

SAVE OUR

LIBRARIES

**UNDER
THREAT**



SAVE OUR LIBRARIES

WE URGE
GATESHEAD COUNCIL
TO THINK AGAIN ABOUT PROPOSED
CUTS TO
THE LIBRARY SERVICE IN
GATESHEAD.

Gateshead Vision is – ‘Local people realising their full potential, enjoying the best quality of life in a healthy, equal, safe, prosperous and sustainable Gateshead.’

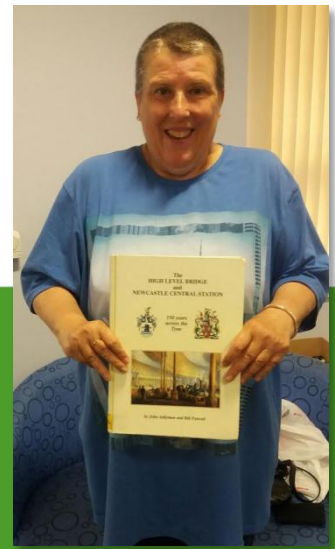
Since the passing of the Public Libraries Act 1850 an effective, popular and admired public Library network has been a constant feature across Gateshead. It has been centre stage in Gateshead’s impressive record of educational attainment, community cohesion and social mobility.

Please read our stories and discover the impact libraries have on our lives.



WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

SANDRA ARMSTRONG



My name is Sandra Armstrong and I have been a regular at Felling Library for many years. I was introduced to the library by my support group, Community Base. I am now able to visit independently as the staff there help me with all the things I need to do.

I love local history and I go there to read the books and to look at the files of local photographs. I love Felling and I print off lots of pictures as it gives me something worthwhile and interesting to do. The staff help me on the computers too. Without this help and support I would feel so lost. I would be very sad if Felling library should close as I am not able to travel very far and the big library at Central can be a bit scary sometimes.

Please think of me and others like me when you are making your decisions about cutting the library service. The staff who work in Felling are so good, it wouldn't be the same without them and I draw them pictures to show how much I appreciate them!

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

ANNA'S GRANDMA



My granddaughter Anna, and I attend the Rhyme Time at Felling Library every Tuesday morning and I cannot underestimate the benefits of introducing very young children to rhyme and song. As a retired primary school teacher I have seen over many years the effects of language deprivation on the acquisition of reading skills. The professional expertise of a qualified librarian in leading these sessions is invaluable and just one of the many vital roles they fill in language development.

Yes, I know there are private providers of Rhyme and Song sessions but the charges can be prohibitive for parents with limited funds. The library service provides these free of charge, every week of the year, and the parents and carers have confidence in the professional skill of the providers. To me, as a Gateshead council tax payer, it is an investment in our children's future.

As a lifelong resident of Felling, and also an education professional, it is in such areas of deprivation where the services provided by the library and qualified librarians are most needed. Even our new Prime Minister, Mrs May, is calling for equality of opportunity to increase the life chances of the most disadvantaged children. So as a Labour Council, Gateshead, should be leading the way to make these aims a reality. How can taking away vital services improve life chances?

We know the council will blame cuts in central funding if they have to make these devastating cuts in local library services. Hopefully austerity politics will not last forever. If we lose much of the infrastructure of this important service, which improves the quality of life for so many, we will find it almost impossible to rebuild it in the future. I fear it will be gone forever like so many of the facilities which made Felling a good place to live.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

PAT WILSON



My name is Pat Wilson and I have been resident in Felling for 25 years. I am alarmed and horrified that my local library is once again at risk of closure, or of being taken over by volunteers. I have already witnessed the previous library, which was in a prime location, being demolished to make way for houses. Although the present location is not ideal, being situated half way down a steep bank, it remains an essential and valued part of the local community.

I use Felling library on a regular basis and it is an essential lifeline as I need to access the computers to enable me to obtain my brief for work as an Ambassador for Sainsbury's supermarkets. I do not drive so it is crucial that my local library is within walking distance.

I feel that Felling, having just obtained a new ASDA Supermarket and a new shopping precinct, is attracting more people to the area and giving Felling a new piece of the action. Taking away the library is surely a retrograde step and it will result in isolating so many people, the young, the elderly and the most vulnerable in our community.

I hear there is a possibility the existing staff may lose their jobs and be replaced by volunteers but this would result in a loss of expertise in an area where it is most needed. The staff have helped me on the computers a great deal and I see them helping many others, particularly Job Seekers who are sent to do their job searches in order to receive benefits. In an increasing technological age it is worrying that this support could be taken away.

Please save Felling library as I feel that cutting the service will be a false economy and it will be far more costly in human terms. In an area of high deprivation a library service is surely essential to raise standards and aspirations.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

ALFIE



Alfie (5) has been a regular visitor to Crawcrook Library since we moved to the area 2 years ago. Straight after one visit to the library last year, Alfie decided to turn our house into a library, with help from Isaac (4). They made a library desk and got the grown-ups to choose a book from the (well-stocked) living room library! This is now a game we play regularly.

One of Alfie's favorite parts of the school day is reading time. He tells his teachers "I love reading!". I have no doubt that using Crawcrook library regularly has helped Alfie to become a confident reader and a keen lover of books.

ANDREA



When I first came here to the UK, I didn't know many people, therefore I was kinda lonely after school. When I started coming to the library I met so many different people and I joined the Reading Hack at the library over 3 years ago now. This gave me a chance to get out of the house, socialise with new and different people whilst having a nice time. I'm sure that my library isn't the only one in Gateshead that offers these opportunities to young people like me, so if any library was to close it would have a devastating effect on people just like me, along with many others.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

MANISHA SINGH



Hello. My name is Manisha Singh and I am 11years old.

I have been going to Felling library ever since I was a baby. The caring staff taught me how to read and encouraged me to read lots of different types of books. I have dyslexia so it has been difficult for me but I have loved books ever since. I go to Felling library as often as I possibly can. When I am not at school I love to go and help out at the weekly rhymetime. I am always learning a new skill at the library. Some of the books I have borrowed have taught me how to knit, crochet and sew.

As soon as my parents and I heard that Felling Library might close, or the existing staff may be replaced by volunteers, we were extremely upset and we started a petition in Felling Post office, which my parents own. Lots of people have signed it . We think it will be a devastating blow to the local community if these changes go ahead. The local community need to access the library for so many things, computers, photocopying, fax machine and books. And what will all the children who visit with the schools do and what will happen to all the babies at rhymetime and the old people who meet there to make, and see their friends.

And what will happen to me?

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

TESSA



Hello. This is my little girl, Tessa. As soon as Tessa was born I took her straight to Felling Library to get a library card for her as I believe looking at books from an early age is beneficial in so many ways.

I discovered Felling Library has a rhymetime every Tuesday morning and I decided to bring Tessa along. Tessa loves her weekly visits and we have made great friends with the other mums and tots. Rhymetime helps young children to develop in lots of ways and it quickly became one of the highlights of our week.

We formed a special bond with the librarian who runs the weekly sessions and she told me about the Bookstart Bear Club and how Tessa could achieve certificates by reading books. This is a photograph of Tessa receiving her gold certificate. It is quite an achievement as there are ten certificates in total. We have loved looking at the books and reading the stories together. The gold certificate now has pride of place on Tessa's bedroom wall and I am so grateful to the library service for offering such incentives. It represents Tessa's very first achievement.

Please keep library provision local and please keep Felling library in operation with all the experienced staff.
Thank you!

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

ENA CORBET



Miss Ena Corbet, is seen here on the garden arbour which was erected in memory of her dear late sister Pat in Whickham Library garden.

Now 88 years old, Miss Corbet has been a member of Whickham Library for many years and uses it on a regular basis to borrow books. She also comes in to catch up with other locals and to rest between shopping and returning home.

Miss Corbet was deeply upset when she heard the library was under threat of closure or being handed over to volunteers. She believes that volunteers will not have the expertise and knowledge of properly trained staff that have been doing the job for several years.

Miss Corbet remembers the library garden when it was just a bit of waste land and it was just an area for 'rubbish to be thrown'. Her late sister often used to say 'I would love to see something made of that' but died before the garden creation was complete.

Pat would have been overjoyed to see it. Miss Corbet used some of the money she was left by her sister to put towards the garden. She often goes out to sit in the arbour to reflect and says it's her haven.



Miss Corbet cannot make it to any other library and would be absolutely lost if the Whickham branch was to close. She says it is very important to have a place like the library where community groups can meet as they do in Whickham.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

VIVIAN HENDERSON



Vivian Henderson has been an active member of Whickham Library for about 30 years and uses it to take several books out every week.

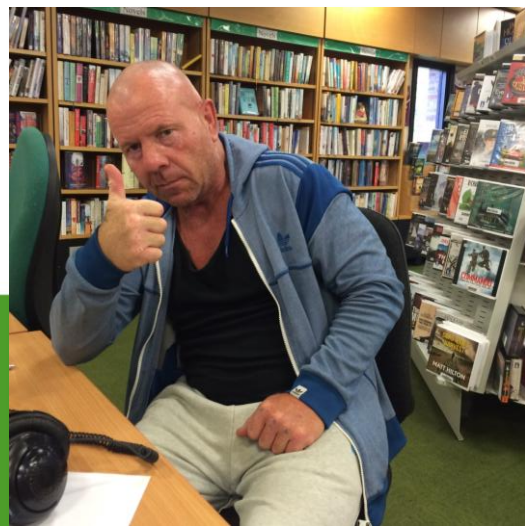
Mrs Henderson says she would not like to see the library handed over to volunteers as she quite often reserves books from other branches, and this would not be possible if it was under volunteer management. She would have to make do with the stock that was in the library which she would quite quickly exhaust.

In order to travel to another library if Whickham branch closed, Mrs Henderson would have to take two buses to get to Blaydon, changing in the MetroCentre which would take a long time and would absolutely tire her out as she is disabled and uses her walking stick on a daily basis. At the moment it only takes her (at the most) 10 minutes to get into Whickham and the library is right next to the bus stop, whereas in Blaydon, she would have to walk all the way through the precinct.

Mrs Henderson also said she loves to come into the library on a Monday morning to coincide with Rhymetime; she loves to sit and listen to the toddlers sign their hearts out while she chooses her books. She also meets up with friends in the library and if the weather is nice, they use the library garden to sit in and chat.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

RAYMOND JOHNSTON



My name is Raymond Johnston; I have used Pelaw Library since I was very young. I'm 21 now. Ha not really, I'm 50. I enjoy using the facilities Pelaw Library has to offer. When you arrive you're always greeted warmly and acknowledged when you leave too. I've seen staff come and go over the years but knowing they're always there to help is good.

Closing the library will be a devastating blow to the public; it is a piece of history and would be a massive loss to Pelaw and the surrounding areas. A lot of people rely on the library; it's a meeting place for all. My mam comes to the coffee morning on a Wednesday, I use the computers to do job search and the place is always full of people. They do special events to raise money for charity and have the kids in singing; the whole of Pelaw comes together in the library.

Please think again and keep Pelaw Library.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

LAURA HILLARY



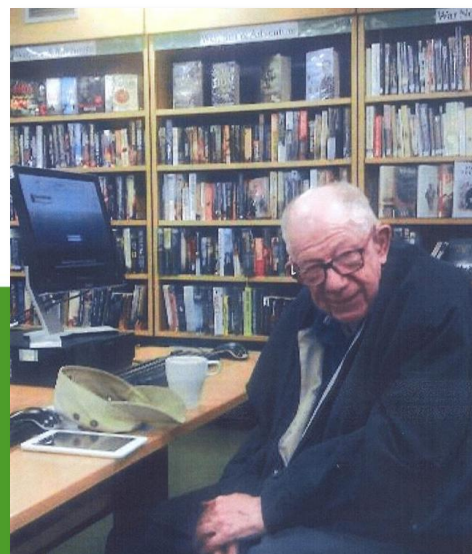
“I understand that at the moment the government is looking into closing down libraries around Gateshead which I believe would have a negative impact on the local community surrounding these libraries. Despite what most people seem to think, libraries supply more than just books to lend, libraries have groups within them where people of all ages can show up and state their opinion. I myself am a part of two groups at Gateshead Central Library, called The Anime Attacks Committee and the Reading Hack group. The Anime Attacks Group sets up various events that attract the attention of various different types of people which allows the library to gain more interest; it also allows people to feel as though they are a part of something. The Reading Hack group meets on a weekly basis and each week we look at new “Hacks” that we can complete, all to do with the books that we enjoy to read. The group also allows the young people of the libraries to get together and work on what we are passionate about and we would be lost without libraries.”

L. WILSON

I have been attending Felling Library for the past four years with a gifted and talented reading group- Chatterbooks. Fortnightly, myself and six pupils visit the library and work with Beryl to explore different texts. This session allows the children time to reflect on literature in a highly motivating setting and explore themes and authors in a fun and stimulating way. The children are highly motivated to visit the library and enjoy the well thought out sessions delivered by Beryl. Within the school community, the children are disseminating a love of books and are discussing different authors fluently and knowledgeably. As the children are the oldest in the school, they are excellent role models for the younger children and promote a love of reading to younger pupils. The Chatterbooks group is invaluable to the pupils at Brandling. Being able to learn within a library environment, and to receive expert tuition from library staff, enriches the education of the children and promotes a life-long love of reading.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

DAVID BROWN



I'll be devastated if the library closes. People don't realise how much it will affect my life. I've learned how to use Facebook at the library, how to email and Skype to keep in touch with family. I'm learning how to put pictures onto Facebook now and the staff have been so helpful. I wouldn't know what I'd do without the library; I wouldn't have the experts to help me on the computer. My family love to see how far I've gotten on the computer and I enjoy learning something new.

Central Library & Leam Lane Library are two buses away for me. I can come to Pelaw Library on my scooter and I have friends who come here too. If we lose the library, you're taking away a part of the community. Coming to the library gets me out of the house-my support worker encourages me to get out and about and likes me to report back on my progress.

If you take away the library, my services, what are you spending my money on?

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

DOROTHY FORSTER



I always come to the library at least three times a week. It's a place where I can rest my legs and chat to people. The staff are lovely, can't fault them, and they always recommend books to me. I've had some smashing books over the years; it helps my brain you know. I'm 90 next year.

I used to just come to the library for a rest and read the newspapers or magazines, but the staff got me reading and it's been great. Books are good company when you live alone. Please, please don't close the library, it's my life. It really is. The staff would be out of a job and they're wonderful, pleasant people who are good with us oldies.

I can ask the staff about all my problems, about my phone, TV-who else is there to ask? I have no family and you don't get good neighbours now, but you can always count on the library staff.

Coming into the library is my life; the people who work here are my lifeline. Please don't close the library. I can't get the bus; it's too far to go to Leam Lane! No, I can't do that. The library is the heart of the community and I don't know what I'd do without my books now.

WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY...

HEATHER BLISS

I have been a member of Rowlands Gill Library for nearly 30 years. Over time I have borrowed books (novels, and when first in the village, books on local history which were extremely useful); also book tapes and latterly CDs.

There are always local papers to read.

As a member of Rowlands Gill WI, we have supported the Library at events – and with tea and cake! We have recently started a Knit and Natter Group in the Library to help bring members together and highlight the Library. We are also looking at starting a Book Club.

Times are changing – and Gateshead Council will need to make financial cuts – but I do feel Rowlands Gill Library really should remain open. If closed, residents without cars (and this includes the elderly and young people, possibly with children) will need to travel on at least 2 buses (expensive for the younger population) to visit another library. Highfield is part of Rowlands Gill and some parts of Highfield could be classed as “deprived”. Surely they at least deserve support?

The Library provides computer accessibility. Not everyone has a computer at home or a printer. These items are important to help people who are unemployed apply for available jobs.

“Rhymetime” held in the Library is for young parents in the local area. Where would they go if the facility closed? There are 3 schools in the area if you include High Spennings – and Rowlands Gill Library is local to them too.

We are so lucky to have this facility in Rowlands Gill – it would be a great shame to let it go.

“MY LOCAL LIBRARY PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN MY RECOVERY”

I was discharged from hospital homeless and placed in safe accommodation by Gateshead Council. I was eventually found a permanent flat. Following the loss of my job, 2 years earlier, I had become isolated with no social interaction. My new home was in an unfamiliar area and I had no local family, friends or acquaintances.

I knew from past experience that one of the places to go was my local library. I had limited funds for bus fares and my mobility was also limited so, at first, it took 45mins to walk there but, as my health improved I was able to get there in 20 mins.

I immediately encountered a welcoming atmosphere. The members of library staff, while totally professional, were friendly and non-judgemental. Soon a visit to the library became part of my daily routine. Here was a safe and secure environment where I had access, not only to books (I like to dip into biographies) but newspapers, local information and computers. Getting to, and using, the library played a key part in my recovery.

I then spent three months attending a rehabilitation centre in Gateshead for my alcohol addiction. When that was completed I returned to using the library. I had been declared bankrupt and the library was essential for me to access facilities I could not afford. I could not afford to buy Alcoholics Anonymous literature, but in the library I was able to read it online and to find information on meeting locations. Using the computers also enabled me to re-establish and maintain contact with family via email, as speaking to people on the telephone was difficult for me.

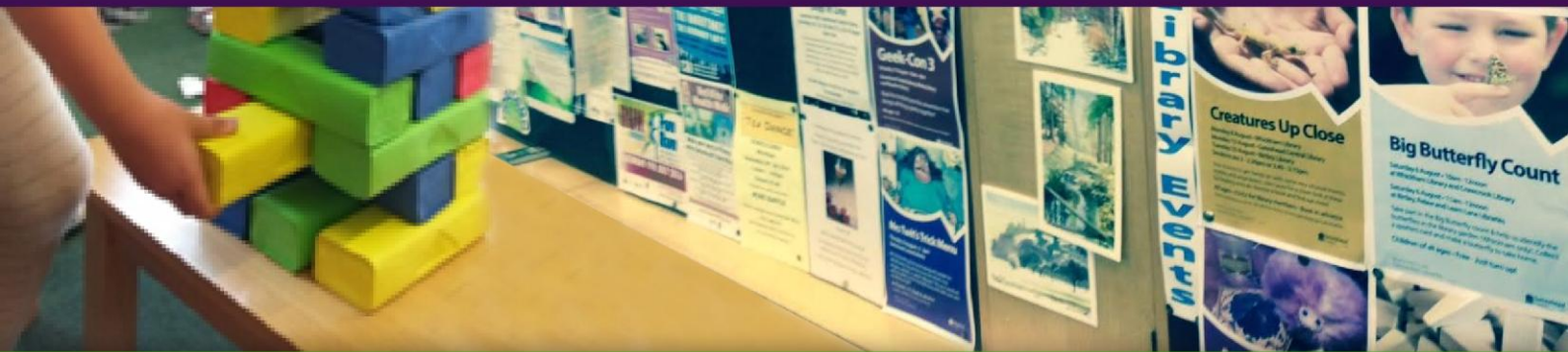
The help and advice provided by library staff, particularly with computers, was invaluable. Whilst I had been computer literate, during my illness I had become deskilled. Help and guidance was always available without being intrusive. I was guided through the screens when websites appeared difficult. This enabled me to find tutoring contacts and mystery shopping assignments as a source of income. As I became increasingly mobile, both physically and financially, it was useful to have access at other locations, including the Central Library and Civic Centre.

I now enjoy six years of sobriety and am able to lead a meaningful and purposeful life - still visiting the library.

My local library played a significant part in my journey of recovery for which I will always be grateful.



THANK YOU



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Thanks To All
Library Staff
And Kind
Contributors.

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