

Maria Miller
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

05 August 2013

Dear Mrs Miller

e-book lending by public libraries

On a number of occasions, I have expressed my Association's concern to Ed Vaizey and William Sieghart's Review Panel over e-book lending proposals by public libraries, believing they have the potential to harm considerably bookshop sales in the private sector and thus being detrimental to growth and jobs. If it is so easy to download an e-book from a library free of charge, why would the consumer subsequently go out to our High Streets to buy a book? We are monitoring the e-book lending pilots with considerable interest.

BOOKS ARE MY BAG campaign

But we thought that with your special interest in advertising and the media you might like to know that rather than complaining from the side-lines, we are actually trying to do something pragmatic and practical to support our High Streets this autumn.

According to research, 68% of shoppers say they prefer to discover new books in bookshops (Source: Censuswide June 2013), and bookshops account for 45% of spending on books where the buyer hadn't yet decided what book it is they want to buy (Source: Bowker March 2013). Furthermore, it is estimated that bricks-and-mortar booksellers are responsible for *the discovery* of some 21% of all consumer book purchases—worth around £450m in total (Source: Bowker March 2013). Bookshops are therefore vital in promoting new writers and less well-known books, and in maintaining a diverse and robust publishing industry, which makes an important financial contribution to the UK's creative economy.

Moreover, there is reason to believe that bookshops help sustain the nation's reading habits. After the closure of the Borders book chain in 2009, the following year one in ten book sales did not migrate to other bookshops or online channels (Source: Books & Consumers); in other words, a proportion of book sales disappeared and therefore a number of readers were lost. Physical bookshops are a crucial, therefore, in making books available and supporting reading.

Believing that High Streets, Bookshops and Books are important to society and communities as a whole, the advertising agency, M & C Saatchi, has devised for us a national awareness campaign to promote books and high street bookshops. Amazingly, they have done this on a pro bono basis and Maurice Saatchi has agreed to be the campaign's Patron.

The campaign launch will take place on Saturday, 14th September 2013, when over a quarter of a million cotton bags and promotional material with the brand message BOOKS ARE MY BAG will appear in UK bookshops. Thus our customers will become High Street ambassadors for the bookshops they care about. On that day there will be lots of bookshop parties and events. The campaign will end just before Christmas.

Over 100 Celebrities have now been photographed holding the campaign bags and each has given us approval to use their photograph in any way to support the campaign. All this activity will be underpinned by a substantial PR campaign, masterminded and rolled out by M & C Saatchi.



What BOOKS ARE MY BAG does is to crystallise and celebrate the unique physical experience of browsing and buying printed books in a bricks and mortar shop.

We are building a campaign website www.booksaremybag.com and on this consumers will be able to find their nearest local bookshop and be aware of the various events that booksellers are organising to support the campaign.

It would be really good if you personally and/or DCMS in general were able to show support in some way for the campaign. Perhaps by providing a quote, or by agreeing to be photographed with a campaign bag? Eric Pickles at DCLG thinks what we are doing is really great and has already pledged his support.

I would be happy to provide more information if that would be useful.

French Government's support of bookshops

As you may know, the French Ministry of Culture is giving fantastic support to bookshops in France at the present moment in time. The French Minister of Culture, Aurélie Filippetti, announced this Spring that €9m would be allocated by her government and publishers as part of an eagerly awaited plan to help the independent bookselling sector in France. *"This unprecedented effort for books and reading is indispensable,"* Mrs Filippetti said. *"Without independent booksellers, the whole of the book ecosystem would be affected... there would be fewer publishers and authors, less choice for the reader and fewer societal links in towns."*

Furthermore, in June Mrs Filippetti said that her government would nearly double its funding of the National Book Centre in Paris from €2.5m to €4.5m a year. The French Minister of Culture also said that a bill creating a mediator for the book sector would be presented to the French Parliament before the first quarter of next year.

As far as I am aware, DCMS is not giving any specific financial – or other - support to the UK's bookselling sector. One can only surmise, therefore, that bookshops are regarded by the French Government as culturally more important than the Coalition Government views our sector in the UK! I hope you'll be able to tell me that such a comment is unfair.

May I conclude by asking what is the Government's position on supporting the cultural importance of bookshops? Might you and your officials be prepared to consider with us ways whereby we might receive greater support from DCMS than we have hitherto?

I am sending a copy of this e-mail to Ed, as we have corresponded on many occasions during the last few years.

With best wishes,

Tim Godfray

Chief Executive, Booksellers Association of the UK & Ireland Ltd