with councillors throughout that time to re-emphasise the importance of these facilities, and will be doing everything possible to find a way of keeping them open.

Kind Regards,

Jim Fairlie MSP

Date: 10/01/2025 14:26 (GMT+00:00)

To: jim.fairlie.msp@parliament.scot

Subject: Fw: Auchterarder Library

Good afternoon,

I attended a meeting hosted by representatives of Culture Perth and Kinross (CPK) at Auchterarder Library on 8 January 2025 where residents learned about :

- the considerable financial shortfalls that exist in CPK's budget:**
- that CPK was initially set up in order that Perth and Kinross Council could benefit from Business Rates relief, though it was not possible to say which departmental budgets had benefitted from these savings**
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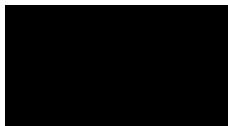
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Thank you for taking the time to read this.

With kind regards,

Debbie Harley
Save Our Rural Libraries campaign
Auchterarder

Address:



----- Original Message -----

From: KeithAllan@pkc.gov.uk

To: saw2102@btinternet.com

Sent: Friday, January 10th 2025, 22:00

Subject: RE: Potential closure of Auchterarder Library

Hi Shirley. Be assured I am fighting the corner for Auchterarder

KEITH



KEITH ALLAN

Councillor – Strathallan Ward

Perth & Kinross Council

**Scottish Conservative &
Unionist Party**

Phone: 01738 475096

Mobile: 07468 756248

Web: www.pkc.gov.uk

Email: KeithAllan@pkc.gov.uk

From: Shirley Williams <[REDACTED]>

Sent: 10 January 2025 15:14

To: Councillor Keith Allan <KeithAllan@pkc.gov.uk> Councillor Steven Carr
<StevenCarr@pkc.gov.uk> Councillor Alan Watt <AlanWatt@pkc.gov.uk>

Cc: Angela Laurie <angela@abbeybusinesssupport.com>

Subject: Fwd: Potential closure of Auchterarder Library

CAUTION: This email originated from an external organisation. Do not follow guidance, click links, or open attachments unless you have verified the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Keith, Steven and Alan,

I am forwarding the email below to you for information.

I originally contacted Chris Kane, MP at the same time as contacting MSPs and the First Minister about the proposed closure of Auchterarder Library. I do understand that library provision is a devolved matter and that Westminster has no direct involvement in decisions about libraries in Scotland. However, I do think it is a matter of concern that CPK and/or PKC seem to be avoiding communications with a democratically elected person who is trying to help his constituents.

Your help in trying to bring about a meeting at the library between Mr Kane and CPK for further discussion would be appreciated.

Kind regards,

Shirley Williams

Member of Save Our Rural Libraries Campaign

Auchterarder

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: "STEWART, Lewis" <lewis.stewart@parliament.uk>
Date: 9 January 2025 at 16:38:45 GMT
To: Shirley Williams <shirley.williams@parliament.uk>
Cc: Angela Laurie <angela@abbeybusinesssupport.com>
Subject: Potential closure of Auchterarder Library - Please help!

Hi Shirley,

Thank you for your email.

We have been attempting to meet with the library/P&K, but so far, we have been unsuccessful. I suspect due to the high tensions surrounding the library closures, the council is not keen on politicians getting involved.

We have been making representations to the council to support the library, expressing Chris's and his constituents' views. If I am honest, it looks like a meeting will not be possible, and Chris has essentially no sway in this decision.

I am very sorry I can't offer a more positive reply, but I think the council's hands are tied.

Kind regards, **Lewis Stewart**
Office of Chris Kane, Member of Parliament for Stirling and Strathallan
Parliament: House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Constituency: Stirling Business Centre, Wellgreen Road, Stirling, FK8 2DZ
<Outlook-414warzg.png> Phone: 01786 652345
Email: lewis.stewart@parliament.uk

Follow Chris Kane on: [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

Any personal data Chris Kane MP or his staff members receive will be treated in accordance with Chris Kane's privacy policy. Please email chris.kane.mp@parliament.uk if you would like to view the privacy policy or exercise any of your legal data rights.

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General enquiries to Perth & Kinross Council should be made to enquiries@pkc.gov.uk or 01738 475000.

RE: CPK - Birnam Library

1 message

Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk>

29 November 2024 at 17:04

To: Dunkeldppg Dunkeldppg [REDACTED] CSR [REDACTED]

Sent on behalf of Councillor Grant Laing

Good afternoon Steph and Caroline

Apologies for the delay in responding but I was awaiting a response to the questions you gave me on 18 November 2024. I have now received a response and attach this for your information.

If you still wish to meet once you have read through these responses, please let me know, although I am heavily involved with our full Council meeting next week.

Kind regards

Councillor Grant Laing

Leader of the Council

Perth & Kinross Council

2 High Street

Perth

PH1 5PH

Email: glaing@pkc.gov.uk

Phone: 01738 475023

From: Dunkeldppg Dunkeldppg [REDACTED]**Sent:** 26 November 2024 20:53**To:** CSR <[REDACTED]>**Cc:** Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk>; Provost Xander McDade <XMcDade@pkc.gov.uk>**Subject:** Re: CPK - Birnam Library

Hi Grant

As Caroline and I have just had a meeting with our counterparts across Scone, Comrie & Auchterarder libraries it reminded me that we didn't have anything in the diary yet to review the response from CPK on our questions. Can you please let us know when you'd be able to chat to us on that?

Many thanks

Steph

PPG Chairperson (Bimam Library Campaign)

On Thu, 21 Nov 2024 at 15:45, CSR <[REDACTED]>

Hi Grant,

I wanted to try and get something in our diaries whilst there is still space - does next Friday anytime at the moment work for you?

We understand CPK had a private meeting with a handful of members of the community on Monday so we're aware this conversation needs to advance now with that concerningly opaque process moving forward apace.

Thanks, Caroline

On Mon, 18 Nov 2024 at 12:24, CSR [REDACTED]

Dear Grant,

Please see below proposed questions for CPK as discussed.

It would be great if we could schedule a time to meet once you've had a response - would Friday 29th suit?

Thanks, Caroline

What assessment has CPK made of the engagement of library users that are not active borrowers in its consideration of the impact of library closures?

What engagement has CPK had with non book borrowing library users on the future of rural libraries?

What engagement has CPK had with rural communities on the question of whether or not they believe their library should close?

What engagement has CPK had with rural communities on the potential impact of closing rural libraries?

What measures has CPK implemented or planned in relation to its equality impact assessment on the closure of rural libraries?

What discussions has CPK had with local facilities in order to reach cost savings for delivery of local rural library services?

What did CPK do to advance discussions with rural communities on the future of rural library services between February 2024 and September 2024?

What discussions have taken place with library users at AK Bell, Aberfeldy, Crieff, Kinross, and Blairgowrie libraries about the proposed reduction of hours at those libraries and the proposed closure of rural libraries?

What discussions have taken place with library staff at AK Bell, Aberfeldy, Crieff, Kinross, and Blairgowrie libraries about the proposed reduction of hours at those libraries and potential impact on library users?

What viability assessments has CPK made about the possibility of rural communities taking on local library services?

What discussions has CPK had with its rural library staff about their views on the impact of closure of rural library services?

On Tue, 12 Nov 2024 at 12:43, Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk> wrote:

Sent on behalf of Councillor Grant Laing

Good afternoon

Thank you for your recent email.

I will arrange for a Teams meeting notice to be issued to you both shortly for Friday 15 November at 11.30am.

Kind regards

Councillor Grant Laing

Leader of the Council

Perth & Kinross Council

2 High Street

Perth

PH1 5PH

Email: glaing@pkc.gov.uk

Phone: 01738 475023

From: Dunkeldppg Dunkeldppg <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 05 November 2024 14:56
To: Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk>
Cc: Caroline Robinson <[REDACTED]> Provost Xander McDade <XMcDade@pkc.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: CPK - Birnam Library

Good afternoon Councillor Laing

Thank you for getting back to me, we would love the opportunity to meet with you then - it would have to be on Teams please as it's an inservice day.

A fellow parent, Caroline, who is copied on this email was able to attend the meeting with CPK officers (I wasn't able to) so she can provide some more insight on that when we meet but another parents words sums up our feelings much more eloquently:

"It feels hard to see libraries being reduced to visits and headcounts as if they can be considered within a capitalist framework when to me they meet a fundamental need, especially at a time when children's literacy levels are at an all time low and their mental health so fundamentally poor.

It feels vital to preserve something that offers an alternative, positive space to that of social media and screens. I feel the attempt to quantify the costs of libraries completely misses the point. They should be preserved at all costs and then steps should be focused on how to better embed them in children's and societies lives, increase footfall, perhaps by positioning other experiences and activities in them.

I wish we could have some fundamental recognition that not all things are equal and what libraries and books offer children is vital to healthy development and their future selves."

Look forward to discussing with you on the 15th. I had also reached out to Provost McDade so I have copied him here as well in the hope he can maybe join the discussion?

Kind Regards

Stephanie Handa

Chairperson of the Royal School of Dunkeld Parent Partnership Group

On Tue, 5 Nov 2024 at 14:01, Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk> wrote:

Sent on behalf of Councillor Grant Laing

Good afternoon

Thank you for your recent email. I believe you have however already met with Culture Perth and Kinross Officers at a public meeting recently.

If however you still wish to meet, I am happy to discuss the library situation alongside the budget situation we are wrestling with in Perth and Kinross, as are other local authorities across the UK.

I would be available to meet on Friday 15 November 2024 at 11am either at my office at 2 High Street or on Teams.

Kind regards

Councillor Grant Laing

Leader of the Council
Perth & Kinross Council
2 High Street
Perth
PH1 5PH
Email: glaing@pkc.gov.uk
Phone: 01738 475023

From: Dunkeldppg Dunkeldppg <[REDACTED]>
Sent: 26 October 2024 20:51
To: Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk>; CSR <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: CPK - Birnam Library

Hello Councillor Laing

Further to my email of 13 October (see below), we would love the opportunity to discuss this with you and a representative from CPK. Can you please let me know when you would be available to do this?

Many Thanks
Steph Handa
Chairperson of RSD PPG

Sent from my iPhone

On 13 Oct 2024, at 20:11, Dunkeldppg Dunkeldppg <[REDACTED]>
Hello Councillor Laing

Apologies for the slow reply to your email. We would love the opportunity to discuss this topic further now that the CPK consultation has concluded. We wondered if it was possible to involve a senior representative from Culture Perth & Kinross in the discussion as well?

Can you advise if you would have some time to discuss on a Friday in November?

Many Thanks
Steph
PPG Chairperson

Sent from my iPhone

On 13 Sep 2024, at 10:45, Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk> wrote:

Sent on behalf of Councillor Grant Laing

Good morning

Thank you for your email of 12 September 2024. As you can appreciate my diary is extremely busy and unfortunately I am not available on 20 September 2024.

I am however happy to meet with you either in Dunkeld or at my office in Perth at a mutually convenient times to discuss this in line with the whole Council budget.

Kind regards

Councillor Grant Laing

Leader of the Council

Perth & Kinross Council

2 High Street

Perth

PH1 5PH

Email: glaing@pkc.gov.uk

Phone: 01738 475023

From: Dunkeldppg Dunkeldppg <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, September 12, 2024 12:15 PM
To: Councillor Grant Laing <GLaing@pkc.gov.uk>
Subject: CPK - Birnam Library

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Dear Councillor Laing

Members of the Dunkeld and Birnam community and surrounding area will be convening on 20th September from 4pm at Birnam Library to demonstrate our support for our library service. We would like to invite you to join us to hear from members of the community about why we must keep this essential service as a publicly funded resource at the heart of our community.

Just days after it was first posted so far over 340 people in our community have signed a petition to keep the library publicly funded, as people express their frustration at the recently published Culture Perth and Kinross consultation which only asks respondents about alternative models of library provision - rather than about maintaining the current service and the reasons why this service is so significant to us all.

We believe it is important you join us on 20th September as our Councillor to hear from members of the community about what this service means to us. We understand that budget setting is a question of priorities and there are those in our community - notably our very youngest members for whom this is their very highest priority. We feel frustrated and motivated by the sheer level of cuts to our children's services we have witnessed in recent years. Not only have there been cuts to playgrounds, school meals, school outdoor spaces, ASN budgets, music budgets...the list goes on, but on top of these cuts our children's education and childhoods have been deeply and irreversibly affected by the COVID pandemic. We will not idly stand by whilst more cuts are made, with the hope that our over stretched community will pick up the mantle.

Please let us know if you will make the demonstration and if not what your message to those who will be convening is.

Best wishes,

Stephanie Handa

Chairperson of the Royal School of Dunkeld Parent Partnership Group

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 **Questions from Birmam Campaign Group for Councillor Laing.pdf**
60K

Library Review – Question Responses for Councillor Grant Laing

What assessment has CPK made of the engagement of library users that are not active borrowers in its consideration of the impact of library closures?

We have considered a number of data sources in both the Review and recent discussions with communities. We use figures for headcount (the number of people coming through the doors of the building), active users, the numbers who either borrow books or use computers and the number of attendees at events. We also looked at which other libraries active users also make use of and while reviewing demographic data, mapped membership of each library across areas included in data sets of multiple deprivation as well as ACORN, which classifies different audience types.

During the Library review we also sought to engage with non-users through our survey which we promoted widely on social media and through Community Councils and other key contacts.

What engagement has CPK had with non-book borrowing library users on the future of rural libraries?

During the library review the questionnaire and call for participants in focus and other groups was shared within libraries so that members and non-members had equal access. Information was also shared with all Community Councils and included in local press and media.

All those with a library membership card which had been active at least once in a three-year period were included in direct communications. As you need a library card to use the computers, online services, library Wi-Fi and book borrowing, this method does reach the majority of service users, including those who are very infrequent users of services.

What engagement has CPK had with rural communities on the question of whether or not they believe their library should close?

We are aware that no service users want to see their library close, however with year-on-year reductions in funding services are no longer sustainable.

The decision to close libraries is one which sits with Perth and Kinross Council as the statutory provider of services which is why they chaired the Library Review. Consultation and focus group discussion during the review included discussion on possible closure and what that would mean for communities and this informed part of the Equalities Impact Assessment Process. The current engagement is a discussion with communities about what alternative provision might be able to be delivered in the local community to mitigate any closures.

What engagement has CPK had with rural communities on the potential impact of closing rural libraries?

As above during the Review process and most recently CPK created a questionnaire that was distributed to active library users at the affected libraries in August 2024. This questionnaire was then extended to library costumers who had not used their library card since 2022. Over 1500

responses were received. This questionnaire asked recipients about their preferred options for an alternate library service. After this, meetings were held in the communities: 29th October (Comrie), 4th Nov (Birnam), 6th Nov (Auchterarder), 12th Nov (Scone) and 13th Nov (Alyth). This led to discussions about the financial position of CPK, our responsibilities and alternate services that we could offer.

Second meetings for those interested in discussing further the community led or community funded provision are being organised for early December. Birnam's second meeting took place on 18th Nov, with a third planned in January 2025.

What measures has CPK implemented or planned in relation to its equality impact assessment on the closure of rural libraries?

An EQIA was prepared during the Library Review which reflected the consultation and engagement which had been undertaken at that time which included input from a range of equalities groups. Evolving from this is a n EQIA which is being continually refreshed as we work with communities and surface any as yet unidentified issues.

We aim to offer a mobile library service to the affected communities, C&C and Books on Wheels to those who are unable to access services due to the health, age or caring responsibilities. We also aim to offer Bookbug, Reminiscence sessions or other activity depending on the needs and wants within each community. Our eResource offer has also been enhanced recently with the introduction of Borrow box to complement our existing platform of Overdrive and PressReader.

What discussions has CPK had with local facilities in order to reach cost savings for delivery of local rural library services?

There is only one library which CPK has any facilities costs for, almost all libraries are in buildings which are leased from Perth and Kinross Council and for which there is no charge for rent or utilities. There means that there are no savings for CPK to be made in any reduction in these costs.

What did CPK do to advance discussions with rural communities on the future of rural library services between February 2024 and September 2024?

It was agreed with Perth and Kinross Council that the project would begin in the Summer 2024 due to our small staff teams being tied up with the opening of the new Museum in Perth. Once the opening period had passed, planning meetings began in June and the questionnaire we distributed to Library members in August 2024.

What discussions have taken place with library users at AK Bell, Aberfeldy, Crieff, Kinross, and Blairgowrie libraries about the proposed reduction of hours at those libraries and the proposed closure of rural libraries?

The change in opening hours will be communicated directly from December 2024. Communication with those who may lose a library service has been the priority to date.

What discussions have taken place with library staff at AK Bell, Aberfeldy, Crieff, Kinross, and Blairgowrie libraries about the proposed reduction of hours at those libraries and potential impact on library users?

All staff are aware of the potential changes to opening hours however communication is ongoing as there may be changes to these proposals following community discussion from December.

What viability assessments has CPK made about the possibility of rural communities taking on local library services?

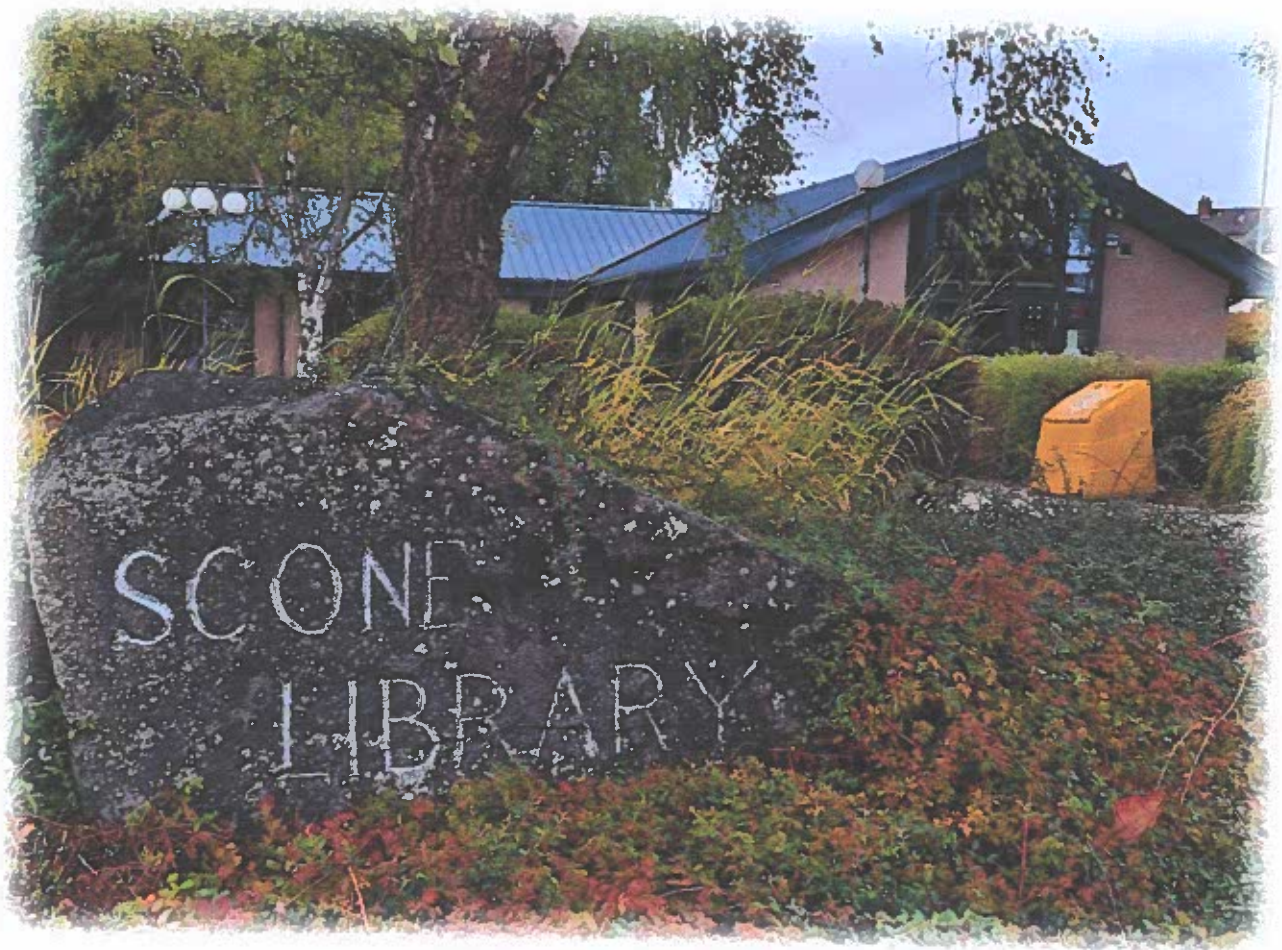
This is part of the process of discussion with communities. We cannot solely determine viability, which will have many varying factors some of which will be unique to individual communities, as we do not have access to the detailed information which communities will have which is why we are keen to partner and collaborate with them.

What discussions has CPK had with its rural library staff about their views on the impact of closure of rural library services?

Staff at our rural libraries are very committed to their communities and their libraries. They are aware of the very challenging financial constraints that CPK is operating within and the difficult choices that are required due to the lack of funding. They have all, without exception, conducted themselves in a highly professional manner. They are able to speak directly to the libraries manager or a member of CPK Executive Team at any time if they wish to raise concerns.

Save Scone Library

Please sign our petition



We'll only get one chance to save the village library which is due to close in March 2025 unless we change the Councils mind.

Every signature counts!!

Save Scone Library



Our Libraries are under threat.

Libraries across Perthshire are at serious risk of closure, to be replaced by either inadequate mobile libraries, or nothing at all.

But libraries have a significance beyond book lending; It is an irreplaceable community hub.

As regular library users, we have seen first hand how our library services have positively impacted people across different age groups and backgrounds - from young learners nurturing their reading skills, to older generations who find company and shared interests in its comfortable surroundings.

British libraries not only serve as an essential provider of free reading materials for over 7.5 million people, but also play a crucial role in fostering community engagement and improved wellbeing. Closing Scone Library would deny our community access to these valuable resources and harm our village.

It is our responsibility to save it as a place of learning, exploration, and community connection.

Please join us in urging Perth and Kinross Council to reconsider the proposed closures, and secure the future of Scone Library – If you care, please sign our petition today.

[Perth and Kinross Council](#)

Why this petition matters

Started by [Kevin Gates](#)

[Media inquiries](#)

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Libraries across Perthshire are at serious risk of closure, to be replaced by either inadequate mobile libraries, or nothing at all. But libraries have a significance beyond book lending; It is an irreplaceable community hub. As regular library users, we have seen first hand how our library services have positively impacted people across different age groups and backgrounds - from young learners nurturing their reading skills, to older generations who find company and shared interests in its comfortable surroundings.

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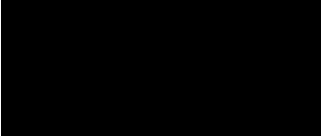
Please join us in urging Perth and Kinross Council to reconsider the proposed closures, and secure the future of Scone Library - If you care, please sign our petition today.



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

John Swinney MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Perthshire North

Mr Kevin Gates



Our Ref: JS10667RA

5 November 2024

Dear Mr Gates,

Thank you for your email regarding proposals to close the Culture Perth & Kinross Library in Scone.

I appreciate the concerns that have been registered with me about the proposed changes to library services. I understand options are being explored to see how services could be retained in Scone.

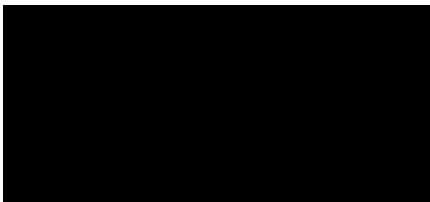
Residents must be offered an opportunity to engage on this matter.

I have written to Helen Smout, Chief Executive for Culture Perth and Kinross, to consider the views of my constituents and to seek a wider consultation with the Scone community.

I will be in touch as soon as I have a response from Culture Perth & Kinross.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,



Re: Scone Library

From WISHART, Peter <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>

Date Thu 14/11/2024 16:26

To [REDACTED]

Dear Kevin,

That's no problem at all. I look forward to meeting you then.

Yours sincerely,

Pete Wishart MP

From: Kevin Gates [REDACTED]

Sent: 14 November 2024 16:04

To: WISHART, Peter <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>

Subject: Re: Scone Library

Good afternoon Pete,

Thanks for the chance to chat over the library issues.

That meeting date and time would suit me perfectly.

Would you happy for me to bring along one additional member of our team. It's just to ensure that I pick up our conversation properly before we share with the larger group

Thanks in anticipation

Kevin

From: WISHART, Peter <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>

Sent: 14 November 2024 14:47

To: Kevin Gates [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Scone Library

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for getting in touch, and I would like to thank you for your efforts with regards to finding a resolution to the issues surrounding Scone Library.

I would be more than happy to meet you to discuss this in more detail. Having checked my diary, I would be available to meet with you at my office in Perth from 11.45am-12.15pm next Friday, 22nd November.

Please let me know if this works on your end. I would be happy to look at alternative dates if that one doesn't suit.

Yours sincerely,

Pete Wishart MP

From: Kevin Gates <[REDACTED]>
Date: Monday, 11 November 2024 at 17:35
To: WISHART, Peter <pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: Scone Library

Good afternoon Pete

I am leading the Save Scone Library campaign group. You are no doubt aware that we have had very successful turnouts at our public meeting and demonstration of support for the library. Over 200 attended on Saturday morning at the library.

I am aware that you have engaged with other libraries in the rural communities of Perthshire and was hoping that we could arrange a meeting to discuss the specific problems relating to Scone. We have our consultation with CulturePK tomorrow evening and our resolve as part of that consultation is to make sure Scone library remains open.

We accept that borrowing and reading habits have evolved and that financials are tight but we can't accept that with an open mind and smart innovative thinking that we can't find a sustainable future for the traditional library in the village.

I look forward to hearing from you

Thanks in anticipation

Kevin

Kevin Gates
[REDACTED]

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RE: Save Scone Library

From Fraser M (Murdo), MSP <Murdo.Fraser.msp@parliament.scot>

Date Fri 01/11/2024 18:01

To Kevin Gates <[REDACTED]>

Dear Mr Gates,

Thank you for reaching out regarding the closure of Scone Library. I assure you that this is something that my office and I have been monitoring closely as I am of the view that our local libraries are crucial to communities in Perth and Kinross. Libraries are so much more than borrowing a book; they are a place to connect, relax, work, and – crucially – a resource for our younger generations.

I have been as unaware as you about the planned closures of the libraries in the Spring and I am dismayed to have learned that you were unable to contest the decision taken by the council this winter past to cut the Culture Perth and Kinross budget. This was a decision that was taken due to the extent of the cuts levied on the council by the SNP Government.

I will be calling the SNP Government out on this issue next week in Parliament with an oral question, in which I will ask the Government to provide more money to local councils to mitigate these cuts, noting that they should be able to do this now that they have been assigned an additional £1.4 billion by the UK Government for this current financial year.

I hope that with the consultation and enough pressure on the Scottish Government, a solution can be found to keep our libraries open.

I hope that this is helpful. Thank you for taking the time to write.

With kind regards,
Murdo

Murdo Fraser
Scottish Conservative MSP for Mid-Scotland and Fife

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From: Kevin Gates <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Sunday, October 27, 2024 5:22 PM

To: pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Fraser M (Murdo), MSP <Murdo.Fraser.msp@parliament.scot>; Rowley A (Alex), MSP <Alex.Rowley.msp@parliament.scot>; Smith E (Liz), MSP <Elizabeth.Smith.msp@parliament.scot>; Baker C (Claire), MSP <Claire.Baker.msp@parliament.scot>; McCall R (Roz), MSP <Roz.McCall.MSP@Parliament.scot>; Stewart A (Alexander), MSP <Alexander.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot>; Ruskell M (Mark), MSP <Mark.Ruskell.msp@parliament.scot>; CEStewart@pkc.gov.uk; HAnderson@pkc.gov.uk; GrantStewart@pkc.gov.uk; JWelch@pkc.gov.uk; glaing@pkc.gov.uk; XMcdade@pkc.gov.uk;

enquiries@culturepk.org.uk; chiefexec@pkc.gov.uk; ArunSingh@pkc.gov.uk; ClaireMailer@pkc.gov.uk;
amtaylor@pkc.gov.uk; sdevlin@pkc.gov.uk; rrobinson@pkc.gov.uk; SWWalker@pkc.gov.uk;
eritchie@pkc.gov.uk; planninglrb@pkc.gov.uk
Subject: Save Scone Library

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Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you today to express concern regarding the consultation surrounding the potential closure of Scone library.

The library is a central pillar of the Scone community, and serves not only as a place to encourage reading, but also as an essential third place for the residents to engage socially, a vital tool in combatting social isolation and loneliness.

Scone library not only offers valuable book lending and printing services, but also puzzles, knitting, coffee mornings, toddler's group, and other community-building services.

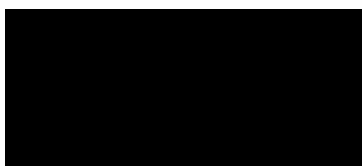
Of note, the Robert Douglas Memorial School has no library service whatsoever, and students use Scone library as a vital educational resource. If Scone library closes or reduces in efficacy, hundreds of children will have their education hindered.

Given Scone's growing size, with the recent planning permission of 750 new homes, removing the library facilities seems both shortsighted and inimical to good community building.

The residents of Scone feel very strongly about this issue, and would greatly appreciate any input or help you or your office could provide in helping preserve Scone library.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I look forward to your response.

Kevin Gates



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Outlook

RE: Save Scone Library

From Lisa Potter <LPotter@pkc.gov.uk>

Date Thu 31/10/2024 14:11

To Kevin Gates [REDACTED]

PKC - EXTERNAL

Good afternoon,

Thank you for getting in touch to share your concerns about the future of Scone library. I have been passed your email to respond on behalf of the Council staff who you included in your original email.

While decisions about the future operation of individual libraries in the area are for Culture Perth and Kinross, the funding challenges which have led them to reshape their services are ones that we share.

As is the case for all local authorities we are having to manage increasingly tighter public budgets. This means services cannot continue to be delivered in the way they have in the past, making change necessary. As the Council is the largest funder of Culture Perth and Kinross, these financial challenges and requirements for change are shared, and they are also having to make difficult decisions. Culture Perth and Kinross have of course shared plans for the new model for library services with us as it has been developed.

While their new model focusses services through library hubs, mobile libraries and the eLibrary service, please be assured that they will continue to work with our schools to make books and resources available to pupils.

You clearly feel strongly about the role a community library facility can play. Culture Perth and Kinross are keen to help community groups who wish to develop a community or volunteer led provision in their area. This could be an avenue for you to explore.

You may also find it helpful to get involved in the next stage of discussions by joining one of the upcoming local meetings hosted by Culture Perth and Kinross. The meeting in Scone will be held on Tuesday 12 November at 6.30pm in the Robert Douglas Institute.

With best wishes

Lisa

Lisa Potter Chart.PR (she/her)
Service Manager – Strategic
Communications and Engagement

Email lpotter@pkc.gov.uk

From: Kevin Gates [REDACTED]

To: pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk; John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot;
Murdo.Fraser.msp@parliament.scot; Alex.Rowley.msp@parliament.scot;
Elizabeth.Smith.msp@parliament.scot; Claire.Baker.msp@parliament.scot; Roz.McCall.msp@parliament.scot;
Alexander.Stewart.msp@parliament.scot; Mark.Ruskell.msp@parliament.scot; Councillor Colin Stewart
<CEStewart@pkc.gov.uk>; Councillor Hugh Anderson <HAnderson@pkc.gov.uk>; Councillor Grant Stewart
<GrantStewart@pkc.gov.uk>; Councillor Jack Welch <JWelch@pkc.gov.uk>; Councillor Grant Laing
<GLaing@pkc.gov.uk>; Provost Xander McDade <XMcDade@pkc.gov.uk>; kinnoull@parliament.uk; Depute
Provost Andrew Parrott <AParrott@pkc.gov.uk>; chris4perthcitycentre@gmail.com; Councillor Stewart
Donaldson <SDonaldson@pkc.gov.uk>; Culture Perth and Kinross Enquiries <enquiries@culturepk.org.uk>;
chiefexec <chiefexec@pkc.gov.uk>; Arun Singh <ArunSingh@pkc.gov.uk>; ClaireMailer@pkc.gov.uk; Alan
Taylor <AMTaylor@pkc.gov.uk>; Sheena Devlin <SDevlin@pkc.gov.uk>; Ross Robinson
<RRobinson@pkc.gov.uk>; Scott Walker <SWWalker@pkc.gov.uk>; Elaine Ritchie <ERitchie@pkc.gov.uk>; SPR
Planning Local Review Body <PlanningLRB@pkc.gov.uk>
Subject: Save Scone Library

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Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you today to express concern regarding the consultation surrounding the potential closure of Scone library.

The library is a central pillar of the Scone community, and serves not only as a place to encourage reading, but also as an essential third place for the residents to engage socially, a vital tool in combatting social isolation and loneliness.

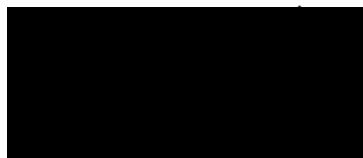
Scone library not only offers valuable book lending and printing services, but also puzzles, knitting, coffee mornings, toddler's group, and other community-building services.

Of note, the Robert Douglas Memorial School has no library service whatsoever, and students use Scone library as a vital educational resource. If Scone library closes or reduces in efficacy, hundreds of children will have their education hindered.

Given Scone's growing size, with the recent planning permission of 750 new homes, removing the library facilities seems both shortsighted and inimical to good community building.

The residents of Scone feel very strongly about this issue, and would greatly appreciate any input or help you or your office could provide in helping preserve Scone library.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and I look forward to your response.
Kevin Gates



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Outlook

Scone Library support

From Kevin Gates [REDACTED]

Date Fri 08/11/2024 16:13

To Councillor Colin Stewart <CEStewart@pkc.gov.uk>; HAnderson@pkc.gov.uk <HAnderson@pkc.gov.uk>; grantstewart@pkc.gov.uk <GrantStewart@pkc.gov.uk>; Councillor Jack Welch <JWelch@pkc.gov.uk>

Good afternoon all

You will no doubt be aware that our campaign in support of Scone Library continues tomorrow morning with a demonstration of support at the library at 11.15.

We anticipate a good turnout

It would be great to see you there and/ or at the CulturePK consultation event at the Institute on

Tuesday 12th Nov at 6.30pm

Thanks in anticipation of your support

All the best

Kevin Gates

Save Scone Library Organiser

Scone library

From Kevin Gates [REDACTED]
Date Thu 14/11/2024 17:31
To enwallace@pkc.gov.uk <enwallace@pkc.gov.uk>

Good afternoon Elaine

Thanks very much to the CPK team for attending RDMI on Wednesday. We found it enlightening and deeply concerning.

The presentation and discussion will help us shape the direction of our campaign to Save Scone Library.

We appreciate your financial predicament but can't accept that there are no other viable options. We'll do what we can to reverse the current stance of CPK and PKC.

At the same time we will be challenging our elected representatives to identify new funding streams or create financially viable strategies for all libraries in P&K

In the meantime, I got involved with the tidy up at the end of the meeting and missed the chance to add my contact details to your list of those willing to try to identify an acceptable fall back position from a community perspective

I'd be grateful if you could add my name to the list

All the best and thanks again

Kevin Gates

Save Scone Library Organiser

 Outlook

RE: Save Scone Library campaign

From Lisa Potter <LPotter@pkc.gov.uk>

Date Tue 24/12/2024 09:32

To Kevin Gates <[REDACTED]>

PKC - EXTERNAL

Dear Mr Gates,

Thank you for getting in touch. I have been passed your email to respond on behalf of the Council staff who you copied into your original email.

We understand the concerns being raised and note your request in relation to the use of budget funding. Preparations for the setting of the Council budget for 2025-26 are currently underway, taking into account a wide range of financial considerations. The budget itself will be set in February 2025 by elected members of Perth and Kinross Council based upon the funding settlement from the Scottish Government and the final Council Tax level agreed by Council. We are unable to speculate on what decisions will be made in that budget.

In the meantime, Council services and organisations who receive funding from the Council, will continue to plan for the implementation of savings already agreed.

With best wishes

Lisa

Lisa Potter Chart.PR (she/her)
Service Manager – Strategic
Communications and Engagement

Email lpotter@pkc.gov.uk

From: Kevin Gates <[REDACTED]>

Sent: 18 December 2024 19:09

To: pete.wishart.mp@parliament.uk; John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot;

Murdo.Fraser.msp@parliament.scot; Alex.Rowley.msp@parliament.scot;

John.Baker.msp@parliament.scot; Roz.McCall.msp@parliament.scot;

Save Our Rural Libraries public demonstration

From Kevin Gates [REDACTED]

Date Sun 05/01/2025 21:06

To Councillor Colin Stewart <CEStewart@pkc.gov.uk>; grantstewart@pkc.gov.uk <GrantStewart@pkc.gov.uk>;
HAnderson@pkc.gov.uk <HAnderson@pkc.gov.uk>; Councillor Jack Welch <JWelch@pkc.gov.uk>

Bcc Gail Aboim [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Good evening gentlemen

The campaign to save Scone Library continues with our attendance at the 'Save Our Rural Libraries' demonstration planned for 11am on Saturday 11th January. Attendees from Alyth, Auchterarder, Birnam and Comrie will be in attendance outside the Museum

It will follow a similar format to the Scone library demo which you all kindly attended. Thank you for your support at that event. Your words were gratefully received by the community.

As we have indicated in previous emails we believe the financial picture has sufficiently changed to allow PKC to rescind their earlier decision to cut funds to CulturePK forcing the ALEO into radical, unpopular, unjustifiable and morally wrong closure decisions.

PKC have confirmed with us that the budget process is underway and that the elected officials will sign off in February. They have also stated that the previous agreed cuts to funded bodies are still being planned for. Whilst I accept planning for the worst case is necessary there is still time to adjust the availability of funds to avoid the cessation of library services in the fastest growing village in Perthshire

It is extraordinary that 3 Strathmore ward communities are affected by the ongoing threat to libraries. Coupar Angus has already gone and been replaced by the Strathmore hub community service. I have visited and been in conversations about this facility and it is clearly not an effective substitute for 'The Real Thing'

It is hard to believe that we can accept a further two closures in this ward. Scone, being the largest community and fastest growing area in Perth & Kinross and Alyth costing virtually nothing to run.

It is clear that the obligation to supply an 'adequate' library service is being interpreted in a manner which is purely designed to starve local villages of key community hubs and prioritise other PKC pet projects. What was once adequate will shortly be inadequate!

It really makes a mockery of the latest PKC engagement process about Placemaking.

Could I ask that you support your local constituents again by attending on Saturday and saying a few words on our behalf.

Please let me know your thoughts and I will arrange a speaking slot for you

Thanks in anticipation and I look forward to seeing you all again

Kevin Gates
[REDACTED]

Ross Bank, The Ross,

Comrie, Crieff

PH6 2JU

18 December 2024

To all Perth and Kinross Councillors

Dear Councillors,

As representatives of SORL (Save our Rural Libraries), we are writing to you to ask you to re-consider your current plan to close rural libraries in Perth and Kinross. Currently, five rural libraries in the county are under threat of closure, these being the libraries in Alyth, Auchterarder, Birnam, Comrie and Scone. As representatives of the library users of these communities we are calling for our libraries to remain publicly funded, and accessible to all.

There are many reasons not to close these rural libraries, advice from officers of the Council to yourselves as our elected representatives has, we believe, largely focussed on fiscal reasons for closure. Unfortunately, on occasion, you have been misinformed. For example, the advice from Head of Culture and Communities Services, Transformation Review of Arms Length External Organisations (ALEOs) 6th December 2023 (Report 23/247) is based on Appendix 1, a report from Glasgow Audit which indicates that the Council owns all five of these library buildings. This is not the case. The Council owns just three of the library buildings involved.

Elected Members have not been given the full information with regard to the wider financial benefits that libraries bring to communities and therefore to the county as a whole. Research by the University of East Anglia¹ indicates for every £1 invested in library provision there is £6 of benefit. These benefits include reduction in the pressure on other council budgets, particularly in relation to the social care budget. Libraries support individual independence in the older percentiles of the population and support mentally healthy communities. They do this by giving communities a regular, predictable place that is warm, welcoming and free on the "doorstep". A place where there is a professional presence; the person in charge is not your neighbour. A place that people can have a reason to go to, ostensibly to exchange a book, but where they will have meaningful interactions with other people, the activity that provides so many mental health benefits. These are benefits that mobile libraries and Click and Collect services do not provide.

Thus, closing libraries, and particularly closing libraries in comparatively isolated rural communities, increases the financial risk to the Council. Councillors will be aware of the costs of individual care. It is highly likely that the financial outlay to provide rural libraries is an economically sensible

¹ Gordon, J. ed. (2023) *Libraries for living, and for living better: The value and impact of public libraries in the East of England*. ISBN 978-1-915812-21-6. p.18. Accessed 2 Dec 2024: <https://www.ueapublishingproject.com/product-page/libraries-for-living-and-for-living-better-by-john-gordon> Also as J. Gordon, A. Blackett, R. Fordham, M. Garraffa, S.

Band D Council Tax⁴. Additionally, past experience demonstrates that the expected savings from the closure of Council establishments are rarely, if ever, fully realised. With financially positive changes on the horizon now is not the time to be making closure decisions which will be final and irrevocable.

Thank you for considering the information we have placed before you. My hope is that we have made a sufficiently strong case to sway your support towards retaining the five rural libraries as Perth and Kinross Council funded establishments and that you will use your influence, your voice and your vote for their future retention.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted signature]

Alastair Forsyth for Save Our Rural Libraries

On behalf of representatives of SORL (Save our Rural Libraries) members:

Caroline Wilding, for Save Birnam Library Campaign

Alastair Forsyth/Sarah Hawkins, for Save Comrie Library Campaign

Kevin Gates, for Save Scone Library Campaign

Angela Laurie, for Save Auchterarder Library Campaign

⁴ 35p is an extrapolation of the indicative CPK cost savings and the council press release about their medium term council tax strategy. <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/24337/Proposed-Council-Tax-rises-to-protect-frontline-services> 27 Nov 2024. "At just £11.70 a month for a Band D property, we could raise over £10m to protect health and social care, support for children with additional support needs and invest in tackling poverty." We have assumed CPK needs to save £300k p.a. for libraries after the impact of NIC is included (the exact figure is rather unclear). If £11.70 p.m. = £10million, then £300k needs £0.35 per Band D property. As argued above, our libraries are justifiably regarded as contributing to investment in all