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21 October 2022

Dear Sheila Bennett,

PLR Rate per Loan 2021/22 year

Thank you for your letter of 21 October regarding the rate per loan. We note that you propose an increase on the rate per loan from 11.26 pence to 30.53 pence per loan for the 2021/2022 year. We accept the British Library Board's recommendation that the 2021/2022 payments are made at a rate of 30.53 pence per loan but wish to make the following additional observations:

- 1. Covid.** We understand that the proposed rise is exceptional and is caused because of the restricted access to public libraries during Covid lockdown and the commensurate decrease in loans during that period.
- 2. Fund** PLR continues to be an important source of earnings for authors particularly those whose books are sold mainly to libraries and those whose books are no longer in print but are still being read. The scheme ensures that funds reach a wide range of authors, beyond top-sellers, which is very important if we want to encourage diversity in writing. PLR is a simple and effective way by which the Government can support writers and do it fairly, in a targeted way at modest cost. We would urge the Government to ring-fence and increase the (already meagre) PLR Fund. We are disappointed that this was not addressed in the last spending review, particularly in view of the comments we make below in relation to audiobooks and ebooks and the general duties in relation to library lending. We would point out that taking into account the UK population, our PLR funding is well below that of comparable EU countries. At £6 million net of administration costs, it compares badly with the £14 million annually in Germany (£11.2 million on a population-adjusted basis at current exchange rates). We would ask that the Fund be increased.
- 3. Volunteer Libraries:** We are sad to note the further decrease in the estimated loans of books registered for PLR, caused by the pandemic and the continuing cuts in library services and the exclusion of some volunteer-run libraries from the scheme. We urge the Government to include volunteer-run libraries within the PLR scheme so that true figures for library lending can be recorded and remunerated.
- 4. Library Cuts** We urge the Government to fulfil its obligation to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service and to protect and maintain the library service which is under serious threat. We would particularly urge DCMS to argue strongly for improvement to funding for public libraries including additional funds for buying book stock.
- 5. Remote lending of ebooks and audiobooks.** We are delighted that the Government included in the Digital Economy Bill a clear and narrowly-defined statutory solution agreed by all stakeholders extending PLR to ebooks and audiobooks while maintaining frictions. We note that no extra funds have been allocated either for payments to authors or for the work of the British Library in implementing the new payments and we urge this to be addressed. This is particularly important in view of libraries' increased investment in ebooks and remote lending during the pandemic.

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6. It remains a breach of the Government's obligations as well as unsatisfactory and unfair that all libraries other than public libraries should be exempt from remunerating authors for loans. The Government should rectify this by making appropriate regulations under s40A (2) of the CDPA to ensure that school and other libraries are included in the PLR scheme.

Yours Sincerely

Nicola Solomon