



United Kingdom
Debt Management
Office

Public Works Loan Board

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LOANS TO PARISH, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

1. Powers to Lend

The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) has the power to lend to parish and town councils in England, community and town councils in Wales and charter trustees. It is for the PWLB to decide whether to make a loan in respect of an application but it will normally lend if the terms and conditions described in this document are met.

2. Purposes for which loans may be made

Loans may be made to finance capital payments for which a council has a formal borrowing approval. A council may also apply for a loan to replace short-term borrowings (including a bank overdraft) or revenue balances used temporarily for the purpose stated in the approval.

3. Borrowing Approval

The PWLB will only lend once a borrowing approval has been obtained. The letters are issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), or, in the case of Welsh councils, the Welsh Government (WG). Borrowing approvals state, amongst other things, the purpose of a loan, the amount and the maximum period over which it can be taken.

The related borrowing may only be undertaken within the terms and time limit of the approval. It is not obligatory for the approval to be taken up in a single loan, and separate applications may be made in respect of a scheme where, for example, the expenditure is spread over several months, provided that the loans are covered by a valid approval.

The initial approach for a borrowing approval should be made to the local County Association of Local Councils. In the case of Welsh councils, the approach is direct to the Welsh Government.

Please contact the Board via phone or email if you require any guidance regarding the borrowing approval process.

4. Security for Loans

Under the provisions of the Public Works Loan Acts of 1965 and 1967, loans from PWLB are secured by an automatic charge on the revenues of the council and not on the council's property.

5. Applications for Loans

Applications should be made by the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) on Form LC1, copies of which may be obtained from the PWLB website. The completed form should be accompanied by the following documentation:

- i. Blank cancelled cheque or an original bank statement (bearing the details of the bank account to which the advance is to be made)
- ii. Completed direct debit mandate
- iii. PWLB are advised of all valid borrowing approval letters directly from DCLG or the Welsh Government so a copy of the letter is **not** required

The application should be sent to PWLB **one week** before a loan is required. In completing form LC1 the RFO will be required to supply the following details. Non-receipt of information will result in a delay to the advance.

- Borrowing approval number
- Purpose of loan
- Sum required (must be expressed in whole pounds)
- Type of loan required
- Half-yearly interest payment days (for fixed rate loans)
- Payment frequency (for variable rate loans)
- Method of repayment
- Period of repayment
- Preferred date of advance (optional)

On receiving an application PWLB will review and notify the RFO (via email) when all checks are completed. The notification will invite the RFO to telephone PWLB in line with the following timetable to agree the final terms of the loan including the rate of interest and the date for the advance.

RFO telephones to agree terms	Day of advance of loan
Monday	Wednesday
Tuesday	Thursday
Wednesday	Friday
Thursday	Monday
Friday	Tuesday

Where a bank holiday intervenes the timetable moves back by the appropriate number of days. Thus, if a Monday is a non-working day and the advance is required to be made on the Tuesday, the agreement would need to be made the previous Thursday.

Following the loan agreement, a confirmation letter outlining the terms agreed will be sent to the council on the day of advance via email. Any original documentation (i.e. bank statements) will be returned via post except in the case of blank cancelled cheques which will be destroyed securely by PWLB.

6. Types of Loan

There are two types of loans available from the PWLB:

- (a) Fixed rate loans, on which the rate of interest is fixed for the life of the loan, and
- (b) Variable rate loans, on which the rate of interest is variable at one, three or six monthly intervals. Once chosen, the roll-over period remains unchanged for the life of the loan.

7. Method of Repayment

There are two repayment methods open to Parish, Town and Community Councils:

Annuity: half yearly payments where each payment is of a constant amount inclusive of principal and interest (available on fixed rate loans only)

Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP): half yearly payments where each payment consists of a constant instalment of principal plus a diminishing amount of interest, calculated on the balance of principal then outstanding

The minimum repayment period on either method is two years.

PWLB also offers Maturity loans at fixed or variable rates but only if the applicant has provided for a sinking fund to meet the repayment of the principal at the end of the term and can demonstrate it has the expertise to operate such a fund. Exceptionally, the PWLB will allow repayment of a loan by the Maturity method where the applicant expects a future receipt to repay the principal at term. Evidence will be required during the application process.

8. Interest Rates

The PWLB's interest rates are determined by HM Treasury in accordance with section 5 of the National Loans Act 1968. In practice, rates are set by the DMO on HM Treasury's behalf in accordance with agreed procedures and methodologies which are described in a DMO Technical Note.

In the case of fixed rate loans, a precise rate of interest is prescribed. In the case of variable rate loans the rate is fixed by reference to a formula. The rate of interest charged on a fixed rate loan or the formula for a variable rate loan will be that agreed by telephone two working days before the date of advance.

Fixed interest rates are set twice daily at 9:30am and 12:30pm with a separate rate calculated in 6 monthly bands for periods up to 50 years. Once a loan has been agreed, the rate of interest is fixed for the duration of the loan. Payments are at regular half-yearly intervals (e.g. 1 April and 1 October) but the borrower may choose the half-yearly days so long as the first date is no later than six months from the date of advance. Scheduled interest payments are calculated by applying half of the annual interest rate to the balance of the loan outstanding at the start of the half-year. If the date a loan is issued does not fall on one of the half-yearly days, the borrower pays an amount for the broken period from the date the loan is issued to the date of the first half-yearly payment.

Variable interest rates are set daily with separate rates for 1, 3 and 6 monthly roll-over periods, which are applicable to both EIP and Maturity loans. Borrowers choose the roll-over period of the loan at the time it is agreed. Interest payments are calculated by reference to the balance outstanding since the last loan payment and the number of days in the roll-over period.

Further information on interest rates, including a [Technical Note](#) on their calculation can be found on the PWLB website, www.dmo.gov.uk.

9. Loan Repayment Periods

A council may choose the repayment period within the following limits, subject to the maximum repayment period specified in the borrowing approval.

		Minimum period (years)	Maximum period (years)
Fixed rate loans	Maturity	1	50
	Annuity or EIP	2	50
Variable rate loans	Maturity	1	10
	EIP	2	10

Although the borrowing approval will state the maximum period for the borrowing, a lesser period may be chosen, as generally a council should not borrow for longer than necessary.

10. Fees

Under the Public Works Loans (Fees) Regulations 1991, as amended, the fees payable by councils in respect of advances from PWLB are:

Fixed rate loans	35p for every £1,000 or part of £1,000
Variable rate loans	45p for every £1,000 or part of £1,000

The minimum fee payable is £25.

11. Advance of Loans

A loan when authorised will be transmitted electronically to the council's receiving bank account. The sum to be transmitted will be the amount of the loan less the fee. Interest will be charged from the date of advance.

12. Scheduled Repayment of Loans

Scheduled repayments due from parish, town and community councils are collected by direct debit. A direct debit instruction must be provided with the LC1 application form.

A council should ensure that its paying bank account has, on a scheduled repayment day, sufficient funds for the due amount. Repayment notices are issued via email 20 working days prior to each loan repayment. When a repayment date falls on a non-working day, the relevant payment will be made on the next working day. Payments notices are not invoices and scheduled repayments are due under the terms of the loan agreement irrespective.

Further information on payment by direct debit is available from the PWLB website.

PWLB reserves the right to charge interest on late payments, which will be at the Bank of England base rate for the day from the relevant payment date to the date on which PWLB's account is credited. The same terms apply to delayed premature repayments.

13. Premature (early) Repayments

Minor authorities should not borrow for longer than necessary. Repayment amounts are calculated on the assumption that the loan will run to maturity and normally a loan is repayable only by the regular payments due under the agreed terms. PWLB cannot renegotiate a loan and, while it will usually accept a premature repayment in whole or in part, in all instances the terms will not favour the borrower over the National

Loans Fund. Breakage costs are charged equivalent to the net present value of the outstanding amount of the loan, in line with standard actuarial practice. This means a premium will be payable when the interest rate on the loan to be repaid is higher than the current 'premature repayment' rate for a loan repayable by the same method as, and over the same period as that remaining on, the loan which it is proposed to repay. When the interest rate on the loan to be repaid is lower than the equivalent 'premature repayment' rate, a discount will be allowed. PWLB reserves the right to charge interest to delayed premature repayments, which will be at the Bank of England base rate for the day from the relevant payment date to the date on which PWLB's account is credited. Please note that early repayments will not be accepted for loans that have been in existence for less than one year or have less than one year to maturity.

14. Refinancing

The Board will normally allow a minor authority to replace a fixed rate loan with another fixed rate loan, subject to the authority gaining a borrowing approval letter for the new borrowing. Similarly, the Board will permit a borrower to replace a fixed rate loan with a variable rate loan or *vice versa*. However, in all cases the terms for accepting early repayment will apply, so that, again, **the terms will not favour the borrower** over the National Loans Fund. Accordingly, the cost of paying off a high-rated loan will tend to offset the financial advantage of a lower rate on the replacement loan, which loan will be subject to the fee for a new advance. Councils considering refinancing debt should enquire further of the Board.

15. Premature (early) Repayments: Procedure

PWLB has discretion to accept a premature repayment:

- in whole, which means 'paying off', or redeeming, the loan in full; or
- in part ('paying down'), which reduces the debt while leaving an outstanding amount of principal remaining to be serviced.

Repayment in full ('paying off')

For reasons of timing, remittances for paying off a loan will normally be accepted only by bank transfer. Should a council wish to pay off a loan, the clerk or responsible financial officer would need to telephone the Board to make a formal agreement to repay, and then arrange for the council's bank to remit the sum by bank transfer. The Board follows a timetable of two working days. Accordingly, the call would need to be made two working days before the intended settlement date. On making the agreement the Board will determine the settlement costs. This will entail calculating a premium/discount on the outstanding balance of principal according to the appropriate rate in the 'premature repayment' set of rates prevailing at the time of the agreement. Interest accruing from the previous scheduled repayment date will be included in the settlement sum as necessary. Once the Board has quoted the amount required to pay off the debt, the council should arrange for payment to reach the Board on the agreed date by an automated direct credit transfer to the Board's bank account:

Sort Code **60-70-80**

Account No. **10013288**

Account Name **PUBLIC WORKS LOAN**

The Board will provide confirmation of the telephone agreement and will also provide confirmation once the funds are received. All confirmations will be sent via email to the responsible finance officer.

Partial repayment ('paying down')

It is open to a council to make a partial early repayment ('pay down'). The payment will be applied to the outstanding balance net of any premium or discount and accrued interest, and the council notified once the funds are received of the effect on its outstanding balance of principal and future scheduled repayments. For reasons of timing PWLB cannot provide figures in advance for this effect, but it would be open to a council to make its own estimate.

16. Further Information

Enquiries should be made to the contact points shown in the heading to this note. PWLB's website has a dedicated page on lending to [parish councils and drainage boards](#) which provides the following information:

- Links to related websites (e.g. Department for Communities and Local Government or the Welsh Government)
- Calculator for indicative interest rates and loan charges for new advances
- Application forms

In addition, the Board will give information about its own terms, conditions and procedures. It will provide, on request, an indication of the cost of paying off a debt at the rates in force on the day. A calculator of indicative costs for new fixed rate loans is available on the Board's website. Generally, however, it is for local authorities to take their own advice, including any necessary financial and legal advice.

June 2017