

## **CHAMBERS HARRAP NUJ CHAPEL, EDINBURGH PRESS STATEMENT**

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- The proposed closure of Edinburgh publishers Chambers Harrap, announced by parent company Hachette UK on 15 September, is to be reviewed at a high-level meeting in Paris
- The meeting has been called by the staff representative body of Lagardère, the group of which Hachette UK is a part
- This body has requested that the threatened redundancies be postponed until the end of the year while an independent financial study is undertaken into the case for maintaining some or all of the Chambers Harrap operation in Edinburgh
- This development comes amid growing concern about the consequences of the proposed closure for the future of publishing in Scotland

On 15 September Hachette UK announced the proposed closure of Edinburgh publishers Chambers Harrap, citing falling sales of print dictionaries as the main cause. All 27 jobs are threatened by the proposal, which would end 190 years of publishing history in Edinburgh.

Chambers flagship title, The Chambers Dictionary, has long been a favourite of crossword puzzlers and has been described by author Philip Pullman as 'the most human of dictionaries, the most quirky and eccentric, the hardest to put down once picked up'. Harrap titles include the Shorter French-English Dictionary, one of the market leaders in France.

The Hachette plan proposes that the two reference publishing lists, Chambers and Harrap, should be separated. Chambers titles would move to Hodder Education in London, and those of Harrap would move to Paris to be managed directly by Larousse. Hachette are currently engaged in consultations with the NUJ, the staff union, over the proposals.

Although the threatened closure of Chambers Harrap primarily affects publishing in Scotland, colleagues from Lagardère companies in Europe, particularly in France, have questioned the move. The European Works Council (EWC) of the Lagardère group, which represents staff interests to management, has expressed disbelief that all the implications of such an extreme action could be dealt with satisfactorily and closure plans finalized by 16 October, the proposed end of the consultation period with Chambers Harrap staff.

The reaction of the Lagardère EWC in Paris echoes the widespread dismay expressed in Scotland over the planned closure of the iconic Chambers firm, a decision described as an act of 'cultural vandalism' by one shocked commentator.

NUJ Scottish Organiser Paul Holleran said: "We are delighted that the works council are demanding a delay in the process. There are a number of issues that the company cannot ride roughshod over. One is the employment rights of the staff, another is the continued existence of one of Scotland's most prestigious publishers."

Meanwhile, the campaign to save one of Scotland's oldest and most historic publishing companies continues to grow. The local MSP Malcolm Chisholm immediately raised the issue in the Scottish parliament, and John Swinney, the Secretary for Finance, has asked Scottish Enterprise to consult with Hachette in a search for alternatives to closure. David Martin MEP, Edinburgh MPs Mark Lazarowicz and Gavin Strang, and MSPs Christopher Harvie and Margo Macdonald are among others who have called the closure into question, as have the renowned linguist David Crystal, and the distinguished Scottish journalist Neal Ascherson. Apart from the potential loss of a historic Edinburgh company, there are serious concerns that closing Chambers, a centre of innovation in digital publishing, would have serious consequences for the future of publishing in Scotland as a whole.

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**Notes to Editors:**

Chambers Harrap Publishers Limited's (CHPL) business falls into two principal parts, Chambers and Harrap. CHPL has 27 employees.

Chambers produces monolingual English dictionaries and other English subject and language reference publications, including Brewer's Phrase and Fable. Most sales of Chambers titles are in or from the UK.

Harrap produces bilingual dictionaries and other bilingual publications, including a successful range of language learning materials. The majority of Harrap sales are in or from France where Larousse acts as its distributor.

The Chambers publishing business was established in 1819, Harrap Limited was formed in 1901.

In 1992, W & R Chambers Limited was acquired by Groupe de la Cité and was owned by and reported through Larousse.

Groupe de la Cité acquired Harrap Limited in 1992 and merged it with W & R Chambers to form the company that is now known as Chambers Harrap Publishers Limited.

In 2000, Larousse and CHPL became part of Vivendi Universal Publishing as a result of the merger of Groupe de la Cité and Seagram's.

In 2004, Hachette Livre (part of Lagardère) acquired Larousse and, therefore, CHPL from Vivendi. In the same year Hachette also acquired Hodder Headline to form what is now Hachette UK Limited.

In 2006, Hachette UK began to manage CHPL, on behalf of Larousse.

Hachette UK is owned by Hachette Livre a wholly owned subsidiary of Lagardère, a leading company on the Paris stock exchange.