

Eventful day in battle to save library's future

By David Roberts

david.roberts@nne.co.uk

CAMPAIGNERS fighting to save their local library used a national day of events to bolster their argument.

At Cockerton library, in Darlington, hundreds of people visited throughout Saturday – National Libraries Day – withdrawing the maximum number of books in a bid to convince the local council not to close the facility.

The authority wants to shut the library as it tries to trim 20 per cent from its budget.

Visitors were encouraged to sign a petition against the proposal at the event, organised by the newly-formed Friends of Cockerton Library, and which was supported by local councillors and Darlington MP Jenny Chapman.

She said: "This is my local library and I wanted to support the residents, who feel strongly about keeping it.

"Everyone wants to see it stay open but it's a question of how that is possible given the extent of the cuts.

"But the council has indicated it is ready to listen to residents and I'm very pleased about that."

The Friends want the council to defer closing the library so they can come up with a robust business plan and explore other means of keeping it open without public money.



HOPING TO BUY TIME: The Friends of Cockerton library, in Darlington

Mike Crawley, from the Friends, said the petition has well over the 1,500 signatures needed to trigger a debate about the proposal at a meeting of the full council.

He said: "We need to find out exactly what the public wants to add to the library and how to get added value from it, but the first hurdle is keeping it open for another 12 months."

Attending the event was 13-year-old Hannah Wintle. She said: "The library's a big part

of Cockerton. Lots of local children go there to do their work.

"There would be nowhere to go if it were to close."

Campaigners at Great Ayton, in North Yorkshire, have agreed to take over the running of their local library from North Yorkshire County Council.

Carol Morgan, one of the residents who fought to keep it open, said it was vital these facilities were saved.

She said: "The nearest library to us is in Stokesley and young children can't get there on their own. It's the same for the elderly.

"It's more than the books – it's about the whole community."

On Friday, campaigners fighting a test case to save six libraries in Brent, North London, were dealt another blow.

The Supreme Court announced that it has refused them permission to appeal

against a Court of Appeal ruling in December. The panel of three judges said the application does not raise an arguable point of law of general public importance which ought to be considered by the Supreme Court.

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