# Nearly 400 UK creatives urge government to protect copyright from AI training loopholes



In a powerful assertion of solidarity, nearly 400 prominent figures from the UK creative industries have united to demand that the government abandon proposals allowing technology firms to sidestep copyright protections when training artificial intelligence (AI) systems. Leading voices, including Sir Paul McCartney, Dua Lipa, and Dame Judi Dench, have signed a letter calling for urgent reforms ahead of a crucial vote in the House of Lords.

The looming threat posed by AI to creative works has sparked a passionate response from artists and industry leaders alike. In their letter to Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, the signatories declare: "Our work is not yours to give away." This statement underscores a collective anxiety that the current proposals will undermine the very foundation of the country's thriving creative economy.

Baroness Beeban Kidron, a filmmaker and pivotal figure in galvanising industry support, has stressed the need for transparency in how tech companies handle copyrighted material. She advocates for amendments to the Data (Use and Access) Bill that would require these firms to disclose which works they use in their AI training processes. Speaking passionately about the situation, she likened the current operations of tech companies to “coming in the back window and nicking whatever they like while you’re asleep.” Her vision for the legislative amendment is clear: it would give creators the agency to control the use of their work.

The debate has intensified with concerns that AI systems are increasingly viewed as a threat rather than an opportunity within the creative sector. Prominent musicians have voiced their worries that without robust copyright protections, the originality and economic viability of their work could be irrevocably compromised. Sir Paul McCartney articulated this concern succinctly when he asked Baroness Kidron, "What would this (an AI copyright exemption) mean for four lads from Liverpool?" His point highlights a broader fear that emerging artists might find it impossible to carve out a career in a landscape dominated by AI-generated content.

The potential economic ramifications of these proposals are significant. Industry leaders warn that allowing unchecked access to creative works could diminish the UK’s global standing as a creative powerhouse. They argue that safeguarding copyright not only protects artists but also bolsters the UK's economy by ensuring that creators can continuing generating income from their work. This sentiment resonates with many, as the creative industries contribute billions to the nation's economy and embody its culture.

Moreover, the letter has garnered support from a diverse range of individuals, including actors, authors, and musicians, showcasing the widespread concern across different segments of the creative field. Notable signatories include Sir Elton John, Russell T Davies, and writer Kazuo Ishiguro, each reinforcing the idea that the integrity of creative work is at stake.

Industry commentators have pointed out discrepancies in the government’s approach, particularly regarding the proposal that creators would need to “opt-out” of their work being used for AI training. Critics argue that this system could lead to widespread copyright infringement, leaving many artists vulnerable and without recourse. The pessimism surrounding this model is reflected in Kate Mosse's assertion that fairness must underpin any engagement with AI, as copyright is also about justice for creators.

While the government claims it is committed to balancing the needs of AI development and creator rights, critics remain sceptical. They argue that previous attempts to create regulations have favoured tech giants at the expense of artists. A representative from the government stated that they are consulting on a range of measures before making any decisions that affect creators, underscoring the complexities at play in this evolving legislative landscape.

In essence, the current debate inhabits a crucial crossroads for the UK’s artistic community. As AI technology continues to advance at a breakneck pace, the question of how best to protect the rights of artists while allowing innovation to flourish has never been more pressing. The voices of the creative industry have made it clear: any legislative approach must prioritise their rights, ensuring that the wealth generated by creativity is fairly distributed and respected.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.
2. Paragraph 2.
3. Paragraphs 3, 4, 6, 7.
4. Paragraphs 4, 6.
5. Paragraphs 5, 6.
6. Paragraph 7.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14696229/Dua-Lipa-Paul-McCartney-400-British-entertainment-titans-urging-Government-abandon-AI-copyright-plans-creative-works-raided-US-tech-firms.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/5a6601f7-a9c9-4f3b-a205-b4f8fe3e688d> - Over 400 prominent UK musicians, artists, and media executives, including Sir Paul McCartney, Elton John, Dua Lipa, and Richard Curtis, have co-signed a letter urging Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to support stronger copyright protections against unauthorized use by artificial intelligence. They advocate for an amendment to the Data (Use and Access) Bill, introduced by Baroness Beeban Kidron, which would require tech companies to disclose which copyrighted works—such as music, books, and films—are used to train AI models. The amendment aims to enhance transparency and accountability, protecting artists from what they describe as ongoing 'mass theft' of creative content by AI systems. Although the amendment was recently defeated in the House of Commons, it will be reconsidered in the House of Lords on Monday. The government has proposed alternative measures, including an economic impact assessment, and has moved away from a previously favored approach that required creators to opt out. Industry leaders warn that without legislative safeguards, the UK's creative sector could suffer economic losses and diminished global influence. They stress that supporting the amendment is key to maintaining the UK’s standing in the global AI market while upholding its creative and legal standards.
3. <https://www.apnews.com/article/b260a4c6f0fdf732fb4994cdeb1710a4> - Paul McCartney has expressed concerns over potential changes to UK copyright laws that may allow artificial intelligence (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, preventing tech companies from profiting unfairly. Many organizations, including The Associated Press, support maintaining strong copyright protections under the Creative Rights in AI Coalition.
4. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/dont-let-ai-rip-off-artists-beatles-star-mccartney-warns-uk-government-2025-01-26/> - Paul McCartney has cautioned that artificial intelligence (AI) could exploit artists and urged the UK government to ensure copyright reforms protect the creative industries. He expressed concerns that AI models could produce content based on popular works without compensating the original creators. In December, Britain proposed a way for artists to license their work for AI training but suggested an exception for large-scale use where rights aren't reserved. McCartney emphasized that proper copyright protection is essential for creative people, warning that only tech giants might benefit otherwise. He cited his own experience using AI to recreate John Lennon's voice, illustrating the risk of artists losing control over their work. The government is reviewing copyright laws, seeking to clarify legal ambiguities to support AI investment while protecting creators' rights.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/dec/10/paul-mccartney-ai-warning-uk-debates-copyright-laws> - Next week the UK parliament will debate amendments to the data bill that could allow creators to decide whether or not their copyrighted work can be used to train generative AI models. The amendments, championed by Beeban Kidron, would require operators of internet bots that copy content to train generative AI models to comply with copyright laws. Some publishers, such as Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation and the Financial Times, have already struck licensing deals to allow Open AI to train its large language models on their journalism. In contrast, the New York Times has sued Open AI and Microsoft for copyright infringement. In a statement supporting a campaign for creatives to get paid by the AI companies using their work, McCartney said: “We[’ve] got to be careful about it because it could just take over and we don’t want that to happen particularly for the young composers and writers [for] who, it may be the only way they[’re] gonna make a career. If AI wipes that out, that would be a very sad thing indeed.” McCartney used machine-learning technology to help produce last year’s Beatles song Now and Then by isolating John Lennon’s vocal performance from a recording made in 1970. But that differs from the way AI firms train their large language models on vast bodies of often copyrighted material without paying for it. Ministers are also set to consult on how the copyright issue should be handled in the UK. The system that is likely to best suit the tech companies would require artists, writers and publishers to opt out of having their creations mined to train large language models. But lobby groups such as the News Media Association (NMA), which represents newspaper publishers, want a system that requires them to opt in instead. On Tuesday, Lisa Nandy, the culture secretary, told the Commons culture, media and support select committee that the government had not decided which model it would propose in the forthcoming consultation but she highlighted reservations about a system that would require creatives to opt out. Nandy said: “We have looked at the limitations of similar legislation in the USA and the EU, so we have reservations about this idea that you can simply just say I want to opt out and then find that you have been completely erased from the internet.” That may put her in opposition to the technology secretary, Peter Kyle, whose department has “fully drunk the Kool-Aid on AI”, according to the committee chair, Caroline Dinenage. He is thought likely to want copyrighted material to be available to the tech companies unless creators opt out. The novelist Kate Mosse has also backed the campaign for amendments that would allow the enforcement of the UK’s existing copyright law, thereby allowing creators to negotiate for fair payment when licensing their content. She said an opt-out would not work. “As a writer, I want to engage with AI, and I do engage with AI,” Mosse said. “But we are looking for the F word – fairness. Copyright exists. Intellectual property exists. But the law is not being kept and there is a clear obfuscation of the law.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/38585a82-cffd-4144-9969-82e94cbb2168> - El pasado martes, miles de músicos, artistas, autores y periodistas británicos protestaron contra las propuestas del gobierno que facilitarían a las empresas tecnológicas el uso de su trabajo para entrenar modelos de inteligencia artificial. La consulta gubernamental sugiere un sistema de 'reserva de derechos' donde cada creador debe optar por no permitir el uso de su trabajo. El sector creativo respondió con la campaña 'Make it Fair', llamando la atención sobre los peligros de esta propuesta. Más de 1.000 músicos, incluyendo a Kate Bush y Damon Albarn, lanzaron un álbum 'silencioso' titulado 'Is This What We Want?', para mostrar el riesgo que las propuestas representan para la industria musical. Artistas como Paul McCartney también se opusieron, y cientos de creativos firmaron una carta señalando su desacuerdo. El debate enfrenta a las industrias creativas, que buscan transparencia y licencias, con las tecnológicas, que desean acceso libre a contenido para entrenar algoritmos.