

IPO's IP rights examination backlog brought to zero

In May, the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) cleared its examination backlogs for the first time in several years. Backlogs refers to cases that take longer than IPO's service standards. It follows two of the busiest years in IPO's history, where record numbers of applications and change requests were received.

Clearing backlogs has resulted in a faster service for IPO's customers. Over the last three years, customer satisfaction with IPO's speed of service for patent examination has almost doubled, rising from 42% in 2019 to 75% in 2022.

Overall, IPO achieved a customer satisfaction score of 88% in March 2022, a score which is among the highest in the UK across any industry. It also exceeds its Ministerial target of 85%.

Tim Moss, IPO's CEO said:

Clearing our backlogs has been a huge team effort, especially given the challenges we faced in Brexit and Covid-19. Our teams have worked incredibly hard and made processes more efficient to help us complete examinations more quickly. Now we have cleared the backlogs we can firmly focus on our transformation plans.

The patent examination backlog

The patent examination backlog has been steadily growing over the previous two decades. Patent backlogs are those that have not been examined more than 42 months after the initial application.

In the last three years the number of late patent examinations reduced from 13,000 to zero. The scale of the work is unprecedented for IPO. Last April the patent backlog stood at 6,007 cases, consisting of 12,000,000 pages.

The trade marks and designs backlog

In 2020 and 2021 there was also a significant backlog of trade mark and design applications, caused by three main factors:

1. The number of trade mark applications has soared. Domestic trade mark applications have more than doubled over five years – from around 65,000, to more than 150,000 last year.
2. Since the UK exited the European Union, customers now have to go to UKIPO if they want UK protection – previously they could file at the EUIPO and gain

UK protection.

3. The covid-19 pandemic led to new businesses being set up or businesses diversifying in response.

At its peak, in March 2021 the trade mark backlog stood at 32,185 trade mark applications, with it taking 35 days for the examination process. Now that the trade mark backlog has been cleared IPO is processing trade mark applications within its target of 10 days. IPO also had a backlog of 9,507 design applications, with it taking 32 days to process a case. This has now also been cleared.

Changes to the IP register

The huge increase in IPO's workload extended to changes to the IP register, such as, changes of address. 2021 saw IPO receive 80,000 more change requests for trade marks and designs than it would receive in a typical year. This is a combined increase of 335% more change request forms than an average year, which resulted in it taking 33 days for changes to be processed. This backlog has now been cleared.

How did IPO clear the backlogs?

Clearing the backlogs was a huge team effort for the IPO, especially given the considerable challenges faced in Brexit and Covid-19. Their teams made processes more efficient to complete examinations more quickly. A number of service improvements were made to help clear the patents backlog:

1. Patents examinations were streamlined so they focus on the most important and relevant things first, taking into account the legal requirements and the customer's considerations. This saved the IPO time, but is also better for customers, because they get more clear and succinct guidance on the issues that are most relevant to them.
2. 'Technology clusters' were created so work on different subject matters (eg measuring devices or automobiles) could be shared across a wider pool of colleagues. This allows IPO to focus our resources on the areas where it has the most demand at any given time.
3. IPO improved the way applications were handled so non-specialist staff could help examiners with early work on an application.

For trade marks and designs, given the surge in applications we've seen, IPO needed to recruit a number of examiners to cover the continued demand for their services.

However the team has also:

1. Invested in better forecasting across trade marks and designs, which allowed IPO to plan resource more effectively in order to become more flexible and cope with demand.

2. Had a root and branch review of our processes, improving efficiency by managing our workflow differently, adopting new methods of training and continuing to make small improvements to IPO's systems.

What's next?

Clearing our backlogs is great preparation for IPO's next steps as an organisation. The One IPO Transformation Programme is edging closer, with the new patents service expected to launch in just two years. Starting with a clean slate will mean it's easier to move people over to our new digital services. Having better, faster services for both IPO's customers and staff, will allow them to manage large volumes of work more quickly and easily, and reduce the chances of similar backlogs building up in future.

So, with the backlogs cleared, the future is bright.

[Alok Sharma, COP26 President, to visit South Africa to reinforce support for a just energy transition](#)

- Mr Sharma will meet key stakeholders involved in the process of a clean and just energy transition and how the partnership will support their ambitious goals
- UK announces further £1.5m funding for new technical assistance and partnerships on supporting South Africa's just energy transition

COP President Alok Sharma will travel to South Africa this week (19-21 June) as work continues to support the implementation of the South Africa Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) announced at COP26 last year.

During his visit, the COP President will meet with South African government ministers, communities, business leaders and officials involved in delivering a just energy transition for South Africa – discussing the opportunities and challenges presented by such a transition, and how the partnership can support them to accelerate a move to renewable energy.

The South Africa Just Energy Transition Partnership is a long term political agreement between South Africa and an International Partner Group (IPG) of countries, comprising the UK, US, France, Germany, and the EU.

The country-led Partnership aims to accelerate the decarbonisation of South

Africa's economy, with a focus on bolstering the electricity system and a move away from coal that will help the country achieve its ambitious goals set out in their Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

On his first visit to the country, Mr Sharma will also meet with coal mining communities to hear about their perceptions of a just energy transition and emphasise the opportunities that green growth presents for job creation. He will also witness work to support a just transition in action at a coal-fired power plant soon to be decommissioned, observing the repurposing process underway there and promoting the importance of efforts which retain and create new jobs while shifting from coal.

While in South Africa, Mr. Sharma will meet with key ministers from across the South African government and representatives from the South Africa Presidential Climate Finance Task Team assigned to deliver the Just Energy Transition Partnership. The parties will jointly assess progress and agree the next steps to drive forward this innovative response in accelerating and financing a just energy transition.

Alok Sharma, COP26 President, said:

"A clean, just energy transition not only delivers enhanced climate action, it will help create new jobs, economic growth, clean air and a resilient, prosperous future.

"Providing financial support and technical partnerships is fundamental to support this transition in developing and emerging economies.

"The South African Just Energy Transition Partnership embodies the ambition we called for at COP26. This country-led approach puts fairness at the heart of the transition from coal to clean energy and will deliver high levels of finance and support to South Africa in achieving this ambitious transition.

"With less than six months before COP27, my visit is about demonstrating our continued support to South Africa to drive forward this commitment and build on key next steps."

A further £1.5m of support will be provided to South Africa in 2022-2023 through the UK's Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions (PACT) program, aimed at providing technical assistance to South African government stakeholders working on just transition sector job resilience, climate transition pathways for reaching net-zero in various economic sectors, and energy sector decarbonisation.

There is a huge global appetite for the strategic energy security that greater investment in renewables can bring. Work is ongoing with partners to assess the scope for similar partnerships in other nations with further announcements anticipated in advance of COP27.

PM call with Prime Minister of Norway: 19 June 2022

Press release

Prime Minister Boris Johnson spoke to the Prime Minister of Norway, Jonas Støre, this evening.



The Prime Minister spoke to the Prime Minister of Norway, Jonas Støre, this evening, ahead of the NATO leaders summit later this month.

The Prime Minister updated Prime Minister Støre on his visit to Kyiv on Friday, and his assessment of the conflict in Ukraine.

He reiterated his strong belief that Ukraine can and will win and said his visit to the country had further cemented that view.

The leaders discussed the blockade of grain in Odessa, and how international partners and allies could further support efforts to ensure its release.

Both Prime Ministers agreed more needed to be done ahead of the NATO leaders summit to support Ukraine and bolster its resilience in the face of continued Russian aggression.

The Prime Minister said he looked forward to seeing the Norwegian leader in Madrid to discuss how the UK and Norway could continue to work together in support of Ukraine.

Published 19 June 2022

Statement on violence in Afghanistan

World news story

The UK does not support anyone seeking to achieve political change through violence in Afghanistan.



Following violence in Afghanistan, Hugo Shorter, Chargé d'Affaires at the UK Mission to Afghanistan in Doha said:

The UK does not support anyone, including Afghan nationals, seeking to achieve political change through violence, or any activity inciting violence for political purposes, in Afghanistan, and will not allow UK soil to be used to plan or prepare it, and we strongly discourage others from doing so.

Violence of any kind is not in Afghanistan's interests, nor the international community's, and we deplore terrorist attacks of all kinds.

To promote peace and stability, to deliver essential humanitarian

support to the Afghan people, and to address shared concerns on security, there is no alternative to engaging pragmatically with the current administration of Afghanistan, and that is what we are doing.

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