

Meeting note: All Party Parliamentary Group for IP
AGM and Discussion on Designs
Tuesday 25 November 2025, 4:30pm-5:30pm
Portcullis House Room R and MS Teams

Meeting Chair

- Rt Hon Sir John Whittingdale OBE MP

Speakers

- Leah Jobling-Purser, Head of Designs Policy, Intellectual Property Office
- Jeff Lloyd, Deputy Director of Trademarks and Designs, Intellectual Property Office

Parliamentary Attendees

- Sir John Whittingdale OBE MP (Conservative) – Meeting Chair
- Pete Wishart MP (Scottish National Party)
- The Lord Clement-Jones CBE (Liberal Democrat)
- Ruth Jones MP (Labour)
- The Baroness Bowles of Berkhamsted (Liberal Democrat)
- The Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG (Conservative)
- The Lord Freyberg (Crossbench)
- The Earl of Clancarty (Crossbench)
- Rt Hon The Lord Lansley CBE (Conservative)
- The Lord Inglewood (Crossbench)
- The Viscount Camrose (Conservative)

Online attendees

- 9 sector representatives joined online.

Purpose of Meeting

The first purpose of the meeting was for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Intellectual Property to hold its AGM for 2025-26, including the election of its Chair and Officers. The Secretariat provided the independent Parliamentary Chair, Clive Efford MP, with an Annual Report, an Income and Expenditure Statement and a Due Diligence Statement to approve.

- Sir John Whittingdale OBE MP was elected the Chair of the APPG
- Ruth Jones MP, Pete Wishart MP and Lord Clement-Jones were elected as Officers of the APPG.

Following the successful AGM, the purpose of the meeting was for the APPG to hear views on the Government's 'Consultation on changes to the UK designs framework'. The consultation – now closed – considered reform to the designs framework to ensure it remains clear, effective and suited to future needs. The consultation invited businesses of all sizes, including micro and SMEs – who make up the vast majority of design businesses – to share their experiences and offer suggestions about how to improve the system.

Two officials from the Intellectual Property Office joined the discussion to take questions about the potential implications of any reforms for future IP policy, and to listen to the views of parliamentarians and stakeholder representatives.

Discussion

The roundtable participants discussed:

Simplification and modernisation of design rights

- Complexity of current legislation and multiple forms of unregistered rights were highlighted.
- Proposals to simplify the system were noted, alongside concerns about maintaining valuable protections.
- Modernisation options discussed:
 - Allowing animated and digital design formats (e.g., CAD files).
 - Ensuring design rights do not conflict with copyright rules or accidentally affect other protections, such as the Artist's Resale Right.
- Observations made about consultation options linking simplification with reduced term of protection.

Access to justice and enforcement

- Challenges for small businesses in enforcing design rights were discussed, including cost and complexity.
- The potential introduction of a small claims track for design disputes was considered as a way to improve accessibility.
- There was a broader discussion on deterrence and enforcement mechanisms.

Criminal sanctions for unregistered design infringement

- The consultation's call for evidence on extending criminal sanctions was noted and a range of views were expressed both in favour and against extending criminal sanctions.
- Points raised in favour included:

- Criminal sanctions could provide a stronger deterrent against deliberate copying and repeat offenders.
- Parity with other IP rights, such as copyright, which has long included criminal provisions.
- Safeguards in the criminal justice system (e.g., Attorney General's two-tier test) were noted as a way to prevent the prosecution of innocent parties.
- More critical points included:
 - Concerns about complexity, uncertainty of scope and the difficulty of defining unregistered designs compared to other IP rights.
 - Potential impact on innovation and risk of escalating commercial disputes.
 - Criminalisation of unregistered designs infringement not supported in other jurisdictions.
 - Criminalisation of unregistered designs infringement is not currently supported in other jurisdictions and was rejected in recent international treaty discussions.

Education and registration uptake

- Low awareness of design registration despite its low cost was highlighted.
- Suggestions included improving education and outreach to encourage early registration.
- Registration presented by some in the discussion as a way to provide certainty and reduce reliance on complex unregistered rights.

Post-Brexit disclosure rules

- Loss of mutual recognition of disclosure between UK and EU was identified as a challenge, particularly for sectors such as fashion.
- Reciprocal arrangements with the EU considered unlikely; alternative approaches discussed, including global recognition models.