

Speech: Matt Hancock's speech at the Alliance for Intellectual Property reception

As new Secretary of State, I wanted to set out my views on intellectual property early and clearly.

Imagine there was no James Bond

Imagine there was no Harry Potter

Imagine there was no Imagine.. by John Lennon

Who can say what cultural brilliance would have been robbed from our nation if artists couldn't reap the rewards of their creation?

As your report acknowledges, we have one of the best intellectual property regimes in the world.

We were one of the first countries in the world to realise the need for laws to protect the work of creators. The Statute of Anne from 1710 is widely seen as the first copyright act, and influenced similar legislation across the world.

Of course a lot has changed since then.

Rather than copyright simply concerning what comes off the printing press, there are now international video and streaming platforms which host colossal amounts of content. Four hundred hours of video is uploaded to YouTube every minute.

Of course the internet means distribution is easier than ever. Both legal and illegal.

And the viral nature of social media means ownership can be harder than ever to enforce.

To paraphrase Mark Twain, a stolen joke is no laughing matter.

You understand this. IP rules may be technical but their importance can't be overstated.

Intellectual property is vital to encouraging creativity and as a Government we are committed to protecting it.

We remain fully committed to addressing the transfer of value from the creative industries and closing the value gap that fails to reward our creators.

We are making some real progress in this area. Research shows there has been a drop in infringement levels from 17% to 15% since 2013, partly due to the increased availability of legal content.

But there is much more to do. The research also shows that pirates are increasingly turning to illegal streaming devices and websites. You have told me this.

This must be stopped and there is a lot of work taking place to do this.

Our Digital Charter is the framework which will develop the policies and frameworks to make the UK the safest and fairest place to be online. We have a good track record on this.

The Government has helped to broker a ground-breaking code of practice through the Search Roundtable.

This helped search engines and the creative industries to work together so consumers aren't being led to copyright infringing websites.

Thank you to the Alliance and its members for the vital part you all played in this. These partnerships between tech firms and the creative industries are crucial and we want to see even more of them.

The Government has also confirmed that it will continue to fund the Intellectual Property Crime Unit, helping it to build on its impressive record fighting online counterfeiting and piracy.

While we remain members of the EU, we will support work in Brussels to tackle the value gap.

And as we leave the EU we will import EU rules into UK law and then maintain and strengthen the protection of intellectual property.

We want to go further than just maintaining the status quo.

Brexit will provide the opportunity to strike trade deals independently with new markets.

And I want to make it perfectly clear tonight; intellectual property will be at the heart of these discussions.

The Government wants Free Trade Agreements to support innovation, market entry and consumer choice.

And as we look to expand the potential of new markets, we want to ensure rewards for creators, along with support and investment for the creative industries.

Breaches of IP are not a new concern for artists; Jimi Hendrix once said "I've been imitated so well that I've heard people copy my mistakes." This is true for me too...

But the scope and the nature of it is changing and we need to be well equipped to combat it.

Britain has historically been world-leading in helping artists get the value they deserve from their books, plays, films or music.

The Alliance for IP has played a big part in this. Thank you for all the work you've been doing on behalf of artists across the UK – and for producing this valuable report.

It is my profound belief that throughout history, civilised society has been based on the respect of property.

That is the basis of any market economy. And the market economy in turn is the greatest force for prosperity ever invented by man.

And as technology marches on, the property that really matters is increasingly the ideas, the designs, the art and the concepts. In short, the IP.

It is therefore no exaggeration to say that respect for IP underpins this nation's prosperity. And you are its most effective voices and guardians. Britain understood this first. And we will lead the world once more.

Our commitment to IP is unwavering. We will remain an open, confident, forward looking nation that will be a haven for the brightest creative talent. For that is where this country's future lies.

Thank you and have a wonderful evening.