

Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ



The All Party
Parliamentary
Writers Group

November 2021

Dear Chancellor

Re: Public Lending Right Funding

The All Party Writers Group held a supplementary inquiry into how the pandemic had impacted writers, and creators more broadly, in November 2020. Recently, we held a follow-up meeting to discuss the recommendations we made in the subsequent report by the APPG.

A resounding point to come from industry representatives and writers themselves is that an increase to the overall fund for Public Lending Right (PLR) would be an ideal way for the Government to help support the creators who have been integral to the cultural output of the UK.

PLR is a fair and simple way to ensure that writers are remunerated for uses of their work, with payments based on the lending of books from libraries across the UK. The upper cap (£6,600) guarantees that the scheme helps all writers, beyond the best-sellers.

For next year, an increase in the rate per book loan – from 9.55p to 11.26p - is currently being recommended in the annual consultation being carried out by DCMS. This rise is, however, simply a reflection of the closure of libraries during the pandemic, and therefore a drop in the overall number of loans, and will not be sustainable without an increase to the fund when normality returns

The overall fund has been frozen at £6.6 million since 2015 and lags behind other schemes internationally – it is, for example, half the level per head of population than Germany or France, despite the UK's commitment to its creative and cultural sectors.

In practice, this means that a large number of writers receive relatively little as a reward for their contribution to libraries and the public good. As it stands, of the 21,077 people who benefitted in 2019/20, 15,605 received under £100, so – while retaining the upper cap - an uplift to other international levels would allow more meaningful payments to be made to so many and in a very targeted way.

The creative sector contributes so much economically and culturally to the country and the APWG has appreciated the work done by the Treasury and Department for Culture, Media and Sport in alleviating some of the burden imposed by Covid-19 through the Cultural Recovery Fund.



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However, we have found that individual creators are struggling to access this funding as it typically goes to institutions or venues. An increase to PLR would be a way for the Government to acknowledge how integral writers are to society and public life. It would also be a way to ward off any further talent loss to the sector which was listed as a policy priority in the Government's 'Boundless creativity' report, issued by DCMS in July 2021.

Public libraries are proportionately more important to less affluent areas, too, and to local authors in those communities. Therefore, as well as being a targeted source of support for this vital component of our creative and cultural life, an increase in PLR would also fit well with the Government's wider 'levelling up' agenda across the UK.

Next year, too, marks the 40th anniversary of the implementation of the PLR scheme in the UK, which so many other countries then followed, so an increase in funding would be a fitting way to mark that milestone in how we value authors and writers for their contribution to the public good.

Yours sincerely and with best regards

Giles Watling MP

Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Writers Group