

From: David Cunningham
Sent: 12 January 2006 18:36
To: Alan Shearman
Subject: Waterstone's takeover of Ottakars

Dear Mr Shearman,

I am writing to you to protest about the proposed takeover of Ottakar's bookshops by Waterstone's in the UK.

As a Scottish writer whose first novel is published by Faber & Faber in February 2006, I am extremely disturbed by this development. Within Scotland it means that Waterstone's would have control of 21 out of 31 major bookshops. The result will - for a number of reasons - be an inescapable sapping of diversity and vitality in Scotland's literary culture.

Ottakars actively promotes new Scottish writers published in Scotland through events and signings; Waterstone's do not. What is more, in spite of Waterstone's claim that only 3% of its stock nationwide is centrally ordered, the head office in England already instructs buyers about the vast majority of titles. In other words, while shops in Scotland technically maintain autonomy, they do so according to strict buying guidelines. Also, Waterstone's refuses to deal direct with small Scottish suppliers and insists that niche publishers go through a large wholesaler. This has considerable implications for Gaelic publishing.

I hope that e-mails such as this one will encourage the Competition Commission to take a firm line on this issue.

Regards,
David Cunningham