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5 April 2019

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria St
London
SW1H 0ET

Dear Mr Clark,

Online Book Piracy

We are writing regarding online book piracy. We are British authors and members of the Council of the Society of Authors.

We are concerned that websites offering illegal downloads of books are becoming increasingly prevalent. Research by the Intellectual Property Office found that a sixth of e-books read online in the UK in 2017 - around four million books - were pirated. We do not want to give any of these sites publicity by naming them here, but they can easily be found.

Authors are not asked for permission before their work appears on these sites, and they do not receive any remuneration. Authors' earnings are in decline and many are struggling financially. A survey carried out by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) in 2018 found that the median earnings of a UK author from their writing was just £10,500 per annum.

The growth of online book piracy has the potential to damage the legitimate book market and make it even harder for authors to make a living from their work. This will harm writers and readers alike - if authors can no longer afford to write, the supply of new writing will inevitably dry up. It could also cause further damage to our library service (which does pay authors, both for the purchase of books and, through PLR, every time a book is lent), at a time when libraries are already facing cuts and closures across the country.

The UK's great literary heritage has always been underpinned by a robust copyright regime. Unfortunately, this regime is not respected by online pirates, who flagrantly infringe copyright law by both copying our books and offering them for download. As Secretary of State whose department has responsibility for copyright and piracy, we are calling on you to take action against the blight of online book piracy.

We would be happy to meet to discuss further and we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Pullman (President, Society of Authors)

Antony Beevor

Malorie Blackman

Tracy Chevalier

Wendy Cope

Lindsey Davis

Margaret Drabble

Maureen Duffy

Clare Francis

Antonia Fraser

Maureen Freely

Neil Gaiman

Victoria Glendinning

Philip Gross

Daniel Hahn

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Penelope Lively

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