**Sunday 30th May 2021**

**Dear** *Insert your local MP here*

**Please take action to save the Honresfeld Library for the nation**

The Honresfeld Library is unrivalled in its holdings of Northern British literary treasures. Created by William Law, a nineteenth-century Rochdale mill owner, it includes manuscripts by Robert Burns Walter Scott and Jane Austen, and at its heart is the largest collection of Brontë manuscripts in private ownership. Many of these were thought to have been lost, including a rare Emily Brontë notebook of poetry.

Sotheby’s have announced that they will auction most of this unique collection as separate lots over the coming months, with the first sale being held on 21 July. Trophy items will be picked off at prices beyond the reach of British museums and libraries. Many will disappear into the bank vaults of international private investors. This calculated act of heritage dispersal has no regard for matters of curation, conservation, scholarly access or public benefit.

The Honresfeld sale is a timely moment to consider what we lose in failing to respect public, as well as private, interest in national heritage. The Honresfeld Library is not just paper and ink, but cultural good which, saved and managed in the public interest, will yield significant long-term revenue, including through tourism, not to mention its huge importance to national cultural prestige and identity.

We respectfully solicit immediate consideration of the following:

1. We urge immediate action to save intact the Honresfeld Library for the nation.
2. We petition for legislation to ensure that public institutions have a fair chance of acquiring items of national interest when they come to market. Currently, it is only after such items have been hiked on the international markets that even the remote possibility of national retention comes into play.
3. We urge the establishment of a robust framework of regulation to safeguard items of national literary heritage in private ownership: minimum standards of conservation, curation, and access in the public interest, including through digitisation.

As MP for i*nsert your location here*, we would be grateful if you would support our campaign by asking a question in the House of Commons and raising these important cultural issues with the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Right Honourable Oliver Dowden CBE MP.

If you require any further information, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely