# UK government pledges impact assessment amid fierce opposition to AI copyright reforms



Ministers in the UK government have formulated a series of concessions regarding proposed copyright reforms in an effort to address concerns raised by artists and creators ahead of a critical parliamentary vote scheduled for next week. According to The Guardian, the government is set to promise an economic impact assessment of the copyright changes it is proposing. In addition, the government will commit to publishing reports on various issues including transparency, licensing, and access to data for artificial intelligence (AI) developers.

These concessions come in response to widespread apprehension in both Parliament and the creative industries, which fear the potential negative impacts of the proposed reforms. Notably, high-profile figures from the creative world, such as Paul McCartney and playwright Tom Stoppard, have publicly opposed the changes. Elton John referred to the reforms as “riding roughshod over the traditional copyright laws that protect artists’ livelihoods.”

The government’s proposals focus on allowing AI companies to use copyrighted works to train their models without obtaining explicit permission, unless the copyright holder actively opts out. This approach has been criticised by creatives who argue that it unfairly benefits AI companies at the expense of copyright holders and undermines existing copyright laws.

The government’s commitments will be included as amendments to the data bill, which has become a focal point for opposition to the reforms. The bill is expected to return to the House of Commons for debate next Wednesday.

Despite the concessions, critics remain unconvinced. Beeban Kidron, a cross-bench peer and campaigner against the proposed changes, stated that the government’s amendments “did not meet the moment.” The Liberal Democrats have announced plans to table their own amendments, aimed at requiring AI companies to adhere to existing copyright laws.

Ed Newton-Rex, a British composer and vocal opponent of the reforms, expressed his strong disapproval, saying there is “a ton of evidence” showing the proposed changes would be “terrible for creators.” He added, “We don’t need an impact assessment to tell us this.”

Peter Kyle, the Science and Technology Secretary, has attempted to engage with the creative industry in response to the backlash. In a recent meeting with music industry figures, Kyle acknowledged that his previous focus on dialogue with the tech sector had caused frustration among creatives. This had been a point of contention since Kyle reportedly held over two dozen meetings with technology firms in his initial months in office without similar engagement with the creative sector.

Kyle and Downing Street aides have argued that if the UK does not reform its copyright system to accommodate AI developments, companies may relocate to countries with more favourable laws, such as Saudi Arabia. Government sources maintain that many AI companies are already establishing bases abroad and warn that without legal reform, UK creatives could find themselves powerless to contest the use of their work by foreign companies.

Further, a government source indicated that ministers are not firmly committed to the opt-out system and are keeping an open mind on the issue. However, Labour MPs remain sceptical, accusing ministers of “giving in to US tech” without evidence of substantial job creation, while warning of risks including outsourcing and devaluation of UK creative work.

Lady Kidron, who successfully passed amendments to the data bill in the House of Lords opposing the government’s approach, criticised the government’s strategy of postponing decisions with reports and reviews. She challenged why the government is not more robustly protecting UK intellectual property rights, supporting the growth potential of UK creative businesses, and heeding warnings from UK AI companies about the privileging of US and Chinese tech firms.

James Frith, a Labour member of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee, underscored the importance of safeguarding legal rights for creators. He remarked, “The mission for creative industries cannot mean creative industry submission. Creative industries must not be expected to forfeit legal rights for uncertainty.”

Although Kidron’s amendments, which would impose UK copyright law on AI companies regardless of their location, were removed in the Commons, the Liberal Democrats are poised to reintroduce similar proposals next week. Their amendments call for developers of AI models—including those that underpin systems like chatbots—to comply with UK copyright law and to disclose the copyrighted materials incorporated during model training.

Additionally, the Liberal Democrat amendments seek greater transparency regarding the use of web crawlers by AI companies. Web crawlers collect data from the internet for use in AI model development. Victoria Collins, the Liberal Democrat technology spokesperson, stated: “An economic impact assessment should be the bare minimum creatives can expect. We’ll be pushing to stop AI copyright law from being watered down in the Commons next week, and urge MPs to stand with us and back British creators.”

As the parliamentary vote approaches, the government faces sustained pressure from both creative sectors and opposition parties to reconsider the balance between fostering innovation in AI and protecting the rights and livelihoods of creators within the UK’s copyright framework.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ft.com/content/38585a82-cffd-4144-9969-82e94cbb2168> - This article discusses the protests by thousands of British musicians, artists, authors, and journalists against government proposals that would allow tech companies to use their work to train AI models, highlighting the 'rights reservation' system and the 'Make it Fair' campaign.
2. <https://apnews.com/article/dc80620c1c226a816048b87fb30309c4> - This piece reports on the release of a silent album titled 'Is This What We Want?' by over 1,000 British musicians, including Kate Bush and Elton John, protesting proposed changes to UK AI laws that could allow tech firms to use copyrighted material without creators' consent.
3. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/dont-let-ai-rip-off-artists-beatles-star-mccartney-warns-uk-government-2025-01-26/> - This article features Paul McCartney's warning that AI could exploit artists and urges the UK government to ensure copyright reforms protect the creative industries, expressing concerns that AI models could produce content based on popular works without compensating the original creators.
4. <https://www.industrypreviews.com/2025/01/30/uk-government-is-giving-away-the-property-rights-of-creators-warn-lords-as-they-force-ai-copyright-safeguards-into-data-bill/> - This report highlights concerns from the House of Lords about the UK government's approach to AI and copyright law, noting that no economic impact assessment has been conducted into the government's preferred copyright policy, despite the creative industries' significant contribution to the UK economy.
5. <https://www.musicbusinessworldwide.com/uks-house-of-lords-votes-to-strengthen-copyright-protections-in-ai-dealing-blow-to-governments-plans/> - This article covers the House of Lords' vote to strengthen copyright protections in AI, dealing a blow to the government's plans, and includes statements from artists like Elton John and Paul McCartney expressing concerns over the proposed changes.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/elton-john-paul-mccartney-keir-starmer-musicians-kate-bush-b2706986.html> - This piece reports on Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's response to the backlash from artists including Elton John and Paul McCartney against proposed changes to copyright law and artificial intelligence, emphasizing the importance of the creative sector to the UK's economy and global reputation.
7. <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMitwFBVV95cUxPMU04NzlGMDlXUkZVcVZZVW9ra0F4TTZZbHRtc3U0TXJ0YlFLZkRkcW5MTVdFMVVVMDM1cVROVWRGSjEyZjlENmVMdjFPRnNHcHFpc0ZuVS1WZ2tmYnNCMWhvd09OZldWQmY0VkI4X2VUODhEejFzMG9WbnBqSTFqeWl0QzVTak9xQmJZTmpRbHE3Y3ZhT1VZMkxYaDlwajdqWDRubW5UMm5GYkxMQ25raTBnNERPMFU?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data