

Edinburgh libraries used as test centres will reopen soon

Edinburgh libraries repurposed as Coronavirus test centres during the pandemic are set to reopen to the public, the council has confirmed.

Negotiations to return three out of the six facilities still being used for testing to library usage are underway between officers and The Scottish Government, with a timeline set to be released in the coming weeks.

It is expected that libraries in Leith, Oxbgangs and Newington, currently all Symptomatic Local Test Centres, will be returned to their communities in April.

Meanwhile, Sighthill Library, which has also been used for symptomatic testing over the past two years, and temporary asymptomatic test centres at McDonald Road Library and Blackhall Library, will continue to operate for Covid-19 purposes.

On Saturday a demonstration was [staged by Labour candidates outside Leith Library](#) highlighting the role of public libraries and the need to retain them for community use.

Organised by Katrina Faccenda, Labour's Leith candidate for the upcoming council election, the 'read-in' was inspired by a similar campaign led by activists in Glasgow, who successfully persuaded the council to reopen local libraries.

The event – organised before the council confirmed the reopening of Leith Library and other facilities in the city used for testing – was set up as an open mic, giving attendees

the opportunity to share their favourite passages about Leith and Edinburgh.



Katrina Faccenda, Labour. Photo: © 2022, Martin P. McAdam
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Katrina said: “When we started campaigning in January one of the issues which kept coming up was not only the continued closure of the library but how much library provision across the north of the city has been hit by cuts over the years.

“I still remember the library van which I visited as a child and the excitement of choosing new books to read. I started to plan the “Read In” before the reopening was announced and my inspiration was the community activists in Glasgow who got their libraries reopened, some of which were under risk of closure.

“But the more I read about public libraries and how many have been closed here in Scotland in recent years, the more I was convinced to go ahead with the event as a way of bringing together the community to celebrate libraries and to remind

those in control of funding that we will fight for our libraries.

“Modern libraries offer many essential services beyond book lending but let’s not forget that access to books is access to knowledge, libraries can transform people’s lives, it isn’t surprising that the ruling class were not enthusiastic about giving working class people public libraries in the 1800’s.

“I will be keeping an eye on the situation throughout March to make sure that if still needed the testing centre is being relocated and look forward to supporting the Leith community in their campaigns for better public services.”













In Leith which is a three councillor ward, candidates for the 2022 Council Elections announced so far are:

- Adam McVey (SNP)
- Chas Booth (Green)
- Katrina Faccenda (Labour)

by Donald Turvill, Local Democracy Reporter

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