Time for change?

Ideas for the future of...

Cumbria’s Libraries

Public discussion booklet

Serving the people of Cumbria
Cumbria County Council values libraries. From firing the imaginations of our children, helping our students reach their potential and giving people the skills to succeed to providing advice on health and well-being or simply a space to relax and enjoy books, we think libraries are important. But is it time for a change?

This document is the starting point for a conversation we want to have with you during 2011 about the future of Cumbria’s library service. This is about involving you right at the start, before we have firm proposals, and well before any decisions are made.

We all know council budgets are being stretched and all council services have to be looked at. And while this is not about budget cuts and we aren’t starting this conversation with an expectation that we will save money we do need to be confident that we are getting the most value out of what we spend.

While more people are using our online services, every year fewer people are visiting our libraries. We want to stop this trend. Our aim is for our libraries to be fit for the future, providing you with the right services in the right places and making sure that the money we spend benefits as many of you as possible.

The trend shows that each year fewer people are visiting Cumbria’s libraries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Service users in millions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005-6</td>
<td>3m</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006-7</td>
<td>2m</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007-8</td>
<td>1m</td>
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Can we think differently?

We think this might mean changing the way the library service is currently provided. For years the public debate in Cumbria has been about buildings and opening hours. But is this really what libraries are about? We think the debate needs to shift - we should be talking about how we can widen access, get more people reading more books and help people get the most out of the service.

We think this means using the money differently, getting books and resources out of buildings that in some cases are closed most of the week, and into people’s hands. We think it means changing the way people access the service and really getting communities involved.

We’re genuinely open-minded about how things could change, but as you’d expect we have some ideas. We’d like your views on these ideas but we’d also like to hear your own ideas too. Like the recent introduction of audio books, Wi-Fi and new specialist collections we believe the library service improves when we really listen to people.
Did you know...?

- There are currently 48 libraries (including 3 mobiles) and 5 Library Links. The council spends roughly £6m a year on the library service.
- Over 250,000 people are registered library users in Cumbria, that’s more than half of the population. One in five of the population are classed as “active borrowers” meaning they have borrowed an item in the last year. The mobile libraries have around 2000 active borrowers and 600 people make use of the home delivery service. 16,000 new people joined the library last year.
- 1.8m books were borrowed from Cumbria’s libraries last year. People also borrowed an additional 350,000 other items like CDs and DVDs. People don’t just use the library for books though – last year there were almost 250,000 sessions on library PCs.
- Nationally use of libraries has been declining and Cumbria is no different. Compared to 2005, last year Cumbrians borrowed half a million fewer items from libraries – an 18% decrease. Visits to libraries in Cumbria have also dropped 20% in the same period.
- Carlisle is Cumbria’s biggest library and the most used, in fact it’s one of the best used in the UK. The overwhelming majority of library users visit the larger libraries in main towns. That said, some of the smaller libraries, like Roose, really punch above their weight and are very well used.
- Library opening hours vary considerably, while Carlisle is open 53 hours a week there are five libraries which are open for 10 hours or fewer. The overall average across all libraries is 27 hours. Additionally some libraries open on evenings and weekends and others don’t.

Where are Cumbria’s libraries?
- Alston
- Ambleside
- Appleby
- Arnside
- Askam-in-Furness
- Aspatria
- Barrow
- Barrow Island
- Brampton
- Carlisle
- Cleator Moor
- Cockermouth
- Dalton-in-Furness
- Denton Holme
- Distung
- Egremont
- Frizington
- Gosforth
- Grange
- Harraby
- Hensingham
- Kells
- Kendal
- Keswick
- Kirkby Lonsdale
- Kirkby Stephen
- Longtown
- Maryport
- Millom
- Milnthorpe
- Mirehouse
- Moorclose
- Morton
- Penrith
- Roose
- Seascale
- Seaton
- Sedbergh
- Shap
- Silloth
- St Bees
- Thornhill
- Ulverston
- Walney
- Whitehaven
- Wigton
- Windermere
- Workington

Library Links
- Lazonby
- Hallbankgate
- Broughton-in-Furness
- Ormskirk
- Coniston

Not just borrowing books

Libraries are about more than just borrowing books. Here are some examples of the wide range of things going on in Cumbria’s libraries:
- Over 200 reading groups
- Author visits and talks
- Craft fairs
- Jigsaw collections
- Health visitor clinics
- School holiday activities
- IT Learning sessions
- Internet access
- Reminiscence sessions with older people
- Family Learning
- Pre-school story times, rhyme times and baby bounce sessions
- Reading groups for young people
- Homework clubs
- School class and playgroup visits
- Visits to schools
- Specialist cancer and autism collections
- Access to other council services

We think there’s scope to do so much more! We’d love to hear your ideas for what else libraries could do.
At this stage these are just ideas, no more. But we see the potential for a new set-up for the library service which improves accessibility, makes better use of technology and self-service equipment, and moves away from thinking about where the service is delivered to how it is delivered. We want to free up money by reducing fixed costs, like maintaining buildings, and instead invest in different types of service. As a starting point we think we could do this through creating a core of Library Extras in around 30 of Cumbria’s main towns and then supporting a range of Cumbria Community Libraries in other local communities. The service would be underpinned by an enhanced 24/7 virtual library available online.

**Library Extra**
- In main towns and providing comprehensive coverage across the county
- Scope for some other libraries to become a Library Extra if it makes sense
- Improved and more consistent opening hours
- Access to specialist resources
- Information hubs for local communities
- Providing other council services
- Possibility to join up with police, health, district councils etc

**Cumbria Community Libraries**
- No set number, based on local need and demand, could include new locations
- No “one size fits all” – variety of options
- Opportunity to have more locations, open much longer than at present
- Possibility to join up with schools, shops, village halls
- Communities take control, but scope for support from council
- Supported by new Community Outreach Librarians
- Home delivery service

The council is committed to continue to provide a service in current library locations if they did not become a Library Extra, but we would want to look at new ways of providing that service. In addition we would be making the offer to other communities in the county to talk to us about the potential for them to host a Cumbria Community Library in their area. There’s no doubt these would be big changes but we think they have the potential to really set Cumbria’s library service up for the future.
In terms of our mobile libraries we know how important it is to get a service into communities that would otherwise not have easy access. But our mobile library vehicles are nearing the end of their working life and are expensive to repair, even more expensive to replace and demand has been dropping.

We want to hear what you think about the future of mobile libraries. Is it the best possible way to provide a service to communities or are there other options that could actually improve people’s access to books by using the money differently?
Have your say

You can share your views in any of the following ways.

- **Complete** and return the feedback form at the back of this document to the address below or drop it into your local library:
  
  Have Your Say, Communications Team,
  
  Cumbria County Council, Carlisle,
  
  Cumbria, CA3 8NA

- **Respond** online at cumbria.gov.uk and join the online discussion forums

- **Visit** your local library and contribute to the “comment boards”

- **Host** your own local discussion and send us your conclusions

- **Email** your comments direct to yoursay@cumbriacc.gov.uk

- **Write to:**
  
  Have Your Say, Communications Team,
  
  Cumbria County Council, Carlisle,
  
  Cumbria, CA3 8NA

Deadline for responses: 30 June
Your big ideas?

Now you’ve heard what we’re thinking we’d like to hear your ideas. We think there are some key questions, but feel free to tell us whatever you think.

The big picture

- Are we right to focus our attention on access, books and people rather than just thinking about buildings?
- What else do you think libraries could do to attract more people?
- Would people be willing to pay for some things – for example reading groups or children’s activities?
- Could libraries provide other council services?

Libraries Extra

- What do you think of the Library Extra idea?
- What should the opening hours be? Is it worth opening on Sundays or in the evenings?
- Where does it make sense to have a Library Extra?
- What services should be offered at a Library Extra as standard?

Cumbria Community Libraries

- What do you think of the Cumbria Community Libraries idea?
- What would be the best venues for Community Libraries – existing library buildings, shops, cafes, community centres, somewhere else?
- What would you expect at a Cumbria Community Library as standard?
- Would your community be interested in getting involved? What support would you need?
- What should be the role of Community Outreach Librarians?

If you require more space for your comments please continue on a separate sheet of paper.
24/7 virtual library

- What do you think of the 24/7 virtual library idea?
- What more would you like to be able to do online?
- How could we make use of technology like eBooks or Apps?

Getting involved

- How do you want to be involved in this process as it progresses?
- Who do you think we need to make sure we talk to?

Who are you?

We want to make sure we hear from a cross section of local people. Please tell us a little about yourself.

- Are you? ___________________________ Male □ Female □
- Age? ___________________________ Under 18 □ 18-34 □ 35-54 □ 55-74 □ 75+ □
- Please provide the first part of your postcode (ie CA16) ___________________________
- Are you responding on behalf of an organisation? (Please specify) ___________________________
- Would you like to be added to our email list to be kept up to date about this consultation? (Please provide your email address) ___________________________
- Are you a member of the library? ___________________________ Yes □ No □
- If yes, would you say you visit the library ___________________________ Frequently □ Occasionally □ Rarely □
- Which library do you usually visit? (Please specify) ___________________________
- Do you ever visit other libraries in Cumbria? (Please specify) ___________________________

If you require this document in another format (eg CD, audio cassette, Braille or large type) or in another language, please telephone 01228 606060.

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W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę zatelefonować pod numer 01228 606060

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua, telefone para o 01228 606060

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