

John Harvard Library is "stunning exemplar" says culture minister

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London SE1 website team

Culture minister Margaret Hodge has praised Southwark's refurbished John Harvard Library as a "stunning exemplar" for the rest of the country.



Margaret Hodge at John Harvard Library

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The minister chose [John Harvard Library](#) in [Borough High Street](#) to launch a new national consultation on the future of the library service on Tuesday morning.

Ms Hodge said that [John Harvard Library](#) is "a stunning exemplar of the sort of practice we would like to see mirrored right across the country of a very welcoming environment, fantastic layout, good facilities for children and great facilities for people to learn".

She congratulated Southwark's library service and the Big Lottery Fund for their work on the transformation of the library which has [pulled in lots of visitors](#) since it [reopened a fortnight ago](#).

Shadow culture minister Ed Vaizey also joined the audience of library sector representatives and journalists for the launch of the [Empower, Inform, Enrich](#) consultation document.

"Libraries are a bit like post offices," said Margaret Hodge. "They are beloved institutions and they embody everything that we value about lives in our communities.

"But whilst they are valued as institutions, I do think they face enormous challenges."

She highlighted a national fall in usage of public libraries despite increased spending on the service.

The consultation paper includes a series of essays on how libraries should change to meet modern needs and expectations. Contributors range from poet Michael Rosen to Darcy Willson-Rymer, managing director of [Starbucks UK](#).

- Respondents to the consultation should email library.review@culture.qsi.gov.uk by 26 January 2010.