# House of Lords defeats government to enforce stricter AI copyright protections



The recent legislative battle in the House of Lords represents a significant turning point in the ongoing discourse surrounding the intersection of artificial intelligence and copyright law. In a striking defeat for the UK government, peers voted 145 to 126 in favour of amendments to the Data (Use and Access) Bill, aimed at imposing stricter regulations on the use of copyrighted material for training AI models. This outcome underscores escalating tensions regarding how major tech companies utilise intellectual property without appropriate consent or compensation.

The amendments, championed by digital rights campaigner Baroness Kidron, were designed to enforce existing copyright protections and enhance transparency. Under the proposed measures, AI companies would be explicitly subject to UK copyright law, regardless of their country of origin. This includes revealing the identities of web crawlers—automated programs that gather data from the internet—which currently operate with a degree of anonymity. Furthermore, the amendments seek to empower copyright owners by obliging AI developers to disclose when and how their work is employed. Such moves received bipartisan support, indicating a growing consensus in Parliament that significant legal changes are necessary to safeguard the rights of creatives against the encroachment of unregulated AI practices.

Critics of the government’s approach have voiced substantial concerns about its preferred 'opt-out' system for text and data mining, which many believe could facilitate widespread unauthorized usage of copyrighted content. As highlighted by several key figures in the House of Lords, including Baron Berkeley of Knighton and Baron Arbuthnot of Erdom, the idea that existing copyright law could be relaxed to enable AI training raises profound ethical questions. Both peers asserted that AI will not necessarily require copyrighted material to function effectively, thereby suggesting that no amendments to the current framework are required.

These discussions have been galvanised by vocal opposition from prominent members of the creative community. Notable figures such as Paul McCartney, Elton John, and Andrew Lloyd Webber have been at the forefront of this movement, warning that insufficient copyright protections would jeopardise the livelihoods of artists, particularly emerging talent. McCartney has been particularly vocal, having signed petitions that assert the unlicensed use of creative works for AI training constitutes a significant threat to artistic livelihoods. "Without strong protections," he warned, "the UK’s status as a global leader in music and the arts is at serious risk."

The amendments proposed in the House of Lords not only aim to protect existing rights but also reflect a broader dissatisfaction with the government's current consultation process, which many stakeholders regard as inadequate. Beeban Kidron has described the opt-out provision as "complex, costly, and ultimately unworkable," especially for independent artists who may struggle to navigate the bureaucratic intricacies associated with opting out of the data mining process. This crucial debate highlights a foundational issue: any dilution of copyright laws could enable AI companies to exploit creators’ works without permission or fair compensation, shifting the benefits of artistic labour away from the artists themselves and into the coffers of major tech firms.

While the UK government maintains that current uncertainties surrounding AI and copyright law could hinder technological development—including within the creative industries—the opposition from artists and lawmakers alike suggests that a careful recalibration of rights may indeed be necessary to foster a sustainable integration of AI into the economy. The House of Lords’ recent vote signifies a pivotal moment in this ongoing conversation, pointing toward a future where the rights of creators are robustly protected against the backdrop of rapid technological advancement. As the bill returns to the Commons, it remains to be seen whether the government will heed these calls for a more equitable approach to copyright in the age of AI.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/news/government-defeated-for-third-time-in-lords-over-copyright-protection-against-ai/a1798825657.html), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/paul-mccartney-government-treasury-simon-rattle-elton-john-b1207724.html), [[6]](https://musictechpolicy.com/2025/02/03/uk-governments-ai-legislation-is-defeated-in-the-house-of-lords/)
* Paragraph 2: [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/paul-mccartney-government-treasury-simon-rattle-elton-john-b1207724.html), [[3]](https://www.lexology.com/pro/content/critical-ai-copyright-amendment-added-uk-data-bill), [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/data-paul-mccartney-government-bill-treasury-b2688003.html)
* Paragraph 3: [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/25/why-are-creatives-fighting-uk-government-ai-proposals-on-copyright), [[7]](https://routenote.com/blog/uk-house-of-lords-votes-to-strengthen-copyright-protections-amid-ai-battle/)
* Paragraph 4: [[6]](https://musictechpolicy.com/2025/02/03/uk-governments-ai-legislation-is-defeated-in-the-house-of-lords/), [[7]](https://routenote.com/blog/uk-house-of-lords-votes-to-strengthen-copyright-protections-amid-ai-battle/)
* Paragraph 5: [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/data-paul-mccartney-government-bill-treasury-b2688003.html), [[6]](https://musictechpolicy.com/2025/02/03/uk-governments-ai-legislation-is-defeated-in-the-house-of-lords/)
* Paragraph 6: [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/paul-mccartney-government-treasury-simon-rattle-elton-john-b1207724.html), [[6]](https://musictechpolicy.com/2025/02/03/uk-governments-ai-legislation-is-defeated-in-the-house-of-lords/), [[7]](https://routenote.com/blog/uk-house-of-lords-votes-to-strengthen-copyright-protections-amid-ai-battle/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/news/government-defeated-for-third-time-in-lords-over-copyright-protection-against-ai/a1798825657.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/paul-mccartney-government-treasury-simon-rattle-elton-john-b1207724.html> - The UK government faced a defeat in the House of Lords over measures to protect creatives from having their copyrighted work used to train AI models without permission or remuneration. Peers voted 145 to 126, with a majority of 19, in favor of amendments to the Data (Use and Access) Bill aimed at tackling the unauthorized use of intellectual property by big tech companies scraping data for AI. Digital rights campaigner Baroness Kidron proposed the amendments, emphasizing the need to enforce existing property rights by improving transparency and establishing a redress procedure. The measures would explicitly subject AI companies to UK copyright law, regardless of their base, reveal the names and owners of web crawlers that currently operate anonymously, and allow copyright owners to know when, where, and how their work is used. This move received cross-party support, with both Labour and Conservative peers rebelling against their own front benches to back the measures. The government's preferred option of an 'opt-out' system for text and data mining was criticized as potentially leading to widespread unauthorized use of intellectual property. News Media Association chief executive Owen Meredith welcomed the amendments, urging the government to listen to concerns as the bill moves back to the Commons. Shadow technology minister Viscount Camrose acknowledged the importance of getting the issue right and suggested allowing the government's consultation to continue its work. The debate highlights growing concerns within Parliament about the unregulated use of copyrighted material by major tech firms and the need for stronger protections for creatives.
3. <https://www.lexology.com/pro/content/critical-ai-copyright-amendment-added-uk-data-bill> - The UK government suffered a surprise defeat in the House of Lords over a new AI copyright regime proposal that aims to protect creative industries from illegal data scraping by AI developers. The amendments to the Data (Use and Access) Bill, proposed by digital rights campaigner Baroness Kidron, received cross-party support and aim to enforce existing property rights by improving transparency and establishing a redress procedure. The measures would explicitly subject AI companies to UK copyright law, regardless of their base, reveal the names and owners of web crawlers that currently operate anonymously, and allow copyright owners to know when, where, and how their work is used. This defeat highlights the growing concerns within Parliament about the unregulated use of copyrighted material by major tech firms and the need for stronger protections for creatives.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/25/why-are-creatives-fighting-uk-government-ai-proposals-on-copyright> - Generative AI models, the technology behind tools like ChatGPT, require vast amounts of data to generate responses. This data often comes from the open web, including sources like Wikipedia, newspaper articles, and online book archives. Creative professionals and industries, including authors, artists, and newspaper publishers, are demanding compensation for the use of their work to build these models and for the practice to stop until they have granted permission. They argue that their work is being taken without compensation to build AI tools that create works in direct competition with their own. The UK government's preferred option in a consultation is to allow AI companies to train models on copyrighted work by giving them an exception for 'text and data mining.' However, under the proposals, creatives would be able to opt out of the mining process through a 'rights reservation' system. Critics of the government's consultation, such as Beeban Kidron, a crossbench peer in the House of Lords and a filmmaker, argue that copyright law does not need changing because it already prevents someone's work from being used without permission. They also argue that the opt-out option is unfair because it places a burden on artists who might not realize such a provision exists and could be difficult to implement for emerging artists. The government argues that current uncertainty over AI and copyright law is holding back development and use of the technology, including in the creative industries.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/data-paul-mccartney-government-bill-treasury-b2688003.html> - The UK government has been defeated in the Lords over measures to protect creatives from having their copyrighted work used to train AI models without permission or remuneration. Peers voted 145 to 126, with a majority of 19, in favor of a package of amendments to the Data (Use and Access) Bill aiming to tackle the unauthorized use of intellectual property by big tech companies scraping data for AI. Digital rights campaigner Baroness Kidron proposed the amendments, emphasizing the need to enforce existing property rights by improving transparency and establishing a redress procedure. The measures would explicitly subject AI companies to UK copyright law, regardless of their base, reveal the names and owners of web crawlers that currently operate anonymously, and allow copyright owners to know when, where, and how their work is used. This move received cross-party support, with both Labour and Conservative peers rebelling against their own front benches to back the measures. The government's preferred option of an 'opt-out' system for text and data mining was criticized as potentially leading to widespread unauthorized use of intellectual property. News Media Association chief executive Owen Meredith welcomed the amendments, urging the government to listen to concerns as the bill moves back to the Commons. Shadow technology minister Viscount Camrose acknowledged the importance of getting the issue right and suggested allowing the government's consultation to continue its work. The debate highlights growing concerns within Parliament about the unregulated use of copyrighted material by major tech firms and the need for stronger protections for creatives.
6. <https://musictechpolicy.com/2025/02/03/uk-governments-ai-legislation-is-defeated-in-the-house-of-lords/> - The UK government faced a defeat in the House of Lords regarding their AI bill, specifically concerning measures to protect copyrighted material from being used to train AI models without permission or compensation. Members of the House of Lords voted 145 to 126 in favor of amendments to the UK Government’s Data (Use and Access) Bill, proposed by film director Beeban Tania Kidron, the Baroness Kidron. The amendments received cross-party support and include provisions to ensure that AI companies comply with UK copyright law, disclose the names and owners of web crawlers, and allow copyright owners to know when and how their work is used. The defeat highlights the growing concerns within Parliament about the unregulated use of copyrighted material by major tech firms and the need for stronger protections for creatives. Several prominent artists voiced their opposition to the UK government’s AI bill, including Sir Elton John and Sir Paul McCartney, who argued that the proposed changes would allow AI companies to use copyrighted material without proper compensation, potentially threatening the livelihoods of artists, especially emerging ones.
7. <https://routenote.com/blog/uk-house-of-lords-votes-to-strengthen-copyright-protections-amid-ai-battle/> - The decision to strengthen copyright protections was championed by Baroness Kidron, a digital rights advocate and crossbench peer, who has been vocal in her opposition to the government’s proposed opt-out system. She criticized it as 'complex, costly, and ultimately unworkable,' particularly for independent artists who lack the resources to opt out from the thousands of AI firms worldwide. She isn't entirely against AI use in the UK economy or the industry, recognizing that there is still an opportunity for it to be used: 'There is an opportunity of growth in the combination of AI and creative industries. But this forced marriage, on slave terms, is not it.' Other key figures in the House of Lords echoed these concerns: Baron Berkeley of Knighton argued AI companies’ unauthorized use of copyrighted works is simply stealing the intellectual property of rightsholders—something that is already harming the music industry. Baron Arbuthnot of Erdom argued that AI does not need to be trained on copyrighted music or art to function effectively, further reinforcing the case against weakening copyright protections. At its core, the debate highlights a fundamental issue: weakening copyright laws would effectively allow AI companies to exploit the work of artists without permission or compensation. This shifts the benefits of creativity away from rightsholders and into the hands of major tech companies. A wave of high-profile artists have spoken out against the government’s original proposal, with Paul McCartney, Elton John, Lord Lloyd-Webber, Kate Bush, and over 40,000 other creatives adding their voices to the fight. McCartney warned that weakening copyright laws could stifle creativity, making it harder for future generations of artists to sustain careers. In December, he joined many others in signing a petition stating that 'unlicensed use of creative works of training generative AI is a major, unjust threat' to artists’ livelihoods. Elton John echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that without strong protections, the UK’s status as a global leader in music and the arts is at serious risk. While the Labour government’s ten-week consultation remains open, the House of Lords’ vote represents the first major legislative pushback against AI companies using copyrighted material without permission. For now, the victory signals a promising step toward fairer AI regulations in the UK that respect the rights of musicians and creators. But it isn’t over yet.