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## **Culture Minister David Lammy announces £4m boost for Public Library improvements**

A free and up-to-date public library service must be at the heart of Government cultural and social policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Culture Minister David Lammy said today. And he announced that the funding programme for library improvement was to be extended for a further two years, with £4 million of new money.

Announcing the Government's response to the Culture Select Committee's report on public libraries, David Lammy said:

"The public library service has played an important part in my life for as long as I can remember. As a child, inspirational school teachers and librarians introduced me to this world, and I have never looked back. And this is as true for young people today as it was then. Libraries can change lives.

"Libraries themselves change too, of course. And information, scholarship and creativity are not bound by the printed page. For many people books and publications will always be the knowledge medium of choice, but libraries have to look further ahead. They also have to be welcoming, friendly and safe places with good quality materials and up-to-date facilities. A public library should be a source of local pride."

He continued:

"My Department, together with the MLA, will continue encouraging this evolution by providing £2 million a year towards libraries improvement up to 2007-08. A programme will be developed by MLA, who will manage the total funding."

Mark Wood, Chairman of the MLA added:

"This new funding for library improvements is terrific news. It will mean we can build on the improvements already made under our Framework for the Future development programme: boosting reading and learning, improving digital services and making sure libraries are efficiently managed to meet the changing needs of modern library users."

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