

Press release: Pressure grows on producers of illegal streaming devices and thieves of paid-for content

- Government to explore further measures to prevent damage to creative and broadcasting industries caused by theft of intellectual property
- Minister warns users and providers of adapted streaming devices who steal 'paid for' content they run the risk of fines or prison
- Extensive review finds current laws are effective in combating illicit streaming

The Minister for Intellectual Property, Sam Gyimah, today highlighted the continued Government clampdown on users and providers of illicit streaming boxes who cause damage to our £92bn creative industries.

It comes as the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) publishes its response to a Call for Views on illicit streaming. This finds that a number of recent prosecutions show existing laws are working. But the government will push ahead with a range of measures to tackle the threats created by the infringement of intellectual property rights.

Media streaming boxes are devices such as Android TV or Kodi boxes. They are legal until they are altered with apps or add-ons that allow users to access 'paid for' material for free. This could be subscription TV, premium sports channels and new films. Using apps or add-ons like these is against the law. It is estimated that around one in four may not be paying for what they are watching.

Minister for Intellectual Property, Sam Gyimah said:

Illegal streaming damages our creative industries. We have always been clear that media streaming devices used to access 'paid for' material for free are illegal. Recent prosecutions have shown that if caught, sellers of boxes adapted in this way face fines and a prison sentence.

Through our modern Industrial Strategy, we are backing our booming creative industries which is why we are taking further steps to tackle this threat and in our recent creative industries sector deal outlined support to create the right conditions for them to continue to thrive.

The IPO published its response to a Call for Views on illicit streaming today. It shows recent prosecutions demonstrate the current laws are working. This summer the owner and operator of a major pirate streaming service providing illegal access to Premier League football, was jailed for five years in Newcastle. Around the same time, two suppliers of illicit streaming devices were jailed for four and a half years for selling hundreds of devices that let customers watch games via unauthorised access to Sky Sports, BT Sport and illegal foreign channels.

But in addition to the law, the government is taking a range of additional steps to counter the problem. It has already delivered a public education campaign in conjunction with Crimestoppers and industry stakeholders to highlight the risks associated with watching content using ISDs while also highlighting the importance of tackling the organised criminal networks behind much of this activity.

In addition, the Government confirmed today that it will:

- Consider the evidence for and potential impact of administrative site blocking (as opposed to requiring a High Court injunction in every case), as well as identifying the mechanisms through which administrative site blocking could be introduced.
- Work to identify disruptions that may be applied at other points in the supply chain, for example App developers, and further develop our understanding of the effect of new generation smart TVs on how this infringement occurs.
- Undertake research into consumer attitudes/motivations towards use of ISDs in order to develop more effective strategies for reducing levels of use.
- Deliver up to date training to Trading Standards officers via the established IP in Practice courses.

The Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit (PIPCU) will continue to prioritise resources in this area, taking appropriate action against those traders who seek to encourage copyright infringement through the sale of IPTV boxes.