

Libraries NI
27 May 2010

For Immediate Release

Libraries NI Board closes Ballynahinch HQ

At its meeting on the 27th May, the Board of Libraries NI agreed to close the former South Eastern Education and Library Board Regional Library Headquarters at Ballynahinch and to relocate the staff and services based there. The Board also agreed to move the Co. Down collection to Downpatrick Library in response to the findings of a public consultation process and to make it more accessible.

Libraries NI, the single public library authority which came into being on the 1st April 2009, inherited five Library headquarters from the Boards. The organisation therefore had to review its need for administrative premises in order to streamline provision and maximise funding for front line services.

To review their premises Libraries NI commissioned a detailed independent economic appraisal, investigating all five of the previous Education and Library Board Library headquarters, and undertook a period of public consultation. The economic appraisal, which considered factors such as occupancy levels, building conditions and premises costs for each of the sites, concluded that the Ballynahinch headquarters should be considered for closure.

The public consultation focused on the only public service in the building, the local studies service, which includes the valued Co. Down collection which contains books, maps, newspapers and other documents relating to Co Down past and present. Consultees emphasised the importance of keeping this collection together.

Irene Knox, Chief Executive of Libraries NI said:

“I am pleased that the Board has agreed to move the Co. Down collection to Downpatrick in response to the public consultation process. This will allow customers to gain access to the information during extended opening hours, including evenings and weekends, in a modern, welcoming library environment.

“There also seemed to be some confusion about the local library and it’s important for me to stress again that we remain committed to the branch library service in Ballynahinch.

“The feedback received from this process clearly highlighted the commitment, service and professionalism of all of the staff at Ballynahinch. I would like to thank them for their dedication and patience during these difficult times and we will continue to meet with both them and their unions to discuss the way forward together.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

- *Libraries NI* was charged by DCAL with reviewing the need for the number of administrative buildings.
- *Libraries NI* is the single public library service for Northern Ireland. It came into being on 1 April 2009 as part of the Review of Public Administration. Its services are regionally planned and locally delivered and focus on: support for learning and learners; access to information; cultural and creative development; heritage and digitisation; and the promotion of reading.
- Further information is available on the *Libraries NI* website www.librariesni.org.uk