# Over 400 artists call on UK government to reform copyright laws amid AI threats



In a significant move that highlights the tension between technology and creative rights, over 400 esteemed artists, including Elton John, Coldplay, and Dua Lipa, have urged the UK government to reform copyright laws to safeguard their works from potential exploitation by artificial intelligence (AI). The collective call to action, which features notable figures such as Paul McCartney and Florence Welch, emphasizes the need for a proactive stance against AI's encroachment on artistic integrity.

The petition comes ahead of an imminent vote in the House of Lords on an amendment to the Data (Use and Access) Bill, which seeks to mandate AI developers to disclose the copyrighted materials used during their model training processes. Currently, under UK law, data mining for non-commercial purposes is allowed by default, placing the onus on creators to opt out of data mining for commercial uses. This administrative hurdle has raised concerns within the creative community about the potential for increased infringement on their rights as technology continues to advance.

The artists assert that creative copyright is not merely a financial necessity but a vital component of the UK's cultural fabric, supporting approximately 2.4 million jobs across various sectors. Their letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer argues that without rigorous protection, the UK risks undermining its status as a global leader in creativity while jeopardising the financial stability of countless artists. As McCartney pointedly remarked earlier this year, "You get young guys, girls, coming up, and they write a beautiful song, and they don’t own it." This sentiment resonates with many in the industry who feel vulnerable in the face of rapidly evolving technology.

Elton John has reiterated these concerns, warning that advancements in AI should not come at the expense of artists' livelihoods. According to him, a failure to amend current legislation might result in major tech companies having unfettered access to artistic works, thus fostering a marketplace where human creativity is diluted by mass-produced, AI-generated content. He describes the potential prevalence of AI in artistry as a systematic dismantling of the protections that creatives have relied upon for their work.

Notable voices like Jimmy Page have also weighed in, cautioning that AI's indiscriminate scraping of creative works is not merely a technical issue but raises profound ethical dilemmas. He argues that the unregulated use of human creativity by AI, without proper consent or compensation, skews the very definition of innovation toward exploitation. Similarly, Queen's Brian May expressed fears that the current legislative environment could signal an era of irreversible "theft" of creative works.

In a parallel protest, over 1,000 artists, including Kate Bush and Damon Albarn, released a silent album titled "Is This What We Want?" This unconventional project, consisting of 12 tracks of empty studio recordings, symbolises the silent threat posed to artistic ownership and creative expression. The album serves not only as a protest but also aims to raise funds for the charity Help Musicians, highlighting the pressing need for sustainable support within the community.

As the consultation period on these legislative changes approaches its conclusion, the creative sector remains adamant about the need for transparency and a fair licensing system that adequately protects artists' rights. Many creators worry that the government’s preference for an ongoing consultation process, rather than immediate legislative action, may enable tech companies to exploit loopholes in the existing framework.

While the bureaucratic discussions continue, the arts community stands united in their call for reform, affirming that any scaffold of innovation must encompass the rights and inputs of those who shape the creative landscape. As the debate unfolds, it will undoubtedly determine the future relationship between technology and creativity in the UK, a nexus critical to maintain in a world increasingly influenced by AI.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
3. Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5
4. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 4, 5

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/elton-john-coldplay-and-dua-lipa-among-400-artists-calling-on-uk-government-to-change-copyright-laws-amid-ai-threat-3861915> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.huffingtonpost.es/life/cultura/400-artistas-dua-lipa-coldplay-paul-mccartney-piden-gobierno-britanico-proteccion-iabr.html> - Over 400 British artists and creators, including Paul McCartney, Dua Lipa, Coldplay, Elton John, and Ian McKellen, have urged Prime Minister Keir Starmer to protect copyright rights amid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI). In a letter, they advocate for an amendment to the new Data Bill that would require tech companies to disclose how they use protected content to train generative AI models. The signatories emphasize that while they support technological progress, unregulated use of creative works could impact the livelihoods of 2.4 million people in the UK and weaken the country's position as a creative powerhouse.
3. <https://cadenaser.com/nacional/2025/05/10/centenares-de-artistas-britanicos-eixgen-a-keir-starmer-que-actualice-las-leyes-de-derechos-de-autor-ante-el-peligro-de-la-ia-cadena-ser/> - Approximately 500 British artists, including prominent figures like Paul McCartney, Dua Lipa, Elton John, Ian McKellen, and Kazuo Ishiguro, have signed a letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer demanding protection of copyright rights against the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). They criticize current government legislative proposals that would allow tech companies to use creative works without authors' consent, potentially leading to a 'loss of creativity.' The artists call for an amendment to the Data Bill that would require AI developers to be transparent about the use of protected content. The UK government states it is working on measures that benefit both creative and tech industries and commits to not implementing changes that do not adequately protect creators.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/5a6601f7-a9c9-4f3b-a205-b4f8fe3e688d> - Over 400 leading UK musicians, artists, and media executives, including Sir Paul McCartney, Elton John, Dua Lipa, and Richard Curtis, have signed a letter urging Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to support stronger copyright protections against unauthorized AI usage. They advocate for an amendment to the Data (Use and Access) Bill, proposed by Baroness Beeban Kidron, which would require AI developers to disclose which specific copyrighted materials—such as music, books, and films—have been used to train their models. The amendment aims to ensure transparency and prevent what is described as the mass theft of creative works by AI firms. Although the amendment was recently defeated in the House of Commons, it faces another vote in the House of Lords. While the government has proposed its own amendments and insists that all options remain on the table, many creators fear that without explicit legislation, tech companies will bypass copyright protections. The letter cautions that neglecting creators’ rights could undermine the UK’s global standing in the creative sector and damage long-term economic prospects. Advocates argue that the proposed measures are vital to foster a robust licensing market and maintain the UK’s leadership in both creative and AI industries.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/dc80620c1c226a816048b87fb30309c4> - A silent album titled 'Is This What We Want?' has been released by over 1,000 British musicians, including notable artists like Kate Bush and Elton John, to protest proposed changes to U.K. AI laws that could allow tech firms to use copyrighted material to train AI models without creators' consent. The album's 12 tracks are recordings of empty studios symbolizing the potential loss of creative control. The protest aims to protect the interests of musicians and preserve the integrity of Britain's creative industries. Profits from the album will support the charity Help Musicians. The consultation on these law changes closes on Tuesday, with strong opposition from artists and media companies. The UK government insists the new approach will favor both AI developers and right holders.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/38585a82-cffd-4144-9969-82e94cbb2168> - Thousands of British musicians, artists, authors, and journalists have protested against government proposals that would allow tech companies to use their work to train artificial intelligence models. The government's consultation suggests a 'rights reservation' system where each creator must opt out to prevent their work from being used. The creative sector responded with the 'Make it Fair' campaign, highlighting the dangers of this proposal. Over 1,000 musicians, including Kate Bush and Damon Albarn, released a 'silent' album titled 'Is This What We Want?' to demonstrate the risk these proposals pose to the music industry. Artists like Paul McCartney also opposed the plans, and hundreds of creatives signed a letter expressing their disagreement. The debate pits creative industries, seeking transparency and licensing, against tech companies desiring free access to content for training algorithms.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/22/elton-john-calls-for-uk-copyright-rules-rethink-to-protect-creators-from-ai> - Sir Elton John has called on the UK government to reconsider proposals involving the relaxation of copyright rules to protect creative talent from artificial intelligence (AI). The singer and songwriter is among a growing list of public figures expressing concerns about plans that would allow tech firms to use online material, including creative work, for AI without permission. Under current government proposals, creators would need to opt out of their work being used, but some campaign advocates, including Simon Cowell and author Kate Mosse, have called for an opt-in system. John highlighted the industry's impact on creating jobs and economic growth, emphasizing that the adoption of this copyright exception would destroy the UK's leadership in the music industry.