

## AI copyright dispute could see update 'in very near future,' UK minister says

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UK rights holders and AI developers will see a further update on the government's plans to resolve a contentious dispute over the use of copyrighted materials in AI model training in "the very near future," a minister said. Margaret Jones told lawmakers that there were legal questions over how the existing copyright rules applied to generative AI models.

UK rights holders and artificial intelligence developers will see a further update on the government's plans to resolve a contentious dispute over the use of copyrighted materials in AI model training in "the very near future," a minister said.

Speaking in the House of Lords, Parliament's upper chamber, junior digital minister Margaret Jones acknowledged that there were legal questions over how the existing copyright rules applied to generative AI models.

"There was an attempt to come to a voluntary agreement on this under the previous government, which would have been a way forward for both those sectors, but unfortunately that voluntary agreement did not work out," she said.

Under the Conservative government, the Intellectual Property Office held as many as 12 industry meetings as officials unsuccessfully pushed for a solution, documents obtained by MLex under Freedom of Information laws showed.

The meetings, held between June and October 2023, looked into legal issues to do with labeling and metadata for the outputs of generative AI, transparency of inputs, licensing, and permissions and consents, but the two sides could not find a compromise.

Jones said that "the ball has bounced back into our court" after the talks failed, and legal cases are likely to take years before reaching conclusion.

A high-profile dispute between Getty Images and Stability AI which could offer some clarity on how courts interpret the issue is currently waiting for trial in London. But the judgment is not expected until 2026, however, meaning the issue requires a more immediate policy response.

"Our view is this should not be necessarily left to the law. Unfortunately, it takes a long time for these legal cases to be resolved," Jones said.

"We are trying to find a way forward that will be fair to everybody, but does not require the long legislative process that I know the [lawmakers asking the question] is all too aware," she added, hinting at a potential short-term fix to some aspects of the issue through secondary legislation.

Further industry talks are understood to have been held by the new Labour government since it took over in July, as ministers stressed the need to consult widely on its proposals (see [here](#)).

Jones said today that she hoped to be back in Parliament "with a further progress report in the very near future." AI minister Feryal Clark promised last month that a proposal would be made "by the end of the year" (see [here](#)).

The issue remain highly contentious as rights holders fear that the government could revive its controversial plans for a text and data mining exception to the copyright rules.

The proposal was briefly put forward by the previous Conservative government and then withdrawn in the face of fierce opposition (see [here](#)).

This autumn industry sources signaled growing concerns that it could be revived, prompting the chair an influential parliamentary committee to write to ministers last month saying the proposal was "disastrous."

Caroline Dinagen warned it would "remove any motivation tech companies would otherwise have to work with the

creative industries to devise commercial models that safeguard the incentives and reward for human creativity in the AI era" (see [here](#)).

Seeking to quash these concerns, Prime Minister Keir Starmer said last week that it was a "basic principle" that UK publishers "should have control over and seek payment for their work, including when thinking about the role of AI," but he stopped short of spelling out what it could mean in terms of policy (see [here](#)).

The issue remains close to the top of the government's to-do list in science and innovation.

Patrick Vallance, the previous government's scientific adviser and now an influential minister in the new Labour administration, also pushed for the reform to go ahead.

In his review, published last year, he stressed "an urgent need to prioritize practical solutions to the barriers faced by AI firms in accessing copyright and database materials," as further delays would "put the UK at a disadvantage and impede domestic development of the technology."

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