# Bjorn Ulvaeus urges UK government to enforce stricter AI copyright protections for artists



Bjorn Ulvaeus, a member of the iconic Swedish band ABBA, has publicly called for stronger regulatory measures to protect artists' copyrights from profit-driven artificial intelligence (AI) companies. His appeal comes amid ongoing debates in the UK about government proposals which could permit tech firms to use creative works to train AI models unless the creators explicitly choose to opt out.

The controversy centres on government plans, currently being considered as part of the Data (Use and Access) Bill, which may grant Big Tech an exception allowing them to utilise artists’ material for AI training without direct compensation, unless the artist objects. This stands in contrast to existing copyright laws that automatically protect artists and mandate compensation when their work is used. A landmark court ruling in the United States earlier this year affirmed that AI companies should pay for using such content in their models.

Ulvaeus criticised the plans, stating in an interview with The Times, “Unfortunately, there is an alternative and dangerous view, driven by profit-seeking tech companies. AI training must be subject to clear transparency rules.” He emphasised that “copyright is the oxygen” creators rely upon to sustain their livelihoods. He, alongside other creative industry voices, argue that the proposed opt-out system is impractical and undermines the protections traditionally afforded to artists.

The UK’s creative sector is a significant contributor to the economy, valued at around £126 billion and supporting approximately 2.4 million jobs. Industry experts warn that the government’s proposed changes could impair this vital sector by enabling unrestricted exploitation of creative content, while offering minimal benefits in critical areas where AI advancements are most needed, such as defence, health, and scientific research.

In addition to Ulvaeus, high-profile figures such as Sir Elton John and Sir Brian May have backed a campaign opposing the government’s proposed AI copyright exception. Baroness Kidron, a filmmaker and crossbench peer, highlighted the opportunity for the UK to lead globally by offering high-quality creative content as a valuable commodity to AI companies. However, she underlined that meaningful transparency is essential to ensure creators can hold AI firms accountable for copyright violations.

Parliamentary voices have also joined the discussion. Samantha Niblett, a Labour MP and co-chair of the parliamentary internet, communications and technology forum, expressed cautious optimism about AI, noting its potential to transform the economy positively. Nevertheless, she warned, “this will not happen if AI is built on content stolen from UK citizens, with a regulatory environment that favours Big Tech monopolies.” Niblett urged the government to incorporate transparency requirements into the Data Bill to promote a fair licensing market for the data essential to AI.

Technology Secretary Peter Kyle stated the government’s aim is “to provide a solution allowing both sectors to thrive,” reflecting attempts to balance the interests of the creative industries and technology companies.

Caroline Dinenage, the Conservative chairman of the culture, media and sport committee, supported strong copyright protections combined with transparency measures to ensure that creators can continue producing work essential to developing safe and reliable generative AI models.

As the Data (Use and Access) Bill progresses towards its report stage on 7 May, stakeholders across the cultural and technological landscape await the government’s final stance on the delicate balance between innovation in AI and the preservation of artists’ rights. The debate highlights the ongoing challenge of integrating emerging technologies with established intellectual property frameworks.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ft.com/content/2ced1e1f-7d14-44d7-b188-464ddd69890d> - The UK government is considering enforcing greater transparency on AI training models to prevent the unauthorized use of creative works without compensation. A consultation will propose an exemption to copyright laws enabling tech companies to use various materials for AI training unless rights holders opt-out through a 'rights reservation' system. This move aims to balance legal certainty for AI companies and compensation for creators but has been met with opposition from the creative industries, which fear it could undermine their economic contributions.
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/b98979ba-6ae7-4490-97a9-127381440b1f> - Creative artists and content companies are protesting against the unauthorized use of their work by large technology firms, driven by AI developments. More than 1,000 artists released a silent album to protest against the British government's potential legalization of generating revenue through AI without consent. Lawsuits have been filed in the US by the Authors Guild and individual authors, claiming mass-scale theft by AI firms like OpenAI and Microsoft. The UK's creative industry, a significant economic contributor, is undergoing debates about aligning intellectual property laws with current AI advancements while considering 'fair use' exemptions favorable to AI companies. Integrative economic models are suggested where AI content creators can legally access and remunerate human-generated content. Start-ups such as ProRata.ai, TollBit, and Human Native.ai are experimenting with revenue-sharing models and content licensing solutions. Updated legislation and market mechanisms are required to protect intellectual property rights against AI corporations.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/f26bda64-1237-4188-8540-210367567089> - The author, a novelist, is alarmed by the unauthorized use of their work by AI models, exemplified by Meta scraping content from their novel 'Labyrinth' without consent or compensation. Despite appreciating AI's potential to enhance creativity, the author condemns the theft of intellectual property, a practice that threatens the UK's robust creative economy and copyright laws which have historically protected creators. Recent discussions in the UK parliament have focused on this issue, with notable resistance to government proposals to weaken copyright protections in favor of AI developers. The author advocates for strong copyright laws to ensure creators derive fair economic benefits from their work, warning that diminishing these protections will stifle creativity and harm the thriving UK creative industries.
4. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2024-12-18/lords/grand-committee/data-use-and-access-bill-hl> - Amendments have been proposed to the Data (Use and Access) Bill to clarify compliance with UK copyright law by operators of web crawlers and general-purpose AI models. These amendments aim to ensure that AI companies cannot use copyrighted material without permission or compensation, reinforcing the existing copyright framework and providing a mechanism for copyright holders to contest the use of their work and ensure a route for payment.
5. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2024-12-18/lords/grand-committee/data-use-and-access-bill-hl> - Amendments have been proposed to the Data (Use and Access) Bill to clarify compliance with UK copyright law by operators of web crawlers and general-purpose AI models. These amendments aim to ensure that AI companies cannot use copyrighted material without permission or compensation, reinforcing the existing copyright framework and providing a mechanism for copyright holders to contest the use of their work and ensure a route for payment.
6. <https://www.parallelparliament.co.uk/debate/2024-12-18/lords/grand-committee/data-use-and-access-bill-hl> - Amendments have been proposed to the Data (Use and Access) Bill to clarify compliance with UK copyright law by operators of web crawlers and general-purpose AI models. These amendments aim to ensure that AI companies cannot use copyrighted material without permission or compensation, reinforcing the existing copyright framework and providing a mechanism for copyright holders to contest the use of their work and ensure a route for payment.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-14666085/Abbas-Bjorn-joins-calls-profit-seeking-AI-companies-protect-artists-copyright.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data