

Streetreads under threat of closure

Streetreads, the charity backed by Edinburgh author Sir Ian Rankin and the Edinburgh Makar, Michael Pedersen is under threat of losing its home in Nicholson Square.

The library provides a safe space for around 200 homeless people each week, but it has been served with an eviction notice by the landlord. In a city where there are more than 5,000 households experiencing homelessness there are about 100 people who sleep rough every night. The service is aimed at helping anyone who does not have a home.

The book lending service which is much more than just that is run by Simon Community Scotland. The facility costs around £75,000 to run providing a place to read or borrow books and a sense of belonging to its visitors.

Simon Community Scotland is now urgently looking for a new location and has an urgent need for funding to secure the right space for people who need mental health support, and who can engage in creative writing and educational sessions. It is also a space to have a cup of tea and a chat.

There is an urgent need for funds to help continue the service. Click [here](https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/streetreadslibrary) to donate.

Fiona Williamson, Head of Service for Simon Community Scotland

in Edinburgh, said: “We are devastated and deeply concerned about the impact this will have on people who use the library. Streetreads opened in 2021 and has grown exponentially alongside the people we support. There will be a huge gap in services and support while we seek new premises, as our appeal for more time to find an alternative site has sadly been declined.

“At very little cost, Streetreads creates immeasurable value for the city. Losing this space is not just a blow for the most vulnerable and isolated people in our city – it’s a setback for Edinburgh as a whole.

“This isn’t just a library—it’s a lifeline. This is a chance for Edinburgh to show its spirit and solidarity. We’re asking landlords, businesses, and community members to help us to secure the right space which requires investment and funding. I am excited that together, we can ensure no one is left without the safety, opportunities, learning and hope that is provided by this vital service.”

Michelle, a regular visitor to the space, said: “Streetreads is more than a library– it’s a sanctuary. It’s the only place where I feel human.”

Lorraine McGrath, CEO for Simon Community Scotland, said: “The need for safe places, support and hope has never been greater. This eviction underscores the growing challenges facing people in Edinburgh who are increasingly at risk of homelessness and all the related harm and trauma. We need urgent support to find a new home for Streetreads. We have been advised that alternative premises are likely to add an additional £20,000 a year to running costs.”

Ian Rankin, said: "I've known and supported Streetreads from the very beginning and always enjoyed visiting the library and drop-in centre. I'm so hoping that suitable accommodation can be found for this crucial enterprise. Streetreads means the world to its many users."

Michael Pedersen, writer in residence at The University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh's Makar (Poet Laureate), said; "Streetreads Library is an incredible, crucial, and vital resource to Edinburgh and Scotland beyond. It's refuge and salvation, it's connection and inspiration, and so so much more. I've been awe-struck by the work they do, their warmth and innovation, and the enthusiasm their clients have for the space, its people and the facilities. Quite frankly, it's invaluable. And all this from a library that's only in its infancy (in the grand scheme of things). We need to be growing it, supporting it, championing it and celebrating it. It's a model for others to learn from, to follow, but only if we rally behind them now and henceforth. What a formidable loss this location would be, a beacon of hope taken from the chest chamber of our capital city."

[In 2018 the relaunch of Streetreads was attended and supported by then First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon and Sir Ian Rankin. Read more here.](#) Streetreads was the idea and project of Rachel Cowan, known around Edinburgh as the book wumman [#bookwumman](#). Rachel experienced homelessness and its devastating impact. Her desire to change that for others inspired her to use books to bring more than solace but adventure, excitement, daring, mystery, romance and thrills into lives with a darker kind of drama. Rachel and Simon Community Scotland came together in 2018 with a desire to reach further and make more connections.

If you can help, contact Simon Community Scotland immediately via hello@simonscotland.org or visit www.simonscotland.org.

If you would like to donate click here <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/streetreadslibrary>



Nicola Sturgeon and Ian Rank at the relaunch event in 2018 for Streetreads PHOTO courtesy of The Scottish Government