

PRESS RELEASE

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Library Buildings' Survey Published

A report published by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) today shows 70 per cent of England's public library buildings are fit for purpose and meet health and safety standards.

The report estimates the cost of bringing the remaining 30 per cent of library buildings up to standard at £760 million.

MLA Head of Library Policy John Dolan said: "The report gives a clear indication that local authorities need to invest much more in their library buildings."

"We commissioned this report as a benchmarking tool for local authorities to assess the extent of spending they need to make in their library buildings. MLA will ensure all parties are aware of the report's recommendations. This includes sharing best practice and adopting a more sustainable approach to ensuring library buildings are fit for purpose."

The figures do not reflect planned investments already in train, such as the expected opening of new libraries and refurbishments, in the next few years.

"However the survey highlights serious problems that must be addressed. While acknowledging the recent and planned investment on new library buildings, local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that all libraries are fit for purpose," said Mr Dolan.

The report, *Library Buildings' Survey*, by PKF Accountants & Business Advisers, found that, of the estimated £760 million investment required, £130.8million was to address a routine maintenance backlog and £73 million would be necessary to satisfy health and safety, Disability Discrimination Act (excluding reasonable alternative provisions that may be currently in place) and other building regulation requirements.

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

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Councillor Chris White, of the Local Government Association, said: "Councils are fully committed to giving local people modern libraries that provide the services that they want. Books, reading and learning remain at the heart of the library service and councils have done an excellent job to provide a full choice of library services. Visitor numbers to libraries are on the up."

"However, funding is tight and councils are not given specific money from the government just for buildings. At a time when resources are seriously stretched in some parts in local government, councils have to take very tough decisions based on what local people want."

"We look forward to working with the MLA to ensure that good practice can be rolled out so that the needs of local people are met."

The report can be found on the MLA website
http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets/L/librarybuildings_10218.pdf

ends.

Notes to Editors

1. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and the nine regional agencies work in partnership to provide strategic direction and leadership for museums, libraries and archives across England. Together we work to improve people's lives by building knowledge, supporting learning, inspiring creativity and celebrating identity. The Partnership acts collectively for the benefit of the sector and the public, leading the transformation of museums, libraries and archives for the future. Visit: www.mla.gov.uk
2. The 149 local authorities in England are responsible for around 3,500 libraries (3137 permanent public libraries and 433 mobile libraries). 136 responses to the survey were received, representing a 91% response rate. The figures quoted are projections for the whole for the whole sector.
3. The responses to the survey have been collated and analysed without any independent assurance and are based entirely upon authorities' responses to the questions posed.

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