

Dame Liz Forgan
Chair, Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London
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2 June 2011

Dear Liz

FUTURE LIBRARIES PROGRAMME

With the transfer from MLA to Arts Council gathering pace, I thought it would be timely to offer some further thoughts on the Future Libraries Programme (FLP).

I am very pleased with the constructive engagement we have had with the Arts Council about what your new responsibilities might mean for councils. I do, however, feel we need to move quickly to clarify the position on the future of the FLP. As you know, Ed Vaizey and I are persuaded that the FLP needs to continue into a second phase.

In the context of continued financial pressures on councils the best way to continue to protect frontline library services, and avoid getting into the territory of statutory inquiries, must be through expanding the FLP.

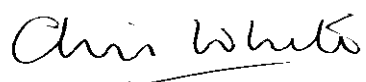
The phase one projects have shown that the FLP is a successful, sector-led approach to improving local library services. Already there is an impressive amount of learning emerging from the projects and we are sharing this with other councils. As you know, we received expressions of interest from over 100 councils to participate in phase one, and I am confident that there would be a high level of demand for a second phase.

I understand that in the context of the transition, the Arts Council wants to consider how libraries can best be a part of a single conversation with councils, also spanning the arts, culture and museums. This is something councils strongly support. Councils would also very much welcome a clear commitment from the Arts Council that the FLP will continue, in partnership with the Local Government Group. This would open the way for us to work together over the summer to scope out what a second phase would look like, alongside your

wider consultation with councils and other partners about your new responsibilities. It would also ensure that we keep up the momentum generated by phase one and are ready to put a clear offer to councils in September.

I would welcome an early opportunity to discuss this with you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Cllr Chris White
Chair Local Government Group Culture, Tourism and Sport Programme Board