



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport

# Government response to a consultation on the Public Lending Right rate per loan for the Scheme Year 2018 to 2019

January 2020

## **Introduction**

The consultation ran from 28 October to 26 November 2016. A consultation letter was sent to 20 major groups representing the interests of authors, and the Devolved Administrations.

## **Background**

The Public Lending Right (PLR) is a right for authors and other rights holders to receive payments from a central fund in relation to public lending of their physical and audio books by public libraries in the UK. The 2018 to 2019 PLR Scheme year, includes for the first time payments for the remote lending of e-books and e-audiobooks from public library services in Great Britain.

Payments are made annually to eligible authors, calculated on the basis of a rate per loan figure, by the British Library, which has managed the PLR Scheme (“the Scheme”) since October 2013. The British Library recommends to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport the rate per loan for each financial year, taking into account the size of the central fund available that year and the number of qualifying book loans from a sample of public libraries in the UK in a preceding sampling year.

## **The consultation**

DCMS ran a 4 week public consultation on the Board’s recommendation to increase the rate per loan from 8.52 pence to 9.03 pence for the 2018 to 2019 PLR Scheme year. The consultation ran from 4 November to 29 November 2019. A consultation letter was sent directly to 14 organisations, including groups representing the interests of authors, public libraries and other stakeholders related to the public library sector in the UK, as well as the Devolved Administrations. A copy of the consultation letter was made available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Twelve responses were received, and they were all supportive of the proposal to increase the PLR rate per loan to 9.03 pence. The responses received all came from those organisations to which we sent the consultation letter. A number of the responding organisations took the opportunity to raise other issues, not related to the scope of the consultation to increase the rate per loan, and these are summarised in the table below.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Other comments</b>
Association of Authors Agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urges the government to increase and ringfence the fund in a future Spending Round</li> <li>• Asks the government to include ‘volunteer run’ libraries so comprehensive figures of lending can be recorded and remunerated</li> </ul>
Arts Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleased that e-books and e-audiobooks are now eligible</li> </ul>
The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pleased to see that loans of e-books are now included in the scheme</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Asks the government to take steps to protect and maintain the library service which operates under the threat from cuts</li> <li>● Asks the government to include volunteer-run libraries within the PLR scheme library lending can be recorded, and remuneration from all the loans of their works</li> <li>● Asks the government to maintain the PLR fund at its current level as the fund values the contribution authors make to the public library service</li> </ul>
British Library	No other comments
CILIP - the Library and Information Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suggests moving away from sampling to real data collection</li> <li>● Suggests reviewing the scheme to establish a robust basis on which to calculate its overall value and the funds required to manage it</li> <li>● Will be exploring ways of improving the quality, range and currency of book stock in public libraries</li> </ul>
Department for Communities - Northern Ireland	No other comments
Libraries Connected	No other comments
Publishers Association	Supports the comments from the Society of Authors
Scottish Government	No other comments
Society of Authors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Welcomes extension of PLR to include remote lending of e-books and e-audiobooks</li> <li>● Asks the government to ring-fence and increase PLR Fund in the next spending review</li> <li>● Urges the government to include volunteer-run libraries within the PLR scheme</li> <li>● Urges the government to protect and maintain library services and ensure a “comprehensive and efficient” service</li> </ul>
Welsh Government	No other comments
Writers Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Asks the government to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ increase the fund to maintain its value to the authors</li> <li>○ include volunteer libraries within the PLR Scheme</li> <li>○ review the formula used to calculate PLR</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Having considered the consultation responses, the minister has concluded that stakeholders welcome the proposed increase to the rate per loan and has decided to vary the Scheme to increase the rate per loan from 8.52 pence to 9.03 pence.

### Other points raised in response to the consultation

As noted above, some of those who responded to the consultation took the opportunity to raise other points about PLR and public libraries. Although such matters fall outside the scope of the consultation, the government's position in relation to each of these issues is as follows.

#### *Volunteer-run libraries and the PLR Scheme*

The PLR is applicable to loans made from libraries falling under the statutory control of the relevant local authority. In the majority of cases, such libraries will be both controlled and managed by that authority. Where a library is managed by volunteers or community groups, the local authority may decide that the library remains within its statutory responsibility and ultimate control, and that PLR would apply to loans from the library.

#### *Protect and increase the PLR Fund*

The British Library administers the PLR for the government, and receives funding for PLR within the Grant-in-Aid provided to it by DCMS. The 2015 government spending round confirmed that the funding for the PLR was to be retained at the same level in cash terms until 2020. The government will consider future funding levels for the PLR, as part of the British Library's overall funding, at any future spending review.

#### *Comprehensive and efficient public library service*

Public libraries policy is a devolved matter in respect of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, library authorities are responsible for providing "comprehensive and efficient" local public library services. They are expected to provide public library services (including by making decisions relating to provision of bookstock) while taking into account local needs and available resources.

DCMS is committed to supporting a sustainable long-term future for public libraries in England, and DCMS ministers take seriously the statutory duty to superintend and promote the improvement of library services in England and Wales, and to ensure that library authorities in England meet their own statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.

#### *PLR operations*

DCMS will continue to work with the British Library, which administers PLR, to consider the potential for future improvements to how PLR operates. This includes whether amendments could be made to the PLR Scheme in relation to the collection of loans data and calculation of the PLR rate per loan and payments.



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