# Elton John and creative leaders slam UK plan to weaken copyright protections for AI training



For months, a collective of leading figures from music, literature, design, and the visual arts has raised alarm over the UK government’s proposed changes to copyright laws that could radically shape the landscape of the creative industries. The concerns escalated when the government initiated a consultation that appeared to advance a predetermined agenda: allowing artificial intelligence companies to utilise copyrighted work without the permission of its creators unless these creators had opted out—a process that inherently lacks transparency. This proposition is seen by many as a blatant charter for theft, stripping vigorous protections from those who pour their lifeblood into creative endeavours.

Elton John, a renowned figure in the music industry, has been vocal in his condemnation. Speaking to the press, he declared, “The government have no right to do this to my songs. They have no right to do it to anybody’s songs, or anybody’s prose.” John’s sentiment echoes the frustration of thousands of artists who fear that their rights and incomes are at stake amidst these legislative changes. The pushback from the artistic community was also echoed in the House of Lords, where members from various political backgrounds attempted to introduce amendments to the legislation—now formulated as the data (use and access) bill—that would enforce existing copyright laws. These amendments aimed to mandate transparency, ensuring that creators could identify how, when, and by whom their work was being appropriated in AI training.

Despite these concerted efforts, government representatives, including Secretary of State for Technology Peter Kyle, dismissed calls for greater protection, even as he conceded that substantial amounts of copyrighted material have already been assimilated into AI models. His comments indicate a lack of accountability for AI companies, which has caused a backlash among artists and creators. Kyle’s continued support for the existing policy, despite significant criticism, underscores a troubling disconnect between the government and the creative sectors—an industry that supports over 2.4 million jobs and contributes approximately £126 billion annually to the UK economy.

This situation has raised serious alarms among industry leaders not only regarding the immediate ramifications for creators but also about the long-term cultural implications for Britain. The creative industries are often described as the nation’s cultural bedrock, weaving the narratives and histories that define the country. The potential erosion of copyright protections would not only devalue artistic work but could also undermine the very capacity of the UK to tell its own stories in the future.

Moreover, concerns have been voiced not only by musicians like John and Paul McCartney but also by a coalition of over 30 leaders from the performing arts, including heads of prominent institutions such as the National Theatre and Opera North. They advocate for robust protections of both moral and economic rights for creatives, asserting that a fragile ecosystem of freelancers is at risk if copyright laws are allowed to be flouted. As the creative industries grapple with the modern realities of AI, the stakes are high, and the need for protective legislation clear.

As the government appears poised to move forward with its plans, the upcoming debate in the House of Lords will be crucial. The resilience of Britain’s creative community and its ability to influence policy will shape not just the present state of the industry, but also the future trajectory of how creative work is valued in an increasingly automated landscape. The fight against these detrimental changes is far from over, and with renewed discussions set to take place, the call for a legislative framework that respects and protects the rights of creators remains more critical than ever.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/may/24/ai-britain-creative-industries-government-data-bill> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/criminal-elton-john-condemns-uks-ai-copyright-plans-2025-05-18/> - Elton John has strongly criticized the UK government's proposal to relax copyright laws, allowing AI developers to train models on creative content without guaranteed compensation to original creators. He, along with other prominent artists, argues that this move undermines the livelihood of young artists and devalues original creative work. The government insists it is consulting stakeholders and will not proceed with any policy change unless it benefits both AI development and the creative industry.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/9ad226ad-e90b-45a6-b479-12fd93f701ad> - The UK's creative industries, valued at £125 billion and employing over 2.4 million people, are vital yet often underappreciated. Despite rapid growth, these industries face threats from unregulated AI usage. Current UK policy has sparked concern over potential misuse of intellectual property in AI training, risking devaluation of creative works and future loss of content creators. The upcoming industrial strategy aims to position the creative sector as a key growth area, emphasizing investments in AI-led innovation and skills development.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/185e2e9d-2642-4b2b-b2e0-99751841b07a> - Artists are raising concerns about the impact of AI on their industry, contesting plans by Christie's to auction AI-generated art. Many artists earn modest incomes, with UK artists averaging £12,500 annually. Copyright is crucial for artist earnings, but generative AI complicates this. AI models, trained on vast datasets including artists' works, produce new images without clear attribution, posing potential copyright infringements. The UK government plans to relax copyright laws for AI training, intensifying artists' fears of income loss.
5. <https://apnews.com/article/b260a4c6f0fdf732fb4994cdeb1710a4> - Paul McCartney has expressed concerns over potential changes to UK copyright laws that may allow AI companies to use copyrighted materials unless creators opt out. McCartney argues this could lead to artists losing control of their work and damage Britain’s creative industries. The UK government is consulting on new copyright laws intended to balance creators’ control and compensation for AI use of their works, while supporting AI development. McCartney insists that the government should protect artists’ rights to their creations.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/mar/18/performing-arts-leaders-issue-copyright-warning-over-uk-governments-ai-plans> - Over 30 performing arts leaders in the UK, including the bosses of the National Theatre, Opera North, and the Royal Albert Hall, have joined the chorus of creative industry concern about the government’s plans to let AI companies use artists’ work without permission. They depend on a 'fragile ecosystem' of freelancers who rely on copyright to sustain their livelihoods and urge the government to support the 'moral and economic rights' of the creative community in music, dance, drama, and opera.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/dec/19/uk-arts-and-media-reject-plan-to-let-ai-firms-use-copyrighted-material> - Writers, publishers, musicians, photographers, movie producers, and newspapers have rejected the Labour government’s plan to create a copyright exemption to help AI companies train their algorithms. The Creative Rights in AI Coalition (Crac) said existing copyright laws must be respected and enforced rather than degraded. The coalition includes the British Phonographic Industry, the Independent Society of Musicians, the Motion Picture Association, and the Society of Authors, as well as Mumsnet, the Guardian, Financial Times, Telegraph, Getty Images, the Daily Mail Group, and Newsquest.