# Keir Starmer faces backlash over trade deal threatening UK copyright protections for creatives



Keir Starmer's Labour government now finds itself at a perilous junction regarding the safeguarding of Britain’s intellectual property, especially within the creative sectors. In light of a proposed trade deal that threatens to significantly weaken copyright protections, the artistic community is rightfully alarmed about the impact on their livelihoods and the integrity of their work.

High-profile figures, including Elton John, have expressed their outrage at the government's approach, which many perceive as a dangerous capitulation to corporate giants at the cost of creators. John condemns the government's stance as tantamount to a "criminal offence," contending that permitting tech behemoths to exploit copyright-protected material without adequate compensation fundamentally erodes the very essence of British creativity. This sentiment resonates deeply within the creative community, as artists fear their hard-fought rights may be sacrificed at the altar of technological advancement and overseas investment.

Historically, the UK has prided itself on a robust copyright framework dating back to the early 18th century. Yet, under the pretext of progress and innovation, the Labour government, along with figures such as Technology Secretary Peter Kyle, seems prepared to dismantle this vital heritage—echoing a concerning trend where corporate interests overshadow individual rights.

A particularly troubling aspect of this situation is the proposed UK-US trade agreement, which could grant tech firms like Google, Meta, and Apple unchecked access to British creative works. This reality has sparked nationwide protests, with a united front of musicians, artists, and writers rallying under campaigns like 'Make it Fair.' Over 1,000 musicians even released a silent album titled "Is This What We Want?" as a stark indictment of the government's proposals, underscoring the chilling effect such policies could inflict on the creative sector.

Critics are bolstered by the voices of industry heavyweights like Paul McCartney and Ed Sheeran, both of whom vehemently oppose any relaxation of copyright laws. They warn that such a shift jeopardizes the financial viability of emerging artists and threatens to tarnish the UK's standing as a leader in the creative fields. These esteemed figures are calling for unequivocal clarity and fair remuneration in the use of copyrighted materials by AI technologies, urging the Prime Minister to fortify protections that safeguard British creators.

The urgency of these concerns is amplified by recent turmoil within the US Copyright Office, which has cast doubt on the reliability of copyright protections. A draft report indicated a troubling allowance for using copyrighted materials for AI training in research; however, it cautioned against commercial applications without due consideration of fair use standards. This uncertainty mirrors the wider challenges posed by burgeoning tech influence on copyright laws around the globe.

Government reassurances about engaging with stakeholders have done little to mitigate these fears. Skeptics question the likelihood of any policy that ensures AI development will not unduly harm British artists. Many argue that unless stringent regulations are in place—such as mandates for transparency about the materials utilized in AI training—creators will remain susceptible to exploitation.

As the discussion unfolds, the unwavering resistance from the creative community embodies a unified resolve not only to defend their rights but also to uphold the quintessential spirit of British artistry. The government’s trajectory will undoubtedly dictate the fate of these industries, potentially leading to irreversible shifts if profit continues to eclipse principle. The responsibility now rests with leaders to judiciously navigate these interests, ensuring the UK retains its rightful place as a bastion of creativity amidst an ever-evolving technological landscape.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/money/comment/article-14744253/ALEX-BRUMMER-Britains-copyright-betrayal-Labour.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - 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. Supported by artists like Paul McCartney and Ed Sheeran, John argues this move undermines the livelihood of young artists and the integrity of creative industries. 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/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 AI models. The 'Make it Fair' campaign highlights the dangers of such proposals, with over 1,000 musicians releasing a silent album titled 'Is This What We Want?' to demonstrate the potential impact on the music industry. Artists like Paul McCartney have also voiced opposition, emphasizing the need for transparency and fair compensation.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/dc80620c1c226a816048b87fb30309c4> - Over 1,000 British musicians, including Kate Bush and Elton John, have released a silent album titled 'Is This What We Want?' to protest proposed changes to UK AI laws that could allow tech firms to use copyrighted material 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 musicians' interests and preserve the integrity of Britain's creative industries.
5. <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, and Dua Lipa, 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 have been used to train their models, ensuring transparency and preventing the mass theft of creative works.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/22/elton-john-calls-for-uk-copyright-rules-rethink-to-protect-creators-from-ai> - Elton John has called on the UK government to reconsider proposals involving the relaxation of copyright rules to protect creative talent from AI. He emphasizes that such changes could destroy the UK's leadership in the creative sector and allow tech companies to exploit artists' work without proper compensation. John, along with other artists, advocates for an opt-in system where AI companies seek permission to use work and offer payment, ensuring creators' rights are protected.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jan/14/british-novelists-criticise-government-over-ai-theft> - British novelists Kate Mosse and Richard Osman have criticized the UK government's plan to grant AI companies broad freedoms to mine artistic works for data, arguing it could destroy growth in creative fields and amount to theft. The government's proposal would allow tech firms to use online material, including creative work, for AI without permission, unless creators opt out. The authors call for the current copyright system to be maintained to protect creators' rights and the integrity of creative industries.