

PE1581/R

Literature Alliance Scotland letter of 22 September 2016

**PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE
PETITION PE01581: SAVE SCOTLAND'S SCHOOL LIBRARIES**

On 19 December 2015, we wrote on behalf of Literature Alliance Scotland, to the then Chair of the Public Petitions Committee, Mr Michael McMahon, in support of the petition 'Save Scotland's School Libraries', lodged by Mr Duncan Wright. We attach a copy of our letter of 19 December 2015, along with a list of the principal literature organisations in Scotland represented by Literature Alliance Scotland. We wish to submit the following additional comments.

Since we wrote in December 2015, we are gravely concerned that Argyll & Bute Council decided to dispense with all its school librarians in February 2016 and that, despite entreaties from all sides, most prominently from the children and young people of Argyll and Bute, the Council has not yet rescinded its decision and reinstated its school librarians.

Depriving the children and young people of Argyll and Bute, or any other part of the country, of their trained school librarians directly acts against giving them equal opportunities and equal rights. Trained school librarians are an essential part of a modern school. They transform the school library into a place of learning, where pupils can be helped in directing their own reading, learning and research.

Other countries understand the essential part that school librarians and school libraries play in young people's education. Under the Swedish 2011 Education Act, pupils in Sweden are entitled to a school library staffed by trained school librarians: it is viewed as a child's right. In Denmark, where its Education Act requires every school to have a school library, school libraries are becoming learning centres where the school librarian, the learning instructor, advises, trains and guides learners in an understanding and knowledge of books and digital information. If we are also ambitious for our children and young people, why would we not follow suit?

Literature Alliance Scotland strongly supports the current emphasis on closing the gap in opportunity between children and young people in different parts of the country, and the aim of giving every child equal life chances on which they can build. There can be no higher aim in seeking to build a fairer and more equal country. The results will help to determine the success that individual young people can make of their lives and will also influence the future success of Scotland. However, to succeed, we will need to work constructively together to avoid a situation where children's chances continue to depend on where they happen to find themselves in the country, something over which they have absolutely no control.

We implore the Public Petitions Committee to take up the cause of school libraries in Scotland vigorously, and to urge the Scottish Government and the local authorities in Scotland to work constructively together to think about our young people's futures and save Scotland's network of school libraries.

Yours sincerely
Dr Ann Matheson
Chair

Dr Donald Smith
Vice-Chair

Enc. Literature Alliance Scotland Membership

Literature Alliance Scotland Membership at September 2016

MEMBERS

- Association for Scottish Literary Studies
- Association of Scottish Literary Agents
- CILIPS (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland)
- Edinburgh International Book Festival
- Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust
- The Gaelic Books Council
- Moniack Mhor
- National Library of Scotland
- Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust
- Playwrights' Studio Scotland
- Publishing Scotland
- The Saltire Society
- Scots Language Centre
- Scottish Book Trust
- Scottish Language Dictionaries
- SLAM (Scottish Literary and Arts Magazines)
- Scottish Society of Playwrights
- Scottish PEN
- Scottish Poetry Library
- Scottish Storytelling Forum
- Scottish Writers Centre
- Society of Authors in Scotland
- Universities Committee for Scottish Literature
- Wigtown Festival Company
- Writers' Guild of Great Britain (Scottish Region)

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