

We are here to represent the people of Ross and HR9, South Herefordshire, as this is the only library in that part of the county, the people of Herefordshire at large – since Ross Library is a crucial part of the county library infrastructure holding 25% of the stock at any one time – and visitors who see access to a library as a useful part of their visit, and an indicator of the quality of the region. And we know that visitors from far and near are vital to our economy.

Finally we represent over 7,500 people who signed the petition mainly on the streets of Ross itself. Why do they care?

Because keeping a healthy library service in the county – including our much-loved library in Ross is about so much more than shelves of BOOKS!

As you know, Herefordshire is a mainly agricultural county with a scattered, rural, ageing population, a low wage economy and decreasing public transport provision. That requires services to be available not just in Hereford City as the central hub, but in the market towns which hold the larger share of the County population between them.

We fully understand the financial pressures you are under from central government. We also know that this pressure will continue and push us further back onto our own resources in future. To survive, the county needs to develop the economy, reduce dependence on social care, create greater employability, self-reliance and social cohesion; the library service is a part of that – not a luxury but a cornerstone.

The public library is a portal to knowledge, sound information, creativity and literacy. All key elements in the kind of society you need and want to build. The facilities in Ross are enjoyed by all age ranges, and alongside leisure, local history and general information include 'Books on Prescription' – a service which helps people to take some control of their own health and aging issues. Ross library also offers a public space for meetings and a well patronised Gallery which is hired out for Exhibitions.

The library in the 21st century is also a portal to 2-way communication as we are all required to carry out more of life's essential tasks online. Library based computers are used extensively by those who do not have any IT Access and those whose access is limited

Listen to a couple of our Petition signers:

A local farmer said - The Rural Payments Agency advised me to go to the Library computers as Broadband speed is too slow on your farm!"

A homeless young man told us – My temporary housing has is no wifi or computer use. I am seeking accommodation through Homepoint which can only be done online.

The library makes a key contribution to the health and well being of the community – that is why public libraries are a statutory right – and we want you to guarantee us that right of genuine access to a comprehensive and efficient service.