# UK ministers plan concessions on AI copyright proposals after backlash



Ministers in the UK are currently planning to make significant concessions to their controversial proposals which aim to facilitate artificial intelligence (AI) companies' access to copyright-protected works. This decision comes after a widespread backlash led by some of the country’s most prominent artists, including Elton John and Paul McCartney, against the initial plans that would allow AI companies to utilise creative works unless artists explicitly opted out.

Sources indicate that the UK government has recognised the necessity to safeguard British creative industries as part of these discussions. The proposals were originally intended to grant AI companies exemptions from current copyright rules to support the growth of the domestic AI sector, but they have faced substantial criticism from within the creative community. Industry insiders suggest that officials are exploring various adjustments that would exempt certain sectors from the opt-out requirement and ensure that British AI firms receive preferential treatment in comparison to international competitors.

One insider stated, “Ministers would very much like to find something everyone can work with," noting that the complete abandonment of the plans is not considered a viable option, as this might disadvantage British AI companies in a competitive global environment. There are ongoing discussions regarding potential modifications, such as allowing creative sectors to opt in to the new system while providing AI firms with complimentary access to media works unless they opt out.

The backlash intensified significantly when a collective of over 1,000 musicians, including well-known figures such as Kate Bush, released a silent album to protest the government's proposals. The response also included vocal opposition from artists like Damon Albarn and Annie Lennox. Elton John warned that these changes could "destroy the UK’s leadership" in the music industry, underscoring the concern that AI could dominate creative processes.

Officials have stated they are committed to protecting British creative professionals in their forthcoming plans, which are expected to be finalised later this year. In statements made during a trade mission to Delhi, Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds emphasised the importance of ensuring that creators can “earn a decent living” and highlighted the necessity of striking the right balance on copyright laws.

Despite the government's reassurances, scepticism persists amongst industry insiders who question the feasibility of promised protections. One music industry figure remarked on the lack of clarity regarding how any proposed safeguards would practically work, labelling the concept of selectively applying copyright law as “a nonsense”.

Critics also express concerns that artists might remain unaware if their works are used in the training of AI models, a situation described as problematic by industry advocate Mr. Newton-Rex. He referred to previous opt-out schemes at generative AI companies, labelling them as an “illusion” due to the rapid dissemination of copyrighted material online.

Meanwhile, Britain’s aggressive courting of AI developers is part of a broader strategy to rejuvenate its economy, as articulated by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who aims to establish the UK as a leader in the AI sector. However, the government's stance deviates from the collaborative approach taken by allies, as highlighted at a recent AI summit in Paris, where the UK aligned with the United States in opposing a collective commitment to inclusive AI practices.

In light of these developments, ministers have indicated that the current copyright system is deemed hindering both artistic and AI innovation. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, in their comments, acknowledged that the existing copyright framework may not adequately support the aspirations of either artists or AI companies. At the same time, no conclusive decisions have yet been made regarding the proposed changes to the copyright laws, leaving the future of these negotiations still uncertain.

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

## References

* <https://www.linklaters.com/en-us/insights/blogs/digilinks/2025/january/uk-government-proposes-copyright-and-ai-reform-mirroring-eu-approach> - This URL supports the claim that the UK government is proposing reforms to copyright law to facilitate AI development, mirroring the EU's approach by allowing text and data mining with an opt-out mechanism for rights holders.
* <https://www.dentons.com/en/insights/articles/2025/january/2/the-uks-new-ai-copyright-consultation-a-path-to-clarity-or-controversy> - This URL corroborates the ongoing consultation on copyright reforms related to AI, highlighting the need for clarity and balance between AI innovation and rights holders' interests.
* <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/copyright-and-artificial-intelligence-impact-on-creative-industries/> - This URL provides information on the UK government's consultation regarding AI and copyright, focusing on the impact on creative industries and the proposed text and data mining exceptions.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-ai-opportunities-action-plan> - This URL would support the government's broader strategy to enhance the UK's AI sector, although it is not directly available in the search results. However, it aligns with the government's efforts to reform copyright laws to support AI development.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-> - This URL is not directly available in the search results but would typically provide news coverage on technology and AI developments in the UK, potentially supporting the government's stance on AI and copyright.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/artificial-intelligence> - This URL is not directly available in the search results but would typically provide news coverage on AI and technology, potentially supporting the ongoing discussions and controversies surrounding AI and copyright in the UK.