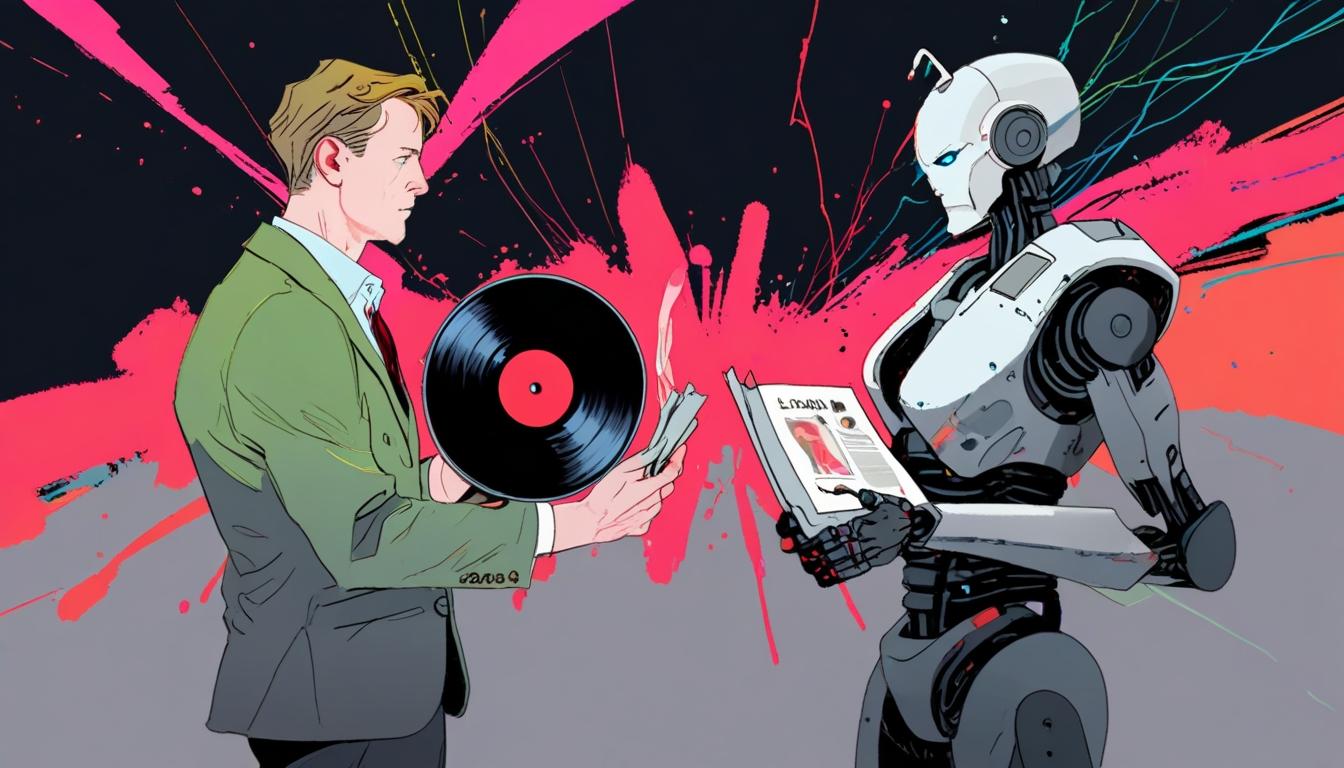
# UK government faces creative backlash over AI copyright reforms favouring tech firms



The UK government is facing significant scrutiny regarding proposed reforms to copyright regulations aimed at benefiting artificial intelligence (AI) companies. These reforms would permit AI developers to utilise copyrighted works without acquiring permission from rights holders, unless those holders explicitly choose to opt out. The potential implications of these changes have prompted backlash from notable figures in the creative sector, including musicians and playwrights such as Paul McCartney, Tom Stoppard, and Elton John, who argue that such measures threaten the livelihood of artists.

The government's concessions, as reported by The Guardian, were announced shortly before a parliamentary vote expected next week. The amendments aim to address criticisms through promises of economic impact assessments and commitments to publish reports concerning transparency, licensing, and data access for AI firms. However, critics have deemed these concessions insufficient. Cross-bench peer Beeban Kidron expressed frustration, stating, “Pushing the issue into the long grass with reports and reviews does not meet the moment.” Kidron has previously advocated for amendments aimed at strengthening copyright protections, questioning the government’s commitment to safeguarding UK property rights and supporting its own creative industries.

In the context of ongoing discussions about intellectual property, the tensions between AI developers and the creative sector have come to the fore. Notably, Peter Kyle, appointed Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology in July 2024, faced criticism for prioritising engagement with tech industry representatives over the creative community. Following backlash from creative professionals, Kyle convened a meeting with figures from the music industry, including CISAC President Björn Ulvaeus. At the meeting, Ulvaeus underscored the necessity of maintaining robust copyright protections while embracing AI, stating, “Copyright is the oxygen which creators and the creative economy depend on for their existence and survival. They cannot be sacrificed.”

Government sources argue that without necessary reforms, there is a risk that AI companies could relocate to nations with more lenient copyright regulations, thereby limiting UK creators' recourse against the use of their work by foreign entities. However, some lawmakers within the Labour party have voiced concerns that the government is yielding to US tech interests without providing substantial justifications. One unnamed MP remarked that ministers are conceding to US tech firms with “no credible substantive proven job numbers in return.”

The proposed amendments from the Liberal Democrats, to be introduced next week, would mandate that AI model developers comply with UK copyright law irrespective of where they are based. Furthermore, these proposals would require transparency regarding the methods used by AI companies to collect data for training purposes, including the use of web crawlers.

The discourse surrounding the UK’s AI copyright reforms is not limited to national figures. Leaders from the world’s largest music companies have publicly condemned the government’s approach. Universal Music Group’s CEO, Sir Lucian Grainge, stated, “The UK stands at a decisive crossroads because what is ‘Made in Britain’ and exported to the world is not limited to physical products, but also intellectual property and copyright including music, visual art, life sciences and more.” Warner Music Group’s CEO, Robert Kyncl, warned that the proposed legislation could undermine the creative community, while Sony Music Group’s Chairman, Rob Stringer, asserted that creators must be duly compensated in this evolving landscape.

In a poignant form of protest, over 1,000 artists, including notable figures like Damon Albarn and Kate Bush, released a "silent album" in February to voice their opposition to the intended changes.

On the other side of the debate, leading AI organisations such as Google and OpenAI have expressed their reservations regarding the government's proposed opt-out system, viewing it as excessively restrictive. OpenAI suggested that a more beneficial approach would be a broad exemption to copyright laws to facilitate the advancement of AI technologies, echoing Google’s sentiment that unrestricted training on publicly available content is essential.

As discussions move forward, the outcomes of these debates will be closely scrutinised not only for their immediate effects on the creative landscape in the UK but also for their implications on the global stage as other nations observe the UK’s approach to balancing innovation and intellectual property rights.

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

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