# IPO Launches Overhaul of UK Design Rights System



The UK Intellectual Property Office (IPO) has launched a major consultation to modernise the country’s designs system, aiming to make it more robust, accessible and future-ready. The initiative is set to benefit businesses that rely on design rights to protect their products, potentially reshaping how design protection is secured and enforced across the UK.

The current registered designs system allows for relatively limited examination, leading to concerns over misuse and disputes. The IPO is proposing the introduction of novelty checks and bad faith provisions to strengthen the validity of registrations. These measures aim to ensure only genuinely new designs are protected and deter opportunistic filings, reducing legal uncertainty for businesses.

A key focus is simplifying the UK’s overlapping system of design protections, which includes registered and unregistered rights as well as copyright. Many companies, particularly SMEs, find the system complex and difficult to navigate. The consultation explores ways to streamline protections and clarify how unregistered design rights and copyright interact—changes that could make the framework more user-friendly and legally coherent.

The IPO is also addressing digital and AI-generated designs, recognising the growing significance of virtual, animated and computer-generated creations. Proposals aim to adapt the legal framework to support innovation in sectors such as gaming, digital media and AI-driven design.

Further reforms under consultation include introducing a small claims track for design disputes, offering a faster and more affordable route to justice. Plans to allow new file formats and simplify submission processes also reflect the IPO’s push for modernisation.

The UK design sector is valued at nearly £100 billion annually, underscoring the economic importance of these reforms. The consultation seeks to address post-Brexit legal uncertainties and provide clearer international protections, reinforcing the UK’s global standing in design innovation.

Open until 27 November 2025, the consultation has received support from industry bodies including the UK Fashion & Textile Association and the Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys. Stakeholders across fashion, technology and manufacturing are encouraged to contribute their views.

This initiative forms part of the IPO’s broader Corporate Plan for 2025 to 2026, which commits to creating a design rights system that embraces digital change and supports the needs of modern creators. For UK businesses and innovators, the consultation offers a chance to shape a more dynamic, transparent and future-proof design protection framework—positioning the UK as a leader in responsible innovation and creative excellence.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://sintons.co.uk/sintons_d_r/navigating-change-what-the-ukipos-designs-consultation-means-for-your-business/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-changes-to-the-uk-designs-framework> - The UK Intellectual Property Office (IPO) has initiated a consultation to modernise the UK's design system, aiming to enhance its accessibility and effectiveness for businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The consultation addresses several key areas, including strengthening the validity of registered designs by introducing novelty checks and bad faith provisions, simplifying the complex designs framework to make it more user-friendly, and future-proofing the system to accommodate digital and AI-generated designs. The consultation is open until 27 November 2025, inviting stakeholders to share their views on these proposed changes.
3. <https://ukft.org/ipo-launches-uk-designs-framework-consultation/> - The UK Fashion & Textile Association (UKFT) has highlighted the IPO's launch of a comprehensive consultation on the UK's design framework. This initiative seeks to modernise design protection, addressing critical areas such as improving the validity of registered designs through novelty checks and bad faith provisions, simplifying the complex designs regime to make it more accessible, and resolving post-Brexit complexities to provide certainty for UK businesses operating internationally. UKFT encourages businesses and designers to participate in the consultation, which runs until 27 November 2025, to help shape a framework that better protects creativity and supports growth.
4. <https://www.citma.org.uk/resources/government-launches-major-design-rights-consultation-mb25.html> - The Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA) reports on the IPO's launch of a major consultation aimed at modernising the UK's design protection system. The consultation focuses on several key objectives, including improving the validity of registered designs through measures like novelty checks and bad faith provisions, simplifying the complex designs regime to make it more accessible, and addressing issues related to unregistered designs to provide greater legal certainty for businesses. CITMA urges its members to respond to this consultation, which runs until 27 November 2025, to influence the future of UK design protection.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-consultation-to-strengthen-uks-100-billion-design-sector> - The UK government has announced a major consultation to strengthen the UK's design sector, valued at nearly £100 billion annually. The consultation covers specific areas of potential reform, including fighting design theft by proposing search and examination powers to identify and reject designs lacking novelty or individual character, streamlining processes to make the system simpler and more accessible, resolving post-Brexit complexities to provide certainty for UK businesses operating internationally, strengthening enforcement and access to justice by exploring the creation of a small claims court track for design disputes, and modernising for the digital age by allowing applicants to submit new file formats and updating legal definitions to benefit future industries and technologies. The consultation runs from 4 September 2025 to 27 November 2025.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-publishes-second-transformation-consultation-response> - The UK government has published its response to the second transformation consultation, outlining changes to bring greater consistency and simplicity for trade mark and design customers. The response includes publishing trade mark and design documents online for the first time, simplifying trade mark applications by discontinuing the series marks service for new applicants, and trialling mediation meetings for disputes at the IPO Tribunal in cases where neither party has legal representation. These changes aim to modernise the IPO's services and make them more accessible to users.
7. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/intellectual-property-office-corporate-plan-2025-to-2026/intellectual-property-office-corporate-plan-2025-to-2026> - The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) has published its Corporate Plan for 2025 to 2026, outlining its strategic objectives and initiatives. The plan includes creating a UK designs framework that is fit for the future, aiming to support all rights holders and meet the needs of users in an increasingly digital future. The IPO plans to engage further with stakeholders through consultation in 2025 as part of the next stage of the process, ensuring the framework gives the UK a competitive edge and supports innovation and growth in the sector.